

## The Voice of Westminster Dog Show

**Meet David Frei, the man who gives the venerable dog show its voice.**

*Steve Dale*

You never know where you'll find David Frei. I've variously interviewed him "hiding out" in a bathroom during a pre-Westminster party at The Joy Luck Club author Amy Tan's home; from behind the stage at Madison Square Garden just before going on air for the USA Network; from a beach in the Caribbean; the chair in his dentist's office; and from several of his favorite restaurants.

This is the first time I've actually interviewed him at his office at the Westminster Kennel Club, where he took over as director of communications in 2003.

Frei is a familiar face to people who watch dogs on TV. He's as connected to the sport of dogs as Jack Buck and Harry Caray were to baseball broadcasting and he has every bit as much fun.

In February, Frei will make his 15th consecutive Westminster broadcast. In 2003, a record 10 million tuned in, and about twice as many watched the National Dog Show from Philadelphia that Thanksgiving event he's broadcast since its inception in 2002.

John O'Hurley (who played J. Peterman on TV's Seinfeld) is Frei's partner on the telecast of the National Dog Show. O'Hurley has said, "Working with David is easy. He's like a dog, you can trust him; he's loyal. I think he just might be part dog." Another longtime (Westminster) broadcast buddy is Joe Garagiola, who says of their nine-year partnership, "There's no question David knows his stuff, and yet he still does his homework. Of course, that's how he makes it seem so easy. He's prepared as well as anyone I've ever worked with." That's quite a compliment given the number of years Garagiola's been a broadcaster.

"David's a great guy, and very giving," says Mark McEwan, who's teamed with Frei on the Westminster broadcast since 2003. "I was the new guy in town," he says. "He could have dictated, or tried to ... But that's not David. He understands he's not the star of the show, the dogs are!"

Garagiola adds, "Anyone who hears David can tell he sincerely loves dogs. And he loves telling people about them. I think that's the secret to his success."

Those who know Frei best agree he's happier today than he's ever been. "Well, that's because he has a platform where he can do good," says wife Cheryl Frei. "And he loves his job as much as any person can." Cheryl, a certified professional health care chaplain at New York Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medical Center, doesn't argue the suggestion that her husband is a preacher on behalf of canines.