

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Jasper & Trillion

Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Mardee Ward-Fanning
HOOF 'N PAW
Wilsall, Montana

Part II

This interview was conducted at the home of Mardee Ward-Fanning in August 2004 by Alona Robison.

Do you think making the Top Ten or Twenty means anything?

I guess it does. This is a tough one, only because for some people it is a great reward. To feel that you put a product of yours out, if you are the breeder of that dog, or if you are the owner, say you bought this dog and you have a lot of high expectations, then yes. What is happening of late, and when I say of late I mean the last ten years, is money seems to be becoming a big issue in this sport. People don't think they can achieve much without spending their child's inheritance, or mortgaging their house, or advertising like there's no tomorrow. I will be the first to admit that although I think Ana was a great bitch, I doubt without the backing she got from Jeff and Nan Bennett, she would have achieved her full potential. But we all have dogs that we want to see do great things, but many of us work, so we have to hire handlers, handlers require money, handlers want to be advertised, and you can see where this goes. If you are going to be an owner/handler, and I quote, "play with the big boys," then either you come up in your abilities and you travel and you advertise as an owner/handler, or you are going to feel like you are being beaten by the professionals. If you have a job and you take off work and go show your dog, chances are you are going to spend more than if you hire a professional handler. So just because a professional handler is showing your dog, is not necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes it is the economic thing.

Some people are not physically capable of showing their own dogs, whether it be mental or physical. Some people get in

the ring, and they love their dog so much their mind just stops at the ring gate. To get your dog to a Top Twenty in the Breed level, is very achievable to anyone with a GOOD DOG. But if one has an average dog, if you start talking Top Ten or Top Five, then it is going to take a lot of time, and you are probably independently wealthy or retired, or you have hired a handler. It puts you into a different venue. It's a little different than going to a show and hoping to get a blue ribbon. You are in a new ballpark once you hit the serious specials level.

Do you think judging is fair for the most part, and what do you think could be done to improve it?

For the most part people try to do a fair and honest job.

of absorbing it, or understanding it.

Judging is based on trying to judge for breeding stock. Sad to say, I think it has become too much of a social event. God knows, my mother loved the social aspect of dog shows, but when she was in the ring judging, she took to heart trying to find the best exhibit, whether it be the six-month-old puppy or the twelve-year-old veteran. Dad was such a student of dogs, dog movement, he started out with a more scientific approach, and my mom had more the aesthetic value without giving up soundness and structure. So I feel I derived a little from each of them, and have found a happy medium. I've been told by exhibitors and others over

very objective. You are always going to have your likes and dislikes but you HAVE to be as objective as possible. Then when you come out of that ring, your friends should still be your friends. If you don't judge that way from day one, you will, over time, fall prey to that more and more and the exhibitors will pick up on it. It will happen, there is no way you can get around it. So from day one you have to not compromise yourself. As long as you think you are doing the best job, with the tools that you have, to pick the best dog, you cannot go wrong.

What is the best advice as a judge you could give either professionals or novices?

You are a team. The handler and dog are a team; one should not overpower the other. If anything, you are actually piloting that dog around the ring with as little notice on your part as possible. A really good handler can do that. That comes down to what you wear, how you run, watching the judge before it's your ring time so you know the procedure. It's very frustrating to judge for half a day and somebody comes in the ring and says, "Do I do a triangle or go around?" Being prepared, showing your dog on the right equipment. Remember, your time in the ring is very limited, and at twenty dollars an entry you figure the judge is supposed to allow somewhere between two and two and a half minutes on you, so you don't have a lot of room for error. You make it the best you can, the ring is not really a place to train. I live out here in the country, and a lot of my socialization is the dogs go with me to the bank, or the bar! I don't have training classes except those about 50 miles away sometimes. So do your training when and where you can and do it before you get to the ring.

Would you rather show under an all breed judge or a breeder-judge, and why?

There is another class of



Some people have the ability to look at a group of animals and with some education in the standard and the purpose of the breed, can come up with the best two or three dogs in the ring. The order might be different from the next judge, first might be second or third, but they are in the same ballpark. The problem is some people have to work really hard at it, and really fail to achieve the ability to decipher good dogs from bad dogs. That is why artists, people with an artistic eye for things, succeed so well at this sport. One can learn and read and go to as many seminars as one wants, but sometimes some people just don't absorb it. They are not capable

the years, who knew my mom and dad and have watched me judge since 1977, that I really got a little bit of both, which makes for a better understanding and judgment on picking a dog.

People who have showed only a few dogs, finished a few champions, and had a few litters, meet the minimum requirements to go out there and judge. You have to leave your friendships (or lack of) at the ring gate, because over the years I have put up people I thought I could never hand a ribbon to, or people who are your friends, but if they don't have the best exhibit, you cannot put them up. It says a lot about a person's character to become a judge and to be

Facing page: Ana Rose, February 1996 at the Garden.





judges too, that would be someone who does a Group or two, but is not necessarily an all breed. I have a bigger respect for most breeder-judges, because supposedly you can base what a breeder-judge has done as a breeder in producing, and what they should like. It really throws me off when I go to a breeder-judge who has had a certain type of dog and given that they have that selection in their ring, they go to something totally different. You walk out saying, "Why? I don't understand why he did that." An all-rounder judges Sammies differently, often more generically. They are not in tune to the subtleties of our breed for the most part. Many are doing a better job, though. I am going back over 40 years of knowing numerous all breed judges, many of who are gone. But depending on what breed they came from, sometimes tells me how they might judge Sammies. For example, Collie and Sheltie breeders tend to do a very nice job on our breed because they understand heads. It is not the same kind of head as a Collie or Sheltie, but being aware of subtleties on a head-piece that make a good Sammy, if they are generally good Collie judges they make good Sammy judges. I have just found that over the years to be true.

