

Interview with John D. Johnson by David D. Jackson



Johnson's Dick the Bruiser

INTRODUCTION:

I was very surprised when Casey asked me to do an interview with John D. Johnson because Casey and I have not seen exactly eye to eye on all issues concerning American bulldogs. I feel strongly, however, that we should all pull together for the betterment of the breed and that we should share information and promote the well-being of the breed any way we can. It is with some trepidation that I submit this interview for publication, and I hope that you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed hearing it firsthand from the man I consider to be the Father of the American Bulldog.

This interview took place in John D. Johnson's living room in Summerville, Georgia on January 7, 1997. We have just finished looking at all of John D's dogs that he currently owns in his backyard kennel. We have spent the last hour or so going through John D's scrapbooks which date back to the 1920's. I will state emphatically that the dogs in John D's backyard look exactly the same as the early photographs he has shown me, dating back well over 45 years. The walls of his living room are covered with old photographs of famous dogs such as the Incredible Hulk, King Kong, Dick the Bruiser, and Johnson's Bobo. There is a huge, beautiful blown up photograph of Elrod which was enlarged by digital processing over his mantelpiece. I see trophies from old dog shows on the mantle and in the center is an enormous brass-studded leather collar which measures 34 inches in circumference. Mildred, John D. Is wife, has just fixed us all a delicious Georgia pecan pie. This interview is being tape recorded and witnessed by two other bulldog enthusiasts. Let's listen to what John D. has to say.D.J.

Dr. J.: "John D., what is that large collar on the mantle?"

John D.: "That collar belonged to the largest bulldog I ever owned, Bruiser Bo, and it measures 34 inches in circumference. Bruiser Bo weighed over 175 pounds (editor's note: This apparently is a result of extra powerful gravity around the Summerville, GA. Area.) and was one of my all time favorite dogs. After Bruiser Bo died, I kept his collar and have been trying to fill it with a dog his size ever since. A few have

come close but I have never been able to fill that collar again. Maybe someday I will, but until that time comes, I will leave the collar on the mantle."

Dr. J.: "Where and when were you born?"

John D.: "I was born July 15, 1924, six miles from Summerville."

Dr. J.: "Have you lived in Summerville your whole life?"

John D.: "Yes."

Dr. J.: "What did you do for a living?"

John D.: "I started off working in gardens, mowing lawns, working in grocery stores, driving a school bus, and then I went to work for the Bigelow Carpet Factory and retired from there six years ago. Basically, I was trying to earn enough money to feed my dogs and my family."

Dr. J.: "How do you get 83 years breeding?"

John D.: "My father got his first bulldog when he was 14 years old and he raised bulldogs most of his life."

Dr. J.: "What was your father's name?"

John D.: "John W. Johnson, and he was born near Summerville also.,,"

Dr. J.: "How influential was your father in helping you to become interested in bulldogs?"

John D.: "My father was very influential because he always had bulldogs around the house and bred them. He also allowed me to get my first bulldog when I was three years old. He was very influential in other ways, as well, and frequently caused me to have to sleep on my stomach."

Dr. J.: "How did you get interested and started in raising bulldogs?"

John D.: "My father took me to see a man who had a new litter of bulldogs when I was three years old. He told me to pick one out, and I remember to this day reaching down and picking up a nice, big fat male puppy. That was the first mistake I ever made. I should have picked up a female, but I'm sure my father would not have allowed me to have a female anyway. I named the dog Prince and he became my best friend. I spent my early childhood playing with Prince throughout the farmlands, swamps, and riverbeds surrounding Summerville. Prince was my best friend and a great dog, and it was here that I began to appreciate the close bond that can form between a man and a dog. Prince also gave me the realization that a real bulldog is capable of saving a man's life. While playing along the riverbed one day, I stepped on a large, funny looking snake. The snake turned to bite me but Prince was quick as a cat and crushed the snake's head. It turned out to be a cottonmouth moccasin. Following that, Prince killed many snakes in the years to come and was never bitten himself by a cottonmouth. I grew up around cattle and would enjoy watching Prince catch a bull whenever my father was not looking. I got my first bitch when I was 14 years old and this is when I went into business for myself breeding bulldogs. My father didn't think too highly of it at the time because in those days you were lucky if you could get five dollars for a bulldog. My first breeding was between my female, Patsy Montana and Prince's brother. There is still a little bit of Prince left in my dogs today."

