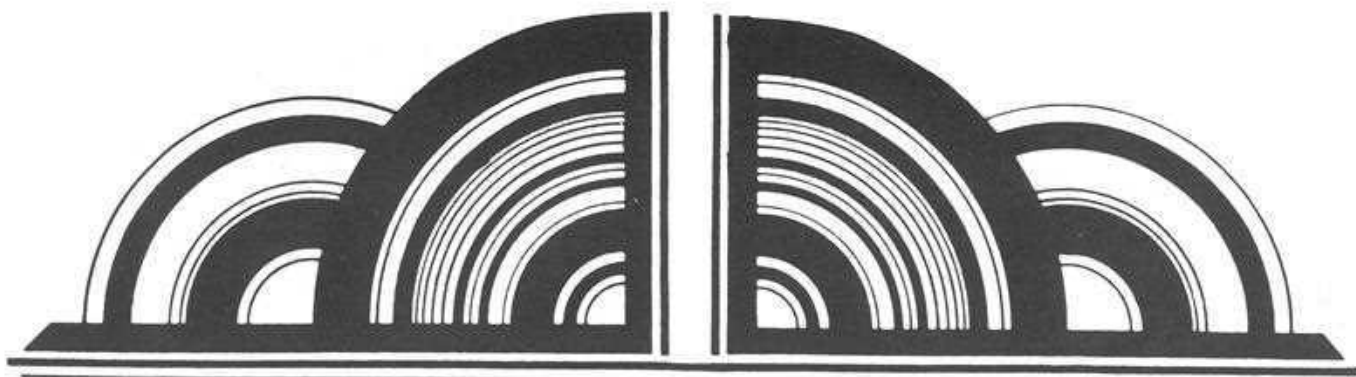


The
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SAMOYED PEOPLE



The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks With
Aljean Mason Larson
White Way Samoyeds
Orangevale, California

This interview was conducted at the home of Aljean Mason Larson in June, 1983 by Lyn Snyder Hoflin.

How did you get started in dogs? Or maybe I should ask how your mother got started in dogs!

I think it was when she moved back after she had lived in Alaska and had gotten interested in sled dogs. I can remember going to dog shows when I was a little girl, and going to State Fair dog shows. That was where she met Mrs. McDowell, from whom we eventually bought our first Samoyed, Czar Nicholas Lebanov. I got him hooked up to a wagon, and rode around the neighborhood; that was my first introduction to driving a dog. My mother had a dog sled which belonged to her father and had been used in Alaska;

my dad put wheels on that. Eventually, when we moved out into the country, we started raising Sams. We had one litter when we lived in town. We had gotten our first male puppy out of that, showed him and made our first champion. We also finished Czar Nicholas.

Our first trainer for breaking the dogs to a sled, was Bill Thompson from Sunnyvale, California. We did some obedience work, started Czar Nicholas and also imported Dascha of Laika. With our own progeny and puppies and what have you, we had a dog team. The breeding developed; my mother got quite interested in proving that sled dogs could be work dogs and show dogs at the same time. That was her main goal. We bred some of our own, and she imported two dogs, a male and a female: Silver Spark of the Arctic, and White Phantom of the Arctic, from Arctic Kennels in England. I think the same year, we imported White Way of Kobe, from Mrs. Perry's Kobe Kennels. Hence, the name White Way Kennels came from him; he was sent over and is in many bloodlines' background stock, as well as some of our own breeding.

One thing led to another and we got into doing a lot of parades, a lot of charity work, publicity, we created dog races, did a lot of children's things for orphanages, Christmas shows, Easter Seal shows, the Hollywood Christmas parade, Treasure Island in San Francisco (when I was about eleven or twelve years old), and we showed a lot of dogs. I did most of the handling of the dogs in the dog shows, except when we had more than one or two. Some shows we had as many as twelve or fifteen dogs entered, and

that is when entries were like \$3 a head! (Laughter) That wasn't so bad.

\$3 was a lot of money then, too!

That is true. And some of the shows where they used the dog team for parade work they sponsored the dog team, so we didn't have to pay the entry fee for that many dogs. We mainly did a lot of sled work; I don't remember exactly when Lloyd Van Sickle got into the picture, but he was the trainer and lived up at our place, he and his family. They also lived in Idaho and travelled back and forth. The dogs did a lot of things in Idaho, carrying mail, rescue work, parachuting from airplanes, and all kinds of things like that. One



Agnes Mason with Ch. Ninya
of Snowland

year, here at the Golden Gate dog show in San Francisco, they flew three dogs from the show, including Rex, to the city of Truckee when the city of San Francisco was snow-bound. They needed Rex and the dog team to take the doctor in to the train. Rex was famous for his guard dog act for John Wayne at one of his movies. Not that he was much of a guard dog ..! (laughter) He was more of a PUSSYCAT! Rex achieved a lot of awards and recognition.

The breeding continued during all this time. Mother kept improving; we sold some of our best dogs to Alaska when they first started getting Sams up there. I think we sent the first Samoyed to Alaska; consequently we sent some of our best dogs up there because she wanted them to get a good start with good stock, and it was better to send the best dogs. It seems like we never kept the pick of the litter; we always sold it. The dogs that I finished and made champions, it seemed they were sometimes the ones that people didn't want. Our litters were pretty even, which to me always represented good breeding. As overall litters, they were all very similar: substance, quality. She was a stickler for hindquarters, which is very important, especially in pulling, and as far as the breed standard goes. I know that we got several other people interested in Southern California, and people that we sold dogs to, but she and Lloyd were the first ones to get the dog races started up at Truckee again. Now it is a yearly event. I look back on how many years ago it was when I read these articles about dog racing, and think we were the ones in the very beginning. But Lloyd eventually moved to Truckee, so that is how he got so involved up there. We just kept showing dogs and breeding dogs, and sold an awful lot of dogs, and we finished a lot of dogs ourselves. Our bloodline is in the pedigrees of a lot of dogs now.

What year was it that you got that first Samoyed?

1935. I was about eight years old. We didn't get him as a dog to show; we got him for sled work and because Mother liked the breed. We had Chows before that. We had a couple of imported Chows from China, but we never showed them, and looking back to what I can remember of them, they were good specimens. When we started showing, we didn't have much sense. All I wanted to do was enter a class that offered a trophy. Any kid of that age only thinks of trophies! I think we were in three dog shows before somebody finally tipped us off on how to enter. We got points on Czar Nicholas, our first dog that I

