On January 22, 2019, the American Shih Tzu Club Board of Directors voted to award the AKC Outstanding Sportsmanship Award to Sally Vilas in recognition of her decades of extraordinary service to our club, our breed, and the world of purebred dogs. Sally’s first show dog, more than 50 years ago, was a miniature poodle. Her husband Bob discovered Shih Tzu at about the time they were recognized, and decided a Shih Tzu would make a wonderful family pet. They acquired their first Shih Tzu from Barbara Pennington. They had only small number of show dogs who lived in their home and enjoyed life with their two sons and their friends—these included Best in Show Shih Tzu Ch. Vilenzo Red Rover Red Rover ROM.

Sally’s first mentor in dogs taught her that a commitment to the sport should include service in appropriate organizations, and she became active in the Poodle Club of Central California in the 1960s, serving as its president and show chair for several years. She joined the ASTC in 1976, serving as ASTC President from 1996 to 2006, then as the ASTC’s Recording Secretary, AKC Delegate, Bulletin Editor, and a member of the Judges’ Education Committee. For her service, she was honored with an ASTC Life Membership. She was also a member of the Poodle Club of America, the Golden Gate Shih Tzu Fanciers, and the Nor-Cal Toy Dog Fanciers. She served as an officer and/or committee member for all of them, including president of Golden Gate and longtime show chair for the toy club. She was also Managing Director of the ASTC Charitable Trust, overseeing its contributions to disaster relief, health research, education, and other initiatives that benefit our breed and the world of purebred dogs.

For many people in our breed and in our sport, Sally was always the “go to” person. If you had a question or needed help, she was always there with a prompt and knowledgeable response. Licensed to judge all toy and non-sporting breeds and groups, junior handling, and best in show, she was also at the forefront of efforts to prevent the passage of a breeding ban in the state of California and ensure the continuation of the Hemopet blood bank that benefits dogs throughout the country.

Clearly, it would have been easier to list what Sally has NOT done than all that she contributed until forced to retire due to ill health in 2019. Her retirement leaves a huge gap that it will take many people to fill!

Those wishing to share memories of Sally for the next Bulletin and a presentation at the National, please contact Jo Ann White at joawhite@juno.com