

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

Summer 1998 • \$13



Samoyed People

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Merrill and Rowena Evans
SEELAH
Waukec, Iowa

Part II

This interview was conducted at the home of Merrill and Rowena Evans in June of 1996 by Katy Merseal.

Have you ever used artificial insemination?

Rowena: Yes. We had one litter of seven puppies - all males!

Merrill: That's another expensive proposition.

Rowena: Dog showing is expensive no matter which way you look at it.

Merrill: If you have your dog's semen collected, you pay for that, then you pay for the storage of it and you continue paying as long as it is in storage. Then when it is used, there is the shipping fee and the cost to have the bitch inseminated.

Rowena: I haven't had anybody who wanted to use the semen we have stored, and I have wondered many times what we would charge. Maybe you would charge the price of a puppy, say \$500 or something like that, which is a normal stud service fee for a dog that is finished. But what do you do when the dog is dead, even though he was a champion and a Group placer, along with all the added expenses? I haven't had it happen yet, but I'm still thinking, what do you charge? I really don't know.

Here is a nice picture of a litter that was done with Jackpot out of a Murdock daughter. Somebody said, "How did you EVER get all their heads turned the same way?" I don't know what we used. There were so many people trying to get the attention of the dogs and we had to round up people to hold them too. All the puppies finished their championships but one. We did that breeding twice. The second litter had nice puppies, but we didn't get them into show homes. All my dogs have tremendous coat, because Murdock carried it and passed it to his get. The dog I am showing now is just a young

dog and doesn't have his full coat yet, but he has a tremendous coat already.

At one show, they brought Murdock's grandmother to the

her up." It's nice that we have that picture.

I have a funny story about Bucky. Here is a picture of him, and as you can see, he wasn't

was. The photographer came into the ring next to us and Bucky went bananas. The judge stood there and laughed and laughed at us. I was so embar-



*Chaika's Sophia of Seelah (Ch. Dusha's Keno of Seelah x Dusha's Chaika of Seelah),
pouting because she just had her ears washed. Big girl!*

show and she had her picture taken with him. The judge said, "Who's this bitch? Why wasn't she entered? I would have put

posing! (laughter) I hadn't shown him for awhile and I took him to either Kansas or Nebraska. I didn't know who the judge

rassed. Everybody thought it was so funny, but I was embarrassed because we couldn't get him to do anything until the pho-



Kola - Jackpot litter.

tographer left. Finally he came back and we tried to get a picture, but we still didn't get a decent picture.

Here is a picture of Murdock's Mykola. She has whelped some of the nicest puppies we've ever had. She was a very little bitch. She was cute, and she was well balanced and very perky. She was strong and not very easy to show, and if her family was in the audience, there was no way you were going to show her. We took her to the Madison, Wisconsin specialty one year and put her in either Parade of Champions or Veterans. Her family was sitting way up in the audience but she caught their eye and we couldn't do anything with her. You will find that at shows, where the owners will be there, trying to hide, but the dog's nose will go up in the air and it knows where they are. I had one who used to hide behind a post but he found her every time. I said, "Just get clear away." Some dogs can't show with their owners around.

This is a picture of one of her pups, "Vegas," who is still jumping six-foot fences. Here's Miss Muffit. Here's Ch. Bakan, out of Judy Mears male and Kola. It was a nice litter. He was very laid-back and we had a hard time getting him going. He wouldn't animate, but he was a sound dog, just as sound as a dollar. Here is a picture of Bakan when he was a little older and has his coat. See the difference? He looked a little bit bitchy to start with and I said, "I don't think we want to show him." Then I saw him one day

and I said, "Let me take him to Florida." We took him to Florida and he started winning. We fin-

ished him without any trouble at all. It's just that he wasn't animated as I like them to be. He

was a sweet dog, with such a lovely temperament. I've had some really lovely temperaments



on the dogs, regardless of Murdock and whatever people say about him! (laughter)

I've had very good luck on hips, although, like everybody, I've had some hip dysplasia. I've had a very good average on excellents and I'm very proud of that. They may not always become champions, but at least they have good, sound hips. I've had various things pop up now

lose it.