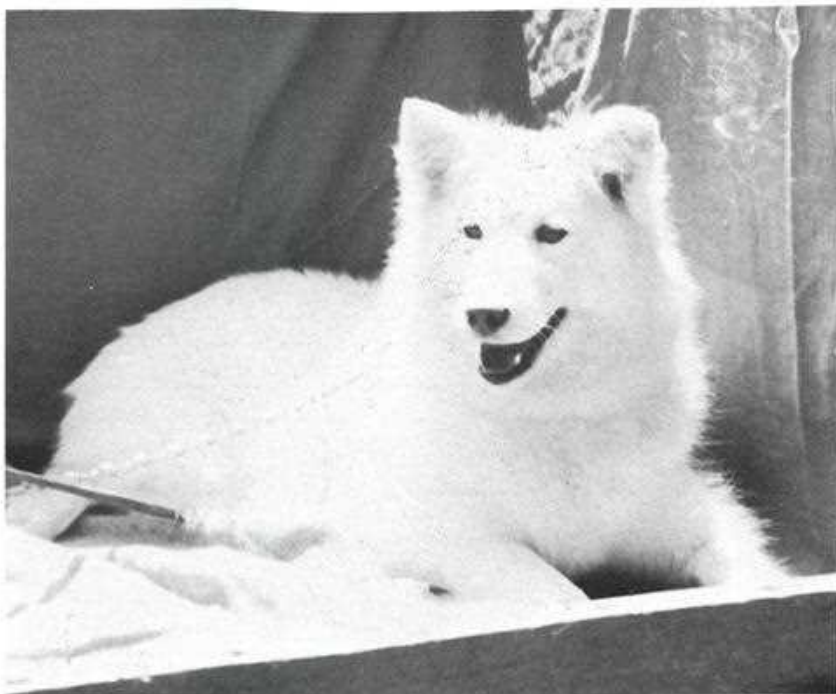


Ch. Czar Nicholas Lebanov and Aljean in 1937

showed. The first champion that we finished was a son of his, Petrof Lebanov; then we finished Czar Nicholas. Dascha of Laika, Petrof's dam, was our first imported bitch from back East. She never was much of a show dog, she was very shy, and she spent more time having puppies than going in the show ring. She just didn't like the shows; she was part of the dog team, and she enjoyed that and yelled and hollered as much as any of them to get going!

I have had an interesting life with dogs, and really enjoyed them. Mother enjoyed them; she got very active in the Samoyed club, and was president of the Pacific Coast Divi-

sion, and she was also president of the Samoyed Club of America. She received a lot of awards and honors for all of her involvement and accomplishments. She helped rewrite the breed standard, which took several years to do, and is the present standard ... at least the last I heard it is! (Laughter) Mother was more into the breeding; I helped and sometimes would help decide who they were going to breed to who, but most of the time I was more interested in handling the dogs at the shows and playing with them. After we had Bill Thompson and started using Lloyd, I helped settle dogs to the team, and had a lot of back-ground in training and driving the



Dascha of Laika

dogs. Lloyd did a lot of the driving, because after a few years they were on the road an awful lot. Mother and I went back to Chicago to the Samoyed specialty and took three dogs. We did fairly well back there; I don't think we got any points, but our dogs placed well. I think I won with a pair of champions in the Working Dog Pairs, but got beat out for the Best in Show. We travelled all up and down California and Nevada; never went to Oregon to show. I don't know how we found time to do what we DID! I still had to go to school, later I was working and then I got involved with horses. I always loved horses, and I was showing them. And that is about it! Isn't that terrible; I can put it in a nutshell!

What was your parents' background? What did they do for a living?

My mother was in direct mail automobile registration service. It was a business that she started in 1915. She was the first woman in the legislature in California; she wasn't a senator, she was involved with the legislative system. My father had a business, Mason List and Advertising, which was a direct mail advertising business which searched motor vehicle records. If somebody got the license number of a car and they had to run it in, it was done through one of their businesses. The businesses were combined; my mother and father ran them together. At one time, they probably had sixty employees working under them.

Before that, my father was involved in automobiles, driving cars, back in the Mid-west. She was from Missouri and he was from North Dakota. My mother passed away in 1972, and my father in 1952. He passed away two years after I was married in 1950.

You have no children?



Rex leading the team delivering mail in Idaho with Lloyd Van Sickle driving

No, no children. Just me and the dogs and the horses; I've got one Doberman and one cat, and they are just "pals!" (Laughter)

You don't have any overwhelming ambition to run down to the local dog show?

No, I've thought about it, but I'm not in the best of health right now. I just can't get out and walk around like I used to; that curtails my activities. I haven't been to a dog show in probably ten or twelve years. I went into Dobermans after I got out of Samoyeds; I bred three litters of Dobermans and had a champion from each one. Showed them myself and finished them; I did have some help from handlers a few times. I was active in the local Doberman club, chairman for trophies for specialty shows and stuff like that. That kind of went by the wayside, so now I just have the one Dobie as a pet, and the cat.

I got tired of the Samoyed dog hair! When we were going to the dog shows I got involved with all the dogs at the shows; I knew all the handlers and all the breeders, and they all knew me. So I had no problem getting just about any type or breed of dog I wanted to show in the children's handling classes. I showed Shelties, Collies, Toy Poodles, Dobies ... once in awhile I'd show a Sam, but I got enough of the Sams showing them myself! Showed a Pointer once; so I liked ALL dogs. I did quite well, but my favorite was the Dobermans. I think Bill Thompson, the first dog trainer that we ever had, had a Doberman that he had obedience trained. The dog belonged to the Randarhoffs, who had the Randarhoff Kennels with outstanding Dobermans, Best in Show dogs. So I got involved with them and knew them quite well; I was always showing a dog of theirs in the children's handling class. I guess that is how I got partial to Dobies; and, like I said, I got tired of the Samoyed hair in everything! I didn't own a black skirt that didn't collect hair. I stayed with the Dobies for quite awhile.

My favorite Sam of all the ones we had, I think was the first one we raised, the male, Petrof. I think my next favorite was Silver Streak. I wanted to take him with me when I married, and we lived just down the street from Mother. We had two and a half acres there, but he was very unhappy. He wanted to go back in the kennel with the rest of the dogs; he was used to the routine. He wouldn't eat at my house, which hurt me no end! (Laughter) He was happier at home with all his buddies and his playmates. I even tried bringing another dog down to keep him company, but that didn't do it.



From L. to R.: Agnes, Duke (laying down), Victory Leader, White Way of Kobe, and Aljean

I guess he could hear the commotion down the block from the kennel, and he was homesick. He was still always my favorite. I probably won more with him, too, which may have been one reason he was my favorite; anything you do well with you like.

Do you have any idea how many litters you bred?

Oh, boy. Probably thirty to thirty-five. One time we had thirty-six dogs in the kennel, I do remember that! Some of those were puppies but most were adults or over six months of age. In 1937 I was ten years old, and we moved out to the country. The property had a big two story barn on it that they used to keep Clydesdales in; my folks made that into the kennel. They put wire gates on the front of the stalls and put two dogs to a compartment at night. Then the center isle, it was an L-shaped barn, was left open. There were two big box stalls at the end wired all the way to the top. The barn had cement floors, except for the tie stalls which had wooden floors. We used to keep the females in heat in the box stalls, because they were very dog proof! The other side of the barn was one big room, and had a yard off of it. In the mornings they were all turned out together, and all ran together. We

did have a couple of males that wanted to fight, and we kept them on opposite sides. Other than that, they all ran together and all got along very well. This big two



Ch. Petrofs Nic of White Way

story barn was cool, and I can remember having Halloween parties and dances upstairs because it had such a slick floor. I guess that was from hauling the hay across it, and it was just like glass.

You could really "boogie" up there!

Yes, for what it was worth in those days! (Laughter) It made an excellent kennel. Czar Nicholas was great for opening gates, and across the isleway we had a big wire gate which pulled IN towards the dogs to open. Well, he learned how to get his teeth into the wire and jiggle it until the latch on the outside would bounce up. Then he would back up holding it in his teeth; and while he was backing up, all the dogs in the kennel were getting out. They would go out and terrorize the neighborhood, and cost us a few chickens a few times! Cost us a swan once, too.

A swan?

