

LEADER OF THE PACK

Flash, a Bronze Grand Champion silky terrier, earned a trip Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in New York

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — When Flash was a puppy, he was attacked by another dog while out on a walk with his owner, Carol Infranca.

"The first dog show after that, we were waiting ring-side and they had one of the huge breeds — it lunged at him," Infranca remembered. "In the ring he was skittish, looking for the next attack. This beautiful boy was scared to death."

His tail was down; his ears weren't up, she said. So she and her husband Lee recruited the experience of a handler to help Flash through this rough patch.

One would hardly guess that he had such a trauma now as the No. 6-rated, Bronze Grand Champion silky terrier prepares for his trip to New York City to compete in the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show on Monday and Tuesday.

"It's the Super Bowl of dog shows," Infranca said. "I've never been. At first I never dreamed I would even know someone who went to Westminster. To actually be going, I'm over the moon."

Not that this will be her first rodeo.

Infranca didn't buy her first dog expecting to breed and show silky terriers. Her first animal was an 8-year-old rescue with a lot of health problems — probably a puppy mill dog, she said.

"I just loved this little dog, and when she crossed the rainbow bridge, I was broken-hearted," she said.

She checked with the American Kennel Club to find a silky terrier puppy. The Internet was still young, so she dialed the phone and pushed in the number of miles she'd be willing to travel to pick up a puppy.

"I got a list of 17 people who were breeders within



Flash takes First Group at the Cook Inlet Kennel Club in July 2014. His handler, Karen Oglesby, of Napa, Calif., will be with him at Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in New York City on Monday and Tuesday.

Photos courtesy of CAROL INFRANCA



Weeluv M.T. Pockets, or Flash for short, takes a jog at a dog show.



Pricey and Joy play ball at their Monmouth home. The silky terriers at Weeluv Silky Terriers kennel have full run of the yard and are adept at catching moles and voles, very much appreciated by owners Carol Infranca and Lee Schlenker.

that 500 mile radius," Infranca said. "I found a breeder who had had puppies the

day Pookie crossed the bridge, so I thought, 'I'm meant to have these dogs.'"

She took the puppy, Coquette, to classes and Lee bought her a book on how to

show dogs.

"The first time we were in the ring, we won, and it was

all the dog because I didn't know what I was doing," Infranca said.

Now an award-winner, it was time for Infranca and Lee to work on what they could do for the breed. Coquette went on a trip to be bred.

Just one puppy was born to the Weeluv Silky Terriers Kennel, and Lee fell in love with the boy, Infranca said.

The couple began going to shows together, with Lee showing the boy puppy, called Solo, and Infranca showing his mother, Coquette.

Now the terriers bred at Weeluv are excellent models of the breed, with three of their dogs in the top 10 in the nation last year. Flash, his sister and his half-sister. The latter two are not still owned by Infranca and her husband, but were from their litters.

Flash's daughter has even more potential, Infranca said.

"We've learned a lot from the dogs," she said.

Check it out:

What: The Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show.

When: Monday and Tuesday.

Where: Watch live streaming of events online at: <http://www.westminsterkennelclub.org/2016/show/tv.html>.

Of note: Flash's owner Carol Infranca said all dogs were bred for a reason. "They all have a role to play," she said. The silky terrier was bred to be strong even though it is considered a toy dog, and to catch rats on chicken farms. "They're relentless. They catch moles and voles and mice," Infranca said. "They're active and alert, on patrol."

For more information about silky terriers: AKC.org.

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