Idealist, with a lifetime in

Andrew Brace talks to ESPEN ENGH, the young Norwegian whose kennel has produced 135 champions in 42 countries

ESPEN ENGH was literally born into the world of dogs in 1962. His mother Kari became involved with Greyhounds in 1955, buying a local dog that was of part show breeding and part coursing bred.

She was bitten by the show bug, but despite showing her dog all over Norway, he had little impact on the show scene. However he did sire the first litter bred at the Dogcastle kennel owned by Ingebjorg Stenhaugen, still also active in the breed.

Kari bought a succession of Greyhound males, which were shown with greater success than her original dog, and she also began handling dogs in a variety of breeds for other people. This stood her in good stead when she began to pursue a career as an all-rounder judge.

The first home-bred Greyhound litter however was not bred until 20 years later. By then the Gulds kennel had started, the foundation bitch after which it was named – Guld – having been mated to the UK import **Int Ch Croswolla Nova**, and this produced the Gulds 'BB' litter which became very influential throughout the world, notably Scandinavia and the USA.

This combination was repeated by breeder Ann Gustavsson and from this Kari bought a bitch called **Gulds Choice Cimone**.

Interestingly Kari had already begun judging in 1968 even though at that point she was not a breeder as such. She had frequently admired stock from this breeding, and it seemed the obvious place to look for a bitch.

Cimone became the foundation bitch for the Jet's kennel, which was always owned jointly by Kari and her young son, the name coming from **Int Ch Jet Commander**, the first Greyhound actually owned by Espen. Commander was bred in Norway but was of three-quarters old RP breeding.

Commander and Cimone were not that closely related but both went back to a series of crosses between Judy de Casembroot's Treetops and the old Cornish Carnlanga lines, that combination having been successful in the UK producing such dogs as **Ch Seagift Parcancady Royaltan** and **Int Ch Treetops Rising Pheasant**.

In 1972 the enthusiastic mother and son imported form England a young male, **Gayside Solomon Grundy**, bred by Brenda Rowe and the first dog to carry her prefix. He was a huge success in Norway where he was runner up Dog of the Year in 1973, while the kennel's foundation bitch, Cimone, won the same honour in Sweden.

The obvious next move to many would have been to mate these two stars together. Solomon Grundy sired many puppies, but he was never actually used by Kari and Espen, and Cimone was duly mated to Jets Commander.

Espen recalls that he and his mother felt that Cimone would be better suited to Commander because he was the dog who far better complemented her. "If we had got the worst from both they would have been hideous, yet if we happened to get the best, the results would be potentially exciting. We were very lucky.

A very young Espen handling a Shih Tzu.

"Our method of breeding has been based on selecting the very best bitch, the alpha-bitch, of each generation. We breed on a limited scale so it makes sense to breed only from the absolute best, more often than not several litters. Thus the alpha-bitch goes into our bitch tail-line that we line-breed to. But we may also breed a litter out of the second best bitch in each generation to produce males to breed back to the alpha-bitches.

"The best daughter from the Commander-Cimone combination, **Int Ch Jet's Elegant Negress**, had just the one litter, to her very close relative **Int Ch Psychotic**, and that produced **Int Ch Jet's Pink Panther**. Panther was definitely an upgrading in the level of quality for us, and won extremely well with many BIS in between which she produced four litters by four different males," Espen recalls.

"She had such a thoroughbred look about her and just seemed to make others look rather dull and common. She was also very turned on as a show bitch and it was fantastic to show her.

"I remember the occasion we took her to the Helsinki show under an American judge. She was in a big champions class and the judge attempted to excuse us from competition as he was convinced that the bitch was being double-handled. I asked him to explain himself, and as we had travelled about 30 hours to get to Helsinki, I refused to leave the ring.

"There was quite a commotion in the ring (where there was a young English-born student judge by the name of Paul Stanton). The ring secretary and the student both agreed with me that there was no element of double handling, and in the end the judge accepted the fact, judged the bitch and ended up not just giving her BOB but also the group! That illustrates just what kind of temperament Panther had.

"We expected a lot from her as a brood bitch as in our opinion she was superior to both her parents and to the other bitches of her generation. She produced quite well but never gave us anything quite like herself, though among her progeny was **Int Ch Jet's Coco Chanel**, whose many wins included BOB at the Norwegian Greyhound Club show of 1988 under Ralph Parsons."

Espen is a veterinary surgeon. He qualified in 1987 and worked as a scientist, specifically as an associate professor of comparative medicine at the University of Oslo for ten years. Currently he is the head of section for animal welfare in the Norwegian Food Safety Authority, co-ordinating the national animal welfare system for all animals.

Having decided to develop the Jet's line, it was important that Espen and his mother knew what they were working with and what faults might be lurking in the background. Deliberately they mated Cimone to **Int Ch Jet's White Christmas**, her son, just to see what skeletons may be in the closet, and Espen feels that this was highly educational. Although they themselves didn't keep any puppies from the mother-son breeding, they do appear in several pedigrees worldwide.

"This taught us a lot," reflects Espen. "The faults that came out were purely structural but neither health nor temperament suffered in any way, so that gave us confidence and we knew what we were working with. We then continued to closely line-breed. Two of Pink Panther's litters were sired by two different uncles, one by a cousin, but her last litter was an outcross sired by our **Int/Am/Can Ch Gallant Major Motion**, who won two CCs in the UK at his first two shows but whose British title eluded him."

The next highlight for Jet's was the very closely bred Panther daughter Coco Chanel being mated to a Panther grandson (**Int Ch Jet's For Your Eyes Only**) and producing **Int Ch Jet's Headed Like A Snake** – Hildur.