Yes, which we had to replace. We had to go around the neighborhood asking people if they had seen five or six dogs running. Oh, yeah, they'd seen them. So we'd catch them and put them all back. Old Nick would do it again later, so we were always trying to think of ways to keep gates locked! He learned



Ch. Chum, bred by Agnes Mason, finished his championship in three 5 point shows

how to turn doorknobs; he's the one that used to sing, play on the piano and howl. He did a lot of commercials and singing on the radio, any publicity work that was needed. Czar Nicholas was always involved in something because he could do all these different things.

Do you have any idea how

many champions you and your mother finished?

Well, there are twenty-five listed on this certificate. A couple of years ago when I looked at this list, I noticed that a couple I knew were champions were not on it; but right now, I can't recall who they are. This list is dated October,



The Mason team being parachuted into Idaho in the 1940's

1961. These are just ones we finished; there were others finished of the dogs we sold.

This isn't a bad Doberman. I bet you could take him in the show ring.

Oh, he's got kind of a rogue tail set, and could use a little better head. He could use a flatter top skull and a little squarer nose. He's sired by an International Champion out of a good bitch. The breeder gave him to me; he was sent to Idaho originally to another breeder to keep as a puppy. He didn't turn out for show quality, and I was looking for a Dobie for a pet. I called Ruth Morgan Edwards, his breeder and a very good friend of mine, who said she had a thirteen month old in Idaho that I could have if I just paid the air freight on him. I said I would take him, and he got out of Idaho and Washington two days before Mt. St. Helens erupted the first time. Otherwise he wouldn't have made it down here. When we picked him up at the airport, he came out of the crate kind of dubious, but when he walked in the house, you'd have thought he had lived here all his life. He's a real character. She told me he didn't like cats so to watch him. Well, I've got an old cat; I introduced him to the cat and told him he belonged here. Just siapped him on the nose a couple of times when he got too inquisitive, and he left him alone. But if any other cat comes on this property, he's after it. There is a big black cat around that just torments him! But he's a pretty smart dog, and he's good company which is all I really wanted.

What was the best litter?

I guess the best was the one we called the "Herdsman's" litter. We finished Herdsman's Victory Leader, and Herdsman's Faith, and Herdsman's Chattiman. I don't know if some of that litter went on to other people; I don't think they used the name "Herdsman's" if they did. We just used that name for the dogs we kept. I think the smallest litter we ever had was four, and the largest litter we ever had was nine. The average would have been six or seven, and there were probably two or three out of each litter that finished their championships. One, anyway; even from the very first litter. I don't ever remember having a litter that was just a complete "dud."

Who was the best dog?

Probably "Chum" who finished in three five point majors at a young age. He died of distemper before he was two years old, although he had been vaccinated.

When was this, fifties, maybe?

I don't remember. The date is

probably on the pictures.

I had heard that some of the early distemper vaccine wasn't really all that good.

Not reliable. And in going to the shows you were exposed to all of those things, without the good vaccines that you have now. It just happened to be that he was the one. The next best dog, and the one that I liked the best was Silver Streak, White Way's Silver Streak; he was an outstanding dog. The best female, to me, was Herdsman's Faith, and I liked Ch. White Way's Siseros But-

terms of what would be bred to what?

Oh, I always gave some input after I was old enough to know anything about it. Towards the end we would discuss the dogs ... what we were looking for and what would be a good breeding combination. A couple of times she bred to some outside dogs, very seldom. In fact, I can't even recall who they were. We acquired Reningrad, and he became my dad's constant pal. He was already a champion when we got him; did some breeding with him, although

finish ... Romeo, Jock (Herdsman's Jocko) had at least one major, and two or three other dogs. When my father died, that kind of curtailed some of the activities, but my mother continued for awhile with the breeding and showing. Not as much as we did in the late 30's and all through the 40's, but some of these dogs were shown as late as 1961.

Would you say that the breeding program was mostly linebreeding?

We did a lot of linebreeding. Very seldom did we inbreed, but we did a lot of linebreeding. Mother felt that by linebreeding ... well, we knew the background, what the dogs were like, the stock, good qualities and the bad qualities. By combining these we had a better tendency to improve the bloodline and to get the dog nearest to the standard. You had the firsthand knowledge. I think a lot of the other breeders who didn't have the background or as many dogs to pick and choose from, were people who had probably seen the showing or seen the dog and what he has done, or the puppies he produced, and their breeding would come from this. We bred to a lot of outside bitches, but we were selective. We didn't just breed to any female; she had to meet Mother's specifications before she would consider her. If you breed to something that is not worth of the breed, that doesn't improve the breed, it tears it down. Some dogs have faults and you have to breed them out and in order to do it you have to sell the puppies that weren't good as pet stock with no papers. Then you go from there.

We never put any puppies to sleep unless it was a cleft palate or something like that. I can't remember having but one or two of those in all the years, although that isn't an inherited thing. We didn't have trouble with monorchids or hip dysplasia; we couldn't have had hip dysplasia and had dogs working and pulling sleds, those two wouldn't go together! We were fortunate there, although that wasn't as prevalent as it is now. The only breed that you really heard about it in at that time was Shepherds.

I wonder if we hear more now because there is more tendency to x-ray.

That could be true. I think some of the breeds got into inbreeding, began having problems with hips, wondered what was the matter, and then got them x-rayed. They had more dogs WITH hip dysplasia, so they got more conscious of it. You see it in almost every breed, Poodles, even Dobermans have that now. The only place you are going to get that is from faulty breeding



Ch. Daschnicks Sam, bred by the Masons
(Ch. Czar Nicholas of Lebanov X Dascha of Laika)

tons. I don't recall what happened to her or why we lost her, or if she ever had any puppies. I think she was the last dog we ever finished, and the last dog we ever showed! I've been going through some of this stuff to jog my memory a bit! (Laughter) My mother was the one that was really involved in the breeding, and all the letter writing; all I did was go along on her coat tails!

Were you "head pooper-scooper?"

Yes! (Laughter) Dog musher, handler and spoiled brat!

Did you have much say so in

I can't think of any offspring. I don't have any certificates anymore. I sent most of my mother's certificates, records, pictures and all that information, along to Dolly and Bob Ward because they are going to set up kind of a reference library. I think they still have most of the pictures, newspaper articles and things like that.

Rex never finished his championship; he had both his majors and I think he needed two or three points to finish. He was always too busy dog-mushing somewhere to be bothered with the dog shows! Other dogs had points and didn't

way back down the line; somebody's got it, they breed, and it just mushrooms. Then you get it into another line, and that line carries it on. The way to stay away from it now is to x-ray and not breed, or put those dogs down. I know they used to put the Shepherds down, because they did not want them out to accidentally get bred.

Did you ever sell the pet puppies with spay/neuter agreements?

No. In those days we just sold them as pets, no papers. We didn't have that many, but we would tell people who wanted a pet that we preferred that they didn't breed them, and we would tell them why. There weren't that many "bad" puppies; as I said, the "culls" of the litter were the ones that I ended up showing and making champions! And THEY went on to be dogs that did big and great things. (Laughter) I think Faith, and Victory Leader, and Jocko were all part of that group! And they turned out to be some of the best dogs.

Have there been any people who got started in dogs with White Way who went on to do what you felt was a pretty reasonable job of breeding Samoyeds?

