

# Maurice 'Sonny' Tougas

It doesn't seem that long ago that 'Sonny' Tougas, Sue-Ellyn Rempel and I were sitting at ringside, watching a Judge struggling with Best In Show in Regina. We decided there and then that between us, we could probably do a better job and should apply for our judging permits. And so we sent in our applications to CKC for our initial permits.

On Friday, October 31, Maurice 'Sonny' Tougas passed away at home from a malignant brain tumour. He had been diagnosed in early July. The prognosis was irreversible from the start. His wife Bobbie was at his side along with his English Cockers. Sonny picked a day to leave us, when across Canada there were major shows taking place in Vancouver, Red Deer and Toronto.

Although Sonny and I had crossed paths many times as 'week-end handlers' and then as aspiring Judges, it was not until we both became All-Breed Judges, that our friendship blossomed. As we began to travel to shows together, we discovered that we shared many interests and between the two of us, silence was never an issue. On our flights to Shows, we usually righted the wrongs of the dog world, and on our way back, we generally re-judged the Show correcting any oversights we might have made. We didn't always agree, but we certainly opined.

Sonny had many talents. His woodworking skills were legendary. He had tools which could slice, dice and chop an ordinary stick of wood into a trophy, a grooming table or a Christmas ornament which were envied by all. He would spend hours hand painting his creations, only to give them away. That was his joy.

On the golf course, his swing was totally effortless. We had the fortune of judging in the Whitehorse many times, and each time we would spend some time on one of the local courses. One of these is a par 3, with a tee box which is elevated above the tree tops. The green is surrounded by water. On a beautiful warm sunny day, Sonny and I stood on the tee box, each of us hitting at least 6 balls towards the green. I think Sonny landed all 6 within 5 feet of the pin. I put 3 in the water and 3 in the bush. I can still hear him laughing.

Along with his wife Bobbie, Sonny was instrumental in running classes at Heatherlea Canine Education.

Countless students benefited from his experience both as a handler and a Judge. At local Shows, his pride was very much in evidence



whenever one of his pupils did well. And they always did. Whenever he could he was on hand to offer his support and encouragement, analysing each performance, preparing them for their next Show. That was Sonny - the teacher.

We belonged to the same Club, Northwinds. Sonny was a tireless worker, always looking for ways to improve our entry, scrutinizing our judging schedules, making certain the Show was running to his satisfaction.

I think above everything else, Sonny was probably the most devoted husband I have ever met. His love for Bobbie was unquestionable. Many a night, over dinner, or on a long flight home, Sonny would always tell me what a lucky man he was to have found a wife like Bobbie. And I would never tire of watching his face light up as he sang her praises. And whenever we returned from a long flight, she was always there, at the airport, waiting to take him home.

We often discussed our immortality and both decided that when our time came, we really did not want anybody to shed any tears over our deaths, or embellish our accomplishments in the form of a heart-wrenching eulogy. And I hope that this is not seen as such. Sonny was my friend, a 'best' friend and I just could not let him go without sharing the influence he had on my life. I didn't mean to cry Tougas, but I just couldn't help myself.

I would like to think there is a heaven. And if there is, it's probably somewhere in the Whitehorse, on a golf course. Tougas is teeing up his ball on the par 3 above the pines, chuckling to himself as he remembers Kereluke landing 3 balls in the water and 3 in the bush.

*Larry Kereluke*