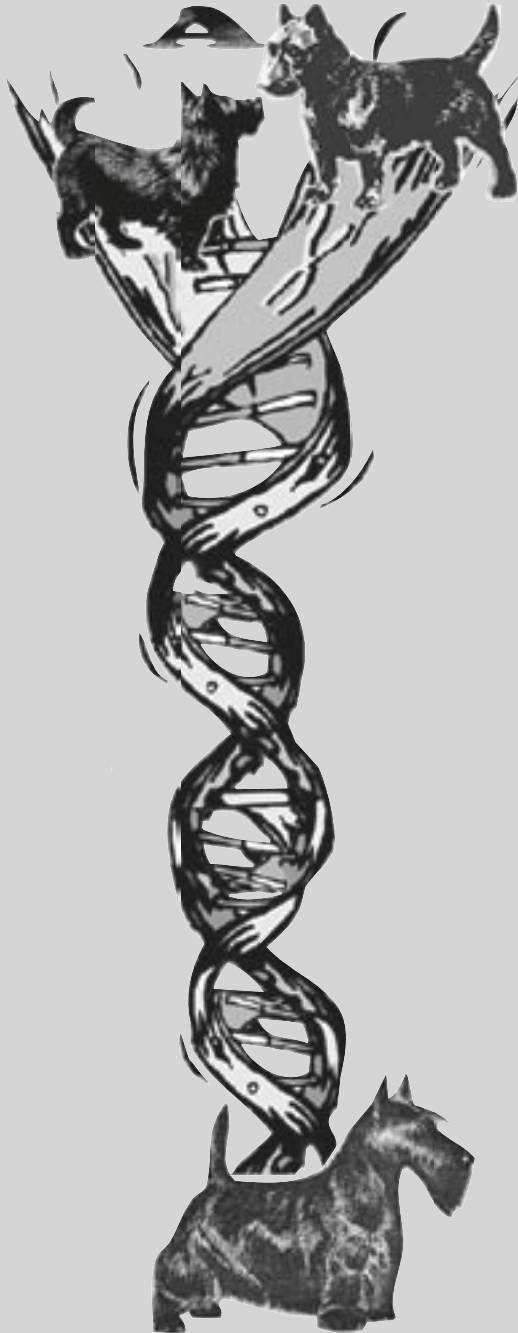


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# Deconstructing the Diehard:

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## The Genetic Plight of the Scottish Terrier

### Part Three: Community Crossroads: Tallying the Price of 'Well-Bred'

Joseph Harvill, Ph.D.,  
publisher *Great Scots Magazine*

*"In the same way, we have to inform the multitude that restoration comes at a price . . . Are you ready, we must ask them, to grant that the law of reward is inflexible and that one cannot, by cunning or through complaints, obtain more than he puts in? Are you prepared to see that comfort may be a seduction and that the fetish of material prosperity will have to be pushed aside in favor of some sterner ideal? Do you see the necessity of accepting duties before you begin to talk of freedoms? These things will be very hard; they will call for deep reformation."*

Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*

Deep reformation in philosopher Richard Weaver's sense will not come easily to the Scottish Terrier community. That is because inbreeding is not just a canine jeopardy; minds and human perspectives become 'inbred,' too, whenever precedent precludes fresh thinking, whenever "that's-the-way-we've-always-done-it" trumps problem-solving.

Nevertheless, Weaver is right when he argues that change—real change—comes about only when we pay the price; the inflexible "law of reward" is that outcomes are the product of inputs. You must change the inputs if you would alter the outcome.

What that means in Scottie circles is simply this: we will get different outcomes in Scottie genetic health and vigor only when we change the way we breed and buy our dogs. On the other hand, if Scottie breeders and buyers continue in today's 'inbred' thinking and practices we will continue to punish our breed with a shrinking effective gene pool, proliferation of health problems due to compromised immune systems, shorter lifespans, smaller litters, increasing whelping problems, and escalating tensions in the Scottie community over 'well-bred'

dogs that are medical and emotional heartbreaks for their owners.