People who have a basis in herding tend to do pretty well with the coated prick-eared dogs in the Working Group. Anyone wanting to learn more about their own breed (or think about judging), have to watch other breeds. You have to watch beyond 6-9 and 9-12 Puppies, because if you watch a major entry in Dobermans, and you watch puppies and you get all the way through specials, it is a learning process for those who are watching. Maybe you have no interest in Dobermans; it doesn't matter. You still see the progression of how a puppy grows up to be an adult. Our dogs are all covered with hair so it is a lot better way to learn about shoulders and other things to watch non-coated breeds. So if you are going to go to a dog show, don't leave when your own breed is over, but stay and go pick another one, find a judge whose opinion you respect, and sit outside the ring and you will learn something.

Do you mind when the exhibitors ask you questions after the class judging is over?

No. It depends on how they ask, like, "Why did you like that dog instead of mine?" The answer is, "I preferred that dog." I'm not going to discuss another person's dog with a

Left: Tug, Smurf, Patrick, KT, and Duke at Big Bear, California, February 1985.



H 'N P's Big Sky from Montana, "Sky," winning BIS.

person who didn't win. They paid for my opinion and they got it. Sometimes the answer might seem a little ambiguous, but, like critiques in Europe, I always try to tell them something positive on their dog, but perhaps they need to work on this or that. I always give them

something that they can go away with and hopefully build on.

Do you think advertising influences judges?

It influences the judges who can't make up their own minds. For example, I am on the other side of the fence. I can make up

my own mind, so when I see a dog that is advertised, I go over that dog with a fine-toothed comb. It better darn well be as good as they say it is, or there is a problem. There is nothing wrong with advertising a good dog with a nice win, it may sway a judge new to your breed.

For example, it is always easier to put up something that Annie Clark has put up because it validates the win in many judges' eyes. So keep in mind that advertising influences the indecisive mind, but also can have a positive spin for promoting a good or great dog to the fancy.



Do you think it is ethical to retouch advertising photos?

It depends what you are retouching. Sometimes you are taking out some kid who is yelling and screaming in the background. But on the dog, of course not. If you take enough pictures of your dog you are going to get a good one. Don't ever advertise a bad picture of a win just because that little sign is in there. If you have a better picture of a dog and the picture with the sign didn't come out very well, you can cut that out and put it on the other picture. That to me is not a touch-up. But if you are going to start adjusting where the feet are and how the tail is and the shape of the eye, definitely not. That is like somebody going to breed to a dog that had braces when he was a puppy and others breed to him because he is a big winner, and then they get all these bad mouths. Well, touch up pictures are the same thing, so you don't want to do that.

Do you show your own dogs or do you use handlers?

I've done both. I enjoyed piloting Teka through her whole career, that was exciting. I showed Knavioux a little bit, but he was mostly shown by Marna Pearson. I will often finish my own dogs and then decide at a point if it needs to go out with someone. When I was teaching, I didn't have the time off, and when I was on the police department in Los Angeles, I didn't have that kind of time either but I had a dog that I wanted out, so I needed to hire the services of a professional. When you do so, the presentation in the ring is about 50 percent of the entire reason why you pick a professional handler. The other many hours the dog is spent with the handler, whether they play with it, groom it, how they are housed, how they travel - there is a lot that goes into picking one. But just like anyone you want to hire for a service, you had better research it before you undertake it and know exactly what you are paying for and what you are expected to pay for.

I show my own Shibas, I had one out campaigning for a

Facing page: Moonstar's Three Dawg Knight HNP, "d'Kota," winning BIS.

while years ago with Robert Chaffin, he has done a lot of showing for me over the years. I am here in Montana, and I have a ranch to run with my husband, Mike, and my name is Manual Labor. (laughter) So being gone the two or three weeks at a time like I did in the past, before we had this ranch, is just not feasible.

How do you train your puppies and at what age do you start?

I kind of let them train themselves. I believe in the "think" method. I have told this to a number of people and they laughed but it's actually true, just like the music man, the think method. It is in their genes. They spend a lot of time free and loose, so that they come when I call them. I do crate-training, of course. I train with a Flexi Lead only because you kind of go with them, and then pretty soon they are going with you and they don't associate correction to you but some "mystical force."

They are in the house, and I teach them "cookie," and they never get a cookie unless their tail is up over their back. The vocabulary is simple, they learn "wait and trot," some basic obedience, like heel.

I truly think people tend to want too much perfection in a puppy. I say not to train in the ring, but of course, puppies have to learn somewhere when they are first ready to go into a ring. They need some prefacing with the collar on their necks, and people touching them and practicing stacking them. I will start training stacking on the table. Then when we go to move, I tell them "trot." I believe I learned that from Pat Trotter, when you get down to your Group-winning and Best in Show winning and things get really tense and there is a lot of activity, if a dog is trained with certain key words, they will focus on them. So it helps to stabilize the situation. That is pretty much it.

Ana's first time in the ring, under Bob Page in 1993 at the National, she was six months and three days old, and we hadn't done a whole lot other than a little bit of Flexi Lead training. When it came time for the stacking and exam, I did a lot of praying. Sometimes the puppies aren't very patient with stacking, but we get through it. I just don't demand that they be

perfect. It takes a long time to do that. You have a little success each time you are in the ring, and pretty soon you are there; otherwise you have these ring-soured dogs before they are a year old, which is a shame. It should be fun.