Here is Bit O'Love. She finished in Florida about five years ago. I sold her to some people in Illinois.

Here is one we didn't keep because she was borderline hip dysplasia, which made us just sick because she was a sweetheart - and showy! She was just as showy as could be! We sold her about two or three years ago to a



Sam-Okie's Chalk Tau Meaka, Merrill Evans' army buddy.

and then, but we've never had PRA.

Here is a picture of Kiam's Northern Exposure. I took him back from a stud service in Canada. I took him out the first time and he took Best of Opposite Sex for Breed. I don't like his rear, but he's showy, and a lot of dogs are winning with worse rears than his. He's just a nice dog.

This is "Coty." We lost him this year. He was a Bucky son. He had his obedience title but he didn't enjoy showing, so we just used him for stud. He was part of the family over at the kennel. They had two boys and that was their family dog. The kids there have gone through a lot because they get a favorite and then we

family in the southern part of the state so she has a good home. We had to make up our minds because we can't keep them all as pets. We try to find good homes for them before they get too old to get into a home. She went to a good home where they love her. She was such a cute little thing and the judges liked her. That's the trouble when you show a dog early, and you are dying to get them into the ring at six months. You show them, put points on them, and then when they're two you have them X-rayed and find out they are borderline in hip dysplasia. I've known some people who will breed a borderline, but I won't. You are asking for trouble when you do that, and we



"Rocky," from Bakan x Copy litter.



Coty's Free Spirit of Seelah.

have enough trouble without doing that. It was tempting with her, though, let me tell you. She was a cutey.

I was afraid they were going to let him get too heavy. He has a little mustache. I've had several that have had that. It isn't black hair,

buff. I was at a specialty and the judge had a lady in the ring with him who was an apprentice judge. He was showing her different

do that?" He said, "I wanted her to see that when you find a buff dog like this you will find black hair." Sure enough, he found a



Magic Muffin of Seelah.

Here's one out of Bakan and Copy that we sold to a doctor in North Dakota. He's spoiled rotten. They will never show him.

it's pigment showing through. A lot of my dogs, when they are washed, you will find dark pigment. Sometimes they will turn

things. I had Keno, who by that time was turning buff. The judge was parting Keno's hair. Later, I asked the judge, "Why did you

couple of black hairs down in that buff coat. You will find them occasionally. You will even find them in white coats sometimes.



Kiam's Northern Exposure, "Rocky."

Pictures today are much better than they used to be. Some of ours were so bad I don't even know why we even bought them. Like this one, Murdock's first Best in Show. It's okay, but he doesn't even have a coat there. Here is a picture of Bo Peep as a young bitch. I just got this one this week from a young couple in the Chicago area. They have a bitch and a dog of ours. This is

their bitch. She's called Seelah's Hot Off the Press. She finished her championship and I think she got some Group placements. It's a cute picture, with her sticking her nose up in the air. She was probably howling.

How did you come up with your kennel name, Seelah?

Rowena: Balika is for white and I was going to call it Balika's Seelah, which is "white power" in

Russian. It was at the time when there were all those riots, and I thought, "I'd better not do that," so I shortened it to Seelah, which is "power" in Russian. I try to put Seelah at the end of the names because it means power. A lot of people don't know what it means. It is pronounced "Sheelah," but everybody says "Seelah," even my husband. And you'd better not say Sam-oy-ed;

it's Sammy-ed. Dolly Ward will have a fit if she finds out someone is saying Sam-oy-ed. She's a real stickler on that! (laughter)

I just say Sammy.

Rowena: That's a smart thing to do. There are a lot of arguments on how to say the name, but when I'm around Dolly, I say Sammy or Sammy-ed. They were great competitors. They had Hoof N Paw and we

had Murdock and we went neck and neck with each other.

You mentioned handling other people's dogs. Have you done that professionally, or just as a favor?

Rowena: Usually dogs I've sold, but I also have shown other breeds. I still have my old license from AKC.

When you started your breeding program, what were you trying to do?