**Recap: The Genetic Picture**



In Part One of this series (“*Troubled Breed: How Did We Get Here?*,” *GSM*, Jul/Aug 2003) I referenced the 58 known genetic diseases in our breed plus the lethal cancers killing our dogs in increasing numbers, including the eye-opening data from Purdue University’s bladder cancer research which identifies Scottish Terriers as 18 times more likely to develop bladder cancer than other purebreeds. I argued that because our dogs’ world is the same polluted environment other modern breeds inhabit our breed’s massive disproportionate risk of lethal cancer points to genetic predisposition in the Scottie gene pool and to unmapped consequences of the genetic deconstruction of the Diehard.

My analysis of how our dogs reached this predicament began at the top of the hierarchy of Scottie stewardship looking at our century-old purebred system built on pedigrees and rigid appearance standards and exposed the pernicious myth which drives show-breeding culture, viz., that *phenotype = genotype*, or in laymen’s

terms, that the best-looking dog is the superior strain. The flaw in that premise is that looks do not equate with genetics, so a handsome, ‘typy’ Scottie can be a carrier of recessive traits which, when mated to another carrier of that recessive gene, can produce a health disaster, and on the other hand, a dog with less-than-perfect ear-set, who is rejected from the gene pool as “non-breed stock” because of ears, may have longevity and fitness genes the gene pool badly needs.

To understand our breed’s genetic predicament and to be part of the solution we must see our breed’s history viewed through the lens of population genetics which maps deleterious effects of loss of genetic diversity across whole populations. As shown in Part One, a genetics-framed look at Scottie history flags (1) our breed’s small ‘founder event’ stock, (2) our century-old fixation on phenotype, or appearance, (3) our sustained inbreeding (“linebreeding” is genetically a form of inbreeding), and (4) our cyclic constriction of the Scottie gene pool to gene puddles by genetic bottlenecks due to overuse of celebrated popular sires. These four ‘virtues’ of the purebred establishment amount to *diversity-reducing breeding practices* that add up over time to what geneticists call “inbreeding depression.”

Classic signs of inbreeding depression are manifest in our Scotties: (1) shorter lifespans (2) weakened immunology (3) smaller litters (4) increased whelping problems, and of course, (5) spread of genetic diseases (see: Lisa Paddock, “*Our Mr. Holmes: Poster Dog for a Scottish Terrier Open Health Registry—The Face of Chronic Illness In Well-Bred Scotties*,” *GSM*, May/June 2003, and also ‘Letter To Editor’ from Elaine Weigle, *GSM*, Jul/Aug 2003).

In Part 2: “Pet Dollars and Deconstruction” (*GSM*, Sep/Oct 2003), I raised the troubling issue of inbreeding’s harmful impact on immunity, referencing the important recent findings at University of California, Davis, which for the first time analyzed with 100 microsatellite markers the canine genome’s Major Histocompatibility Complex (MHC), best known for its role in the immune system. 28 dog breeds, representing the seven recognized breed groups of the AKC, were tested for genetic diversity. Diversity is crucial at the MHC site because the more genetically diverse the site, the wider the immunologic response the individual is capable of mounting, and the more duplicate alleles at the MHC site the narrower range of response an individual can mount when challenged immunologically. The MHC site, therefore, and the UC Davis microsatellite marker research, is a brilliant, hard-evidence look at how inbreeding produces animals that acquire the same allele or gene from both parents as a result of their common ancestry. Research results: (1) the smaller the breed population, and (2) the longer registered by a kennel club, the more depleted the gene pool. Our 100-year-old AKC registered Scottish Terrier breed is implicated on both counts.

Most troubling, however, to all who love Scotties, was the discovery in Part 2 that Geneticist Sewall Wright’s “coefficient of inbreeding,” a statistical formula for estimating how much or how little genetic diversity there is in a gene pool, is not used and is virtually unknown among today’s breeders of Scottish Terriers as tool for choosing mating pairs of least consanguinity, or shared ancestry. Wright’s COI is the critical tool for lowering the degree of diversity-stripping kinship in a gene pool. Sadly, a responsible breeder cannot calculate whether a proposed Scottie mating raises or lowers our breed’s inbreeding coefficient and hence helps or hurts our gene pool’s relative degree of inbreeding, because our breed’s average coefficient of inbreeding has never been calculated.