Another thought on this is picking the judges you take puppies to. There are some judges you should never take puppies to, and it's not because you didn't win under them. It's because of their mechanics of judging. Some are heavier-handed, some don't have the patience for puppies that aren't as well behaved. You better do your homework, because one bad experience in the ring can literally ruin a dog. You better know who you are entering under.

Now, you have done sledding and obedience, and you've done herding with them. Have you done any agility or tracking or anything else with them?

Not with Sammies. There is a gal named Kathy Buckner, and she deserves so much credit with what she has done with a Kitt daughter of mine. Kaelin is coming up to twelve years old, and she has so many titles in agility they are longer than my arm. (laughter) That bitch has done sledding, she has done weight-pulling, she has done agility, she has two legs toward her CDX. Kathy has done marvelous things with other Sammies as well, but Kaelin was her first agility Sammy, and she has done some very notable work so I know they are very capable. Steve and Cheryl Loper have Ch. Hoof 'N Paw's Midnight Maxx, who is now retired, but he did some outstanding weight-pulling with them in Washington. Jason Loper trained and put Maxx through agility, too. So Hoof 'N Paw dogs have covered the gamut of all duties.

How intelligent do you think Sammies are in comparison to other breeds?

More intelligent than most, less intelligent than some. It depends on how you define intelligence. They are thinkers, they are not easy to trick, they have good memories. That is what makes them a challenge in some of these other events, obedience, agility and others. A friend of mine has done some agility and she said she was training one of her dogs, and

they do the repetition as you know. After about three or four times the dog looked at her as if to say, "I know how to do this now; do we really have to do this any more?" This is the way Sammies think, so they are challenging. They save their energy. They don't just go all out. For example, in sledding when I was running the Irish Setters, they just know one speed, and that is run 'til you drop. (laughter) Sammies think, "You know, we have to go out, but we have to come back, so we better save a little bit so we can get back." This is how they think.

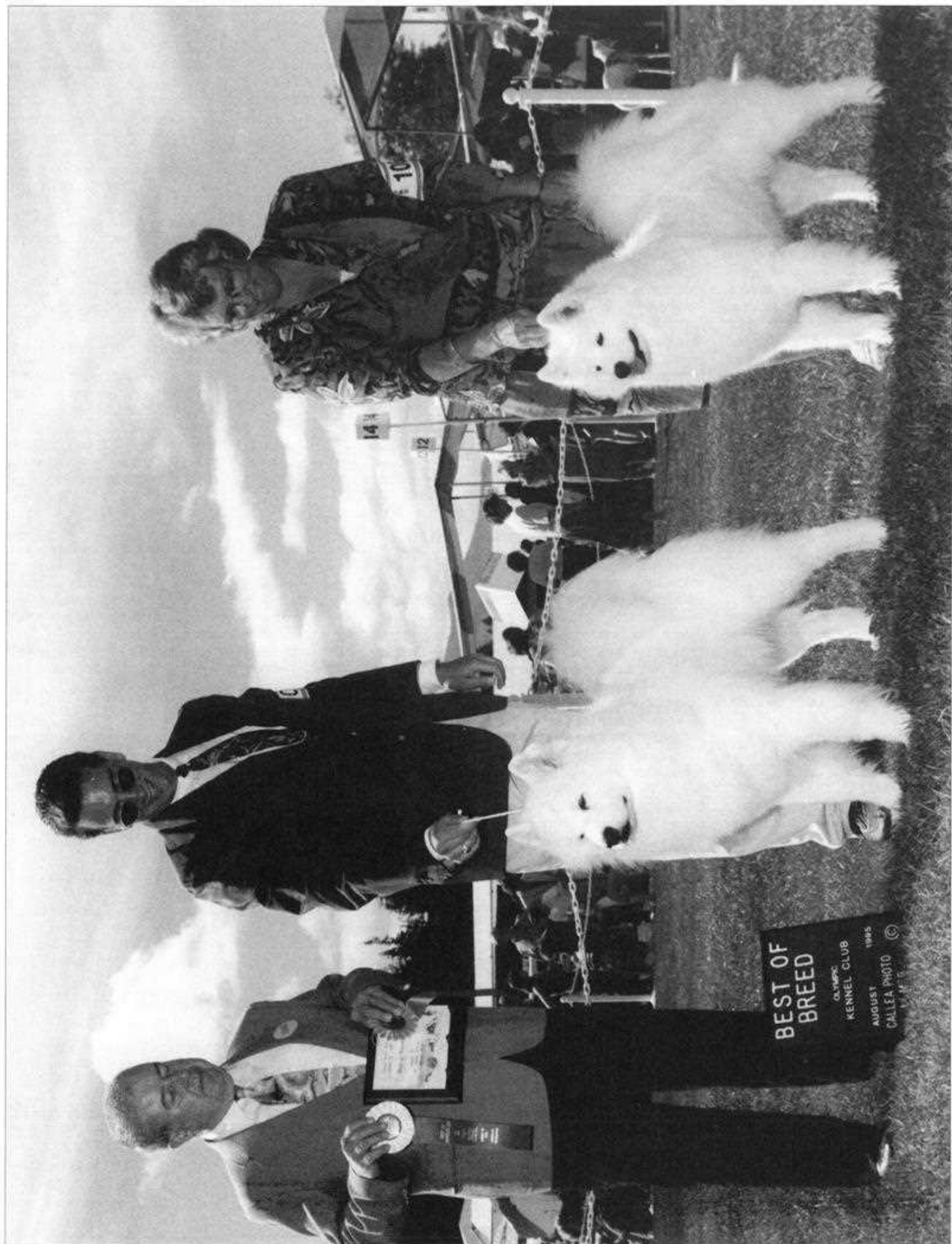
How important is training to winning in conformation?