Rowena: I liked the old Kobe and Whiteway line, which had already been combined and I tried to go back to that. I pretty much stayed with that. If you go back in our pedigrees, you will find that same stuff all the way through. The dogs were pretty much to the standard all the way back. Doris McLaughlin of Silver Acres in Colorado had that line. You can linebreed for three or four generations and then you should outcross, unless you have the perfect Sammy. I liked Kari J-Go Diko. He had a beautiful head. He wasn't a teddy bear, but he had a very beautiful head and was very showy. The dogs I had were nice dogs and I think they were pretty dogs, but there was something a little extra I wanted in there, so I took Ch. Snowfire's Bo Peep to him. She animated. I had no problem on that. I really doubled up on animation when I went to Diko. I only had three puppies from that breeding. I drove up there in a snowstorm, in May of all times, to get this breeding, and we had two girls and a boy. There was something about the little male that I wanted, so we decided we wouldn't keep the females, but we'd sell them. I sold one in Des Moines. She was shown some and got an obedience title. We kept the other one for the longest time. We didn't have a name for her. There was a book out called *The Happy Hooker*, so we were calling her Happy Hooker. Guess who bought her? A minister! He said, "What's her name?" I just couldn't bring myself to say "Happy Hooker." I said, "We've been calling her Happy," so she left us being called Happy. Thank goodness I hadn't put Happy Hooker on her registration slip. (laughter)

Anyway, I did get what I wanted from with that combination, which was A Touch of Silver Moon with Doris McLaughlin's line. When you put a little bit of Silver Moon in there, you end up with a prettier dog. There was something a little extra you



Ch. Dusha's Heirloom of Seelah, "Buddy."

got in there. I was very happy with the breeding. I didn't repeat it, but I liked what I got. From Murdock down, I pretty much linebred all the way. I went out to General Custer in California once. That was a nice breeding I wish I could have repeated, but I didn't get around to that. It's hard shipping dogs. When I shipped "Charity," a Murdock daughter, out there to be bred to him, I almost didn't get her back - I'm just kidding, of course. But Pat Enslin had a sled team that she was noted for, and she said, "She is so strong, I wish I could keep her." I told her she'd better send her back, but she has always talked about Charity. Charity was strong and she probably would have made a good sled dog.

I took Mykola to "Jak Pot," Ch. Windsong's Jak Pot O Pomirish, because I just liked him and thought maybe it was time I did something a little different.

That went back into Joyce Cain's line. She was a judge from Wisconsin. I got some nice puppies from that. I loved the puppies, but I think I got a little bit of a round eye on some of the puppies when I did that breeding. We both could have contributed to it. It wasn't just his fault, because he didn't have round eyes either. Somehow it got in there. I pretty much stayed with the Whiteway and Kobe lines. By doing that, I found I was within the standard most of the time, in both height and overall size. It just stayed the same all the way.

My dogs have always been noted for pretty heads. I can't say that of every dog, however. We have one called "Oopsy Daisy" that was absolutely the ugliest bitch you ever saw. She changed, though, and she became probably one of the best brood bitches we've ever had - if we could have just put another head on her. Anything we bred her to,

she came up with sound, pretty puppies. She did get her obedience title. She is still living, as happy as a lark.

We stayed with the same lines. I know some breeders who will try everything. They go to all kinds of lines to see what they will get, and they do get some nice dogs, but what are you going to do with all of them when you do all those different breedings? You have to be consistent. You may have two mediocre dogs to start with. Maybe one has something good the other one doesn't have and vice versa. With the first breeding, you may not get anything, but from those puppies, down the line, you may get something better. When you breed again, you get something better still and it keeps getting better. I think that's the way to go. You can try all kinds of things and one litter may be fine, while the next litter will be just terrible. I think it is better to stay the same and

build your own line that way.

Once in awhile you will have to go out, because you are going to double up on faults as well as good points. I had some weak tailsets and I think I tightened up on tailsets when I went to Ch. Pinehill Hermes from Doris Knoblock. That was "Pepita." I bred her to Murdock three times and we had beautiful puppies. Bucky was one of her puppies. We got nice tailsets on them, although sometimes they were a little short and tight.