Dr. J.: "Were the bulldogs of your childhood the same as the bulldogs you have now?"

John D.: "My dogs now are the same as the real good large ones -that were around when I was a child."

Dr. J.: "Did you ever breed or were you ever involved with any other type of dog?"

John D.: I used to raise Red Bone hounds that I used to hunt with my bulldogs but I had to give that up. My bulldogs just didn't like those hounds and if they were going after a wild hog and the hounds got in their way, they were just as likely to kill the hound as catch the hog. Bulldogs just don't like other dogs.

Dr. J.: "Where did the name "American Pit Bulldog" comes from?"

John D.: "This was the name that we originally called these dogs when I was a young man. They were known by other names as well, such as Old Country White, English White, Old Time Bulldog, but probably the most common name was American Pit Bulldog, and when we first started registering these dogs, this was the name we used. It became apparent to me, however, that many people were confusing the American bulldog with the American pit bull terrier because their names were so similar, and so I talked to Tom Stodgill who was the founder of the Animal Research Foundation, which was the registry that I was using, and we decided to change the name officially to American Bulldog. These dogs were originally called American Pit Bulldogs because they were used in the pit to fight other dogs and also especially other large animals. They were differentiated from the American pit bull terrier, however, because there was no terrier blood infused. The infusion of terrier blood brought the size of these dogs down to a more manageable size for handling in the pit and also made it much easier to snatch the dog up, hide him under your coat when you were running from the law, if you got raided fighting dogs. The strength, gameness, and heart, however, all came from the bulldog."

Dr. J.: "Did you ever show your dogs?"

John D. "Yes, I showed them in the National Kennel Club shows and a few AKC sanctioned shows. King Kong was the first American bulldog to ever become a double champion. I also judged in some of the shows."

Dr. J.: "When is the last time you ever bred one of your dogs to a bulldog that was not considered a pure Johnson dog from your original lines?"

John D.: "Twenty-two years ago was the last time. I received a puppy from a breeding between one of my females and another bulldog."

Dr. J.: "We'll follow up on this breeding in a later question. Is there a difference in Old Time Johnson and modern Johnson, and where did that term come from?"

John D.: "There is absolutely no difference in my old dogs and my modern dogs. The dogs I have now came from the dogs I had then. I believe that term originated from someone who thought my old dogs were better than my new dogs, and after much thought, I believe I know what he was talking about. When I was a younger man, I was able to keep my dogs well conditioned whereas now they spend most of their time in a pen. I have a large area of land down below the house that extends all the way to the river, and I used to take an old farm vehicle and drive around and around that area of land with the dogs running beside my vehicle. They could easily run five or six miles a day without getting winded and they could reach speeds of 25 miles an hour. So I guess my dogs in those days did look and were better conditioned. As far as I am concerned, however, other than conditioning, there is no difference between Old Time Johnson and modern Johnson.

Dr. J.: "What are the main Johnson lines now?"

John D.: "My dogs now are all mixtures of the early dogs, but I have tried to keep some of the more famous dogs, lines somewhat more separate for breeding purposes. Some of these famous lines are King Kong, Bruiser Bo, Red Machine, Incredible Hulk, Dick the Bruiser, Mean Machine and Aristocrat."

Dr. J.: "How do you keep all these lines separate and how are you able to keep up with these various different lines?"

John D.: "The females carry the same name as the mother to daughter and the name is passed down in that fashion. In other words, I am up to Collette 101 at this point and that dog's mother was Collette and the dog before that, so that I know that that line has come originally down from my Collette dog. The females down from Aristocrat all have Rose in their name, so you'll see Johnson's Rose, Rosa Lee, Rosemary, etc. The Incredible Mean Machine line has machine in its name, so we see dogs such as Machine Brutus, Red Machine, Mean Machine, etc."

Dr. J.: "How do you avoid inbreeding with so few dogs out there?"

John D.: "My policy has always been to never breed any closer than half-brother to half-sister. Usually, my breeding will go no closer than dogs sharing the same grandparent."

