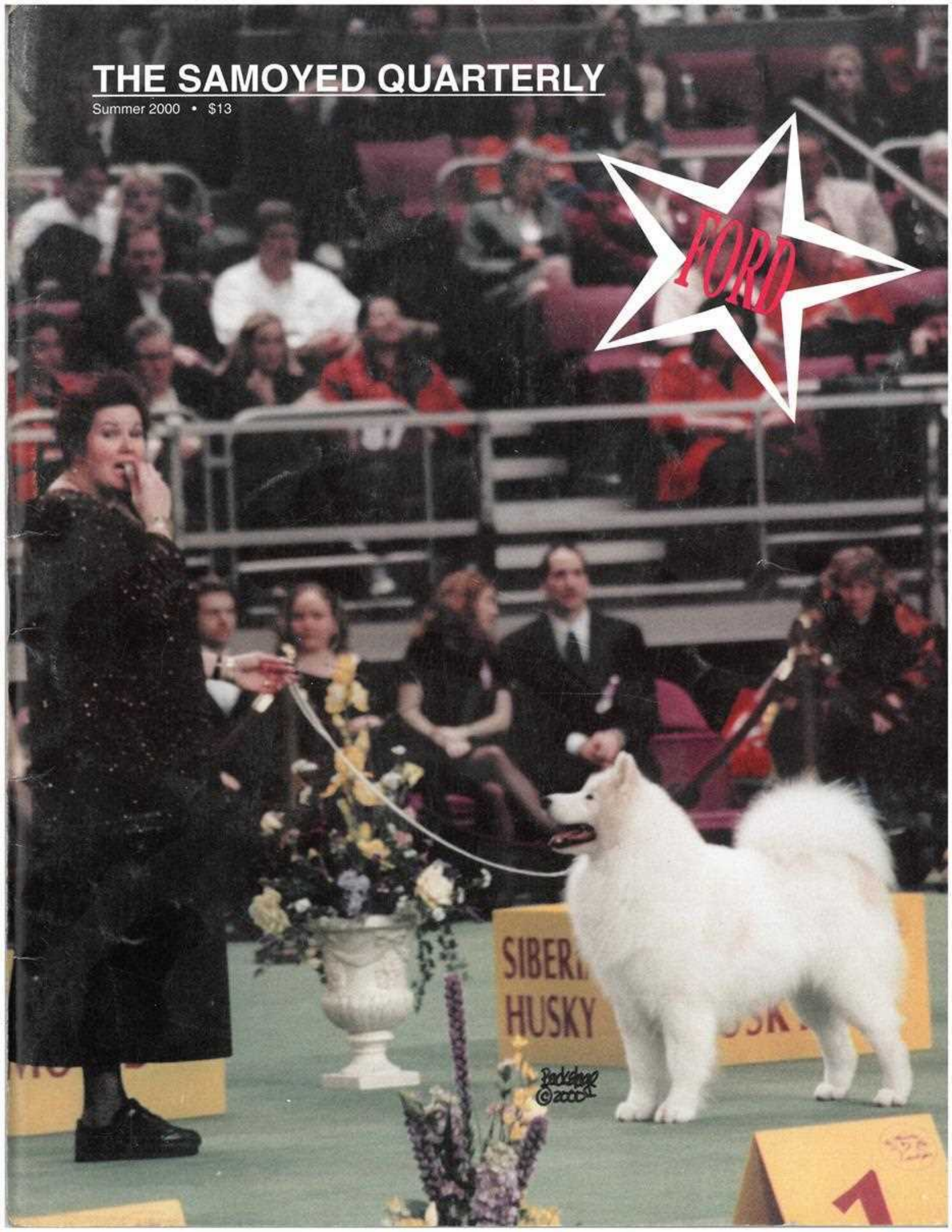


THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Cheryl Wagner
TARAHILL
Alpharetta, Georgia

Part II

This interview was conducted at the home of Cheryl Wagner on November 4, 1998 by Nancy Cozby.

How did you come up with your kennel name?

That's a very hokey story. (laughter) First of all, I'm in Atlanta now which is kind of ironic. Certainly I never thought I'd move to Atlanta when I came up with the name of Tarahill a hundred years ago. I grew up in Michigan but I also spent a lot of time in Kentucky at my grandmother's farm. It was a farm that my great-grandfather used to farm. Add to that the movie *Gone With the Wind*, which was one of my all-time favorite movies and that great line that Scarlett's father has for her when he tells her that land is the only thing worth fighting for and worth dying for, the land lasts forever. My grandmother always felt that way, that the land lasted forever. It was a tradition that was always there. When I was very young and more idealistic than I am today, I thought in terms of the impact that I could have on this breed. Tara was Latin for land and that it would always be there. Tara by itself didn't seem like enough so I had to put something else with it that would go together, so I put Tarahill together. It was going to have such a profound impact on this breed that it was going to be there forever. Years ago if you had asked me my goal, I would have told you to improve the breed. Today I would tell you that God did a good job. My goal is not to screw it up any further. (laughter) I guess that's what happens when you go from youth to middle age. See, I told you it was a hokey story.