At any rate, here is a picture of our sign, "Samoyeds of Seelah." When we retired, they gave us a new sign. Here's a picture of the breeding kennel with the runs. We didn't get a picture of our boarding kennel, but at the left here you can see the building.

Merrill: The kennels are heated and have air-conditioning.

Rowena: It's just a small boarding kennel, but if we want to go away, we can take all our dogs over there and we don't have to worry about them. We know somebody is there to take care of them (Paula and Steve Exline). That was the main reason we built it. It wasn't to make money on boarding, even though we are full most of the time.

Merrill: We keep the boarding dogs totally separate from the other dogs. One kennel is for all our dogs and the other is strictly boarding. The dog on the sign is a picture of Bucky.

Rowena: Oh, yes. Bucky was a celebrity.

Merrill: My insurance company here wanted a dog to put in an ad, so they got some mongrel somewhere and I wouldn't buy it. We used Bucky and had him advertised on billboards and television in five states.

Rowena: The people who owned him initially had a service station. They were advertising tires one month and they had someone come in and paint a big picture of Bucky on the window of the service station to advertise tires. It said, "Bucky says..." By the time we had that picture taken I had taught Bucky a little obedience, but that was after he'd quit showing. He was so obedient that day. He sat there so well, even though it took quite awhile to get the right picture. The whole family was there, except their daughter who couldn't get away from college. They borrowed a neighbor girl. I remember the little boy was so

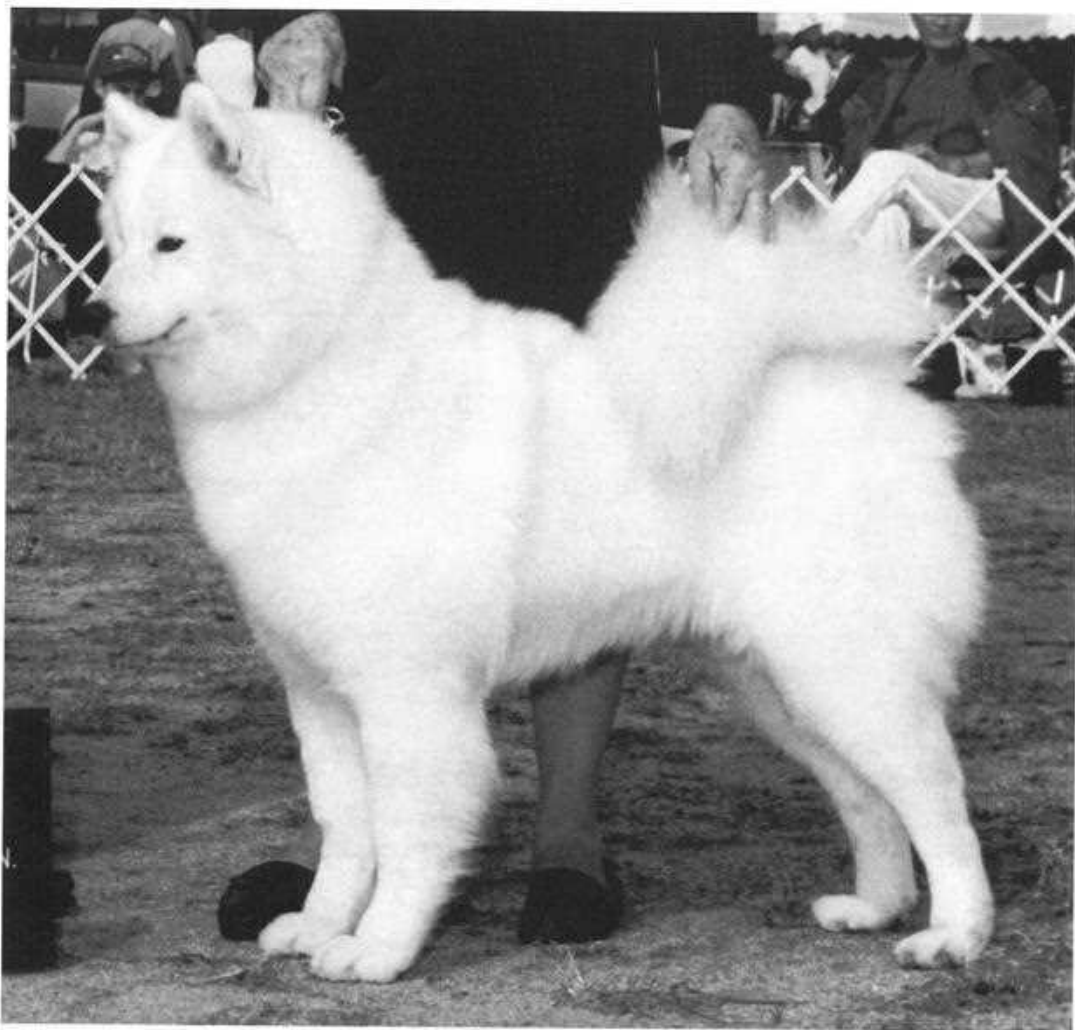
restless because he was hungry after getting home from school, but Bucky was very good - that day, anyway! (laughter) Bucky was just fine and he slept all the way home in the airplane.