Dr. J.: "What type of dog food do you use?"

John D.: "I have been using Diamond, usually the black bag but sometimes the green bag if the dogs look like they are getting a little fat. I have been extremely happy with this brand of dog food. It seems as though my dogs like the taste of it better than any dog food I have ever used and also it is soy free, and I have found this to be very important in preventing gastric bloat or torsion. I have had no problems with bloat since switching to a soy free dog food."

Dr. J.: "Did you ever breed to any other large dog such as a Bull Mastiff or St. Bernard to gain size?"

John D.: "No. These dogs have always been large."

Dr. J.: "Did you ever add American Pit Bull Terrier to increase gameness?"

John D.: "No. The American Pit Bull Terrier got its gameness in the first place from the American Bulldog."

Dr. J.: "Did you ever breed to an AKC registered English Bulldog?"

John D.: "I have heard all types of rumors and stories that this is so and I would like to set the record straight. Mack the Masher was a fine American Bulldog that was owned by Allen Scott. He was an excellent catch dog and long legged and rangy. His muzzle was a little bit longer than average. He was purchased by Allen Scott from Cel Ashley in Big Sand Mountain, Alabama. Cel Ashley never registered any of his dogs and he called them Old English Whites. Nobody was ever going to tell Cel Ashley that his dogs weren't English Bulldogs. If there ever was any pedigree associated with Mack the Masher, then Allen Scott concocted it out of his own imagination. My dogs have always been registered with either the National Kennel Club or the Animal Research Foundation and how far their pedigrees go back on dogs which I never owned I cannot tell you. I did, however, think Mack the Masher was a fine bulldog and I did breed to him. There is no way, however, that Mack the Masher had any English Bulldog in him. Over 20 years ago, a man named David Leavitt decided that he would improve the English Bulldog and he decided to invent the Olde English Bulldogge.

Initially, he tried breeding a Bull Mastiff with an American Pit Bull Terrier and English Bulldog. He was not able to arrive at the dog he desired and contacted me. He came down and looked at my dogs and decided that he would like to use one of my females in further experimentation to improve and perfect the Olde English Bulldogge. I leased him a female for his use. Later on in his search, David Leavitt found a dog in Massachusetts which was owned by a girl up there and was an AKC registered English Bulldog male that weighed 95 pounds and was called West Champs High Hopes. David Leavitt bred my female to this dog and the resultant litters produced the dog that he was looking for. If you will look in the book "Fighting Dogs" by Carl Semenic, you will see the picture of a large white bulldog that was one of these pups.

This English Bulldog, West Champs High Hopes, was evidently a throw back to the original bulldogs, being more long-legged and weighing 95 pounds. He sent me a picture of this dog and it was a very impressive looking dog. He asked me if I wanted one of the puppies and he sent me a very nice female pup which I named Gail after David Leavitt's wife. She grew up to be a 125 pound female and was just gorgeous. I bred her back to the Incredible Hulk and with this started the Incredible mean Machine line. You have to remember that the English Bulldog and the American Bulldog were exactly the same dog 200 years ago, and every once in awhile a throw back English Bulldog will be born which is the same as the old bulldogs were. I could see nothing wrong with breeding a bulldog to a bulldog. I was not trying to deceive anyone and the pedigree of these dogs clearly shows this dog's name and the fact that he was an AKC registered English Bulldog.

If a man is going to be honest, he is going to be honest to a fault. I could have changed these pedigrees and no one would have known anything about it, except for me, Mildred, and the good Lord. The Incredible Mean Machine line of my dogs has probably become the most famous and sought after line of all. I have heard it said that the English Bulldog is not the original pure bulldog bred down in size, but a cross between the English Bulldog and a Pug. I do not believe this to be the case for many reasons, and I believe the English Bulldog is a result of simply breeding the dog down in size, exaggerating the features through breeding, and, unfortunately, breeding his heart out. I do not believe that a 15 pound pug was ever crossed in the 17th or the 18th Century with a 100 or 120 pound bulldog. I do not believe that this was possible in those days, since they did not know artificial insemination. Also, the Pug has a black mask which never ever appears in an English Bulldog or an American Bulldog. Also, the Pug has a screw tail which screws over his back in a different fashion.