"This white and brindle bitch was one of four puppies – two monorchid males, a bitch with a double-kinked tail and her dam needed a caesarean to whelp her. No wonder we were terrified to breed from her". Espen speaks very fondly of Hildur: "She was a very scopy bitch and to a very high degree met our definition of combined substance with elegance, and she had star quality. The Standard calls for a dog that is 'upstanding of generous proportions' and also demands 'a suppleness of limb which emphasises to a marked degree its distinctive type and quality'. I particularly treasure this direct link between functionality and type in the Greyhound Standard."

Headed Like A Snake produced four litters that contained 30 champions, which is an all-time all-breeds record for a bitch. Interestingly, all her sons were entire and only one offspring had a slightly kinked tail.

Greyhounds are known to be not an easy breed to sell as puppies in Britain. Indeed there are many stories of old-time Greyhound breeders who would rear whole litters, make their selection and simply shoot the surplus. I asked Espen how easy it was to sell Greyhound puppies in Norway.

"You should realise that there are no Greyhound races in Norway, and as established breeders we have never had problems placing puppies. We would only very rarely cull on the grounds of health, the puppies with show potential are never difficult to home, and indeed pet puppies are not that hard to place either. There is also a good export market, and most of what we sell tends to be males.

"We always run on the best two bitches from each litter and decide when they are fully grown which one, if any, to breed on from."

Obviously Headed Like A Snake's offspring enjoyed enormous success internationally. A daughter from her first litter, **Jet's Ravishing Redhead**, had been sold as a puppy to a lady in Texas and Espen was keen to see how she had developed when he visited the USA for the Westminster show of 1996. He contacted her owner who duly entered the very young bitch – by now an American champion – and arrived at the show armed with one Greyhound and no intention of handling her. Espen claims to have been too nervous to show the bitch at 'The Garden' so his partner Åge Gjetnes got the job, took her in under Lou Auslander and won the breed.

Int Ch Jet's Headed Like a Snake winning BOB under John Reeve Newson from Canada whose BOS was Int/Am/Can Ch Gallant Major Motion. She later went BIS at this Skokloster show. Mother and son are handling.

BOS that day was a son of **Am Ch Jet's The Voyage Out**, **Am Ch Shazaam The Journey Begins**, who went on to become the top producing Greyhound sire of all time in the United States.

Redhead's owner very kindly agreed to breed a litter from her for Espen and Kari. They chose the stud dog, **Am Ch Crestfield Sky's Salute O'Gerico**, as Espen had been very impressed with his son **Am Ch Gerico Chasing The Wind**, while Kari had awarded BOB and BOS at the National to Salute's brother and sister. Espen took four puppies back to Europe, two going to Norway via Italy, one staying in Italy and one going to Finland where **Int Ch Jet's Pie In The Sky** is now proving a key stud dog.

As regards their long-term breeding programme, Espen is quite emphatic that the Jet's kennel continues to restrict itself to a regime of close line-breeding. However, in view of the fact that there have been so many Jet's dogs exported to various countries, many of those dogs have been frequently outcrossed, and from some of these experimental matings some excellent dogs have been produced.

Espen muses: "Ourselves, we have hardly ever succeeded with our outcrosses. Consequently we have been more than happy to leave that 'dirty work' to other people. And when they have produced excellent males with traits that we need, those breeders have been very generous to send us something back. In this way we do get access to some new lines which we breed back into our own strain to improve on the shortcomings. Interestingly, when we have litters from these outcrosses it is very difficult to assess and select the puppies, so often we have to run on puppies for longer than we would do were they bred from our own pure stuff. The more of an outcross, the harder the selection."

The brindle **Int Ch Jet's Once Upon A Dream** – Vera – was Dog of the Year in Norway in 2001. She was out of Headed Like A Snake and by **Int Ch Guld's Dream Dusty** and took BIS at the three capital shows – Stockholm, Oslo and Helsinki – in the same year. "Winning BIS at Stockholm International with Vera under Pamela Cross-Stern was certainly the highlight of our exhibiting."

Vera's full brother, **Int Ch Jet's As You Like It**, sired the DCC winner at Crufts last year and is grandsire of this year's BOB winner.

Another from the same combination, **Int Ch Jet's Some Like It Hot**, is the dam of **Int Ch Jet's Something In The Way U Smile**, Dog of the Year in Norway in 2003 and RBIS at the World Show in Dortmund. Espen is very proud of the fact that Something In the Way U Smile is the very first International Lure Coursing Champion in the breed in Scandinavia, indeed many of the Jet's dogs have been very successful in the field as well, another interest shared by mother and son.

The Jet's breeding programme continues with an average of one Greyhound litter per year. Espen and Åge keep on average a dozen dogs at home, but there are also some bitches out on breeding terms, most of which are never used. Presently they are well blessed with several excellent young bitches, and as Espen considers himself a breeder first and foremost, this is encouraging. There should be no shortage of Jet's young stock.

The Jet's kennel has now bred 135 Greyhound champions in 42 countries

Int Ch Jet Commander was born in 1966 and was Espen Engh's first Greyhound. He was bred in Norway from three-quarters old RP breeding.

Int Ch Gulds Choice Cimone was the Jets kennel's foundation bitch and seen here winning best veteran in show at Skokloster under Hans Lehtinen with Kari Engh handling.

Int Ch Gayside Solomon Grundy was the first Greyhound ever to carry Brenda Rowe's famous prefix. He was imported to Norway by Kari Engh in 1972. Here ten year old Espen is pictured handling him to win a group under the late Owen Grindey.

Choice Cimone pictured with her son by Commander, Int Ch Jet's White Christmas. He won BOB as a veteran under Brenda Rowe at the Norwegian Greyhound Club and when Brenda subsequently bred a dog puppy of similar colouring, Ch Gayside White Christmas acquired his name. He was to prove a key stud dog in British Greyhounds in the 1980s.

Greyhounds

An occasional series in which Andrew Brace interviews leading international figures in the dog world

This week: *Espen Engh*

around the world.