This is a picture of one of the dogs we had from our insemination breeding. He's nice. I think he has seven or eight points now.

new people don't know me, but that's the way it is after awhile - we're antiques! (laughter) Most breeders, if they see my dogs, they pretty much know it's my head. It's mostly the head people recognize. Most people who have known me through the years know my dogs.

How would you rate type, temper-

eye. That's another reason I went to Diko and I haven't had any light eyes for years now. They are nice, dark eyes. The darker eye looks much prettier with the white. It's not a fault to have a lighter eye, but you don't want blue. I prefer the darker eye. They have to have good temperaments, and I've been get-



Farrah Bit O' Seelah (Homer's Hektor of Seelah x Bit O' Honey of Seelah).

He is kind of a combination Murdock. We started to name that litter after baseball players and this is Dusha's DiMaggio of Seelah (Ch. Dusha's Keno of Seelah x Oopsy Daisy of Seelah). It fits the dog well. We co-own him with a lady and she is doing a good job with him.

He looks like a lion sitting on the ledge of a library.

Rowena: (laughter) That's the truth!

Do you feel you have established a distinguishable line?

Rowena: I think so. A lot of

ament and soundness in order of importance?

Rowena: I think it's a tie between temperament and soundness, but you have to have a good temperament. The Sammy is noted for its temperament. They should be good with children, although if a child is hyper, that will upset a dog. Soundness is very important. Everything else falls into place - the fronts and rears and everything. I want good fronts and rears. I want the black eye, if possible. We started out with a dog that had a lighter

ting some really good temperaments lately. They are full of it. Sammies, on the whole, are kind of hard to live with because they want to be with you all the time. You can't stick them out in the backyard and just leave them there. They have to be part of the family, and you have to decide that your house is not going to stay the way it was, because you are going to have hair. That's all there is to it, you are going to have hair. I didn't think I was going to have hair with my Tibetans, but I do. You

just can't see it. (laughter)

Didn't you say you did some obedience with your dogs?

Rowena: Yes, and I wish I could do more. I may go back to doing more. I have a little bitch right now that is just full of it and she needs to be busy. I think obedience would be the thing to do. If she gets bored she chews her tail, which is just about the time we get her entered in a show. If we keep her busy, she is okay. She had a litter of pups and I lost that litter, the first one in all the years we've been breeding. The only thing we can think of is that they came early. They looked fine. We had an autopsy done on one and the vet said there was nothing wrong with it. They evidently came too soon; also hot weather. We did three breedings, and we think if they would have come on the first breeding we'd have been fine, so it must have been the last breeding we did. She is just a busy dog and I think I'd like to get an obedience title on her.

I have done several and have never gone beyond three shows to get a CD title. I've always gotten it in three shows. We're never perfect, but we make it. I think obedience is great, although some people get a little carried away with it and get tough on their dogs. There is no reason for that. You can sweet talk some of them into it. I really like obedience. The only thing I don't like is that you wait around all day. I understand in other countries that if you don't make it through your exercises then there is no reason to wait around for the sits and downs. I don't know for sure if that is true or not, but that makes sense to me. If you have already flunked, why stick around to continue flunking? I finished Bo Peep and "Muffy." I did their obedience and their championships at the same time. I don't think I'd try that again, though; it's hard work. By the time you show both, you are tired and the dog is tired, and if you are quite a ways from home, stuck out in the boonies someplace, you still have to drive home. I don't care for that.