Occasionally, when an American Bulldog does have a curvature in his tail, it is a pump handle type curvature which is totally different than that seen on the Pug. I have had American Bulldogs throw pump-handle tails for the last 60-70 years, long before I bred to West Champs High Hopes. Pit Bull Terriers will also occasionally throw a pump-handle tail, and I think that this originated from the early American Bulldogs which were used to create the American Pit Bull Terrier.

Dr. J.: "What is an Alapaha Blue-Blood Bulldog?"

John D.: "I really don't know what it is. I do know that I sold Lana Lane a dog several years ago and she told me that she bred it to some South Georgia bulldogs. I have seen one of her dogs and I thought it was an excellent looking bulldog. I have heard from other sources that the colors of some of her dogs are not typical for the American Bulldog."

Dr. J.: "Were there any other influential early breeders of American Bulldogs other than yourself?"

John D.: "The only other man I can think of that was breeding bulldogs at the same time that I was is a man named Louie Hedgewood."

Dr. J.: "What about the other names of breeders that we hear, such as Scott, Williamson, and Bailey?"

John D.: "These breeders came along much later. I helped Allen Scott get started back in the mid 60's. I gave him two fine female bulldogs and expected some money in return when he started selling puppies. I never did receive any, however. I do know that Allen Scott bought many dogs from around the area and into Alabama that to me were of questionable lineage. He did have one fine dog, Mack the Masher, which I did breed to. Many of the dogs he bought had cropped ears and looked like they had a lot of American Pit Bull Terrier in them. One dog he had to me looked like it was mostly Great Dane. Joe Painter finally bought his dogs in the mid to late 70's, and he told me personally that out of 75 dogs he had bought, only six were considered by him to be good bulldogs. I knew Bailey and to my knowledge he only bred three or four litters in all and this was done in the 70's. As far as Williamson, this was also in the 70's and he only bred a very few dogs."

Dr. J.: "Who were the early bulldogs that you began your kennel with?"

John D.: "I was really only a small time breeder between the age of 14 and when I went away to fight in WWII. During WWII my family kept the dogs that we had until I returned from the war. When I returned from the war, I decided that I would like to preserve this breed. When I was younger, bulldogs were very plentiful, but when I returned from WWII, they had become quite scarce. I decided to buy the very best bulldogs that I could find to begin my own kennel, but I was limited financially as to how many dogs I could buy and adequately care for. The dogs I did purchase at this time I tried to make the very best and so between 1949 and the early 1950's, I purchased some dogs that to me represented the largest, strongest, and best American Bulldogs that I could find. One of my best early foundation dogs was Johnson's Bobo and he came from Calhoun, Georgia. Another one was Bobo Jr. which was his son and came from Bobo and Goldie. Goldie was a dog that I had in my family and had raised before WWII. Another dog I purchased was Johnson's Toppie. She also came from Calhoun. The original Sandman I bought in Lookout Mountain, Tennessee. Sissy was a female in my family that I had bred as was Lady Toppie, Tuffy, Frosty, and Big Red. Two other dogs that were in my family were Black Jack and Blondie. Dick the Bruiser came along later and I purchased him around 1956 or 57. I bought him from Harold Lassiter on Big Sand Mountain in Alabama. He was a catch dog and one of my all time favorites."

Dr. J.: "If there were no written pedigrees in those days, how could you be certain that you were getting a pure blooded American Bulldog?"

John D.: "The only way you could be sure was to first inspect the dog as far as his appearance and his temperament and try to determine his physical capabilities. Following that, I would breed the dog and make sure that the puppies he produced were correct. If they were, then I could be fairly certain it was a pure American Bulldog. From 1950 on, I had my dogs registered with either the NKC or the ARF. Also, the dogs that were in my family I knew were pure bulldogs going back another 40 years or so."

Dr. J.: "How did you choose the Animal Research Foundation as the registry?"

John D.: "Initially, I used the National Kennel Club and showed my dogs in their dog shows and was a judge in some. I was not happy, however, with the registry and felt that they were registering American Bulldogs that were not truly American Bulldogs. Also, I had the feeling that some of the dog shows were being rigged. I have been very happy with the Animal Research Foundation and have found them to be totally honest and scrupulous."