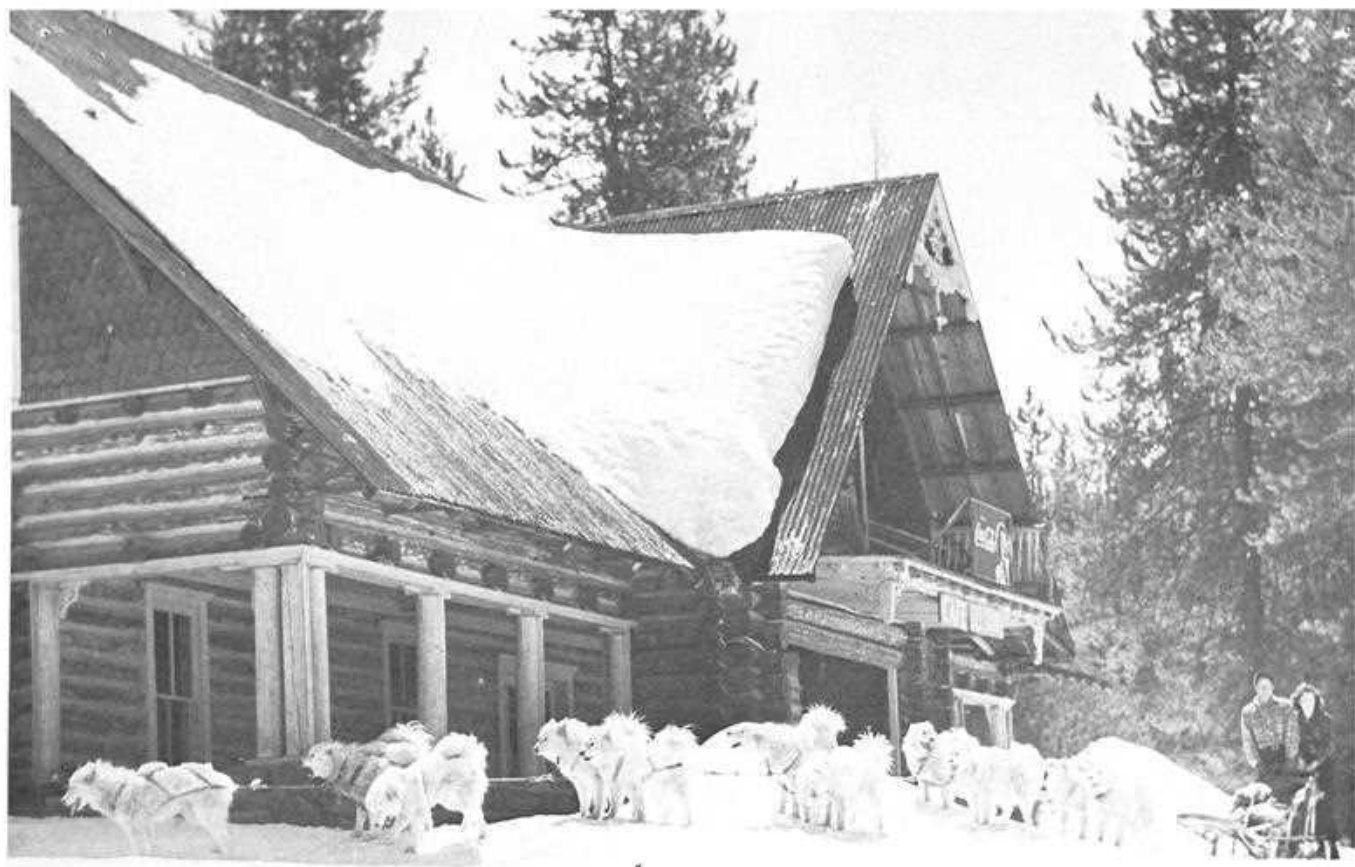
Well, I don't know that I could pinpoint them ... One that I can think of by the name of Powell, over in Santa Rosa. We sold her a bitch, she finished her and got into breeding, and did a pretty good job that I recall. I'm sure there were others in Southern California, that purchased dogs from us. I'm sure that some who bought dogs from us were already into it, and I don't remember how we even met them, like Bob and Dolly Ward. And I know that Ed and Gertrude Adams had Sams before they bought one from us, but they did finish the one they got from us, and bred. Chuck and Gene Burr had Sams and had some of our background, and they did some breeding and did a good job. Some of those people had already gotten started, and I can't say for sure that it was OUR stock that started them; but these people were fairly successful as breeders, and you find a lot of their background. Bob and Dolly Ward ended up with a dog team in Southern California and did a lot of racing; and the Bristols did dog racing and showing. The Whitecliff Samoyeds came into being from our stock; first on the Pacific Coast to have a Best in Show Samoyed. This was when we were kind of phasing out of the dog show picture.

What faults would have kept your mother from breeding to a bitch or a dog?

Cowhocks, toeing in too much, bad bite, too sharp a head, or pointed ears. She wanted the typical smiling face for which the Sam is noted. The dog with the "smile." But she was noted as a stickler on cowhocks, for sure. I think that's why we didn't breed White Phantom of the Arctic very much, because she was a bit cowhocked. For one thing, we bought both her and Silver Spark of the Arctic from the same kennel; they came over together from England. Mother thought, "Well, let's breed them and see what we get." Being from the English bloodline, our stud would have absolutely nothing to do with her. He would breed any other female in the kennel, but he would have absolutely nothing to do with her! I guess because she spoke English instead of American! (Laughter) We tried several times; she would take another male, but he just turned his nose up at her. They have their likes and dislikes, too, I guess.

Were you active at all in the parent club?

No, I never belonged to the parent club and I never belonged to the Pacific Coast club. I went to



Rex in lead. Lloyd and Mrs. Van Sickle at Handle Bars.



Ch. White Way's Silver Streak



Ch. White Way's Siseros Buttons

some of the meetings and dinners, but that was only because I was there at the dog show, and they were held in connection. I left all the "politicking" up to my mother. I wasn't interested in that; I couldn't be bothered with it. I knew the politics at the DOG SHOWS; I knew who all the handlers were that you needed for certain judges, and I knew certain judges liked certain dogs. I did a lot of the selecting as to the dogs that we showed, who we showed and when. Of course, sometimes we just had a string of dogs that we were showing, and they would go to the shows regardless. They would help make points, too, if you have a dog you're trying to finish. You put in a couple extras to help make points and HOPE you were the lucky one to win!

I got to be a pretty good handler in Sams; I watched the handlers a lot, and picked up a lot of their tricks. I never will forget one time ... Ben Brown, who was a very big handler and very well known, plus being a big, heavy man ... Well, he was showing a Sam, and I was showing a Sam at the Oakland Kennel Club show; we were all lined up with our backs to the judge and the center of the ring, Sams facing us with tails to ringside. It was a large ring with a large entry. He would step back to get his dog a little farther (I was right next to him) and I would step back. We ended up in the middle of the ring, and the judge said, "Now, when the two of you get back over in line, I'll finish judging the class!" (Laughter) I never will forget that; Ben looked so sheepish.

I thought it was funny! I thought, "Nobody is going to outfox me!" I won! (Laughter) You pick up a lot of tricks from the handlers, and I had a lot of handlers tell me tricks that helped. And you could groom a Sam ... I could straighten out a cowhooked Sam by trimming him a different way. By trimming the inside of the hock; I think they do that on all of them now. Another thing that was very deceiving, especially on a Sammy because they are supposed to have feathered feet for the snow, was the feathering on the inside of the foot. When they gait and pick up their feet, it looks like their feet are turning under in behind; you trim that inside hair off and it is straight. So I started trimming the feathering off the feet, around the toes, trimming whiskers.

Did you use any special shampoo?