I'm really thinking about doing more obedience because I enjoy it. If you don't make it, it is your fault. It's nobody's fault but yours. I do think the dogs should be clean in obedience. That's one thing I see in obedience, where people will go in in sloppy jeans;

they aren't clean. You can wear a nice pair of slacks, or whatever, but be neat. Some people don't wash their dogs. There is no reason for that. It's just as important as a championship title, and maybe sometimes more important. When you get your CD title, it's important, so have your picture taken. You should have a

can do both. Not everybody can do both. Some people who can show in conformation can't do obedience, and some people in obedience are really very shy people, but they are in command in the obedience ring. If they had to run around the conformation ring, they would be embarrassed or nervous. It just depends on

you ever heard. Talk to Bob Ward sometime, and I think there are a couple of others still around who did sledding. Pat Enslin in California could tell you. They used to have a wonderful time sledding. It was a lot of fun and I think I would have really liked that. We got into it later and then it got later and



Chaika's First Coty, "Coty."

record of it to show people that you got a CD title on your dog. You can say you have it, but unless you have that picture, you can't prove it. When Paula Exline, at our kennel, finished Coty, he was all nice and clean and she was dressed neatly. The judge really praised her afterwards. She said, "I wish more people would come into the ring with a clean dog. I hate to have to put my hands on some of these dogs they bring into the ring."

Obedience is great and you

the person. Some people do really well in obedience. Some make their life's work in obedience. (laughter)

Have you ever done any sledding or carting with the dogs?

Rowena: No, but I wish I had. I didn't start until my children were almost all grown. If I were starting out today, I would really get into sledding. I think that would be more fun! If you listen to some of the old-timers who used to sled and race, it is the most thrilling thing to listen to

later. (laughter) Now it's beyond me. Sometimes you just can't do it all.

There are so many things you can do with the Samoyeds now. If they don't make a championship they can do so many other things. There's backpacking, sledding, obedience, weight pulling and herding. I would love to try herding. I think I maybe could do that. Sammies are natural herders. If you ever notice them, in the house they want to keep everyone all togeth-

er. They don't want one here and one there, they want everyone together where they can keep an eye on everything.

When we lived south of here, we had two dogs. One was old "Shadrach." We had pasture on the side of our house that we rented out to a neighbor, who had cattle and horses in there. Shadrach would get in there and herd those animals, and he had never been taught to herd. The little bitch we had then would do the same thing. Every morning, she would stick her nose through the fence and one horse and she would be nose to nose. It was fun to watch. Samoyeds are natural herders.

There are so many things they can do. That's what I tell people who have pets. I say, "Look at the things you can do. Don't be disappointed if you can't have a show dog. You can get a show dog later if you want to, but look what you can do with your dog right now." They love their dog and they don't want to get rid of their pet, yet they think they want to show. Why put a dog down just because it's not perfect or is not a show dog? They can be something. A Sammy is a Sammy!

My son has a cross-eyed Sammy right now, believe it or not. This dog came wandering in one day. At first, I thought it was one of mine out on a hill. I couldn't catch her, so I called Paula, who came out in her van, and we finally got this dog captured. We put her in the van. I said, "She must be somebody's pet." She was a great big girl. I said, "Take her over and put her into the boarding kennel and we'll advertise." I looked at her and thought, "Look at that head!" She had the weirdest head you ever saw. It took us awhile to figure out what the problem was, but she is actually cross-eyed. We couldn't find the owner, so we decided we were going to take her to the shelter, which I hated to do, because she was only eighteen or nineteen months old, and as big as any male you'd ever seen, with a lot of coat. We found she was spayed. My son and his wife were here and she said, "Couldn't we take her home?" I said, "Are you sure you want her? We don't know anything about her." So they took her home. They've had her about two years now and she's been a great pet, but I wouldn't