Would you say that was your long-range goal in breeding dogs?

My long-range goal in the beginning was to improve the breed and as I got twenty years

into the program and looked back, I realized there wasn't a lot on which to improve. This really was a very healthy breed, it was long-lived and had relatively few health or genetic problems and my goal was not to screw it up. (laughter)

Did you name your litters by any specific scheme, such as A for first litter, B for second and so on?

Yes and no. I know a lot of breeders who do that: this is the A litter, this is the B litter and based on that they can do all that. Jack and Linda Alldred, who own Maur-Mik's Kim, did some neat stuff with combining sire and dam. That's how they



got Debsign's Promise in that litter which was from Louhaven Snow Mist Ensign and Jac-lin's Little Debutante came Debsign's. I tried that and guess I never had the right sires and dams to mix the names and it always sounded funky. There's not a pattern but for a while there at the end we got off on these Duck names. We got kind of crazy with that, because of Saul and Flo Waldman's dog that I had bred to, Lucky Duck.

That's interesting too. Everyone thought that I bred to that dog because he was a big winner. What's ironic and funny, and Saul and Flo know this, is that first of all when I bred to the dog, he was not a big

winner yet, he'd just recently finished his championship, and number two, that dog's dam and his granddam were two of my all-time favorite bitches that I ever knew. I bred to that dog based on who his mother was. I loved that dog's mother. In fact, I named that dog's mother. Flo will tell you that his mother, whose name was Jane, was kind of a cat-like, aloof bitch. She didn't care for a lot of people but she loved me. She would see me at a dog show and be ready to leap out of her exercise pen because she saw me across the way. I bred to Lucky Duck based on who his mother was. Lucky Duck went on to become a great winner. When I bred my Ransom daughter Trinket, whom I loved, to him, I got three puppies. I named the puppies Tarahill's Lucky Duckling

ing the catalog away. Several years later a litter was born with a promising young male and I thought, "Oh, what was that good name Linda More gave me? Let me go find that catalog." That's how Buddy got the name Everybody Duck. Then we just kind of lost it. Finally I'd had it and said we were naming this one All Ducked Out. That's how Ollie, the young male who's currently with Chris, got his name. I guess other than the duck names, occasionally I did something off a sire's name or a dam's name, but the duck names were the only ones over which we really went nuts.

Do you think that you've established a distinguishable line?

That's tough. No, I don't think I did. I can look at dogs and see the characteristics. First of all my dogs, because I did linebreed so tightly, are distinguishable to me. I'm not sure they are distinguishable to other people. There have been very few occasions where somebody had bred into my stud dogs or I have used an outside stud dog. I did have an opportunity just recently at the National Specialty to see a puppy that was by my stud dog, Buddy, and I looked at this puppy bitch and she looked like she had come out of my kennel. Her mother, although she was an outcross, was also linebred and phenotypically looked like my dog. So no I don't think that I necessarily established a distinct line.

I do believe that one of the things my dogs are known for is temperament. I have exceptionally good temperament. I could run four stud dogs together. It amazes me when I hear breeders from other parts of the country tell me that they can't run their bitches together or that they can't run their stud dogs together. Occasionally I've had bitches that couldn't get along with each other but that was rare. What did they think the Samoyed people did on their sled teams? How could you not run them in a pack? What did the Samoyed people do? Do you think they had separate facilities for each dog? (laughter) To me, that's just such a part and parcel of what this dog is. Forget the obliquely set eye and the dog that carries the spirit of Christmas in its heart year-round. If you don't have tem-

(the only bitch in the litter), Tarahill's Just Ducky and Tarahill's Son of a Duck. (laughter) I don't know what happened. I think we all took temporary insanity for a while.

We got crazy with these duck names. I sold a puppy to somebody in Florida who named it Duck 'Em and Leave 'Em, which has since become a champion. (laughter) Linda More came up with the Everybody Duck dog. I was judging the Potomac Valley Sweepstakes and we were talking about all these crazy duck names that we were coming up with, and she said, "You ought to name one Everybody Duck." I remember writing it on the catalog and fil-



Ch. Tarahill's Bred to Win (Ch. Kazakh's Kodiak CD x Ch. Tarahill's Can Do Too).