But Part 2 argued it is not just blind breeding that has imperiled our dogs, blind buying of Scotties drives the deconstruction of our breed as well. AKC estimates indicate only 5% of purebred dogs are bred by purebred clubs; 10% are bred by commercial breeders; 85% are bred by pet owner backyard breeders. When the national Club produces few knowledgeable bred dogs and large numbers of casual breeders produce large numbers in ignorance of genetics, and when pet community dollars subsidize those casual puppy producers, the lion’s share of our breed’s genetic future is left in the hands of the lowest common denominator of knowledge and wisdom



among us.

Clearly we have very real problems facing us as we seek to manage the sacred trust of our Scotties' future. This is not a time to Balkanize our community into factious special interest groups pushing private agendas. Our dogs need our best thinking as we push ourselves to learn to think in new ways, to think as biological conservationists who must manage our breed's gene pool for the future. Put bluntly, our dogs need change—real change—in the ways we do our Scottie business.

#### **Speaking Up For the Dogs**

I need to speak candidly and openly and from my heart in this third and final segment of my series '*Deconstructing the Diehard: The Genetic Plight of the Scottish Terrier*.' I feel compelled to do so because someone needs to speak out openly on behalf of our dogs—not on behalf of dog clubs or organizations, not on behalf of human reputations and accomplishments, but for the dogs.

We all want healthy dogs. There is not a breeder among us nor a companion owner on the planet who seeks Scottish Terrier disease. I wish I had a fail-safe solution to offer, or even better, an answer that was quick and easy, but I don't. At least one astute reader put me on the spot. In his view this series has convicted him of the need for, and the scarcity of, responsible Scottie breeders, that is, those who know the genetic risks in our gene pool and the dangers of inbreeding and whose matings seek to nurture genetic diversity and health in their dogs. His request was pointed: if you're going to point out breeding irresponsibilities then be responsible yourself—publish a list of the good breeders!

His good-faith response points out the dilemma facing all of us: where do we turn? In particular, his desire for a 'kosher' list of breeders who are doing it right, a short-list of the 'good guys,' highlights my own personal predicament as publisher of *GSM*. The most frequent caller request that comes into our magazine office is, "Please help me find a Scottie. Do you know where I can find a puppy?" Where do I send those callers? I want to be a supporter of the Scottish Terrier Club of America because I believe it is our best hope for promoting our dogs' health. But how do I tell my readers to turn to the Scottish Terrier Club of America for their dogs when STCA's most widely known breeder, a teacher of breeders, when asked in a telephone interview about Wright's "coefficient of inbreeding" and our breed's average COI, responded "I don't have a clue."

I'm not wishing to be unkind here, but this reflects a very serious breakdown in our Scottie community because it forces all of us into a double-bind: we cannot turn to pet store, puppy-mill Scotties in good conscience, but neither can we in good conscience endorse breeding which for a century has bred for looks and beauty over deeper issues of genetic diversity crucial to wise management of a small, closed gene pool.

What are we to do?

Frankly, I am mad as hell to be forced into this kind of predicament by a century of purebreed leadership whose pursuit of the ultimate Scottish Terrier 'Barbie Dog' now leaves us caught on the horns of a dilemma: choose a dog that is 'backyard bred' without knowledge of breed risks and diseases, or choose a dog bred for looks without knowledge of inbreeding coefficients and

### **Scottish Terrier Club of America Code of Ethics**

This Code of Ethics is established to set a standard of acceptable behavioral limits for the Scottish Terrier Club of America members. The Code is designed to protect the interests of the club and to protect and preserve the Scottish Terrier. The Scottish Terrier Club of America expects adherence to the code. Blatant disregard for the standards set out in this code will not be condoned.

The Scottish Terrier Club of America was formed and exists to encourage and promote the responsible breeding and ownership of Scottish Terriers and to protect and advance the interests of these dogs. Toward these ends, The Scottish Terrier Club of America recommends the following practices as ethical.

- Abide by the Constitution and By-laws of the Scottish Terrier Club of America and the rules of the American Kennel Club.

- Maintain the animal(s) in an environment and under a regime that as far as possible ensures the well being of the dog.

- Make use of available DNA testing when needed in order to produce Scottish Terriers free of genetically transmitted defects.

- Familiarize oneself with the AKC Standard of the Breed and strive to breed only Scottish Terriers of characteristic type, sound structure and temperament, directing ones efforts to producing dogs in conformity to the AKC Standard.

- Keep accurate breeding records and registration information in accordance with American Kennel Club regulations.