Along the way there have been Whippets in the household for 30 years – a breed for which Espen has a special fondness. Some top winning Whippets have been campaigned by Espen and Åge - notably the two Emotions – **Int Ch Emotion du Manoir de la Grenouillere from France and Int Ch Dumbriton Emotion from the UK - and recently they had the well known UK winner, Spyanfly Say It's Bardo** for a holiday during which she added to her titles. However, there has never been the temptation to develop a breeding programme with the Whippets.

I asked Espen how his judging career began. He began gaining experience at a very young age and, I presumed, went down the traditional Scandinavian ring-stewarding and secretary route. Were there any particular judges he worked with (or didn't) who inspired him?

"My mother took me along to dog shows when I was merely a few weeks old, as far back as I can remember I found the dogs and the shows totally absorbing. I went to as many shows as I possibly could, competed in 'child and dog' and later junior handling competitions all over Scandinavia and with a variety of breeds.

"From an early age I started to take down the critiques for the judges in the ring. At the time there was a lower age limit for ring-stewards, but not for the critique-writers. I preferred to write the critiques anyway and still consider it much more of a learning experience than calling dogs into the ring and delivering out the trophies and the ribbons.

"By writing the critiques you can get a unique insight into the mindset and the priorities of a judge – and if you do the write-ups for the best judges, I doubt there is a better way of learning. Among the judges I learned a lot from in this way in my early days were Bobby James and Ann Argyle."

So were there any specific mentors or heroes for the young Espen?

"Of course I learned a lot from my mother, but I am not sure I ever had what I would consider a mentor as such. I rather preferred to listen to as many authorities as possible and read everything about dogs I could possibly get my hands on. Olav Roig exerted an important early influence and was the first Norwegian to judge worldwide from the late 1960s. He used to send me the marked show catalogues from all the shows he judged – as far away as Tasmania, Barbados and Venezuela, and I still have them all. I considered Rainer Vuorinen somewhat of an idol and a role model.

"Terry Thorn was on the judging panel the first time I officiated at championship show level and with his great enthusiasm and positive approach, he proved a very valuable support. I carefully watched and listened to our foremost Scandinavian sighthound specialists such as Sisko Kalima-Malinen and Birgitha Runmarker.

"Per Iversen has played an important role as a sparring partner and someone always ready to question my placements and priorities, something which I think is very healthy. You often leave the ring with a lot of questions and thoughts in your head, and all too often there is just nobody out there who is ready and willing to discuss.

"Most importantly I tried to pick the brains of major breeders at home and abroad, especially about the intricacies of breed type; I guess I must have been a nightmare! Bjørg Foss has been a much valued travel companion, and together we have visited and picked the brains of God knows how many breeders around the world.

"Writing pedigrees for all breeds has always been a great passion; I could get such a great kick out of writing out extended pedigrees, up to ten generations, especially those carefully orchestrated by mastermind breeders such as Raymond Oppenheimer of the Ormandy Bull Terriers, Ann Knight of the Dondelayo Whippets, Christina Jernberg of the El Khyria Afghan Hounds in Sweden or Jean Lyle of the Canadian Wycliffe Standard Poodles to name just a few. These breeders became my 'heroes'. Most people would consider this odd, or even crazy, but for me it made sense and I believe I learned a lot from it.

"At a very young age I started to subscribe to DOG WORLD and read every word, including the breed columns. Oppenheimer's books on Bull Terriers also became a source of much inspiration. I started writing to him, and would you believe – he replied in a most courteous way, carefully corrected a couple of errors, and even invited me for a visit."

So when did Espen actually begin judging?

"I judged a couple of matches and open shows in the early 1980s and was first approved by the Norwegian Kennel Club to award CCs in 1987 in Whippets, then soon afterwards Greyhounds and Afghan Hounds. From there I rather quickly ventured into the other sighthound breeds, but then stayed put with those for more than a decade.

"I discovered that I enjoyed judging dogs tremendously. For me it was very much like a treasure hunt; every class coming in and it was like opening a newly found treasure chest on some deserted island. True, that chest may often be empty or the contents rather disappointing, but then there is always another chest to open. And sometimes there is a really, really wonderful treasure within – and those treasures are what makes you want to keep looking, the ones that bring goose bumps to your skin or tears to your eyes, or both.

I was very lucky in that international judging appointments soon arrived and by 1990 I had judged quite a few prestigious shows such as Windsor in the UK and Santa Barbara in the US. I thought of those two as my 'sink or swim appointments' – happily I felt that I swam and apparently so did a few others. The snowball got rolling quickly and before I knew it I was jet-setting off here, there and everywhere."

Apart from his obvious involvement with sighthounds, those who know the young Dr Engh appreciate his deep understanding of his breeds and a passion for the sport at large. His friends also are aware of a certain calm confidence. How does this all come together to make Espen Engh the judge?

"Hmmm … I prefer to think of myself as Espen, the dog person. As I see it, I never had much of a choice or made much of a choice in devoting most or all of my spare time to the dog sport. I simply inherited my mother's enthusiasm for the sport and for our breed, no questions asked or answered.

"I am wearing many different hats within the dog sport; breeder, owner, kennel boy (my partner will have a fit over that one!), frequent exhibitor at dog shows and lure courses, judge, club official, even mentor/advisor. I enjoy combining all these different roles and feel that being active in all these different facets gives me a well-rounded horizon of what the sport is about.

"If you are involved in only one way or the other, it is easy to overlook the perspectives of those who have chosen a different role in the sport. But if I were forced to choose between my different roles, I would choose breeding, hands down. As much as I enjoy the role as a judge, for me breeding comes first because it is more challenging, much more difficult and has more of a long-term effect.

From Headed Like A Snake's first litter came Int/Am Ch Jet's Ravishing Redhead, seen here winning BOB at the 1996 Westminster show under Lou Auslander, handled on that occasion by Espen's partner Åge Gjetnes.

"But back to your question; yes, I feel confident with my roles, and perhaps especially so as a judge. But I also know about feeling unconfident when judging breeds that I have not quite cracked. In my case I found the Hungarian Greyhound – Magyar Agar – even after plenty of hard study, extremely difficult to judge. And after having judged them on a number of occasions I am still not very comfortable about judging that breed.