No, we used Ivory Snow laundry detergent. Our bathtub was constantly full of dog hair. Dad was always opening up the plumbing underneath to drain the bathtub and get the dog hair out. We used bluing in the rinse water, which helped to whiten the coat. And then if they were working dogs and going to be in a parade and a show the same day, we used a lot of cornstarch in those days, which you couldn't do now, I don't think. They don't do it as much. We never used chalk, just cornstarch; brush it in damp and then brush it out; that whitened the coat a lot. The time we went back to Chicago and took the three dogs we had a hotel suite, and those Sams picked up the soot of

Chicago that was in the hotel rugs. The morning of the dog show we bathed three Sams in the hotel bathtub because they looked like GREY Sams instead of WHITE Sams. They weren't even biscuit colored Sams! That was a mess trying to get them dry and their coats brushed out.

Did you have any biscuit dogs?

No. Daschnicks Sam had little biscuit spots on his ears about the size of the end of a pencil, and I think that was the only dog that ever had any biscuit.

Was the lack of biscuit intentional?

No, it wasn't. If it came from anywhere it would have come through Czar Nicholas. I think he had biscuit. We found in breeding that the dogs threw more back to their grandparents, and would look to the grandparents to see what a litter was going to look like. You could get to be pretty accurate. Only time we had black and white ones was when Andie slipped out and went across the street to find the Cocker Spaniel; we had black and whites and red and whites! (Laughter) Only slip up we ever had!

Why do you think your mother chose the Samoyed over, say, the Siberian or the Malamute?

I think she liked their temperament better. It was a different breed than what she was accustomed to, and as a rule in those days, the Siberians and Malamutes were pretty tough dogs. Of course, her experiences with them came from when she lived in Alaska, and they don't

have an easy life up there. They were hardy dogs. But when she was looking for a dog, she did a lot of searching; and she was looking for a companion for me which primarily influenced her decision. Plus this was a breed with which she could associate, and she did a lot of research. Books on Hansen, herding, etc. because Samoyeds were primarily a reindeer herding dog in Northern Siberia and this intrigued her.

On the final night in Oakland, they used to have a thing called "Lady and her Dog," and you were supposed to dress in the costume of the origin of the breed you were showing. It was a beautiful class. I can remember Mother making this costume with the mukluk boots and leather jacket, suede to represent to reindeer skin, beads on the fur collar. There is a picture of the one she made for me, shown with Czar Nicholas.

How would you describe the ideal Samoyed?

Oh, boy. That is a \$64 question! Medium sized dog, good bone, good feet, straight with no cowhocks, well-bent stifle. Strong back, not too long in the back, good head, nice almond shaped eye, ears set apart. Smiling upturned lips, filled in fairly

well around the eyes, yet defined around the muzzle. Good coat, but not a curly coat; I don't like curly coated Sams, and I don't like a real long coat on a Sam. Too long a coat is not good in the snow; it packs, it breaks off.

I've seen some Sams with really long coats and they would never stand up to the natural use of sled work, herding or whatever. Too much hair can cause snow to pack in between the toes, also, so you need a compact foot, a tight foot. You don't want a wide webbed foot, although they have a slight web to their foot to keep the snow from going up between their toes. Nice tail that curls over the back, softly, down and to the side; not a flag tail or one that is clamped down there like it is stuck on. A "happy" tail! A tail that wags. Nice shoulder angulation, two fingers apart at the withers. A lot of that has to do with how the neck is put on the shoulder; if the neck is high, that wither separation will be too narrow. A Sam couldn't pull weight if his head is up in the air; he has to be able to lower his head down to get his shoulders into the harness to pull. Dark eye.

What kind of shoulder lay-back?

Now you are talking angles. I only know it if I see it, I can't describe it to you! It is a sloping shoulder, with a bit of forechest. You don't have as much forechest on a Sam as you do on some other breeds. Deep chest, lot of heart room; you need the brisket almost to the elbow. If you get it too low, the dog will elbow out, which also makes them toe in. You also need a fairly short loin, as a Sam is supposed to be fairly square.

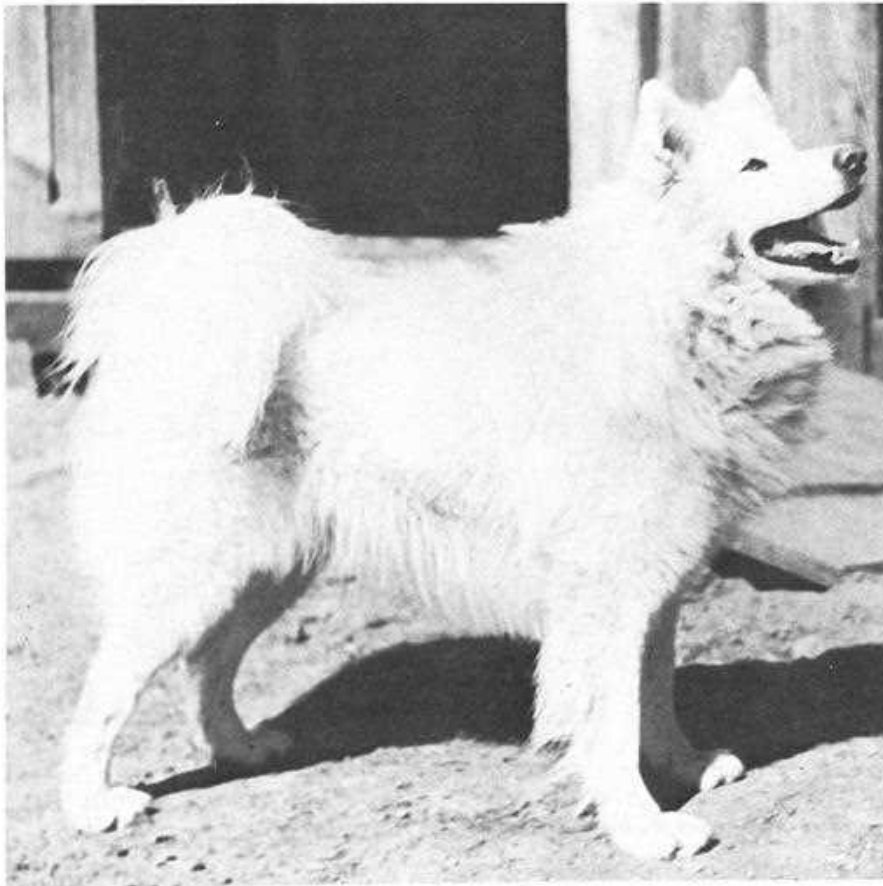
I like round thick ears, but those that can easily be turned back on the head; there again, that comes from working the dogs in the snow. I don't care for airplane ears, although our first dog had that tendency! We did keep that out of our bloodline pretty well, though, because the first litter we bred was from Dascha, and she had small ears set high on her head.

What kind of movement?

Straight, not high and prancing. The lower to the ground they carried their feet as they tracked forward, the better I liked it. Good smooth, not bouncy movement. Something that shows strength with extension, and not a choppy gait, or hackney action. Good reach and drive; there I go again right back to working dogs. You can't have that choppy movement and have a work dog. He couldn't pull his share of the load.

How important is temperament?