- Breed bitches in good condition and health according to AKC recommendations.

- Only undertake the breeding of a bitch when one is prepared to keep the resultant puppies until they are suitably placed. Members offering a dog at stud should require similar assurances from the owners of bitches of non STCA members.

- Puppies should not be sold prior to 10 weeks of age. Puppies and adults should be sold with appropriate inoculations for their age.

- Members should provide stud service only when satisfied that the owner of the bitch has such time and facilities necessary for the proper development of the puppies.

- Should not misrepresent or fail to disclose known hereditary defects, health and physical condition of any stock offered for sale or breeding purposes.

- Provide purchasers of adults or puppies with accurate papers to include a three generation pedigree, registration certificate and/or a written sales agreement as to whether a guarantee is provided and

their impact on health, longevity, and the viability of the gene pool.

Our breed has a right to look to us for more than a “choose your poison” option. Our dogs have a right to stewardship from all of us, both breeders and buyers alike, that takes ‘responsible breeding’ away from the uninformed and beyond ear-set, tail carriage, and other obsessions over phenotype all the way to genetic fitness.

On the strength of that conviction let me offer suggestions and strategies aimed at reconstituting the genetic health of the Scottish Terrier, not as an enemy of any group or of any person who loves our breed, but as an advocate for our dogs’ health interests against our own agendas. There are, first of all, changes the parent club needs to make—changes only they can make—to better serve the interests of our dogs. Secondly, there are changes pet owners need to make in their quest for healthy, long-lived Scottie companions.

#### **Changes Scotties Would Seek In the STCA**

I believe, if they could do it, our dogs would make some important changes from top to bottom in our Scottie community—I know they would because they are never more ‘themselves’ than when they are directing the universe and asserting their dominant spirit. Allow me to imagine my way into their directorial interests to speak for them in a voice generally unheard among us.

In general, our dogs would give hearty ‘Ah-r-r-o-o-o’ to the STCA’s Code of Ethics which I’ve reprinted here in full from their web site (pp. 9-10). If the national Club did nothing else for our breed, this Code shows why the STCA is our best hope for managing our breed’s genetic health. I am impressed especially by their strong language driving home the mandate for breeding as a “lifetime commitment” of responsibility to every dog brought into the world, and their strictures against misrepresentation or failure to disclose known hereditary problems of any stock offered for sale or breeding purposes. This Code of Ethics, or something like it, our dogs could wish were written into the heart of every breeder, backyard or otherwise.

I applaud also the STCA’s mission statement included in their Code of Ethics: “The Scottish Terrier Club of America was formed and exists to encourage and promote the responsible breeding and ownership of Scottish Terriers and to protect and advance the interests of these dogs.”

#### **Scotties Come First**

On behalf of our Scotties whose future is in our hands, I applaud STCA’s mission statement—but I believe our dogs would take exception, if they could, to having their interests bookended before and after in the codicil by words naming the Club and its interests before the dogs (“The Code is designed to protect the interests of the club and to protect and preserve the Scottish Terrier,” etc.).

I say this because our Scotties’ illusion-spotting-faculties could discover easily that it is our breezy assumption that our interests are automatically best for the dogs which has brought us to the trouble we’re in now.

What happens, for instance, when the Club’s definition of sanctioned, show-oriented “responsible breeding” turns out to be wrong-headed genetic thinking tradionalized into *genetic diversity reducing breeding practices* which not only spike kinship in our small population’s gene pool, and thus double up on risks of serious diseases carried by a shared ancestor, but far worse, strip our breed’s immunologic system of essential genetic diversity in the Major Histocompatibility Complex (MHC), thus harming immunological self-defense in our Scotties? (See Part 2 in this series: *GSM*, Sep/Oct 2003). What happens when our breed’s genetic predicament turns the finger of ‘responsibility’ for deconstruction on us? Do we advocate for the dogs against the Club? Or do we shoot the messenger and advocate for the Club against the dogs?

Were they allowed to speak, our Scotties would unambiguously answer—and every reader knows the tone of their reply!

setting forth any terms, conditions or limitations thereto, together with complete medical records and instructions for care and feeding.