At the higher levels, somewhat at Breed but certainly at Group or Best in Show, the dogs better be trained. There is no room for error. You don't fidget on the exam; you know the dog is trained in their cadence and speed on their gaiting, so that you don't break gait. You need a dog that has the notion and ability to come back and just strike a pose and hit everything foursquare. Your moment to shine is very short and you have to catch the judge's attention.

Do you think shy or aggressive dogs can be corrected by training, and how would you go about it?

If it is an aggressive Sammy it's very out of character. Therefore, if it is a true aggression, that dog shouldn't be promoted, bred or anything. A softness yet willingness can be a Sammy trait. A perfect example is my Pouter Mary, who has several specialties and two Bests in Show. She is kind of the classic Hoof 'N Paw temperament, not overly demonstrative, kind of soft but willing to please. If that kind of temperament isn't properly handled, the dog will go the other way and you will lose them, they won't give you anything. You have to build that kind of temperament up with positive training.

A really cute story about that is when Mary was only six months old - she is now five years old - dad and I went to the Turkey Circuit in California. It was the first show on Thursday, she was six months old. Dad and I went to the hotel, and she was fine. She asked to go out, and she was being the perfect little puppy.



But we had no show experience, all we had done was been to the bar and the cafe and the bank for socialization and cookies, and a little bit of lead work. So I was walking around the show grounds about 7:30am, and we showed at about 9am, and here is Mary looking at everything. She was cautious; this was a huge new world for her. Carol Cheeseman said, "Mardee, that's a nice puppy. Is she entered today?" I said, "Yes she is," and she said, "You've got a lot of training to do." And I said, "I've got two hours!" (laughter) Well, Mary won her first four-point major that day, and Carol went Reserve with her Bred-by bitch, and Carol said, "Hell of a training method, Mardee!" That was so cute.

That is so funny! You had two whole hours! Do you have any specific advice to owners who want to handle their own dog?

First you had better be able to run in a straight line, that is a precursor for anything. If you can walk and chew gum at the same time then you are on the right track. Some people just are not coordinated and they have to practice a lot, and you should practice without a dog. If the judge says go to the corner, well, that means go to the corner, not three posts to the left. Judges are on a time limit and they are giving you their instructions, and you had best do it right the first time.

One of my biggest pet peeves when I'm judging is when someone is moving their dog and it breaks, and they arbitrarily stop and go back to the corner or come back to me and start over again. If you do nothing else, you learn how to get your dog back in the gait while you are going, because that is the most annoying thing for me when I'm judging. If I want to see it again, I'll ask to see it again, because nine times out of ten the dogs that do that, I don't want to see it again anyway. So if you are practicing out there, do what the judge says and don't improvise.

Do you have any judging stories you would like to share?

There is one I can recall that happened maybe twenty years ago. Exhibitors shouldn't really

talk to the judges when they are in the ring, other than the casual hello or good morning or something like that. It happened to be in the Siberian ring. It had to have been a major entry. Having Siberians and showed Siberians I know there is a big discrepancy between the racing people and the show people on the weight of a dog. This was in the dead of winter, so if the dogs were going to be racing, they were going to be a good five to eight pounds lighter than if they were not. I had two dogs that I liked very much, and I thought, "You know, I really like the way that one dog moves but his finish wasn't very nice, his coat was a little bit dull. But he was a nice moving dog, a well-proportioned dog." Come to find out, that dog was twelve and a half years old, and I could have finished him. But I put him Reserve. This was a case where the handler might have said, "Come on, old man," or something." You know what, that twelve-and-a-half-year-old dog was probably better than one five or six, and I know what I would have done. That was just one little judging experience that was hard. It wasn't because he wasn't of quality to finish, but he was always running and that's why he hadn't finished yet. So I beat myself up over that one for awhile. It's a little different to say, "Oh, he needs a major to finish," which is an absolute no-no and that just makes me go the other direction, but if I had any inkling that the dog was twelve and a half years old - it was one of those things, he was more than worthy of it.

Let's talk about your breeding and whelping experiences. Are your breedings natural or controlled?

Well, they are naturally controlled. (laughter) If it is a bitch from outside, obviously very well monitored and only with the stud dog when I am there, and I make sure that I'm there to hold the bitch. If it is a trained stud dog and he knows what to do, I just want to make sure that the bitch doesn't hurt him and that she doesn't try to get away. So it is controlled in that sense. I will put them together for a few minutes to see if she is ready to breed or not. I'm kind of the old-school; I really haven't done much of this progesterone testing. I have not

done a lot of sending my bitches to outside dogs. People often ask why, but I've looked and looked and came close to finding an outside dog I want to use, and then something either comes up that steers me away, or I think, it is really not a whole lot better than what I have to try to go really far out, so I might be buying myself trouble down the road that I am not aware of. What I have done has worked for me for so long that I don't perhaps go shopping that much - although I'm always looking!