Ch. Murdock's Charity of Seelah.

trust her around children because I don't know anything about her. If you've ever seen a cross-eyed Sammy, you've never seen anything like it. You have to watch if you come up on her blind side, because she will growl at you. My son has a friend who is an eye doctor, and he said, "I knew right away what's wrong with her." My son asked why and he said, "I could tell by the way she moved." We thought she was moving fine, but he said, "No. I knew it was her eyes." They set right down in. The only way I can describe it is cross-eyed, and the eyes are not almond-shaped. She's cross-eyed, but she is somebody's pet and she's pretty.

You can take the ugliest Sammy in the world out on the street and people will stop you. We used to take our old dog, our first one that was Merrill's, out, and when we would stop, people's children would come up and

throw their arms around her. Fortunately, she was very tolerant and would take anything. One time she was sitting in the sandbox and my grandchildren were there. They were just toddlers. They went out to play in the sandbox and she was in it and wouldn't get out. She would lie in there all the time, and when they went back home, she would go out there in the morning looking for them. She was a character. She and my husband would get on the helicopter - and you know how noisy they are - and she and Merrill would both fall sound asleep. He would take her to his office and she would lie behind his desk. He would have a staff meeting and she would go over and lie by the door, and nobody left that meeting. She was something else. You can tell stories about every Sammy. I could sit here all night and tell you stories about every dog I've

ever had - and you'd be bored to death! (laughter)

No, I wouldn't. I love stories and find them interesting.

Rowena: People from other breeds say they all look alike, but they don't. They are not all alike. Each one has its own personality, and some are more fun than others. There are some that you get a little bit more attached to. I keep thinking I have to give them up, but I don't know whether I can give them up or not. I will probably always have one around. None of my sons have any, except the one with the cross-eyed dog. They've had German Shepherds and cats, but none of them have had Sammies. They aren't Sammy people, and I think you have to be a Sammy person to have a Sammy.

What is a Sammy person?

Rowena: It's one who understands their temperament and personality. They are alive all



Ch. Snowfire's Bo Peep CD.

the time and not everybody can live with a Sammy. You have to know your breed. When you go to buy any dog, you should know something about that breed. It may not be the dog for you or for your family. When people come to see my puppies, I like them to bring their children with them, and then I decide right then whether it would be a good home for my puppy. You can tell by the way people react to their children how they will react to the puppy. If the children are allowed to do anything with the puppy, that puppy does not go home with that family, believe me.

We had one puppy we sold to a family, and I was a little leery when she first came in with these

three children. Soon, though, she said, "Now, you get over there and sit down and let that puppy alone. This is your sister's dog, and you let your sister play with the dog a little bit." I decided things would be all right with this family, and they are. They got another dog too. I was getting a little antsy because the children were hugging the dog and being a little rough with it and it was too young for that. It had always been good around children so I didn't want anything to happen. I was glad this happened while they were with me so I could see how she would react to it. Then I wouldn't have her back saying, "This puppy bit my child." The dogs have to defend themselves some way, and I think most dog

bites are caused because of a child. It is not always all the dog's fault, but they get the blame.

Would becoming more popular help or harm the Samoyeds?

Rowena: I think it has stayed about the same the last few years. I don't think it is anymore popular than it was. It's never been among the top ten breeds in popularity, or anything like that, but it has always been a popular breed. I don't think it has been higher up in the ratings because of all the coat. I really think that's the reason, not the dog itself. People don't want to take care of the coat and don't know how to. Before a puppy leaves us, we always try to show the people how to groom the dog.

We tell them, "If you brush the dog the way we tell you, at least two or three times a week, you won't have any problem." A lot of people just let them shed, and it's bad! They have to get that hair out of there. It will all come back. People don't like to do that, but you have to get that coat out. I've seen people in the show ring trying to hold coats, but you can't hold them. You can feel the lumps in there, so you might as well comb it out and start over again. Everyone likes the Sammy. It's not that people dislike the breed. The show people who have other breeds like the Sammies. They always look so pretty in the ring. I always like seeing that white dog in there.

To be continued ...