•Not knowingly sell a Scottish Terrier of any age to a pet shop, catalog house, laboratory or any wholesale dealer in dogs (a dealer being a person who regularly buys dogs for sale at profit), or to any person who sells to any of the above. Members will not knowingly offer stud service to wholesale dealers or to any person involved with pet shops, catalog houses or laboratories. No Scottish Terrier will be provided for use in raffles, auctions or similar enterprises.

•Assume an ongoing responsibility for the Scottish Terriers that they produce. This is a lifetime commitment. A Scottie in need of a new home, who is owned by, bred by or sired by a dog owned by a member of the STCA should not become a rescue dog. Whenever feasible this dog should become the responsibility of the owner, breeder, or owner of the sire.

•Engage in advertising that is as factual as possible. Misleading exaggerations or unfounded implications of superiority shall not be used.

•Refrain from knowingly making unfair or untrue statements about the dogs or practices of others.

#### **ENFORCEMENT**

Enforcement of the above Code of Ethics will be per Article VI of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Scottish Terrier Club of America.

By signing this Code of Ethics, I/we acknowledge that I/we understand and agree with the purpose of the Scottish Terrier Club of America and that I/we will do my/our best to promote the best interests of the Club and the Scottish Terrier. Furthermore, I/we will conduct myself/ourselves in a manner of good sportsmanship at conformation, obedience and performance events, so as to reflect positively on the sport of purebred dogs.

(Code revised and approved October, 2002. Reproduced here from the STCA web site at [www.akc.org/clubs/stca](http://www.akc.org/clubs/stca)).

### *Deconstructing the Diehard: Part Three*

Our dogs would remind us all in a heartbeat if we would listen that in a deep and profound sense we have not chosen Scotties, they chose us, and therefore the breed has greater claim on all of us, including especially the parent Club which wears the breed name, than we have on the breed. Loyalties, therefore, must be first to the dogs and ethical codes among both breeders and buyers must clearly encode that responsibility so when push comes to shove we back the dogs against each other.

#### **Perceptions of Perfection Must Change**

If we would listen our Scotties would give us an earful on the breed standard because no issue is more central to our dogs' future than how we interpret and apply the standard. The standard is at the heart of the STCA and drives breeding decisions at every level, and therefore, is the causal factor in the genetic renewal or ruin of our breed.

I say the breed standard drives breeding decisions, but, of course, no-nonsense Scotties would remind us the standard does not drive us at all; our *interpretations of the standard and its meaning* drive breeding decisions. Our dogs' objection to the breed standard is not that it is too high but that, as traditionally used, it is too shallow. Our Scotties suffer because those who operationalize the standard obsess over externals of form, over ear set and muzzle length, tail arch and coat texture, while deep issues of health and vitality are off the radar. This fixation on appearance is the inevitable outcome of purebred culture's self-concept as farm club to the showring where in a parody of peer review, in a cumulative three minutes per animal, a judge ostensibly validates a breeder's work and worth as "conformation" to the standard.

The problem here is not peer review; it is not that a rigorous standard of excellence is expected and applied inside or outside the showring. The problem is the excellence that is peer reviewed has been trivialized into a one-dimensional glamor guide and we're too deep into our tradition to see our own devaluation of 'well-bred' into a parody of what it could and should mean.

If they could speak, our dogs would have serious issues with that approach. Devotion to breeding champions from champions by applying the standard as tool for litter-sorting and for catching every judge's eye is the aesthetics-equals-genetics-wrong-headed-thinking that has produced our present inbreeding depression. When a super stud arises who catches every judge's eye and soon every bitch in the population is bred to him, the result is every puppy in the country has one or other of his alleles for every gene locus. What is worse, when that one male does all the breeding (or even a great deal of it) you select *against* all the other alleles in the adult male population. Genetic diversity in the population is lost and the new generation's auto-immune systems are stripped of their ability to mount a full range of immunological self-defense.

And for what? Is ear-set worth genetically impaired Scotties? Is perfect form worth dogs 18 times more likely to die of Bladder Cancer than other breeds?

On behalf of our dogs whose voice in all this must be heard I'm saying our breed standard is shallow and beneath our dogs' dignity until it measures more than muzzle to tail, until it encompasses assiduous husbandry of the best our breed can be, reaching all the way to health histories of every dog produced so that late-onset diseases are conscientiously addressed in future breeding. Such a breed standard, colossal and outrageous by narrow AKC tradition, stretching from before whelping to post mortem archived histories, is the deep sense of 'standard' worthy of larger-than-life Scottish Terriers.