Ch. Tarahill's Treasure Me Always (Ch. Tarahill's Casey Can Do x Ch. Tarahill's Lucky Duckling). At the time, the only Samoyed and only champion of record of any breed to be a registered service dog.

perament in this breed, what do you have?

If you had to rate type, temperament and soundness in order of importance, you'd put temperament first?

Absolutely! It all comes back to why are you breeding or what is your primary goal? If you're breeding just to have big winners in the show ring, then I guess soundness and type are most important and who cares what kind of personality they are to live with. But if you're selling dogs to the public (I was never one of those breeders that every litter was 100 percent show quality, I always had some that had to be sold as pets), how can you not sell sound temperament? I have to know that I can turn my back on these dogs and they're not going to bite a child or a stranger. To me, that's absolutely critical.

Which would you rate second?

Soundness. Form follows function. If you can't do the job you were bred to do, what good are you? This dog right here, this little Pomeranian, she was bred to be a lap dog and, as you can see, she does it quite well. (laughter) She does what she was bred to do.

She's achieved perfection.

Absolutely. (laughter) She was never supposed to pull a sled; she was never supposed to herd reindeer. She's supposed to hang out in your lap. She can do that. This dog was not

designed to lay there on this rug. He was supposed to be a working dog. If a Samoyed looks like a Samoyed, that's nice, but if he can't cover ground how's he ever going to herd reindeer or pull a sled?

Can you describe your interpretation of the perfect dog of this breed?

First of all, there are no perfect ones. Secondly, when I read our standard, if I had to describe our breed in one word, that word would be moderate. If you read our standard, everything about the standard describes a moderate dog. So to me the ideal dog is one that is very moderate.

Can you explain that a little more?

If you look at our breed standard, it doesn't call for anything extreme in movement or anything else. Everything about the dog is described as not extreme one way or the other, but in terms of being a moderate dog. In describing that, you look for a dog that is not extreme on one end or the other. Having said that, that is the dog I would look to show. I would look for the extreme in a stud dog to breed because I think you need the extreme to get to the moderate.

Why do some dogs look good when standing or posing but not so good when moving?

Because they're not made right. Beauty is as beauty does,

Henry Stoecker, one of my all-time favorite judges said, and I think I recently heard somebody else use the same quote when referring to horses, "Dogs are like showgirls. They all look good standing still but you have to put them in a line and watch them move to see how they're made." Beauty is as beauty does. To me it really doesn't matter how good you look standing still. If you can't cover ground, you can't do the job you were bred to do; therefore, what good are you?

How should a dog move in the front and from the side?

First of all, from the side they absolutely have to cover ground. That's first and foremost my number one criteria. I can forgive almost anything else but I will not forgive lack of sidegait. It doesn't matter what else you have if you don't have sidegait.

Movement from the side should be very fluid, the topline should be level and they need to cover ground. Period. I always tell new people, when they talk to me about movement, about front and rear, and they tell me this or that bothers them, "I know you're on your way to the German Shepherd Nationals so you're going to have the chance to see some wonderful sidegait." You're also going to see some front ends singing "Hello Dolly" coming at you, going in every

direction and the rears, too. (laughter) It's because they have the angulation. Because they have those angles is the reason they have the sidegait. The front end extends and the rear end comes up to take the place of the front end, so that you have the single tracking effect. You compare that, as I always like to do, with a Shepherd and a Doberman: there are almost no Dobermans in this country that aren't clean on the down and back but they cover no ground. They're straight from both ends with very little angle on the front end assembly, and there's very little angle on the rear end. They're balanced, but those legs have no place to go because they can't get in trouble.

Now, look at the German Shepherd with that wonderful ground-covering stride. In order to have that stride, you have to have a lot of angle on that front end assembly, and you've got to have a lot of angle on the rear end assembly. There are a lot of places that leg can go from the time it raises off the ground and hits the ground again. I can forgive that for the ground covering. What I've always said is that if you think about this, think about the dog that is pretty straight on the front and rear, beautiful on the down and back but not covering a lot of ground. Think about the dog that's a little cowhocked

or toeing in or toeing out or whatever but with this wonderful ground-covering sidegait. Not so clean down and back. To get from here to there, from point A to point B, the dog that's pretty straight in the front and rear takes twenty steps. The dog without the pretty front and rear but with the sidegait gets from here to there in twelve steps. Which dog will be more effective herding reindeer? Which dog will be more effective pulling sleds and which dog will be less tired at the end of the day? To me, I can forgive a lot of things for good sidegait. I cannot forgive lack of sidegait.

How should a dog move in the rear and when going away at a slow trot?

I would prefer to see them single tracking. I would prefer to see them do what the standard says they're supposed to do and converge. I would like to see them converge and as the left front moves off, the right rear comes up and takes its place

What are you looking for in a head?