Dr. J.: "Who was your favorite dog of all?"

John D.: "I really don't have a favorite dog, although I have several that I would have to say were my favorites. If I could pick one dog to be possibly the best all around American Bulldog I have ever owned, it probably would be Bruiser Bo. However, there were several dogs that I would have to say were also my favorites including my first dog Prince, King Kong, Bobo Jr., Elrod, Dick the Bruiser, Aristocrat, and the Incredible Hulk."

Dr. J.: "Back to the other breeders such as Bailey, Scott, and Williamson. Did you ever trade dogs back and forth with these men?"

John D.: "No, I never traded dogs back and forth with any of them. I gave Allen Scott two females and I bred to his dog Mack the Masher."

Dr. J.: "Did you know Joe Painter?"

John D.: "Yes, I knew Joe Painter and I knew that he did buy Allen Scott's dogs. Joe Painter was a dog fighter and raised and fought American Pit Bull Terriers. I know that he did have some trouble with the law but do not know the circumstances of this."

Dr. J.: "Did Joe Painter ever cross his America Bulldogs with his American Pit Bull Terriers?"

John D.: "Joe Painter told me that he never crossed them, however his neighbor said he did."

Dr. J.: "Would you ever consider now crossing your dogs to the lines out there, such as Scott?"

John D.: "No. I know that many breeders are now crossing my dogs with various other strains. I think that this is bound to make their strains better. If I was going to recommend purchasing an American Bulldog, however, I would want the dog to be at least 3/4 Johnson and probably 7/8 would be better. I have worked for many, many years to try to maintain the purity of my American Bulldogs and I know where most of the other strains came from, and I would not want to take the chance of infusing some other inferior breed. There is no breed of dog that you can mix with the American Bulldog to improve him. In my opinion, he is the best breed of dog in the world and his blood has been used many, many times down through the centuries to improve other breeds with his blood."

Dr. J.: "Do you think your dogs are too inbred?"

John D.: "No. I have tried to maintain the purity of my dog's lines through careful line breeding without resorting to inbreeding."

Dr. J.: "Have you had problems with your dogs attributed to genetic inbreeding such as hip dysplasia?"

John D.: "I have only had to replace six dogs for hip dysplasia in the past 50 years and two of those I believe were questionable. Now, my policy is that if the dog may have hip dysplasia, it should be returned to me so that I can have my own veterinarian x-ray the dog and ascertain if this problem is present. I replaced two dogs and found out later that the dogs I replaced were fine."

Dr. J.: "What about other problems such as tumors?"

John D.: "Tumors are more prevalent now in dogs of all breeds. In my opinion is not due to genetic inbreeding but due to the type of food that we feed them now. In the old days, our dogs ate what we ate. If we had pintos and collard greens for supper, the dogs had the same. When I raised puppies, Mildred would fix up a big bowl of oatmeal. Dogs in those days seemed to live longer and have less

problems with tumors. Now days we feed dogs commercially produced dog food, and I can't help but think that many of the chemicals that are used in food processing have some bearing on the increased frequency in tumors. Also, the meat-based dog food which should be used contains many times meat from animals that are not fit for human consumption and this is why they end up in dog food rather than on your kitchen table."

Dr. J.: "What do you think the ideal size bulldog is?"

John D.: "I have always said that I wanted a bulldog large enough that I could throw a saddle over. I think that the ideal size is really the size that would best suit the job that you want this dog to perform. Since these dogs are primarily used for protection now, I feel that a larger, stronger, heavier boned dog is more suitable for this task."

Dr. J.: "What do you think the ideal under bite is?"

John D.: "It depends a lot on the size of the dog, but in a very large American Bulldog such as Elrod, I like the lower jaw to protrude approximately one inch. In the smaller, 100 pound American Bulldogs, I think about 1/2 inch is correct."

Dr. J.: "What do you think about the even or scissors bite?"

John D.: "I do not think that a scissors bite is correct in the American Bulldog. These dogs have always been large catch dogs for centuries and in order for a bulldog to grab hold of a bull's lip or nose, the canine teeth need to be separated so that there are four areas of tissue that literally need to be torn through rather than a tight slice which the dogs, teeth will do in a scissors bite. Bulldogs have amazingly powerful jaw muscles and they would be capable of slicing through tissue easily if their teeth matched up perfectly as most dogs do with a scissors bite."