As far as whelping, I like to whelp in the house, next to the bed or in the bathroom. Even though some of my dogs are outside the majority of the time for exercise or R and R, they are all housedogs and they all have free time. The outside runs are 50' x 100', so I don't exactly consider that a small space. I let certain dogs run loose together so that they have companionship. Ana, for example, cannot be out with anyone because she will take them for a long trip, and when you are out in the country and there is not much between here and there, she can get pretty far away.

Back to whelping, I let the mother chew the cords, I just kind of monitor it. I try to stay out of it. It is a very natural thing for them, if they are a good whelp and a good mother, I am there to lend a hand if they need it. I don't do a lot of intervention. If it is a bad whelp or bad mother I would not breed that bitch again. To me, it's part of the whole complete dog. I'm not going to propagate bad maternal instincts, so if they aren't good at it, even if they produce some nice puppies, there is always another way to go that is very similar. So I won't encourage them to be a mother a second time.

Are your males at stud to outside bitches?

Yes, as long as they meet the requirements of certifications and health records and that sort of thing. People looking for specific qualities might inquire for stud service and it will be a total outcross, and knowing pedigrees behind both sides, I might suggest they go somewhere else to get what it is that they are after. I have never been one to hard push my stud dogs. I'm in this

because I love doing it and I want to produce the best all-around Sammies that I can. People often say, "I want a puppy that shows just like Ana," or one of the others. I'll say, "Well, a lot of that is breeding, and then after you have put the puppy on the ground, it's about 90 percent environment." They have to spend a lot of time with you, they have to travel with you, they have to hear all sorts of things and see all sorts of things. If they are not a member of the family first and foremost, and taught all sorts of outside stimuli as well as learning how to be crate-trained and have quiet time, then they are probably not going to show like a Mirec. It is hard to fill that particular request in a puppy.

Would you breed to a dog that had a serious fault if he were outstanding in all other areas?

It depends on what the serious fault is. Bad fronts, a bad shoulder, those are so hard to overcome and I've spent so many years trying to overcome it, and I feel if nothing else, I have dogs that have good fronts. Hopefully balanced with their rears, too. As I said, in the last ten years I have been noticing what tails do to rear movement. If there were generation after generation behind a particular dog that produced that tail, I would stay away from that.

Do you think it's a good idea to breed to a top-winning dog regardless of the pedigree?

Absolutely NOT! That has been the ruination of many other breeds. I won't even try to say what those are, but if you have followed the sport in other breeds as well as your own, I think it's evident. Often, some people will not breed their champion stud dog to a bitch that isn't finished or vice versa. That is absolutely ridiculous. Some dogs, perhaps, don't have the opportunity to be shown, and they are well bred and they have a lot to offer the breed. Perhaps an injury is purely cosmetic, nothing genetic, has precluded this particular dog from being shown. So one thing about breeding dogs is: breed dogs NOT titles! If you are trying to second-guess Mother Nature, good luck! (laughter) We all try to breed that "perfect 10," but if it was that easy, none of us would work as hard at it as we do. But if you keep jumping

Facing page: Wild Rose Knight, "Pop," and A Rose is a Rose, "Ana."



Am/Can Ch. Symphony's Proud Mary HNP, BIS, BISS, "Miree"
(Ch. Hoof'N Paw's Knight Shadows x Symphony's Tantara).

ship because you are not getting what you want, and go someplace else, and then you go someplace else, you are NEVER going to establish a line. You have to work through some of your own areas that you want to improve on. But don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. People who have done this have no concept of what they are really trying to achieve. They are not going to get there because they are "reinventing the wheel." If you have a sound program, build on it, work to improve it.

How many litters do you think a bitch should have, and what would be the youngest and oldest she should be bred?

It depends on the maturity of the bitch. This gets into the Code of Ethics that the SCA is dealing with. Naturally we have CERF and OFA. I might interject right now that if we are required to CERF every year, I think a dog should be x-rayed more than once. A dog could be

perfect at 24 months, and then go haywire at 36. It is the same thing with eye checks; a dog is clear and then at seven or eight comes down with cataracts. What do you do, go around and kill all the puppies he has produced? Of course not! You have to go with the cards that you are dealt and do the best you can, and minimize health risks the best that you can.

I think two years is fine for breeding a bitch the first time, and a dog could be used younger. There might be circumstances that warrant that. A case in point, if you do a prelim on a dog at a year or sixteen months old, and you have an eight- or nine-year-old bitch that is in really good shape and she has had some litters, and you want to get something more out of her, then you might use that dog before he is officially OFAd with a number at 24 months. But if he has a prelim and it looks good or better, you are probably okay. What is the dif-

ference between that and x-raying a dog at 24 months, and never checking again, but at six he becomes dysplastic. Dysplasia is a condition that doesn't have to be genetic. It can be created by environment and quite often can be by an injury or excessive weight.

We try to legislate ethics here, but you need a certain amount of common sense. By virtue of frozen semen now, it gives you a little more latitude. For example, you have a young dog, he is well bred, you have a litterbrother a little bit better and you want to place him in a pet home. You could collect that dog and freeze him and neuter him, and then do some of the clearances when he hits the ages at which they are required. This can help people keep the numbers down. By the same token on this multiple sire thing, you might have an older dog and you want to use him, but the bitch is six or seven and you don't want to breed her after

that, and you want to prove a new young dog. Well, you can breed her to both and let DNA sort it out. So it is getting closer to the way things are being done in horses and cows. Cow breeders are a lot farther along in this than the horse people, but the dog people are the last ones who come up to snuff on this. I think because of their size it is not as feasible for example to collect eggs out of an older bitch and then have a surrogate mother raise the puppies. But I venture to guess that is probably somewhere in the future.