Very. I think temperament is what the Samoyed is based on. They should be a good family dog, willing to allow people in, although you still want them to bark; you don't want them to be so docile that they couldn't care less. In the show ring they should stand easily for going over, and not be shy or pull back. You can make certain allowances for puppies that are first shown as they will be a little hesitant; but we always got our puppies out a lot and had other people come in and pet them and play with them. I had a lot of neighborhood friends and we used to play with the puppies a lot. Mother would always make them wait for their food, she would hold the pans. In the barn along that long concrete center, we would feed the Sams out of one big dish. It looked like an old washing machine top that was about two feet in diameter with a slight one inch lip on it. We put the dog food in that and they would all stand around in a big circle and eat out of it. We might put down two pans at times. Or if we had them locked in their stall, with two or three dogs to a unit, we would put a pan in for each of them. They always switched around from pan to pan, anyway.



Ch. Petrof of Lebanov, aged 10 years
(Ch. Czar Nicholas of Lebanov X Dascha of Laika)

See, that's where temperament came in. They didn't fight or growl. I think the only personality clashes were a couple of males who for some reason, just didn't like each other.

Would you have bred to a dog with poor temperament?

I doubt it. I think it would depend a lot on what I thought of the temperament of the bitch I was breeding. If she was very stable, and the background of the male was also, I might consider it. Sometimes temperament can be created by handling, and you can't criticize a dog for what has happened to him. We had one dog that had been teased by kids walking up and down the street and running a stick down the fence as they would go by; this was a female, and if she and I happened to be out, she would bark and bark at those kids. Other kids could come around and she was fine. Therefore, some temperament you can create. Usually a Sam is a pretty stable dog; that's how they're bred, and that's what they are supposed to be: good companions, good children's dogs.

Did you help your bitches whelp?

Yes, although they very seldom needed any help. I worked for a small animal veterinarian for twenty-three years, so I got quite involved in breeding, assisted in breedings at the vet hospital, and used to go to a couple of Dalmatian kennels in Sacramento to help with breedings. I learned a lot there, but I was into breeding dogs before I ever went to work for the vet. I had a lot of knowledge going in, which made me an asset to him. I could answer a lot of questions over the phone that never had to be referred to him.

When did you like to wean your puppies?

The mothers took care of that sometimes. Usually we would wean about five to six weeks old. We started feeding them as soon as they opened their eyes. We'd give them lean ground round, semi-raw, and they would gum that. We'd start them off on oatmeal mush and milk, pablum and milk with vitamins and calcium; they would waddle through that! We fed the older dogs quite a bit of oatmeal, milk and stuff in the mornings, and at night they got their kibble and horsemeat. Puppies were fed about four times a day; the older dogs were fed usually twice a day, and the much older dogs, only once a day. And even when they were in training for the dog races, it was very much the same diet.

Sams always seemed to be pretty easy whelpers. We had one bitch that didn't like the puppies; the first litter she had, she killed every one of them. We took them away from her, and then when she was



Aljean with Varka, owned by Gertrude Hibbard. Varka was the Mason's lead dog in 1939.

finished we thought we'd put them back and maybe she would settle down, but she didn't. We had litters where we would lose a puppy or two because it was small or not quite right, and the bitch would keep pushing it out, until finally that was it. We felt, well, Mother Nature is stepping in here somewhere.

Did you ever do any tube or bottle feeding?

Never any tube feeding, although we bottle fed once in awhile. I think I have bottle fed more Doberman puppies than anything else. Sams are pretty good mothers. We always kept them in a quiet place; the best whelping place we ever found was the shower stall. Put down newspapers, a flat blanket; it was easy to clean and watch. The dams seemed to like the quiet and being away from everything. We

also had a service porch that we had puppies on at another house we lived in. That was probably 12 X 12, and that made a great whelping room and room for puppies. It had a wooden floor. Then we would move them down to the kennel and give them one whole stall to themselves, and gradually move them outside with the other dogs. They always fit right in. They liked all the cats and the cats liked them.

When were the puppies evaluated as to whether they were show or pet?

We never looked at them when they were first born as to whether they were show or pet. A lot of people measure them and all that; we never did. In those days it just wasn't that important. Today it seems like everybody I hear says, "They weigh so many ounces, they



Cooling Off

are this long, etc." I wouldn't even know how to begin to measure a newborn puppy! You could tell the difference in the muzzles and faces, of course. I would say that we started when they began getting up and around, and you could tell something about how they moved and how they looked overall. The longer you have them, the better chance you have to evaluate them, and the more you could see what you liked and what you didn't like. We sold them at all ages: eight, ten weeks, three months. Sometimes, as I say, we sold what we thought was the pick of the litter, and I would end up finishing the ones that were left over! That certainly wasn't deliberate! It really amazes me when I look back on it now, and I think how really naive we were ... many breeders seem to keep the best, but we always felt we were selling our best stock, and that a reputation is built on what you sell, not on what you keep. We wanted other people to be able to go on with what we had bred, and that gives any kennel a good reputation. You don't send your culls out to people who want to breed or show! That will come back and haunt you! I think that is why my mother's reputation was what it was; she was not a dishonest person and she wasn't one to camouflage or cover anything up. That just wasn't her style.

What did a good show Samoyed sell for in the 50's and 60's?

\$75 to \$125. I think we got \$150 to \$200 for the dogs we sent to Alaska, but these were older dogs, seven, eight, nine months old. But \$75 to \$100 was pretty average; it might change a bit depending on who the parents were. If they were good show stock and in demand, you might get \$125 or \$150. If the puppy is young, six weeks, we'd probably get \$75 for bitches and \$100 for males, but in the 30's they went for \$50 to \$75.

So the bitches were cheaper than the males?

The bitches were always cheaper than the males. There was more demand for males in those days. If you talk about a breeding, the first question that is asked is who the sire is! They forget to give credit to the female who has just as

much to do with it. I think that is still true; I see ads in the paper and it seems the males are always more expensive. Another factor in the demand is that many people don't want to be bothered going through the heat, and if you have a show dog, you wouldn't want to spay it.

What did you feed the adults?

Kibble, cooked horsemeat, vegetables, carrot tops, onions, eggs, cut up lettuce. Their eggs were usually mixed with the porridge in the morning. (Laughter) Basically a good quality kibble and horsemeat.

If you had the dogs in the horse barn, where did you keep the horses?

Well, the sixty acres we bought was part of the Robinson estate, and the original main home had burned down up on top of the hill. There was a paved drive that ran all the way through it to where the barn was. This was all part of the Hagan Ranch, and there is still a park strip that he sold to the County of Sacramento for 50 cents an acre to



White Way's Romeo (Ch. White Way of Kobe X Ch. White Way's Staretic Jill)



Ch. Herdsmans Chattigan



Ch. Silver Star



Ch. Starchak, CD, 11 years old.

be used for recreational purposes only. There is a golf course on it, a children's receiving home, bridle paths and a park. Well, we had the main part of the ranch, and it had a four tie stall barn that they kept the "buggy" horses in, and then there was the building where they actually kept the buggies. We converted the buggy part into living quarters. Then there was a long machine shed which was all open on one side and closed on the other. That is where I kept the horses. When I was young I always had horses there, and I always had the neighbors horses there. There was a cook-house on it, too, and we sold it with an acre or two. My dad subdivided the sixty acres into one acre parcels, and we sold most of it. We eventually sold the barn and it was torn down. By that time, Mother and Dad had built another home on the property and they built another, smaller, kennel down there on the two acres they kept. She sold that just a couple of years before she died. Meanwhile, I had married and we received two acres as a wedding present; we built a home on it, and I could have my horses there.