Dr. J.: "Have you ever seen the lower jaw fractured or dislocated when you used your dogs to catch bulls or hogs?"

John D.: "No."

Dr. J.: "What is your ideal or favorite color?"

John D.: "I would have to say solid white, but I like all the colors of the American Bulldog and I feel that it is the dog's overall conformation which makes him beautiful rather than the color. I never look at the dog's color when selecting a puppy."

Dr. J.: "I know you raised prize-winning Angus cattle for years. Did you use your American Bulldogs in raising cattle?"

John D.: "Yes, I used them frequently. Mildred used Black Jack to help herd the cattle into the barn, but the dogs instinctively will go for the bull's nose and are very useful in catching and holding an unruly bull or steer. Other neighboring farmers would sometimes request that I use my bulldogs in helping them catch and hold an unruly bull, and I remember one instance in which it took three bulldogs to pin him, one on his nose, one on his tongue, and one holding onto his ear."

Dr. J.: "Did you ever hunt wild boar with your dogs?"

John D.: "I used to frequently hunt wild hogs when I was a younger man. These were actually domestic or feral type hogs that probably did have some wild boar infused. The boar would commonly have large tusks. The largest one I ever caught, its tusks measured 7 1/2 inches."

Dr. J.: "Did you use a bay dog first?"

John D.: "I started using Red Bone Hounds but had so much trouble with my bulldogs killing my Hounds that I switched over to just bulldogs and used them to run the hogs down and catch them also. These dogs have tremendous stamina when they are conditioned and even the large dogs can run the hog down, go in and catch the hog. This is much harder on them, of course, than first baying the hog and then putting the fresh bulldog in on the hog."

Dr. J.: "Did your dogs catch the hogs by the ear?"

John D.: "No. My dogs have always caught the hog by the nose. There is a tender place in the hog's nose that farmers use to control hogs. You can place a tight wire around this area on the nose and attach this to a pipe and simply twist it and control the hog. A ring in the hog's nose will keep him from tearing up areas that you don't want because this is also very tender. My dogs would attack the hog straight on, grab them by the nose and pin them exactly the same as they did the bulls. I never lost a single dog in this fashion, and the dogs seemed to have excellent control over the hog."

Dr. J.: "Did you or did you know of anyone actively dog fighting your dogs?"

John D.: "I never participated in any type of dog fighting and I would never sell my dogs to anyone that I knew might do SO. I do know that one man that I sold two dogs to in the Miami area did fight them, but when I found out about it, I never sent him anymore dogs."

Dr. J.: "What do you tell people who buy a pup about raising them?"

John D.: "I always tell people to love them, take care of them, and obedience train them. I feel that obedience training these dogs is very important in establishing the correct human/dog dominance relationship. I strongly advise against protection training these dogs because I feel that they are aggressive and protection oriented enough. The majority of dogs that I have had returned to me over the years have been returned following protection training. I feel that these dogs can be trained from a protection or Schutzhund type standpoint, but I think that the dog trainer must be very highly skilled. These dogs can be extremely ferocious towards any animal and to direct this degree of fury towards a human being is dangerous. I know of no quicker way to ruin one of these dogs than to place him in the hands of a less-than-expert dog trainer who trains him to attack human beings.,'

Dr. J.: "How do you decide which puppy to keep?"

John D.: "I try to make a judgment of the puppies around the seventh or eighth week. For me to keep a puppy I like for him to have everything, including size, confirmation, and temperament. I have been a dog judge before and having worked with bulldogs for so many years now, I know when I see a puppy that catches my eye."

Dr. J.: "When you first started selling your dogs right after WWII,, how much did you get for a puppy?"

John D.: "Forty-five dollars."

Dr. J.: "What is the most that you have ever received for a puppy?"

John D.: "Two thousand five hundred dollars.,,

Dr. J.: "What is the most money you have ever turned down for a dog?"