Our dogs desperately need leadership at national levels to take peer review and the whole idea of a breed standard beyond where prior generations have pursued them. After all, it is not champions we are failing to produce today, it is healthy, long-lived dogs. What our breed needs at national levels are visionaries who see beyond points to principles, beyond sport to whole-dog stewardship. Our breed's genetic jeopardy can only deepen so long as the official standard of excellence for the Scottish Terrier is the parody of fitness that is the modern showring.

#### **Perceptions of Public Roles Must Change**

On behalf of our dogs, who are loved as family by breeders and companion owners alike, there is another change needed which only the STCA can make, viz., careful re-thinking of the organization's public ambassadorial role.

Only a small minority of our dogs are showring stars, but I know every non-show Scottish Terrier among us wants to remind the STCA that as national breed representative the Club speaks for *all the breed and all their people*, not just an elite cadre of champions and their owners. "The sport of purebred dogs" is a small piece, not the whole, of the Scottish Terrier.

But that's our problem: when the national Club is defined in terms of sport and competition and therefore by subtle metonymy the part stands for the whole, it is self-limiting. Marginalized or ignored is a whole world of Scottie love and responsible ownership beyond the showring.

The problem with a narrow concept of STCA's role is it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy with consequences. If, for instance, what counts in the hierarchy of values is what happens in the showring, then it is predictable that matters outside the ring will be relegated—matters such as organized rescue and health research initiatives can take 90 years to receive national attention and sanction. Again, if the reason for existence is perceived as validated in the showring, it is predictable that only breeding show dogs will appear legitimate and 'responsible,' thus producing the AKC numbers referenced earlier that breed clubs generate only 5% of the dogs registered each year. The trouble is, such production quantity is simply not enough code-of-ethics-bred Scotties to go around and amounts to an indirect franchise to puppy mills to fill the void—by the very breeders waving the banner of 'responsible breeding'!

Past inattention to the public good, to public roles and public interests, must change because narrowly representing

### *Deconstruction of the Diehard: Part Three*

the breed and limiting leadership to a narrow constituency retards full and robust stewardship of our breed's big picture. Our dogs would remind us all that acting on the imperatives of population genetics cannot wait a century for national recognition, endorsement and implementation.

Larger roles and interests and responsibilities *do* exist beyond the winners' circle because our breed is larger than any special interest, older than any Club. Scotties are part of the public good and deserve ambassadorial representation that is aggressively inclusive, not exclusive.

But our dogs would sniff out another danger. When the focus of stewardship is the showring, then championship records consume gatekeepers' attention while health histories and genetic-health pedigrees are out of sight and out of mind. That's precisely where we are today in our predicament over Scottie genetic health: we have a century of meticulously harvested records of parentage and show wins and no official open health registry monitoring the evolution of the health of our breed.

Thankfully, there are individuals like Mary O'Neal, Gail Gaines, Susan Morris, and Debbie Smith, and local clubs like the San Francisco Bay Area Club and the Michigan Club, who are trying on their own to gather health records and health research for the breed. But some jobs require centralization, and breed health records is one of them. Dr. George Padgett 'guesstimates' the average length of time for competitive breeders to stay active in breeding is six years. What happens to trial-and-error genetic knowledge and record-keeping when individuals move on to other interests? It is lost to future breeders unless there is a central repository for storing and accessing health history information, and *that* is a national role.

It all comes back to truly representative ambassadorship by our national Club. When only a portion of the Scottie public's needs and interests are represented; when only a portion of the whole-dog is prized in interpretations of the standard; when only a piece of the puzzle of breed record-keeping is officially pursued, then our dogs and those who love them are underrepresented and underserved.

Changes are needed in the way we see our dogs and the way we see ourselves. Leadership that takes us in our thinking merely where others have gone, merely to replicate what others have accomplished, will net us merely what we have today: much-loved dogs in trouble because we took the road much traveled by.

#### **Changes Scotties Seek In Pet Owners**

I've devoted an inordinate amount of space in a companion-owner's magazine to issues relevant to the national breed club for one reason: in the matter of our breed's genetic health and future the STCA is of inordinate importance since it is vessel of hope for us all. Striking off on our own is not an option if we love our dogs, for while crying over a dying Scottie is pain we must face alone, solving our breed's health risks is something we must do together. Our dogs need us, and they need all of us working together.