"So I know only too well what it feels like to be without confidence in a breed – and it is not a good feeling, I can tell you that! The treasure hunt is cancelled before it ever begins; it is just trying to get over it as quickly as possible, putting up a dog like you know what you are doing. As a consequence of that, I am not keen to start judging other breeds that I am not very confident about – so I did not apply to judge any new breeds for more than 12 years."

I was once taken to a ring by a famous all-rounder to watch Espen judge Whippets (I will spare his embarrassment by naming him!) and told "Look at him – his hands are like music"! Is there any special technique to the way Espen actually handles dogs when judging?

"Well, I am flattered, but frankly do not think that my technique is all that special. I simply have a clear, preset idea of what I am feeling for and a set pattern of going over the dogs in each breed, checking for breed specific traits as well as for general construction and confirmation – everything is done for a reason, of course. I do enjoy going over the dogs, and hopefully that shows. It should go without saying that any judge should be gentle with both dogs and handlers, but frequently experiencing the show ring from the other side of the coin, I know several judges that need to be reminded about that.

"Alas it is pretty obvious when you watch quite a few judges carefully that they have no idea of what they are feeling for, they are simply patting the dogs as they think they are supposed to touch them, but do not know why and what for.

"Come to think of it, maybe I do have a couple of points of advice as to how to go over the dogs. In some breeds that can be quite difficult to handle and/or introvert, including several of the sighthounds, I have found that it pays to do a quick round of introduction as soon as the dogs are in the ring – the whole point is just to introduce yourself to all the dogs, making some noise or say something so that the dogs are aware that you are coming and then just touch them lightly and walk on immediately to the next dog. When you are going over the dog later, it is more than likely that he/she will recognise you from a few minutes back, you will trigger a positive association and it will be easier to go over the dog thoroughly.

"I have found that this method pays off in Afghan Hounds, Azawakhs, Salukis, Sloughis and Ibizan Hounds to name a few breeds. On the other hand it is a waste of time in Deerhounds, Greyhounds and Irish Wolfhounds, so I do not do it for those breeds.

"First impressions are very important. From a judge's viewpoint, much more often than not your initial reaction will eventually turn out to be the most accurate one. The problem is you only get one chance to form a first impression, and I would like the balance, proportions and side picture on the move to be part of that first impression. Consequently I initially do not look at the dogs much stacked but insist that they are moved around the ring together immediately. Thus that side picture is part of my all-important first impression.

"However I can only look at five or six dogs moving around at the same time; any more than that and I have to divide them into groups, but I always would like to see all the entrants around before I start my individual assessment. By the time I have seen the whole class around the ring I have a pretty good idea as to how I will place it. It always amazed me when judges move classes of 15-20 dogs or even more around the ring, sometimes in spirals when the first dog catches up on the last – the judge must either be extremely talented or the very opposite.

"When going over dogs on the table, have a very clear view of what you are looking for and perhaps especially what you are not looking for. To take Whippets as an example, many of them are able to distort their balance and shape when on a table, so up there you just check for the static qualities, but the balance, the shape and the angulation is much better evaluated on the ground and in movement.

"At Crufts this year I noticed several judges who judged to a set pattern up until the open class, then they seemed to feel the heat and completely changed their procedure – and from the ringside it seemed that their priorities changed as well. I found that very hard to understand.

"When in the centre of the ring, you should realise that you send out a lot of signals that are interpreted by the ringsiders; changing your procedure in the middle of your judging is a sure way of spreading confusion – for the ringsiders as well as for yourself.

"Have you also noticed how many judges when they have finished their individual assessment of the dogs, then turn around and look back at the line-up as if they have never seen any those dogs before? Surely the only sensible way of judging a class is to make your placements in your head as you evaluate each individual. Is this one better than or less good than the two I just went over? Is this one going to make the cut or not?

"By the time you have finished the individual assessment of the last dog in the class, you should know pretty accurately how you are going to place them. But if some placement remains undecided, then compare the dogs in contention by putting them next to each other – standing or moving together. Again at Crufts I saw a couple of judges making the long walk between say the second dog and the thirteenth dog in the class and then back – how much easier would it not be to put the two next to each other for comparison?"

To be continued

Int Ch Jet's Elegant Negress, a daughter of Commander and Cimone, and older sister to White Christmas, who was top winning bitch of all breeds in Norway in 1976.

Int Ch Jet's Pink Panther, Negress' daughter by Int Ch Psykotic, pictured here with Espen winning the group at the Nordic Winners Show in Helsinki in 1984.

Int Ch Jet's Coco Chanel, Pink Panther's daughter, winning BOB at the Norwegian Greyhound Club Ch show in 1988 under Ralph Parsons, owner of the legendary RP kennel in England.

An engaging head study of one of Pink Panther's daughters, Int Ch Jet's Kerrs Pink.

Face to face with Andrew Brace

An enthusiast with a grasp on reality

Continued from last week

DOES ESPEN have any involvement with the Norwegian Kennel Club or breed clubs in his country?

"Sure, for many years I served on several Norwegian Kennel Club committees; the most interesting have been the Standard and show committees. For a while I also attended meetings of the Nordic Kennel Union Standard committee and the FCI Sighthound commission. I am currently chairman of the Norwegian Greyhound Club and hold office with the Norwegian Sighthound Club."

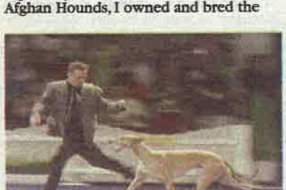
Int Ch Jet's Once Upon A Dream was Dog of the Year in Norway for 2001, and that year won BIS at the three capital shows in Sweden, Norway and Finland... Stockholm, Oslo and Helsinki. She is a younger sister to As You Like It.