My husband was a volunteer with the fire department, and they kept wanting him to come work for them. When they came up with enough money, he did, and we moved into the fire station over in the subdivision. We lived there for about eight years, until we bought five acres on Golden Gate. After that I was able to have more than one or two horses of my own, and I would buy, sell, and train horses, hunters and jumpers. I did quite well; got in with some trainers down at the race track, and took care of post-surgery horses from Davis University that

belonged to customers of the trainers. Then my health began to fail and I couldn't continue those things. I put my last horse down last June, so I don't have horses any more. Got out of the horse business, and the dogs, so I just "exist" now!

I don't have the energy to get around much now, and when I think of the running I used to do in the ring ... I think some of the judges must have thought we were marathon runners! (Laughter)

Did you ever do any work in obedience?

Yes, I did some obedience work. The first dog we had was in obedience, but he didn't even make his C.D. I was never really that much interested in it for some reason; it just didn't appeal to me. I felt that ALL dogs have to have some type of obedience, some manners, but it doesn't have to be formal obedience training. If your dogs are not obedient, they are not happy and you are not happy. Dogs are very smart, and they know what they can get away with and with whom. I like watching obedience, but I guess I was too involved with showing and sledding to have the time for it. Besides the time I spent with the horses! I took riding lessons, and rode the ponies at the zoo before we even moved to the ranch; I was always stuck on horses. I sometimes wonder how I found time to be married and keep house. You have to plan your days very carefully to avoid wasted motion. I used to juggle my horse shows and dog shows on alternate days or weekends; I

went to the Santa Barbara horse show which was usually a week long, and Monterey which was another five days. My husband always enjoyed Monterey and we made a kind of vacation. Then I would take a week and go up to Portland, Oregon to show the horses; I never went up there to show DOGS, but I'd haul horses all the way up there! (Laughter) Then I would take another week to go to the Cow Palace; fortunately I had an understanding boss and he had office hours in the evening. I could ride all morning and we never had dinner until late at night! I was fortunate enough to be a good rider, and had good enough horses that they paid their way, and then some.

One horse I bought at three months for three hundred dollars, took him and the mare home, weaned him at six months, took the mare back, sold him when he was five years old for \$8,500. Three months later he was sold to the Spanish Olympic Team for \$13,500; he was the horse that paid for the barn! Then when I boarded the race horses, I never had any more than I could take care of, never more than seven; and while I was doing that, I was showing Dobermans. I had a full schedule up until about 1972 and then I started losing my eyesight; had surgery in 1975 or '76 and got my eyesight back. Then my kidneys finally went out on me, and that was it. Even when my eyesight was bad, my friends would drive me to a horse show and I could still ride! I did a lot of winning.

There is an expression that is often attributed to the Arabs, "If you know a good horse, you know a good dog."

That could be true. The friend who bred this Doberman decided to go into Manchesters and there was a dog in this area that was for sale that she had heard about, and she wanted me to evaluate it. I said, "I don't know anything about Manchesters!" So she gave me a description of what to look for; they are similar to Dobermans in a way. So the lady brought the dog over, and I had an idea of what Ruth wanted, and what the Manchester should look like, and this dog didn't fit that description. It was "fair" but it wasn't the quality I knew she was looking for, being a breeder, judge and handler. When the lady left, I called Ruth and told her I didn't think she'd be interested in this dog. She saw the dog later somehow, and said, "Yeah, you're right! I didn't want that dog!" I think it all comes from knowing good structure, and the same goes for horses.

I think if you have a good understanding of what you are looking for, you can do this in just about any breed. This is why you get so many all around judges that have



Ch. Niano

bred one or two breeds specifically, so they know those; but if they know their breeds well and have been a good breeder, once they read the other standards and talk to someone

about them, it is not hard to be able to pick good ones. At least, that is my theory on it. The structural terms are much the same; the heads might present a difference of opinion. You would have to like dogs immensely to get into that, however! (Laughter) There are so many people who think their dog is the best, and maybe you didn't that particular day. That's why I never did any judging. I have been asked to do the Samoyed matches and things like that, but I never wanted to get into judging dog or horse shows. I was very content to be the amateur and do the best I could. I had too many friends and wanted to stay on the fence; I didn't want to get off on one side or the other! (Laughter)

You can't make everybody happy.

No, and when you start judging their stock ... that is their pride and joy! That's how judges get a reputation. "I know he doesn't like what I breed, or my "type" so why show under him?" This is true; you are wasting your money if he really doesn't like your dogs or horses, or anything else. I can't think of many judges we avoided, because in those days there weren't that many judges. Many were all rounders, and very few breeders were judges.

Is there any validity to the rating systems of Top Ten, etc.?

We never had that. In our day nothing was rated like that. We just had Dog News, and the American Kennel Club Gazette. In the 30's and 40's we had nothing, and maybe in the 50's they started coming out with Top Ten dogs, but that was based on what they had accomplished as far as Best of Breeds went. That comes down to how far do you want to push the dog, and how many dog shows do you want to attend? Are you just going to "chase points" as we say in horse shows, or are you going to show for the enjoyment of showing, and showing when you feel like showing because you have a good dog. If you want to do a lot of advertising, and send your win pictures to the judges, then you are going to get in the ratings; that's right back to politicking again. We didn't have a lot of politics involved in the shows in the early days. You could go in and have a very poor handler show a good dog, and that good dog would win because he was winning on his own merit. My mother was a terrible dog show handler; not that she couldn't get the dog squared up alright, but she just didn't like getting in the ring and running around and I think that had something to do with it. That's why I did most of it. If you want a high rating the only way to do it is send out those pictures and get them in magazines.



Horse: Red Bank. Rider: Aljean Mason Larson. California State Fair, 1965



Left to right: Ch. Chum, Ch. Herdsman's Victory Leader, Aljean Mason, Ch. Daschnick's Sam and Ch. Petrof of Lebanon, 1944. Best Team in Show.

All the judges look at the magazines, and all the judges look at the pictures; and if the pictures are good, they'll remember you the next time! Towards the end there were some judges like this. Under those types of judges you hope for the crumbs: if a top dog took the Breed, you could hope for Best of Opposite, or if an advertised dog took the points, you, a nobody, could win with a bitch! This way they could spread it around a little bit! My opinion again! (Laughter) As I said before, I learned what the handlers were doing and what was going on.

Our stock won on its own merit. There were no payoffs, or dinners or anything like that. If we used a handler, he just sent us his bill and we paid it. We usually only had a handler for the breed judging, never for Group judging. I did that. If we knew a judge was partial to handlers, we would use one for the breed, but I always gave the handler the best dog, too! Then if he would win, I would take the dog in the Group. I had a couple of

handlers who were very unhappy that I did that. I realize they get more money, and more publicity, but I felt the DOG won it.

I see Samoyed spelled "Samoyede." When did they drop the "e" in the name?

That is the correct spelling. They were starting to drop it, I think, in the early sixties. They used to call the breed the "Sam-e-ed" and some would say "Samoyed-es" because of the "e" on the end. I think they dropped that "e" because everybody kept trying to pronounce it.

Any other memorable experiences in the dogs?

Nothing that really stands out in my mind. Things ran pretty smoothly. A few accidents on the dog sled teams, but those things are bound to happen. We did lose our first dog, Czar Nicholas, in a sledging accident. The snub-line, used to hold the team back while hooking up dogs, broke and the team got loose. The tug-line wrapped around Czar Nicholas' foot and drug him. We got

in the car and followed them, but we couldn't catch them; they can go at a pretty good clip. We finally caught them, took Czar Nicholas to the vet, and then down to the firehouse where they put the resuscitator on him. They worked on him over two hours, and couldn't save him. That was the only fatal accident we ever had during sledging.