Do you supplement very young puppies?

Only with natural foods. My puppies get lots of cottage cheese and yogurt. We have chickens, so they get hard-boiled eggs or scrambled eggs. I like to give them raw hamburger probably the first two or three weeks with their mush when they are starting to eat at three and a half to four weeks. But you know, dog food companies have spent millions of dollars on their products, and some of them are quite good and very balanced. If you start intervening too much you can actually throw off the balance of the nutrition we are probably doing more damage than good. So I get by with the cottage cheese, the yogurt, and also when they are big enough I go to the meat market and I get real cow bones and cut them up and let them gnaw on them. It is good for the nutrition aspect and it is great for their jaws, and then when they start getting their ears up, it helps to build up the muscles, the skull muscles, and it helps the ears come up. No rawhide; real bones.

What kind of food do you feed?

I change their diets because, I get tired of eating the same thing, too, so they probably also do. But in general I stay away from corn-based food. I like rice, I fed lamb and rice for years, I am still feeding a lamb and rice product, but I'll often mix it with other feed. As I say, it is to give them a variety. Our breed does not require really high protein food. I believe you can give them too much protein. Anything that is 28 percent or higher is a little bit high, especially for any length of time. Perhaps in certain growth spurts you might need a little bit more, but you can add the protein level without the added fat by

giving the additives I mentioned.

Do you let the bitch wean the puppies or do you do it?

I pretty much let them wean them. I have had some that have said, "I've had it!" at four weeks, and some that want to keep feeding at eight or nine weeks. The mothering aspect is good, even if they wean them early, I make sure that they interact and play with them because the first four months of a puppy's life with the mother and with you as the breeder are paramount to setting that puppy's frame of mind.

Do you sell your puppies on terms or cash only?

I'd say 90 percent are sold on cash only. I don't like lots of strings. I think they are hard to manage. It is a lot to ask of someone who wants a puppy, and out of sight they are out of your control to a certain degree. I was raised over the years when a handshake and a promise was as good as your word. Nowadays of course that's different, but my contracts are pretty basic and clear. As far as guarantees, if certain things are adhered to, I'll honor them. If not, it nullifies the guarantees. For example, what they are raised on, the flooring, maintaining their proper weight, letting them jump up and down off of things, because that is what breaks the frame down and creates injury and unsoundness, so that is probably the most specific part of any contract I have. Almost everything that goes out is spayed or neutered, and now it is easier to do it myself, because they are finding that you can do spay or neuter at very young ages. Then it is done and there is no question that it has been done.

Do you ever sell on contracts with puppies back or other arrangements?

Only a few times. Since most of them go out to pet homes, that is not an issue. I can count on one hand with a few fingers left over the number of what I would consider good, honest, long-term co-ownership arrangements. Breeders and co-owners have to have the same objectives, and if you are mentoring them, then they need to be very good listeners, because I generally don't say something unless I have a good reason for saying it. So if you want to do something different, then we probably aren't going to have a very good working relationship.

At what age do you put your puppies in their new homes?

Generally between ten and twelve weeks. Sometimes it is a repeat home of many years, and the puppy is the second or third dog they have gotten from me, and I know it is a good pet home. At eight or nine weeks, and if it is not one I am considering for any kind of show career or breeding, I will let that puppy go. But rarely before eight and a half or nine weeks.

Do you have any whelping stories you want to share?

Probably the saddest one was with Tekka, who was my top-winning bitch in the early '80s. I tried breeding her several times, but I didn't get any puppies, so I thought I was breeding her too late. I tried as early as the seventh or eighth day and she would stand for the male, so the last time, I thought I would just put them together every day that she was in season. And she bred on the third day. She had four girls, and I thought it was really fabulous, but the puppies started to fade, and I lost one. I wanted to know why this was happening, so I went to the vet. In the back of her lower jaw, one of her molars was cracked. It was very hard to detect, she never showed any signs of being ill. The cracked molar had gotten infected, and it apparently affected her milk. We lost all the puppies one by one. Even after we discovered this and I took them off, it was like they had enough in their systems that we couldn't correct it. That was very sad. This was years ago, and it took the wind out of my sails on that one.

But from a breeding standpoint, I took her litter sister and she ended up being a very good producer for me, and that was Kit. Her name was Has Klout. She is behind everything that has gone on to do very well for me. So the one sister didn't contribute, but she did. That is how it works sometimes.

That is too bad. What is your grooming procedure?

Ideally, you want to keep the dog bathed, and keep up the coat maintenance. You have coat maintenance and then you have show coat maintenance. When you have a number of dogs and you live out on a ranch, they can get pretty scroungy. But I blow them out

first, and then I comb the difficult areas like the elbows, the hocks and the tummy, and clean their teeth. Then I put them in the tub and wash them, and rinse probably twice as good as I wash them because that is the secret, a really good rinse. Then I blow them out and kind of fluff up as we get near to being dry, and then the next day when they are totally dry, even though you think they are dry there can still be a little bit of dampness in there. So when they are totally, completely dry, then I comb them. Then we are done. Hopefully you keep up the coat and depending on the time of the year, you might need to mist it with a little coat conditioner.

The secret is keeping them

out of the sun. So in the summertime when sun is really intense they are usually inside, out of the sun, whether house time or a little bit of crate time. In the outdoor area they can get out of the sun by going into their log houses. You just don't want any coat damage, because you want the coat just as white or whichever color they are, cream, biscuit or white, as bright as possible. You don't want any sunburning or damage to the coat.