Espen's partner Åge Gjetnes has Afghan Hounds, I asked Espen to tell us a little about the partnership and his input with the Afghans.

"Åge and his Afghan Hounds moved in 15 years ago. He had already been breeding successfully for several years and has continued to do so. For the first few years we preferred to own the dogs separately; he owned and bred the Afghan Hounds, I owned and bred the Greyhounds. The Whippets we co-owned, but did not breed – preferring to concentrate on our two primary breeds.

"Currently we co-own all the dogs but breed separately. This is not just a paper solution; the Afghan Hounds are Åge's brainchildren, not mine. I enjoy and admire the Afghans – they are a truly fascinating breed and they attract fascinating people too. But it is entirely down to Åge to decide on the combinations to make. I expect and am granted the same privilege back when it comes to the Greyhounds.

"This is not to say that our opinions differ vastly; indeed we have very similar taste in both breeds. And Åge does a great job of handling the Greyhounds in the show ring"



Int Ch Jet's Something in the Way U Smile, handled by Espen to win BIS 2 at the World Show in Dortmund 2003 and Dog of the Year in Norway the same year. He is a son of Int Ch Jet's Some Like It Hot, full sister to Once Upon A Dream.

Who, in Espen's opinion, are the most influential Norwegians in the dog world? What does the future hold in store for Norwegian dogdom?

"That was a big question, Norway is after all not that small! Settling for just a few, we have had some well-traveiled international all-rounders such as Roig, my mother and Rodi Hübenthal. More specialised judges such as Grethe Bergendahl and Per Iversen have both judged everywhere, including Crufts. We have and have had a number of extremely clever breeders who have bred top dogs for a long time; Borghild Moen of the Hotpoint Pekingese and Great Danes, Eva Mjelde of the Surprising Labradors, Astrid Gierscky of the Topscore Poodles, the late Erling Aasheim of the Doberhill Dobermanns, Leif-Herman Wilberg of the Siggen Corgis, Kari Granaas Hansen of the Carillo Cockers, American Cockers and lately Siberian Huskies, Helle Høie of the Spotnik Dalmatians, Kari Ditlefsen of the Perdita Dalmatians, Dag Løken of the Tiny Jewel Pomeranians and Vivi-Anne Olsen of the Petit Ami Bichons to name just a few of the most prominent and with apologies to many not mentioned!

"And we have had some very clever Norwegian dog people who for one reason or another have chosen to emigrate – I have mentioned these in my DOG WORLD ANNUAL article. The fact that we do not seem to be able to hold on to many of our most talented dog people is a real worry!

"Unfortunately the Norwegian dog world has entered the numbers game; there is simply more of everything; more shows, more breeds, more judges doing more breeds, more champions – but whatever happened to better? My greatest worry for Norwegian dogdom is much the same as for dogdom elsewhere; the sport is being caught up in quantity and not in quality. I fear that the quality-oriented among the fanciers may lose interest and I see signs of this already happening."

Espen has been visiting the UK for many years – what changes has he noticed? In the shows? The dogs? The judging?

"My first trip to England was in 1972, but the first general championship show I visited was Windsor in 1975. The number of dogs, the quality in so many breeds, the organisation, the enthusiasm and the sheer beauty of it all – it was all just wonderful and overwhelming.

"I marvelled over many of the dogs, some greats I particularly recall are Spode, my all-time favourite from several subsequent encounters, Ch Wenonah Goosander who won BOB among the Greyhounds, the then young Crysbel Skylark who won BOB in Whippets and Ch Kilcroney Rekhmire Merymut who I believe was BOB in Pharaoh Hounds, but without CCs. I was hooked and wanted to go back as often as I possibly could, which fortunately has been quite regularly.

"Those were the days when there were still major breeding establishments around in many breeds, just around the time of the demise of the real kennels. In Greyhounds alone the Shalfleets, the Shaunvalleys and the RPs were breeding strains that were easily recognisable from afar. The same was true in Whippets where you could not fail to recognise a Dondelayo, a Shalfleet or a Hardknott, in Wolfhounds a Sulhamstead or an Eaglescrag, in Pharaoh Hounds a Merymut or a Twinley or in Deerhounds an Ardkinglas or a Dufault, in Salukis a Burydown, a Daxlore, a Windswift or a Knightellington.

"Those days seem sadly gone and the great breeding kennels seem to be a thing of the past. In my own breed there are now hardly more than a couple that by any stretch of imagination can be called strains, and this seems to be true in most breeds.

"The shows have remained similar, but are of course even bigger and a lot of new breeds have been added throughout the years. And many breeds have many more sets of CCs than they used to in those days, but still the Kennel Club has wisely kept that under reasonable control. I totally disagree with you on that, Andrew – in my view one of the best things about your system is the restricted number of CCs available.

"Some breeds have made significant strides forward during those years, some have stayed put and some have regressed – part of the natural cycle of things, I presume. Whippets have improved considerably over the years, but in my opinion the quality in Greyhounds was better then. Lately imports to the UK have become much more commonplace in many breeds and the best ones have contributed tremendously – Afghan Hounds would be an obvious example, but make sure not to lose the valuable qualities of your old strains.

"Even back then what separated the UK approach from the Scandinavian was your focus on the stacked picture and then on movement coming and going, whereas we have always been more focused on the side picture. The differences have become even more marked with the years, to the point where Scandinavians feel that the British seem to have sacrificed side movement almost completely in several breeds, whereas we have probably gone too far in the other extreme and sacrificed movement coming and going.

"I do not think it is wise to sacrifice either, but having to make a preference I will definitely, within reason, go with the side picture which includes movement, but even more importantly the balance.

Presenting the BOB-rosette at the Greyhound Club of America's 50th anniversary specialty to Ch Lochinvar Leaps And Bounds.