Again, back to the standard. I like to see moderation. I don't mean to discount the headpiece as not being important, I like to see pretty heads, but pretty heads don't do the job. Pretty heads don't do what they were bred to do. I don't want to see those real coarse white Chows, and I don't want to see those real whoopee faces either. I'd like a nice almond-shaped eye, I'd like nice dark pigment. I'd like the unilateral triangle between the ears and the base.

How serious are missing teeth?

In my experience with the breed, I have never seen a Samoyed with missing teeth. I shouldn't say that. I know of one big winning bitch that had missing teeth. I don't know of any other Samoyed, in or out of my pedigree, that has missing teeth. It's just not a problem in our breed.

How important is eye color?

It's important. How important is world peace? In the scope of things you start ranking, and in ranking I would put movement at the top, structure at the top and the quality of the coat up there. Eye color is way down the list. Usually by the time I get to the point of deciding eye color, the dog's been eliminated. If I were judging or

in a breeding program, the dog's been eliminated for something far more important than eye color. If it has all the other qualities, by the time I get down to judging eye color, it's irrelevant.

If you could rate the dog on a point scale of 100, how many points should the head be?

Not many. Again, you're going back to how important movement is. I would give the movement a big way in points. I would give the structure of the dog big points and I would give the muscle tone and condition of the dog big points. By the time you're down to what the head looks like, it's a real minimal number for me.

How important is pigment and would you breed a dog that was missing pigment?

Pigment is what we refer to as the lip line, the eyes and all that. Pigment is important because if you think about dogs with big chunks of missing pigment, what would happen to those dogs in the environment for which they were bred? In Siberia and the Arctic, pink lips and pink eyerims are a big problem because they would freeze. Pigment is important but yes, I

would breed to a dog with missing pigment and I would keep a dog with missing pigment. It's not as important to me as all the other things. The other thing you have to remember, and some of the new Samoyed breeders may or may not know this, is that the pigment is genetically linked to the biscuit color. So many of our show people today are concerned about having these absolutely brilliant snow white dogs and they're upset when they have dogs with biscuit freckles, biscuit rears or biscuit patches on their bodies. The biscuit color is where you're getting the dark pigment. The chances are that if you're looking at missing pigment, you're probably looking at these snow white dogs. I've never seen a dog that had biscuit on it with missing pigment.

How about winter nose?

That doesn't bother me a bit.

Do you have any idea what causes it?

No. Sometimes it's age. Sometimes it's diet. This is a tricky question and I'm sure there are people who are going to read this and gasp when they

do, but I'm not opposed to coloring a winter nose for the show ring. Only because I would like to say in an ideal world it would be easier to educate the judges that that is not a problem, and it shouldn't hurt the dog's chances. In the real world, you could have a good dog getting beaten because of a winter nose. I've been lucky in that I have not had a lot of winter noses.

What should be the relation of chest depth to the rest of the dog? Should the chest come to or below the elbow? How many dogs have you seen that honestly came to the elbow?

Hmm, good question. I have not had a particular problem with bloat in my bloodline. I've only had one dog bloat on me but it was a deep-chested dog. When you look at the breeds that are prone to bloat, they are the deep-chested breeds. If you look at the Samoyed bloodlines that have had a problem with bloat, they tend to be the more deep-chested dogs. As a breeder, I would tell you that your job is to breed to the standard and the standard says that the chest should come to the elbow. In reality, not a lot of them probably do. It's proba-



Ch. Tarahill's Rue the Day (Ch. Tarahill's Casey Can Do x Ch. Tarahill's Lucky Duckling).



Ch. Tarahill's Elusive Dream (Ch. North Starr's King's Ransom x Ch. Montego's Lady in White CD).

bly important because with the depth of chest, you're not going to get the lung capacity.

In the last couple of years I've stopped breeding dogs, and I've stopped showing dogs. I'm not really showing horses but I've kind of gotten involved in the peripherals of the horse world and have certainly done a fair amount of studying of horse journals and magazines. I wish I had done that years earlier because I'm amazed at how much I've learned about horses that things in dogs now make sense to me. I did them before but I didn't know why I did them, and your chest question is a good example. In horses, lung capacity is very important. We don't think of lung capacity being important in a dog; yet, particularly in our working dogs, it's very important. How can these dogs do the job they were bred to do without lung capacity?

It's interesting because Jimmy Moses, Michael Canalizo and a few of our highly competitive handlers have known this for a long time, and I'm just becoming aware of it now. These are athletes. They're

canine athletes, and we need to start conditioning and training them. I guess I was doing that all along. We always road-worked our dogs and bitches that were in whelp and our young dogs, but I never thought of them as athletes until I got involved with horses and realized the conditioning we put into our horses, and we think of our horses as equine athletes. All of a sudden it's like the light went on and I realized the dogs are canine athletes.