Do you have any favorite products?

They vary. Some things get to be a fad. Pro White is a good shampoo. I used a lot of the All Systems products over the years. You know, a dog gets really clean just by using Dove



Miree: six months old - first major!

dish soap. Again, the secret is in the rinsing. If you leave any residue in that is when you get into trouble. Especially boys, you have to make sure you dry them really well around their tail and their private parts because that is when they'll get after themselves and create hot spots and sores. So it's very important to dry as thoroughly as you can and you have to have a high power blower to do that. Those have been wonderful.

What general advice would you give to breeders who are just starting

out?

What they are is Sammy enthusiasts, because you don't just start out as a breeder. You get a puppy from a reputable breeder, you have a certain amount of success with that puppy, you finish their championship, then where do you go from there? Well, not everybody has to be a breeder. A lot of responsibilities come with being a breeder. You should be willing to take your puppies back at any time, that means whether they have been gone

for two months or six years. You have to be in a position to make that commitment. Breeders should breed for themselves first. It is a huge misnomer if you think you are really going to make money at this. Too many people feel that if they have a litter or two it will finance the show career of so-and-so, and then you are doing it for the wrong reasons. So first you have to decide why are you breeding, and what are you breeding for.

Then you have to look

around the country and watch hundreds of dogs and go to specialties and Nationals, in all venues at those shows, and decide which are the dogs that you continue to pick out and why do you pick them out. Then you might want to take your bitch to something that they have, and try that. Not every litter is a success. Also don't think you have to sell all your puppies to show homes, because not all puppies belong in show homes. The first home I look for is a good home, and



Miree, April 2002, PVSC, BISS under judge Phyllis Brayton.



Left to right: "Pop" and "Seager," Moonstar's Hollywood Knight BIS, winning Best Brace at the 2000 SCA in Fredrick, Maryland.

that is show or otherwise. To tell you the truth sometimes your pet homes are the better homes. So if you want something done right, do it yourself. This is why keeping strings on puppies with other people who

are not show people, you are asking an awful lot of them. Sometimes it works out but I'd say eight or nine times out of ten it does not. So if you have a great puppy, you better do it yourself.

Do you recommend to your new puppy people to join an all breed club, parent club, obedience or whatever?

If they join the parent club for their breed then they'll get information on that breed specifically in publications and maga-

zines. A good all-around magazine for anyone is the *AKC Gazette*, because it covers lots of issues that may pertain to your dog. Of course I suggest buying some of the better written books on your specific breed. They



Miree.

adversarial. Let the people work into it slowly instead of demanding it. First of all it is a family member. If they are well behaved and well trained at home, then they will be accepted and part of that family for a good twelve or fifteen years.

Is the parent club doing enough to educate judges and new members in Sammies?

Yes and no. I feel that when it comes to judges' education, everybody has their own ideas on it. I don't think imparting someone else's personal opinion is the right way to teach someone how to judge this breed. They need to watch the breed in shows, they need to thoroughly digest the standard. We have a good illustrated standard. But when it comes down to ringside mentoring, it is really hard to be objective as a ringside mentor, but you have to be, instead of saying, "But I prefer this," and leaning someone toward that. Or "In the East they are like this, and in the West they are like that." You know, 40 years ago that might have been true. But travel is so easy these days, relatively speaking compared to back then, we don't have the diversification in the breed like we used to have. A case in point: when I was in California and I just started going to Westminster, I took a dog back there and the dog had done very well under this particular breed judge, in California, Arizona, and Oregon. His comment after the judging - we did not win - was, "I like your dog on the West Coast." Now, we are talking 35 years ago. I didn't agree with it, but showing back in New York 35 years ago, I could see where he was coming from. I say that to emphasize the point, if you know the standard, and are coming up as a judge and have your opinions of how you interpret the standard, you don't need to be told by ringside mentors what they prefer. There are variances between all of them, and to say that one is more correct than another is not the case; that is more a matter of choice and opinion by the mentor. So I think these soon-to-be judges should be mentored on specific, tangible points, not opinions or druthers or preferences. Part of the problem is we have people mentoring who don't have the experience to be mentoring.

are good learning tools, and now with the advent of the internet, there is a myriad of articles and websites that will help you.

If it's going to be a family

dog, I strongly urge them to learn some puppy socialization for a start, basic obedience just makes it a better citizen and family member. If they want to try

their hand at showing - and that's just it, try their hand. These breeders who say you WILL show them, you will do this or that, to me that is very

Is there an AKC video on the Samoyeds?

Yes, and it's a good one. It was shot in the early '90s I believe. There were examples used for some points when they talked about using a dog for nice coat or tailset, for example, but it had short legs. You can be talking about something but everybody is looking at the whole picture. There are a few examples like that, but for the most part, it is a good introduction to the breed. It is merely an introduction.

How long have you lived here in Montana?

I moved here in 1987. I lived west of Livingston about six miles on 40 acres, then Mike and I got married in 1990. I met him here in Montana. Actually, as a cute little story, my Ramblin Rose introduced us. There were a group of girls who would do things together, community service as well as have fun and parties, and we called ourselves the "Fun Bunch." We were at a bar and restaurant in Livingston called the Stockman, and we would meet there for meetings, or I would go down and have dinner or a drink and visit. I was there one afternoon, and Rosey had "bar privileges," so she could come in. She was very polite, and she would get a little popcorn now and then, and just sit there by me. One day Mike and a group of guys came in from the telephone company where they worked, they were sitting there having a beer, and Rosey got up and wandered over to their table. Mike started petting her, and he obviously liked dogs. I was watching this in the mirrors in front of me. He said, "Who do you belong to?" I turned around and said she belonged to me, and we got married six months later. (laughter) She was maid of honor. Actually Pam Shea was maid of honor but Rosey was my "flower girl" and she had a nice little bandanna with flowers on it. We were married in the Stockman, where we met.