Int Ch Jet's As You Like It, a son of Headed Like A Snake, won BOB at the Swedish Greyhound Club National as a veteran last year under Rita Bartlett. His son won the dog CC at Crufts the same year while his granddaughter was this year's Crufts BOB. He is proving to be an important sire and is pictured with his litter sister, Int Ch Jet's Some Like It Hot, dam of Int Ch Jet's Something In The Way U Smile.

In this approach as well as on insistence on showmanship and a motor, I feel that Scandinavia has grown closer to North America in the last three decades and away from the UK.

"As for the quality of judging in the UK – I would not have brought it up, but as you ask: 30 years ago and more there was a much better balance of judges in most breeds. There was a nucleus of very experienced all-rounders and group specialists who judged a significant proportion of the shows. They were supplemented by the most experienced and successful breeders. These days it seems like judging has become some kind of human right which is a total nonsense; everybody and their sister-in-law seems to be judging dogs, be it neither successful nor talented. When these sisters-in-law start judging a significant proportion of the shows, the breeds are in real danger.

"There are only a few left of your experienced all-rounders and group specialists and many breeds are judged almost entirely by breed specialists. Some of them are excellent, but far too many of them call themselves 'specialists' only because they judge only one breed, not because they have some special knowledge, experience or talent. Many one-breed judges officiate maybe once every three or four years and never get into the routine or the mindset to judge dogs – frequent experience is absolutely crucial.

"Too many of these 'specialists' do an appalling job of judging. You can try to educate them as much as you like, but if they do not have the talent, they are never going to make it. So what is needed is first to realise that not everyone is cut out to be an excellent judge, just like few are cut out to be ballerinas. Then a system is needed to identify the talents (and encourage the others to take on other equally important roles in the sport), cultivate them and educate them to judge more breeds, at least some breeds that are closely related.

"You have a couple of remarkably talented Whippet judges who are never ever invited to judge Greyhounds and vice versa – what a terrible waste of talent! I gather this is what the KC is trying to mend with their much criticised fast-track system, I think it is a much needed step forward, provided that the bets are on the right horses, of course."

What was Espen's first judging appointment in the UK?

"Windsor in 1990, when I awarded CCs in Whippets. For me it was a most memorable occasion although I was somewhat concerned about finishing the large entry in time. But it all went well and my BOB, the great Ch Nutshell of Nevedith, went on to win BIS that day, which was fun.

"I have judged a lot in the UK since then and have tremendously enjoyed every appointment, having awarded CCs in all the sighthound breeds. Are you aware of the fact that there are only four current judges approved by the KC to award CCs in all those quite closely related breeds? Terry Thorn, Zena Thorn-Andrews, Zola Rawson and myself. In Scandinavia we have 80 judges approved for all sighthounds – quite a different approach!"

Continued overleaf

Espen's first time of awarding CCs to Greyhounds in the UK when his CC winners were Teiwaz Mr Bad Guy Flyalong who became a champion on the day, and Ch Wenonah Geisha Girl, who turned out to be a daughter of Jet's Oscar de la Renta of Wenonah, brother to Coco Chanel.

Espen judged Whippets for the first time in England at Windsor in 1990 when he awarded BOB to Ch Nutshell of Nevedith and the Dog CC to Ch Norwills Barley at Hammonds. Nutshell went on to BIS that day.

Int Ch Dumbriton Emotion was judged by Espen in the UK at a Club show, and his critique suggested that she could go to Norway any day ... which she later did.

Face to face with Andrew Brace

An occasional series in which Andrew Brace interviews leading international figures in the dog world

This week: *Espen Engh part 2*

Continued from previous page

Are there any special dogs that Espen remembers seeing over the years?

"Oh, I have been impressed by so many dogs over the years, feeling those goose bumps or tears in the corner of your eye is the major thrill. I could mention a whole bunch of dogs, but if I were to choose a few that had that effect I would mention the Deerhound **Ch Betsinda of Rotherwood** winning the group at Crufts in 1982. Not only was she stunningly beautiful, but also she had such an aura about her and gave it all for her octogenarian owner-breeder Norah Hartley. At the same show I was totally mesmerized by the Bull Terrier bitch **Contango Classy Dame** who won the CC, but not BOB, but I would comfortably put her on my list of all-time special dogs.

"The UK-born white Standard Poodle

Espen awarding Best of Winners at a Pharaoh Hound Club of America Specialty to the six months old Shema's Mia Spellbound, later BOB at the same show and an influential sire.

Ch Maneetas Del Zarzoso Fuego Fatuo, such a stallion of a dog with such a superior attitude and style, he absolutely took my breath away. Watching the Australian-born Smooth Fox Terrier **Ch Ttarb The Brat** win BIS at Santa Barbara in 1983 was like watching history in the making as was watching the Kerry **Ch Torum Scarf Michael** finally win his Westminster BIS. The Griffon **Ch Starbeck Crystal Rainbow** in the UK represented the epitome of his breed in my eyes.

"More recently the Papillon **Ch Loteki Supernatural Being**, winning BIS at the World Show in Helsinki. I want to mention a couple of Norwegian dogs too; both the German Shepherd Dog **Ch Ken av Thorarinn** and the Miniature Poodle **Ch Topscore On Stage** both won BIS at Oslo International and made overwhelming impressions. And I would include the Crufts BIS-winning Norfolk Terrier **Ch Cracknor Cause Celebre** as one of the all-time greats.

Stunning Spode

"In my own breed the stunningly beautiful blue **Ch Shalfleet Spode**, in my view the best ever bred by that mastermind breeder Barbara Wilton-Clark, several of Judy Donaldson's great Kingsmarks in Chicago, the blue brindle **Ch Aroi Talk Of The Blues**, Top Dog in the US in the 1970s and an excellent ideal that most of the better American judges took to heart. Much more recently, I have judged the white and brindle male **Ch Gerico Chasing The Wind** a number of times and have never found anything even close up in either breed or group competition and I consider him the best male I have seen in the breed."

On overseas judging appointments, which countries have impressed Espen? Where are certain breeds really strong?