Has it been your experience that coat is very important to winning in the ring?

I hate to say yes, but unfortunately there are too many judges out there who view the quantity of coat over the quality of coat. I have been very blessed, and I think it goes back to my foundation bitch being half-English because the English, generally speaking, have an abundance of coat. My dogs have always had tremendous coats and lots of it. I can't tell you that I've ever been penalized for it, but I have seen some very good dogs be penalized for not having the quantity of coat. Our standard specifically states



Tarahill's Winnie the Pooh.



Ch. Tarahill's White Truffle (Ch. Whitecliff's Sarmik Karu CD x Ch. Tarahill's Last Edition Shada CD).

that the quality of coat should be considered more than the quantity of coat.

This next question is about color: Samoyeds are white, right?

White, cream or biscuit. I have seen a lot of dogs lose because they were cream colored or biscuit.

What color do you prefer?

Obviously the solid white is more pleasing to the eye. Look at this old bitch here. She's got a lot of biscuit but I know I need the biscuit because if I don't get the biscuit, I'm not going to have that dark pigment that I

want. That eventually is going to cause some problems for me.

Have you observed that pure white dogs go up more often?

Absolutely! I have seen cream and biscuit dogs penalized in the ring. My old foundation bitch had a lot of biscuit, I mean literally biscuit-trimmed ears and a lot of biscuit in her coat. It wouldn't matter what I did, how much bleach or whatever I did, she was never going to be a snow white dog. When Ron Pemberton took her to Canada to show her, and won with her, and when the judge



Litter by Ch. Tarahill's Casey Can Do x Ch. Tarahill's Elusive Dream. February 14, 1985.

handed him the ribbon, he said, "The next time you bring her up, give her a bath." (laughter) I know that was back in the early 1970's and I'd like to think things have improved, and they have; but unfortunately you still see some superior examples of the breed lose to less superior examples that are snow white.

What is an ideal front? A 45-degree layback of shoulder with a corresponding layback of upper arm or a moderate front?

To me, 45-degree is moderate. That's what the standard calls for. The shoulders need to lay back and lay in. If you don't have that, or if you have the short upper arms, then you can't have the extension you need. As important as that is, it is equally important that the front to rear be balanced, because if you have all that front impulsion, you need the rear to help carry through with that motion. It has to be balanced.

Describe the correct topline and is it functional or for beauty?

Our topline is very functional and not for beauty. It's a level topline, what the standard requires. One of the things that I used to get very upset about when I was showing dogs, and I'll use my old Buddy dog as an example, that dog was correctly built, and he was bred for what the breed was supposed to be doing. If you started to move that dog and move him into a gaited pattern, the first thing he tried and wanted to do was to drop his head and neck into a level plane with this topline. I can't tell you how many judges I had who criticized that. I actually had a judge tell somebody after a Best in Show that he would have given that Samoyed the Best in Show but he dropped his head in the Best in Show ring. I had a very prominent judge, a very well-known and well-respected Boxer person,

come up to me and say, "I wish your dog wouldn't drop his head and neck when he moves." I said, "Think about what he was bred to do. He has to do that, that's the most efficient way for him to move. If you want, Chris can string him up and it'll put the head and neck up there like some fancy-gaited show horse, but as soon as we do that, you're not going to like the way that front end looks." That front end would be swinging all over the place coming at you because I've restricted what he can do. To me, that's what is supposed to happen: the head, neck and shoulders are all supposed to go into a level line.

You try to pull a sled and see what you do.

Exactly! You hold your head way up there and pull that sled!

What is the ideal height of a dog and bitch?

What's ideal is what the

standard says. Our standard says bitches should be 19-21 inches at the shoulder and males should be 21-23 1/2 inches at the shoulder. That's ideal. In an ideal world, lots of things happen, but we don't live in an ideal world. I would think in this day and age we see dogs more at the top end of the standard winning as opposed to the bottom end. I don't think anyone could take a 21-inch male special out today and win big and consistently with it. It would be very difficult. I wouldn't say that it can't be done, because anything can be done, but it would be difficult. I think more often than not you see dogs at the top end of our standard and maybe that's all part of America's bigger is better theory. I don't know, but we see more dogs at the top end of the standard doing more winning than dogs at the bottom end.

We're better nourished and so are our dogs. (laughter)

I think you're absolutely right.

What about the tail?