But our Scotties will be best served if we make changes in ways we see them and ourselves as pet owners. Let me suggest some areas where change is vital.

#### **Casual Breeding Is Sin Against Scotties**

I know I'm being melodramatic when I say casual breeding is sin, but I must make a point forcefully: breeding affects lives for life and therefore is anything but 'casual.' According to AKC estimates 85% of litters are produced by pet owners. That's us. We're the ones putting the ads in local newspapers selling "AKC registered Scottish Terriers."

The sin against the breed here is not that the breeding is "commercial." *All* Scottie breeding is commercial and *every* breeder is into commerce—unless every puppy ever produced is kept or given away free and no puppies are ever sold! No. It isn't commerce that makes casual breeding a sin, it's lack of commitment to the long-term well-being of the breed.

That's where, again, the STCA's Code of Ethics is a benchmark for everyone who breeds or buys a Scottie. Anyone breeding our dogs should be 'professional' in the old sense of the term, that is, having something important to *profess*, having values and high standards embodied in deep knowledge and commitment to ideas and ideals worthy of tomorrow's healthy Scottie. I'm not saying only STCA folks should ever breed Scottish Terriers, or that what they've given us over the past century cannot be improved upon, but I am saying no one who loves our dogs is ready to hazard the gene pool who comes with less than the STCA's Code of Ethics.

That is our task: *don't breed* unless you conscientiously believe you know enough to help, not harm, the gene pool, and beyond that self-discipline, push every breeder you approach as source for puppies for their 'code of ethics.' Talk to them about their code. Having something important to 'profess' is what we're after, not mere words hung on the wall. Let us push breeders into professing more than glamor goals for our dogs, into taking more seriously and deeply their own fine words about existing "to protect and advance the interests of these dogs." Let us push our best breeders in the STCA, all of whom love our breed heart and soul, to recognize that if casual breeding is a sin against our dogs, so is competitive breeding which puts phenotype ahead of genotype in mating decisions and talks 'typy' good looks before health and longevity. Let us push each other to recognize that DNA tests, when they come, will not solve our gene pool's deepest need which is lowering our breed's inbreeding coefficient to nurture genetic diversity in the population. We must change how we breed, not merely expand our quota of medical wonders.

We must *push* for change, **GSM** readers, for changes in ourselves and in those on whom we depend, and we must push hard. Our Scotties' future depends on it.

### *Deconstruction of the Diehard: Part Three*

#### **Put Your Mouth Where Your Money Is**

Our no-nonsense Scotties would remind us that it is not true that money talks; it takes concerned buyers to interpret what their dollars mean. We must, therefore, verbalize clearly to breeders when we buy a dog or when we refuse to buy, precisely what our actions mean. Only then do our pet dollars begin to talk loudly and clearly on behalf of the future health of our Scotties.

I know it has been a breeders' market forever making responsible-minded pet seekers fearful of being denied any Scottie and willing to take most anything they can get. But networking tools available today such as *Great Scots Magazine* and the Internet offer us new power for asserting our vision of healthy, long-lived dogs. We need a new sense of empowerment to speak up and speak out for the breed we love. We speak out effectively when we alert *GSM* to a breeder who is 'doing it right' so all who phone the magazine can be referred, and also when we alert the magazine to breeders behaving badly. This is how we can amass the short list of the best breeders among us whose dogs manifest they are breeding for health and longevity. This is no more a 'witch hunt' than is rating restaurants or vacation spots and getting the word out what to watch for and what to beware of.

How do we determine who's breeding for our dog's health? First, cut through all hype about champions in the lines and go for health issues:

- Ask for litter sizes and litter morbidity numbers over time: if the breeder does not know, beware: they don't know enough to merit your confidence; if litters are small or declining in viability it is sign of inbreeding depression and health risks; verbalize your health concerns;

- Ask which of our breed's diseases they've found in their breed lines and what they've done to breed against them: if they say "none," you're dealing with someone ignorant or dishonest; listen for deep knowledge that shows this breeder breeds with knowledge, not just hope; no dogs are perfect so don't expect it; whether you walk or buy, make an informed decision and *tell the breeder why*;