John D.: "I was contacted by a broker a couple of years ago who wanted to purchase for an individual, and I don't know the man's name as I only dealt with his broker. He offered me \$50,000.00 for Elrod and \$50,000.00 for Collette. I told him these dogs were not for sale and I felt that I would rather own a \$50,000.00 dog than let somebody else own him. Mildred, my wife, wouldn't speak to me for two days."

Dr. J.: "Why were American Bulldogs plentiful when you were a child but after WWII they became scarce and now are extremely rare?"

John D.: "I believe they became scarce in this country for essentially the same reason they became extinct in England. In the early part of this century and in the century before, we used these dogs on our farms and they were a real asset in working cattle and to a lesser extent hogs. As time has gone on, our cities have enlarged and there are fewer and fewer small farms. In essence, the dog has lost his job. The Bulldog is the original working dog and his purpose is to do a job. When the job disappears, he no longer has a reason for existing.

Now, with crime on the increase, the Bulldog is once again finding a new job and so we are seeing a complete resurgence in his popularity. Another reason that the Bulldog became very scarce is that he does not lend himself to a kennel type situation easily. These dogs are very dog-aggressive and do not live together well. Even when bulldogs were more plentiful, almost everyone that had one only had one or occasionally a pair, male and female. Almost no one had two males or two females because they could not get along with each other. I have always loved the American Bulldog and when I saw that he was becoming very scarce after WWII, I dedicated my life to preserving this breed.

I feel very strongly that any animal that is willing to die for his master is worth preserving. I have countless stories of instances where over the years American Bulldogs have saved my life and the lives of my family. Johnson's Bobo once saved me from a bull that had broken out of its pastures Dick the Bruiser saved Mildred from a pack of wild dogs, and also a man that came to our house with a gun. I know you have heard the story of the fire that almost reached our house. I was able to get most of my dogs out in time, but two dogs stayed behind and actually fought the blazing fire as it approached my house. I know all animals are instinctively afraid of fire, but these dogs gladly would give their life to protect us. They were horribly burned and it took months for them to recuperate, but they always had a home with me following that incredible exhibition of courage."

Dr. J.: "If you had it to do all over again, would you change anything?"

John D.: "The only thing that I would change if I could is that back right after WWII I wish I had been a rich man and could have afforded more foundation dogs so that there would be more blood lines today."

Dr. J.: "Do you have any words of advice for the new breeders?"

John D.: " I would say start with the good ones and breed the good ones to the good ones - Don't try to change the breed and be very careful to not let show judging influence the dogs.

Dr. J.: "Why do you think dog shows have ruined so many breeds?"

John D. "The very nature of the dog show is somewhat detrimental to the bulldog. Dog shows are for an audience to see dogs competing in a beauty contest. American Bulldogs can participate in dog shows, but I would never want them to have to sit side by side as in so many other dog show breed contests. Judges need to make certain allowances to take into consideration the bulldog's temperament. A bulldog that growls at the judge should not be disqualified.

A bulldog that is dog-aggressive or tries to get to the dog sitting next to him should not be disqualified. I believe that the heart of the bulldog is so strong that in order for the American Bulldog to lose this quality, it would have to be purposefully bred out. I believe that it was purposefully bred out in the English Bulldog to allow these dogs to sit side by side in a dog show. Another facet of the dog show that we must all guard against is to try to keep various features from becoming exaggerated and allowing dogs with more exaggerated features to win.

A perfect example would be the hips in the German Shepherd. The early German Shepherd's rear end looked normal but for some reason it was felt more attractive if the dog's rear end drooped somewhat and now trying to breed German Shepherds to have this appearance has caused a rash of hip dysplasia. I believe that my bulldogs are as good now as they were 83 years ago because I have not tried to change them in any way. I have tried to maintain their heart, their desire to please, their ability to bond closely with their human family, and most important of all their ability to sacrifice their own life to protect that of their family."

Dr. J.: "John D., I have thoroughly enjoyed this interview. Every time I see my bulldog's smiling faces when I come home from work, I am most grateful to you for preserving the finest breed of dog in the world. Do you have any final words of wisdom for the people who will read this interview?"

John D.: "They say that dog is man's best friend but they are wrong. Man is dog's best friend. But a dog that will lay down his life to protect his master is a man's best friend, and a dog that will turn and run at the threat of danger is no friend at all."