Again we go back to our standard. I hate to sound like I'm copping out by quoting the standard, but that's the blueprint. As a breeder I tried not to breed for my personal taste or necessarily what I wanted or what I liked. I tried to breed to what I thought the standard said was ideal, whether or not I agreed with it. If I didn't agree with it, my job was to get the standard changed, not breed outside of the standard. Flo Waldman has a great line which I love, "The standard is like the Bible. Everyone has their own interpretation of it." Flo's right. One of the great things about our standard is that our standard is very specific. If you read the Borzoi standard, of which I am familiar because I had some Borzoi at one time, it says "Dogs: masculine. Bitches: more feminine than dogs. Coat: wavy or curly." When you get done reading that standard, unless you've seen the dog, you have no more idea in your mind what the dog is supposed to look like than before you read the standard. Our standard is very specific. It measures lots of things: it tells you what the length of hock should be to the length of leg, what the length of leg should be to the length of back.

Referring to your question about tail, it specifically tells you where the tail should be. When you drop the tail down, the tail bone should touch the top of the hock. Is that important? Yes, and let me tell you why. If that dog is in the Arctic and it's nighttime, that tail has to be able to come around and protect the face. So, tail length is important. Again, I wouldn't rank it over movement but it is important.

How about the ears and earset?

Earset is important and in fact I think that's one of the deteriorations that I've seen in my 25 years in the breed. Ears are getting lower; unless the

your eyeset is correct.

What is an ideal foot?

What is an ideal foot or what do we see in the ring? These are two different questions you know, because our standard says they should all be a hare foot, with nice tight, hard pads and a hare. A splayed foot is penalized. If you go to a dog show tomorrow and you look in the ring, you will not see a single hare foot in that ring. Every foot you see in the ring will be a cat foot. It's not a real cat foot, it's been trimmed to look like a cat foot. We should have a nice, tight foot with good pads and it should be a hare foot

you use a dog with a bad foot and hip dysplasia and bad eyes and a bad front and a bad rear? No. (laughter) If you have a dog that has superior qualities in other areas, then absolutely I'd use a dog with a bad foot.

What is the ideal temperament in your breed?

The ideal temperament should be the dog that gets along with everybody and everything. Again, I'm back to

the neighborhood and not everyone is as conscientious as they should be about keeping their dogs confined to their own yard. What's interesting is that he and I were out walking one day and three little terrier-mongrel, Labrador-mixed dogs came charging up, barking at his heels as if they're going to rip him apart. He's kind of the 'yup, yup, yup, I love everybody' dog. These three dogs chal-



Ross with a Tarahill puppy.

standard has been changed, I don't think there's anyplace in our standard that says earset level with eyes. (laughter) We're putting these ears on the side of the head and we're putting them big enough that if a stiff breeze comes along, they are going to be like the Flying Nun. These dogs will be airborne. (laughter) These ears getting really big and lowset is a problem, again, because we're getting back to would they survive in the Antarctic? Absolutely not!

They'd have frostbite.

Again, back to our standard and how specific it is: when you bend that ear over, you should be able to take that ear and bend it over and the tip of that ear should touch the inner corner of the eye. When you do that, you know your ear is correct and

because, again, back to what they were bred to do. If you've got these little upright feet, they can't dig in and go anywhere, particularly in the Antarctic.

Should a dog with bad feet be bred?

Yes. When I lived in Michigan, I had the chance to work very closely with a lot of the people at the vet college there, and I have a great deal of respect for them. One of them was Dr. U.V. Mostosky, who was head of radiology, one of the original founders of OFA, one of their original board members and a great man. The last time I talked with him he was still reading X-rays for OFA. One of the things that Mostosky always said was, "Never throw the baby out with the bath water." Should you use a dog with a bad foot? Yes. Should



Ross with puppies.

the standard which says this is not an aggressive breed, this is not a breed that picks a fight but if somebody picks a fight with him, he will stand his ground. That's the ideal temperament for this breed. This is not supposed to be a wary breed; this is not supposed to be an assertive breed - this is supposed to be an "I love everybody" kind of breed.

This Rudy dog has a great temperament. Once in a while you get a chance to say, "Wow! He read the standard; he read the same page on temperament that I did." He goes out for walks in the neighborhood with me. There are lots of dogs in

lenged him. He was on a leash and they weren't. He turned around in the middle of the gravel road we were on and just looked at them, as if to say, "Are you sure you want to pick this fight? Cause if you do, come on. I'm going to stand right here, come on." At that moment the standard flashed in my mind. The dog that will not pick a fight but will stand his ground when a fight is picked with him, and I thought he had read that part of the standard. (laughter) That's exactly what he did! Here's this dog minding his own business, and these other dogs were going to come after him, he stood right there

and stared at them, planted four feet on the ground and took this stance as if to say, "Come on, I'm ready." At which point, all three dogs tucked their tails and ran home. (laughter)

What are the most serious faults in the breed today?