- Ask about cancers in the line: if they don't know, then they're not keeping records, and without records, you can't assess your risks;

- Ask for longevity records: if they don't know how long their dogs live, they're not staying in contact with their dogs across time; their's is a short-term agenda; *walk and tell why*;

- Ask what this litter adds to our breed: if they can't articulate how this breeding relates to the whole gene pool in terms of inbreeding coefficient and degree of kinship, they don't understand our breed's genetic predicament and pose a risk; *make your decision accordingly, and tell why*;

- Ask about temperament: biting and aggression matter to companionship; be explicit and ask for facts;

- Ask. Listen. Whether you buy or walk, put your mouth where your money is by talking about your Scottie health values. *TELL others your experiences*. This is how we put our health concerns on the agenda and work together as a community to support those who are working for the good of our dogs.

#### **Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is**

The flip side of our pet owner responsibility to verbalize what we stand for in our Scottie buying decisions is we must support with serious dollars the good work being done for our dogs. If it is right for us to back our dogs against each other when necessary, it is also right to back our dogs by supporting each other when projects are truly for the good of the dogs. STCA's Health Trust Fund deserves our serious backing and support because it plows money into vital health research for our dogs.

We need to think seriously about how we as pet owners can give back to the breed that has given so much to us. Our dogs' future health deserves more from us than nickels and dimes. Have you put our breed into your will or your estate trust? If only 1000 of us bequeathed a mere \$1000 in our wills to the STCA Health Trust Fund we'd have a million dollar endowed fund for serious health research in perpetuity. If you haven't put our breed in your will or estate planning, call your lawyer, and do it now.

Yes, let us bark our heads off at each other in true Scottie frappiness and attitude grouching over how things ought to be done, but let us at the same time lock arms against diseases killing our dogs. I've put our breed in my will; we need every person who was ever owned by a Scottie to do the same. Let's bark and debate health and genetics, but let's put our money to work to fund health research. And when you give back to our breed in your will, specify the money to go to the STCA's Health Trust Fund, or even more specifically, to "Cancer Research."

#### **Put Your Heart Into Your Dogs**

It may seem in all my talk of breeding and genetics and health that the non-breeder is a non-player in the unfolding drama of the reconstruction of the Diehard. That is quite wrong for a deep and vitally important reason. The companion Scottie and the humans devoted to her is living symbol of what everything else in Scottie circles is about: profound bonds of authentic companionship.

We can lose sight of that central truth all too easily in our busyness. Relationships and values and breeds are not self-sustaining, they must be carefully fed and nurtured if they are to flourish. I insist that the most deeply abused Scottish Terrier

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is that dog, for whatever reason, who is used but never gets to own a chosen human's heart. It is abused because our great-souled breed cannot flourish where it is furniture, it's soul withers where it is an object.

That's why the devoted companion owner is so important to our collective psyche: because welded-heart companionship is symbolic of what is central for us all.

I remember vividly Amy Flannigan's quiet remark to me following the 2002 *GSM* 'Gathering' in Columbus, OH. Our 'Gatherings,' like our magazine, are not about competition, but about celebration of Scotties. Amy, who is a canine trainer and obedience trials competitor, found our celebratory focus refreshing. Her comment was: "Thank you for reminding me why I'm so involved in this breed in the first place."

We all need reminding why we're in this breed, why we shlep to dog shows or other canine competitions, why we breed or why we don't, why we sacrifice scarce time and money for our dogs when we don't have enough of either, why we take into our bosoms a creature whose destiny is to shatter our hearts when he's gone; we all need reminding why we do all this and more for our Scotties. That reminder is embodied in deep and profound companionship.

Pet owners, therefore, have a profoundly important role in our breed's future, important because simple companionship calls us all back to our center.

#### **Conclusion**

There you have it. One man's 'voice in the wilderness' crying out on behalf of a breed that owns his heart.

Changes are needed. We're a community at a crossroads where we must love our dogs enough to change the way we see ourselves, our dogs, and our standards.

Our dogs are in trouble genetically, but they are not without resources. Greatest of all their resources is the backing of diehard friends who are committed to the long haul because each has a personal story of deep communion with great-souled dogs.

My faith is that it is the depth of our common devotion to an uncommon breed that will tally the price of change and pay it, for we will not let the Diehard down.