Funny, the vet we took him to first was Dr. Hauge, and that must have been in 1939 or so. Years later, he was the vet I went to work for, and worked for him for twenty-three years until 1972. There was an article in the paper about the accident; in those days, things like that made headlines! Only other problems we ever had sledging was getting the pads tough; we used a lot of Tincture of Benzoin and iodine painted on their pads to toughen them up. The Tincture of Benzoin did wonders. You have to toughen the feet slowly; it is like learning to go barefoot, you have to toughen your feet.

There are a lot of techniques

when training dogs. They have to learn to stay in line, pull ahead instead of back. If I was breaking a new dog, I would use two experienced dogs at wheel, the new dog at point with another good dog next to it, and then an experienced lead dog. They would keep the new one straightened out. You had to have a good lead dog to keep the line tight, because if the others get their feet over, you are in trouble. When they would get their feet over it, the line would get them in the groin and they'd learn real fast! You have brakes on the sled, and so have control from the back; but you had to know what you were doing. We taught them to "gee" and "haw" and "come around, gee" which meant to make a reverse. And "whoa" is "WHOA!" (Laughter) All you had to do was say, "Let's go" and they were gone! That first lunge was really something.

No "Mush, Huskies?"

No, no "mush." I think they just used that in parades and such. You have to kind of act it up a

little bit, I guess.

When you were looking at the magazine earlier, you commented that you didn't feel the Samoyed had changed a whole lot.

No, I don't. I saw some in there that looked just like the dogs we were showing. I saw some that I felt I didn't care for too much, but then that is true anywhere. But I really don't think they have changed that much. Some carry more coat than they used to, but then they are "show dogs" and they like that long coat. You seem to be able to tell the bitches by the fact that they still carry a shorter coat than the dog does, and they seem to be trimming the hair and feathers on the dogs still. I just can't remember any of the dogs carrying coat like some of these dogs; maybe Jack Frost of Sacramento had a fairly long, heavy coat, bred by Mrs. McDowell. I think he was the first Sam we saw.

What advice would you give to someone just getting started who wanted to breed good Samoyeds?

Do some research on your dogs' pedigrees, talk to some of the prominent breeders and get their opinion. Look at their dogs, compare, study the standard, and then pick a person that you feel, after talking and checking around, is qualified to help you pick out a puppy, or sell you a puppy. As a rule, if you go to a reputable breeder you will end up with a fairly decent dog. Now, all dogs don't turn out to be champions. You can only try to do the best you can; and if that dog doesn't turn out to be exactly what you want, then you have to sell it. By then you should know more about what you like, and what the judges like that you can live with. You should be more familiar with the bloodlines then, and should be able to pick out a better dog; this is assuming you were not happy with the one you've got. Of course, you get attached to those first ones, and end up keeping them. You can do that, but don't breed it. Set your limits as to the number you can keep; then if you have a son or



Czar Nicholas piloting the Delta Queen, a Sacramento river boat

daughter who get married and want the dog, let them have it and you can go on! (Laughter) The kids seem to get involved in this and stay in it!

Don't just take one person's "song and dance." Check around and listen; check with a local club, go to some of their meetings, look at their stock, and COMPARE.

You have to look and you have to know what you are looking for. When you first start out, of course, you don't know what all these words mean in the standard, so you have to have somebody explain them to you and show you. My one male Dobie that I bred and finished in four majors, I took him into our club meetings before I trimmed him around the face (he had kind of a wide jaw on him and was a little short in the neck.) I was never afraid to point out his faults, I knew what they were; but you can minimize them. I would take the clippers about three days before a dog show, and clip the hair on his cheeks and down his throat line, and around his neck tapered into the shoulder, and give him a long neck and a thinner jaw. I took him to the dog club and demonstrated this! A couple of people came up to me, and they had a champion then, too, and said, "I could never bring my dog in and do that!" I said, "Why, it's there for you to see." I wasn't trying to hide anything, this is done cosmetically for the show ring. He was sure a good mover! I would show him in the Working Group on a six foot lead; I would be running at top speed and he was free as a bird, tracking just as true ... God, he was a mover! And you could not stand him crooked in front, he'd always straighten out those feet.

Do you have any regrets about being in the dogs?

Oh, no. They probably gave me some of the best years of my life; I met a lot of nice people, had a lot of interesting experiences, a lot of fun. My mother was the one who did all the work, I just got in on the glory. I, of course, fed the dogs, groomed them and bathed them, but that wasn't real work! No, I have no regrets for either the dogs or the horses. I've had a good life and I wouldn't change anything as I look back on it.

Who would you consider were some of the better breeders in the United States when you and your mother were active?

Probably Helen Harris, Jean Blank, Bob and Dolly Ward. There were some breeders in the East that I wasn't familiar with because we didn't see too many Eastern dogs out here. And, of course, Margaret Tucker. She did a lot of good breeding here. Our first breeder, the one we bought our first dog from,



Team led by Rex of White Way, 1952

was Mrs. McDowell, over near Richmond. She was fairly active then, although she was getting out of it about the time we bought Czar Nicholas from her. And ourselves! There were some other breeders around who were breeding occasionally, but they weren't "kennels." Names like Thompson-Glover were back East, and Monsignor Keeghan was breeding dogs.

Back when we first started showing Sams there were maybe three or four Sams at a show! Three dogs was worth two points! It went that way for quite awhile, so there weren't that many Sams or breeders until we got into it. I do think we stimulated a lot of interest even down in Southern California, because it took a long time before the point scale went up. It went up and stayed at about twenty-five dogs for three points for awhile, then went up to forty something, then dropped back down. The point scale out here got fairly stiff. I can't remember exactly when they formed the Sammy club out here, although I'm sure Mother had something to do with that! I was young then and a lot of that was over my head. Mother did a lot of writing and research. The Samoyeds were very active over in England because I can remember looking at English magazines when we were looking for our imports; there were a lot of ads and pictures of dogs over there, so they were

fairly well known in that country.

Did you ever go over to England to see the dogs?

No. We bought all our dogs sight unseen; they sent pictures of some of them, but most of them were puppies or young dogs. When White Way of Kobe came over from Mrs. Perry of the Kobe Kennels, I feel that she sent the best dog from the litter, or the bloodline they were talking about, because he went back to White Fang of Kobe. White Fang is a very well known English bred Samoyed.

Is there anything we haven't covered?

I don't think so. I didn't realize I had that much in my head! When I look at the pictures it jogs my memory about some of the dogs and what we did with them. I hadn't looked at those pictures until you called last week, and I didn't realize I had kept that many pictures.

I'm about ready to send all of this stuff down to my niece; I don't know who else in the family wants them.

You might find that the Samoyed Club of America wants them.

I don't even know who to contact. Dolly has most of the stuff. These things are pretty good if anybody really gets into the bloodline way back. My mother did an eight or ten generation pedigree on Czar Nicholas, or maybe it was White Way of Kobe. Anyway, it was a third of the size of a closet door. In fact, they displayed it as a backdrop on a bench a couple of times. It was interesting, but I don't know what ever became of that. Mother got sick and I finally had to put her in a nursing home; she had Parkinson's Disease and died in the nursing home. I don't know what she did with a lot of that stuff. I do wish I had kept the registrations on the dogs, because I look at some of the pictures and think, "Now, who was the sire and dam?" I just can't take them off the top of my head.

Thank you very much. **