That is a great way to find out who the dog people are.

Yes, she made a good choice. I figured if she liked him, he wouldn't be too bad. He likes the dogs, he doesn't really care to know or understand all the dog stuff, but he is great with the dogs. In fact, when I go away and come

home, almost everyone goes on a diet. I leave strict instructions as to who gets what, but Mike's reply is, "Well, nobody starved to death." What can you say!

So you have worked as a teacher and on the police department; what else have you done?

Now I'm a rancher. I taught school for almost fourteen years, high school and some junior college, and then I did some substituting when I wanted to concentrate on the dogs a little more. Then I decided I better do something a little bit more challenging so I joined the Los Angeles Police Department. That was a challenge because I was 33 when I went on, and most of the recruits were quite a bit younger than I. But I had an athletic background. The reason I chose to do that was they were going to start up the mounted unit again, and that interested me, so I had to become a police officer to be able to ride. So I did that for six years, but my allergies were giving me problems with the Los Angeles air quality. I have always enjoyed coming to Montana; I've been coming to shows in Montana since 1977. A few people know that both my mother and her mother were native Montanans, born in Lewistown. So we have family property north of here, about 75 miles in the Castle Mountains. In fact, my great-grandmother's house is still there. So I guess it was always in my blood. When I came up here, as a cute little aside, my mom said, "Mardee went up to Montana, she's working on a ranch, but she'll be back." Then a couple of years went by and she said, "Mardee likes it up there but I'm pretty sure she'll come back." After five years she started telling everybody, "Well, Mardee's not coming back." (laughter) That is it; I am not going back to California.

How have the dogs affected your lifestyle, other than finding your husband?

They bring a lot of joy. They make you get up in the morning. They are there for you unconditionally. I have enjoyed many other breeds, but there is something very mystifying and intrinsic about the Samies that draws me to them. Of course, it is my heritage. I like pretty much all breeds, but I have spent many times with the

sledding aspect with them. Another cute story about sledding is when I went to a race in Gunnison, Colorado. I had a truck with a camper and a dog trailer, and I had my Sammies and a couple of Siberians, and a couple of Irish Setters, and it was going to be cold so I had three Sammies in the camper with me that night. The next morning, I couldn't get out of the camper because it was so cold that all the breathing from the dogs inside had frozen all the latches. I had to light the stove and make some steam to get myself out of the camper. (laughter) They have been a great joy, they truly have.

What are the drawbacks of being in the dogs?

Sometimes I think I could have lived very happily in Hawaii. Early on, out of high school, I thought about joining the service, but then I couldn't have had my dogs. I came very close to going to Davis to vet school, and it was simply a mix-up with the transcripts when they said I didn't have a class, which I did have. By the time they got that sorted out I had been accepted at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo and in the tradition of my family, they have all been teachers including my sister, I went into teaching. Of course, being a teacher affords you time to have the dog events on weekends and in summers so that just sort of fell into place. But sometimes I regret not having left Cal Poly and gone up to Davis, but I will never know.

Has it all been worth it?

Of course it has! A lot of people think this is really easy because my parents were Bob and Dolly, but in some ways it was harder. There were disappointments early on, some of my early breedings, it is like a singer, I was not an overnight success. I established Hoof 'N Paw in 1966 or 1967, and actually had marginal success in the way of a big winner until the White Knight. He was born in 1974, and that got the ball rolling. I started thinking of longer-range plans for dogs and what I wanted to produce. At this point it culminated with Pop and Ana, and then Pop producing three Best in Show sons, and being able to follow Ana with Miree. I have a crop of two-year-olds that are out of Miree and d'Kota that are showing

some promise, so we'll see.

Short of winning the Garden or even placing in the Group or winning the Group, I have done it all. I don't feel I need to do a whole lot more. I'm happy with what I've done. It is an ongoing learning process. I go off to shows judging or visiting with friends of many years or new people and I learn new things all the time. I really enjoy the horses and I feel the pendulum swinging back. I want to spend a little more time with the horses, and I do a little bit of judging. The weekend warrior regime of keeping dogs out all the time, I just don't feel the need to have to do that. If something comes along and I want to do that, then fine, but right now there are some other priorities that are sifting back to the top after devoting so many years trying to compete at the national level with the very best product I can.

Well, you certainly look happy so you must be doing something right. Is there anything else you would like to cover?

From the international aspect of our breed, we are working better toward sharing with people in other countries, and that's good for the breed. Some of the dogs from one country shouldn't be isolated because of geography. With the advent of frozen semen and sharing with our international neighbors it is good for the breed.

Keep in mind that it is a natural, working breed that loves people and we need to be the keepers of that and we need to pursue and protect that. We need to always say the name of the breed right, which is Sammy-Ed. It is like two boys names. It has been documented that the Russians don't use the "O" and the emphasis is on the second syllable, and it would almost sound more like Samyét. So I guess to Americanize it, Sammy-Ed is probably closest to the Russian word. There are a lot of Sammy owners who say Sam-Oyed, but I promised my mom I would carry this banner and I shall.

Thank you for letting me keep you so long.

You're welcome - anytime.