I think temperaments are not what they were twenty years ago. Twenty years ago when people told me how wonderful my dogs' temperaments were, I told them it wasn't just my dogs, it was all Samoyeds. It wouldn't matter if you got one from a pet store, they all have this kind of wonderful, wonderful temperament. Today, when somebody tells me how wonderful my dogs' temperaments are, I say, "Thank you." (laughter)

What are the most common faults?

I think our earsets have gotten to be a very common fault. I just got back from our Samoyed National in San Diego and some of the judges, when they were talking about what was good and bad or what they saw in the breed, a lot of them were talking about seeing a lot of short upper arms. Apparently that's becoming a problem or is a problem in the breed today. Generally speaking we have good bites and that's not something we have to worry about. Generally speaking most of us have good coats, in terms of quality of coat. Most of us have good tailsets. Depending on what individual bloodline or which particular kennel you want to see, including my own, at any moment any of us could improve our front ends, our rear ends, our sidegait or something.

Is the standard a good one and what would you like to see changed?

Our standard is an excellent standard, it really is. Not only is it an excellent standard, it's interesting that as AKC over the last decade has been trying to get a lot of parent clubs to change their standard to become a more definitive standard, ours is one of the few they've left alone and said, "You don't need to change yours." It's a wonderful standard because it's specific. You're not left wondering about anything when you're done, about what is or isn't. What I like about our standard is that very few things disqualify in our standard. We talk more in terms of deviations from the standard and for it to be penal-

ized to the extent of the deviation.

Should there be any disqualifications?

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely there should be. Blue eyes disqualify in our breed. I don't know why. I'm sure that if we went back to the 1800's there's a good reason for it. Any color other than white, cream or biscuit disqualifies. Those are the only two things that disqualify in our breed. Lots of other breeds disqualify based on

teeth in a Doberman is a big deal. They can't cover the ground to herd a reindeer; that's not what they were bred to do. I keep returning to form follows function and what the dog was bred to do.

So yes, there should be disqualifying things. The other thing I would like to see disqualify in our breed is temperament because I think that's very important.

I'm wondering if the missing pigment in the blue eye has to do with

of specializing. There's only a handful of people in my breed that have speialed the number of dogs that I have at the level that I have. The sport is changing; it's extremely competitive. Specializing is tough. I personally couldn't special a dog, handling it myself because today, unless you're willing to go to between 125-150 dog shows a year, your dog is not competitive. That means three or four days a week you are on the road and on a lot of airplanes today, which is another thing that has changed about the sport. Not very many of us can physically afford to be at 150 dog shows a year, plus the travel time. You're talking about 50 percent of the time being on the road.

My personal feeling is that when I speialed a dog, it was to be the number one Samoyed. I wasn't interested in having the number two Samoyed. I didn't always achieve that goal. I guess I'm making a distinction between specializing a dog and occasionally showing a champion of record in the Best of Breed class. There's a difference. There are a lot of people out there, and I'm not being critical of that, who have champions and are showing them in their local dog shows or at whatever, once or twice a month. Then there are people who are very seriously campaigning a dog to be the number one Samoyed in the country. They are attending 100 plus dog shows a year.

Does making the Top Ten mean anything?

Mean anything how? In terms of personal gratification, in terms of selling more puppies, in terms of more stud services? Obviously it meant something to me because it was the goal I was trying to achieve. Yes. It was important to me for a while because I'm very competitive by nature. Being number one didn't necessarily translate to what I was or wasn't doing in a breeding program. Sometimes I would blow people's minds because I would have people call me and say they wanted to breed to whatever number one Samoyed I had at the time. The first question I would ask them was, "Why?" That usually dumbfounded them because they didn't understand that. The next thing I'd say, which really dumbfounded them, was "What do you think my dog's



Ch. Tarahill's Casey Can Do.

weight or height or missing teeth, those kinds of things. First of all, teeth are not a problem in my breed and secondly, if they were, I don't care how many teeth the dog is missing; it doesn't need teeth to herd reindeer nor does it need teeth to pull a sled. So teeth aren't important. Again, I know I mention this a lot, but I keep going back to doing the job the dog was bred to do. Dobermans were bred as guard dogs. All they had to do was make one leap and latch onto the burglar, once. They absolutely have to have a good mouth. Missing

sunburn or snow blindness?

Very possible. In a perfect world where nature takes over and you don't have breeder interference, where you don't have modern technology, you don't have to worry about disqualifications because nature will disqualify. Nature will take care of it.

Should champions be speialed?