"I feel very fortunate in having been able to judge in almost 50 countries around the world. Different countries impress for different reasons; certainly some breeds are much stronger in some countries than in others. As mentioned, judging in the UK has been a definite highlight, much due to the large entries in most breeds and the sense that each show really counts for something. The fact that there is a restricted number of CCs available in each breed adds a lot of value to each occasion as opposed to most other countries where any one dog show is just one in an endless run-of-the-mill. One very special UK appointment was the Deerhound Club show with an entry of some 200 of those wonderful grey aristocrats.

"Judging big specialties in the US is also a wonderful experience, again the entries are huge and there is a very special sense of occasion. My first US specialty was the American Whippet Club in 1989. It was wonderful and quite overwhelming. It was something of a shock to have Doris Wear (Stoney Meadow), Peggy Newcombe (Pennyworth) and Dianne Bleecker (Morshor) showing up in the same class. With their combined experience of more than 150 years in the breed, I felt somewhat humble that these giants of the breed would pay for my evaluation of their dogs. None of them won the class however.

"I have judged several American Whippet specialties after that, the highlight was last year's National Specialty with a world record entry of 811 individual Whippets, including 149 champions, and all under just one judge in four long days. That was a once-in-a-lifetime judging experience for sure – fabulous!

"I have also enjoyed judging for the Greyhound Club of America twice, the Deerhound Club of America, Pharaoh Hound Club of America and the Saluki Club of America as well as a number of regional specialties, including four US Afghan Hound specialties. The US all-breed scene I have found less inspiring over all, but some appointments stick out such as Santa Barbara in its heyday, the Del Valle Kennel Club in Northern California and the recent American Kennel Club Invitational in Florida.

"My trips to the Ontario Sighthound Association in Canada rank among the highlights as for quality of both the organisation and the dogs; same thing for Mexico where I was honoured to judge the sighthound group at the FCI World Show.

"I have judged several times in Australia – Sydney three or four times, twice in Adelaide, and in Melbourne and Brisbane, but even if they have a number of excellent dogs in many breeds, I am not at home with the attitude of many of the exhibitors and breeders, Adelaide being the exception. New Zealand has been almost the opposite; very friendly people but with potential for improvement in most breeds.

"My trips to several Asian countries, to North and South Africa, to Eastern Europe and to Latin America have all brought rich rewards one way or the other. Judging in some of the more recent and in some ways perhaps less sophisticated dog countries can be very meaningful. How about it when the whole family, including both parents, three children, the grandmother and an aunt comes into your ring in Russia to have your critique simultaneously translated. Then they look at you, then at the dog, then back at you and start nodding their heads? The first time in Moscow, the people left Åge and me at the airport with the words: "Please do not forget about us". The extreme dedication shown and the great sacrifice made by fanciers in some of these countries makes it truly meaningful to go there, even if the hotel room and other facilities may not be up to your normal requirements.

"As for the quality of the breeds that I have judged worldwide, the picture is quite diverse and hard to boil down into a few words. Generally speaking I think Afghan Hounds are in big trouble worldwide with very few outstanding dogs anywhere. The very best ones are still in the US as I think they always have been, but they also have the very worst ones. Australia has always had a good reputation for Afghan Hounds. There are fortunately still some outstanding individual dogs scattered around in Scandinavia as well as some European countries such as Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Slovakia.

"The best entry I have ever judged in Borzois was a club show right here in Norway, but the current quality is nowhere near as good. Again there are some outstanding individuals scattered around. I shall be judging Borzois at the FCI European show this year and hope for some treasures there. I was pleased to see some lovely Deerhounds coming up in the UK and think that they are on the right track, otherwise there are excellent pockets of Deerhounds in Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, the US and Canada.

"Greyhounds; collectively I do not think they are as good as they used to be in either the UK, the US, in Scandinavia or in France, but there are still a few good dogs around in all of those countries. Countries like Australia, Italy, Latvia and Slovenia have quickly establishing themselves as important in the breed. Norway has long been, and still is, a stronghold in Ibizan Hounds as evidenced also by a couple of exports who have gained their UK titles, including last year's BOB and this year's BOS-winner at Crufts. From what I have seen the best line-ups of Irish Wolfhounds can still be found in the UK, perhaps with the exception of big US specialties.

"The best population of Pharaoh Hounds, by far, is in Sweden and Finland, but with excellent individuals in the Netherlands and the US. Same thing in Salukis, the Swedish and Finnish dogs still reigns supreme, Germany and Australia are strong in that breed, and there are some excellent dogs in other countries as well.

Strong Whippets

Whippets are strong all over the world, and during the years that I have been judging them, they have come much more together internationally. Just look at the results from the Crufts weekend; an Italian-owned and bred dog by an American sire wins BOB over an American-imported bitch. This would have been unthinkable just ten, or even five, years ago. When I judged the Whippet bitches at Crufts three years ago, I ended up with a CC winner from Ireland and a RCC winner from Italy. The year after we brought Pauline Oliver's Bardo over to show and she did extremely well, finishing her Danish and Norwegian champion titles in just four weeks.

"The best Whippets anywhere can now compete with the best Whippets from anywhere else and it is most fascinating. That being said, to make it into that final cut out of those 149 champions at the American Whippet National last year, you had to be truly outstanding in any other company. Again, the winner was foreign; this time a Canadian bitch.

"I cannot go on to discuss all the other breeds that I have admired in different countries, but let me just briefly mention the Smooth Collies and Australian Terriers in Finland, the Flatcoats and Cairn Terriers in Sweden, Beagles and Newfoundlands in Denmark, the Smooth Fox Terriers and Brittanys in the US, the Giant Schnauzers in Russia, the Toy Poodles and Papillons in Japan – the list goes on and on."

Why does Espen think Scandinavia has been so successful at breeding dogs? Is there any great difference between the attitudes of the British and Scandinavians?

