

The  
**SAMOYED**  
QUARTERLY



**Summer 1977**

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# SAMOYED PEOPLE



The Samoyed Quarterly Talks With  
VERNON MILES  
Ossining, New York

*This interview was taped at Vernon Miles' home in May, 1977 by Peggy Gaffney. Peggy also took the photos of Vernon and the dog pictured with Vernon is hers: Am. Mex. Intl. CACIB Ch. Elrond, Czar of Rivendell, C.D.*

*Vernon Miles is 88 years old, which we believe is the oldest member of the Samoyed Club of America. While we asked him the same questions as our last two subjects, most questions did not apply or couldn't be answered as they happened so long ago.*

*Where did you get your Sammies?*

I got them from the Pickle; no, I really didn't. I got them from a fellow by the name of Donahue but he got them from Pickle. Donahue didn't show them; he just got them for pets.... two or three dogs, something like that. And I got interested so I

bought from him. I called my dog "Champ". He used to like the water real well and in the winter I used to have a lot of fun sledding. One time I had eight dogs in my team and I used to hook them up and my wife and my children and I would go sledding a couple of miles from here. I am 88 years old and I have lived in this area all my life...I was born in 1889. I have forgotten what year I got my Judge's license but I enjoyed judging.

*What was the Sammie club like back in 1925 when you joined it?*

Nothing like today. You didn't have the activities and there wasn't the number of people in the club. There were 15 or 20 in the club, all in the East here, and then gradually moved to the West and now California is the largest. You don't hear much about the shows here in the East now. The first president of the club's name was Ferno and there was a fellow by the name of Lawrence and Pinkham; then we had a Miss Humphreys who lived in Rhode Island. She



had quite a kennel of dogs at one time. Then there was a Miss Harris and Monsignor Keagan. He was one of the big shots in the St. Patrick catholic cathedral. One time when I went to see him he had his dogs running loose up and down St. Patrick's cathedral. I think he had two dogs. I have written down the half dozen charter members that I remember. Ferno and Lawrence were the backbones of the club. This is going back 50 years.

*What were the shows like then? They were small; were they more formal? Were they more dress-up occasions?*  
Yes, there weren't too many. I didn't go very far. I showed in Jersey, New York state, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

*Did you do breeding?*

Yes. One time I had eight dogs and kept the males on one side and the females on the other side. I bought my first dog for a pet and when some said to show him, I didn't know anything about that, and he told me to go to the dog shows to see what was done. I watched what the others did about showing them if you want to call it fine points.

*Did you get championships on many of them?*

Only one. I won a few ribbons in my class but I never got the best in the show. I showed in Madison Square Garden twice and that was a big show of the East. I am a life member and the oldest; I got in only two years after the club started.

*You bred your own puppies and then built up to 8 dogs; did you use your own females for breeding?*

Yes, I used my own. There is this dog that I showed you.

*Did you use him at stud?*

Yes, he was a good dog.

*He looks like it; yet, actually, he looks like the California dogs do now.*

He was a good, strong dog.

*He has good angulation and a fantastic body and a nice front on him; that much you can tell from the picture. When you bred your puppies, how did you go about picking the ones you wanted to keep? Did you sell them or keep them?*

I sold most of them as pets. A lot of the people wanted them because of the cold weather. No matter how cold the weather gets they can let them out in the cold weather. Their coat can stand it.

*Where did you go -- up north of here?*

I went out about 150-200 miles from here, out on the trails with them. It was a hobby with me and I enjoyed it. I didn't go into it professionally for breeding, although I was satisfied with what I had.

*You have seen the Samoyed change over the years in the people.*

Yes, in the old style, there were no fancy dressers, just solid citizens.

*I seem to remember back the in the 30s and 40s there were a lot of big kennels in the East. Mrs. Ashton in Connecticut had huge kennels.*

Yes, and Pinkham got into it quite heavily. I don't know if he had a judge's license, or not. I think I was the only one there for awhile who had a judge's license. I was licensed to judge just Sams.

*If you were judging a Sam, what would you look for?*

First thing is the body, from the head to the tail and also the legs and also the walk -- the gait. There were sometimes the Sams would not be too good a show-er, and sometimes they would be very good. No doubt all the breeds have the same thing.

*I noticed that the Eastern Sams in the older days seemed to have a lot more hair than the ones out West. Their coats seemed to be a lot longer.*

It used to be there were no dogs in the West. As far West as you got was Chicago. California wasn't on the map as far as the breed was concerned. Now there are more out there.

*I drove to Osning and had the dog in the back of the car and everyone said, "What is that?" And they were here first. So, although the East Coast is where they started they haven't become big out here. There are thousands of Siberians, but very few Sams. They say, "Is it a white husky?"*

I think of the Samoyed as an all-year round dog. You don't have to worry about them in the winter.

*And they stay cool in the summer with the white coat to keep the heat in.*

Right.

*What was your kennel like? You said you had a run for the males.*

I lived in the country on 4-1/2 acres, with a barn and had a couple of stalls in it. There I had one side for the males and the other side for the females. Before I bought the house, Major Bowes owned it. The few years I lived out there, Major Bowes used to come out every summer in his chaffeur-driven car and stayed five or ten minutes. And then he would say, "Sonny, this is my first love". He married Margaret Ellington, the actress, and the road is called "Ellington Road". It is a country dirt road off the main road. Then across the road he built a great, big house and had wonderful outdoor movies, and pool, etc.

*In the winter, you had the dogs in the barn? You also had outside running areas?*

Yes, I used to lift the doors up and let the dogs out all the time. Every once in awhile they would howl at night -- the moonlight. It was a lot of fun. They are very gentle pets and you get very used to them. I finally got rid of the eight dogs I had; sold them to different people for \$15-\$20.

*How did your daughter like them?*

Very much, especially in the wintertime. She used to like the sled-dog-riding.

*Did she go to dog shows with you?*

Yes -- not to every show -- she was not as interested as I was. After she had been to two or three shows, the rest were the same for her. People have different things they like.

*I remember when you wrote to me in California and I was doing the bulletin a few years ago. You wrote me about being a member of the Samoyed Club and I remembered you.*

Samoyeds are a nice thing to have as a memory.

*Yes, people stop you on the street and ask "What is it?"*

I have heard them called the "Santa Claus dog".

*Would you like to go outside and see my dog and get some pictures?*

Yes, I would.

\*SQ\*

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