"Yes, Scandinavian countries do have a lot of excellent breeders. The more I have travelled, the more I have realised that we have some excellent dogs and excellent breeders in our part of the world.

"I can see several reasons. The most important one I think is our system of writing individual critiques for every dog at every show and we are talking about straightforward, honest critiques describing the overall appearance as well as mentioning the major virtues as well as the imperfections.

"New exhibitors quickly learn about the good as well as the less good points of their dog. And those that are unable or unwilling to see their own dogs imperfections are at least regularly reminded that other people see them very well. Those well-written honest critiques are a great relief for that dreaded disease called kennel blindness.

"The critiques help creating an environment where owners and breeders are ready to discuss both the virtues and faults of their dogs with each other. The critique also makes for more conscious judging and is an excellent tool to articulate and explain the reasons for your placements and serves as a great test for the competence and knowledge of the judge. For those who do not understand what I am talking about, read some of Zena Thorn-Andrews' well-written critiques. Mind you, this is something quite different from the toothless niceties that so often appear in the UK dog papers.

"I think that our quality rating system is also a good thing in that you simply cannot be the best of a bad lot. If there are no excellent dogs in the entry, well then simply nobody wins, be it in the class or in the breed. It is also good for the judge not to have to place bad or mediocre dogs, this I find a challenge when judging in countries without the quality rating system. Somehow it takes more to withhold, even if I have withheld CCs, RCCs or the equivalent in the UK, the USA and Canada.

"Another important reason for the Scandinavian success story lies in the recruiting and encouragement of young talents, be it as breeders, exhibitors, show organisers or judges. Most of our leading dog people started out seriously in dogs as teenagers while their ability to learn and ask questions was at its best, and they were quickly recognised and their talents developed. Hans Lehtinen, Rodi Hübenthal, Ole Staunskjær and Kari Järvinen were all approved as championship show judges while still in their teens. Are there any British counterparts, I wonder?

"Another reason is that the Scandinavian countries being relatively small, we realise very well that we are not in the centre of the world and the world does not revolve around us. Thus we keep a keen eye on everything that happens in our breeds worldwide, keep in constant touch with and often visit breeders abroad, many travel extensively overseas to shows, to breed their bitches or to search for carefully planned imports – and a few not so carefully planned. Anyway, in this way many Scandinavian breeders have been able to incorporate the very best stock from anywhere, but mostly from Britain.

"Of course our relative wealth has also played a role in making us able to purchase the very best breeding stock. Our quarantine probably also played a role in keeping a lot of rubbish out. As we did not have quarantine from the UK, most imports came from well-established British strains. Now that the quarantine is gone, imports are coming from everywhere, some for the good, but there are also a lot more worthless ones.

"Yet another reason is the fact that most dogs, including breeding stock and show dogs, are kept as family pets in Scandinavia – possibly due to a mix of cultural and climatic reasons. As family pets, the dogs are there to stay. A consequence of this is that very few dogs, including the very best ones are ever exported, but rather remain available to Scandinavian breeders for their entire fertile careers. You cannot eat the cake and save it for later, you know!

"Most Scandinavian breeders breed on a small scale and will keep only a few brood bitches. As opposed to the UK and America, this has more or less always been the situation with us, so we have never had to wake up to a new era with the demise of the big kennels."

If Espen Engh was running the British Kennel Club what changes might he make?

"You have a highly competent and very experienced dog person as the chairman of your KC, and he would not need me to tell him what changes to make. Obviously the separation between the social and the governing sides of the club will go on and a gradual opening up is unavoidable. The KC has taken so many excellent initiatives in latter years, just look at the Charitable Trust, the Discover Dogs display and the endangered breeds project as examples."

What are Espen's major concerns for the future of the sport on an international level?

"A lot of focus will need to have to remain on presenting the dog to society at large as being valuable, useful and versatile; anti-dog and breed specific legislation has to be fought worldwide. Animal welfare issues are important and will probably become even more so, and I am worried about the effects of the globalisation on the welfare of the individual animal.

"With the borders down, the exchange of bloodlines that may be a great tool for breeders may easily be at the expense of the dogs as they are shipped here, there and everywhere and then back. Poor dogs!

"The arrival of the Internet has made communication so much easier, and of course that is mostly for the good. However it has also opened up for a lot of internet-imports of dogs and semen where people seem to base their selection on carefully manipulated internet-photos, preferring to live their fantasies rather than basing their choices on facts and information.

"Again I am concerned about the shifting of priorities from quality to quantity, and nowhere more so than on the international scene.

"I am afraid we may all drown in more and more of what nobody really wants – mediocre dogs being shown at mediocre shows, being rewarded by mediocre judges and going on the produce another generation of mediocre offspring onto another spin of the same treadmill. Will anybody with average or above intelligence want to be part of that? Who will be the new recruits into such a sport?

"Unfortunately I observe plenty of power play at the blatant disregard of competence and integrity and at the expense of our breeds and the dog people, nowhere worse than in the FCI.

"In an idealistic world people would concentrate on how they can contribute to a positive development, always trying their very best with the best possible motives – asking the right questions and then finding the right answers. How can you positively contribute towards your strain, your breed, your club and the sport – be it as a dog owner, exhibitor, breeder, handler, judge, committee member, breed historian, dog journalist, author, publisher – whatever? I hope there will be many more idealists coming along in the future, as our sport will strongly depend on them."

Certainly the emergence of more enthusiasts with Espen Engh's grasp on reality and the dog fancy would be exceedingly welcome. ■

Int Ch Emotion du Manoir de la Grenouiliere was imported from France. Espen and Åge have owned the top winning Whippet in Norway many years, with imports from France, Australia and England.

Judging the American Whippet Club Eastern Specialty 1989. The BOB-winner Ch Bohem Delacreme Demoiselle went on to Best in Show

Espen judged the Deerhound Club show in 1999 and is pictured with Ch Beardswood Fern winning BOB and Ch Beardswood Garvan going BOS.