Not all champions are speialed. Special champions should be speialed. (laughter) Specializing is a different animal, it's a different ball game and a whole different world, and I speak as someone who did a lot

single biggest fault is?" They really didn't understand that. I'd then ask, "What is your bitch's greatest strength?" They wouldn't know that either. "Why do you want to breed to this dog?" I'd ask. Generally, the answer was, "Because he's the big winner." Then I'd say, "Why don't I send you the show record and you can breed to that!" (laughter)

When people would call me for stud service, and I remember at one time I had four or five males in the kennel, including Buddy who was a big winner and the number one Samoyed in the country. I had Rudy who was a champion but had never

the ring until the time he became the number one Samoyed. Nothing got worse about the dog, despite what some people might have told you; nothing got better about the dog. The dog's genetics didn't change, his conformation didn't change and his pedigree is still the same. The only thing that changed was the amount of winning that he did. That's why all my dogs were the same price because I felt you should be breeding to the pedigree. You should be breeding to the genetics and not the ribbons.

Would popularization help or harm the breed?

Harm the breed. All you

the best interest of the breed and ultimately, because of the indiscriminate breeding, it hurts the breed. Then you see increased numbers of animals in the shelters.

By and large Samoyed breeders are very happy with where we are: we're well-known enough that people who are genuinely going to seek out a Samoyed or go to a dog show or buy a book on purebred dogs and do a little bit of research are aware of who we are. Generally speaking, before they call us they're aware of the fact that there's going to be a time commitment in terms of grooming. We're popular enough that a lot

(laughter) Do I think judging is fair? Well ... let me think about how I want to politically answer this. (laughter) There are an awful lot of accusations out there about bad judging, an awful lot of criticism from exhibitors, generally the losers, about politics and advertising playing roles. I speak about this openly because a lot of that criticism was directed at me, or some of my friends who have done a lot of advertising or used professional handlers. It's politics, it's politics, it's politics, that's how we won. I see a lot less political judging or if you will, "crooked judging." Most judges are not crooked; they



Ch. Tarahill's Casey Can Do.



Ch. Tarahill's Lucky Duckling.

been back in the ring since then, and I had a young male who had never been in the ring and didn't have a single point toward his championship. I also had another dog who had done some Group winnings. I would tell them that my stud price was the same for every dog. The dog that has never been in the ring is the same price as the number one Samoyed in the country. I could do that because one dog was not necessarily better than another. This dog had just had more opportunity, more advertising and more money spent on him. That doesn't necessarily mean he was better. None of his faults got better when he won Best in Show. Nothing about this dog changed before he walked into

have to do is look back historically. The Dalmatian people just gritted their teeth when *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* was re-released. *Lassie Come Home* was a nightmare for Collie breeders. Chihuahua people are just cringing over the Taco Bell commercial. All you have to do is look at any breed that has been popular. Jack Russell people wish that Frazier would get the little Jack Russell off the TV show. Any breed that has been popular, whether it's Poodles, Boxers, Rottweilers - whatever breed you want to look at that has been popular - generally going along with that to meet the public demand, you have indiscriminate breeders. You have a lot of breeders who are motivated by profit rather than

of people know who we are. We're not so popular as to find great quantities in animal shelters or lots of indiscriminate breeding. There is no profit motive in breeding Samoyeds, thank God. Based on what the breed is, it's a large breed - although the standard says we're a medium-sized working breed - most people look at these dogs and say they're big dogs. They're white and for the average owner they require a lot of grooming. When you put those factors together, that doesn't make them the best dog for everybody.

Do you think judging is fair?

That's a loaded question, isn't it? (laughter)

I could follow with what can be done to improve it?

might be stupid, but they're not crooked. There's not as much educated judging going on, at least what I would like to see in my breed. Judges and some breeder-judges even, tend to get hung up on minor points instead of looking at the overall picture.

You'd say that poor judging is less the result of politics and more the fact that they don't know the breed well?

Yes. I won't tell you that politics doesn't influence it. That would be naive to say that. It's human nature. Say tomorrow you're judging the dog show and standing in the ring are two people - one is your friend and one a total stranger - and they have equally good dogs. If you tell me human nature says you'll go with the

foot down wrong, it gives the judge a reason not to put your dog up. Your dog beats himself. When you're at the National specialty and you're down to the wire, and you've got plenty of dogs out there, the dog that is bunny hopping, barking or doing stupid things is giving the judge a reason to eliminate him. When you are at the lower levels of competition and your dogs are in the classes, if you have a good quality dog and he's above average - and most judges are pretty tolerant and they'll ask you to do the pattern again or

aggressive dogs because, as I've said, temperament is so important to me. It depends on if they're aggressive because of a fear thing, like the shy dog, but that has manifested itself in a different way. Probably the same thing, bringing confidence to the animal will help. If it's aggressive because of genetics or because of the dog's temperament or nature, you might get it under control but I don't know that you're ever going to correct it.

You've used handlers a lot. Do you think a big-named handler helps



Ch. Tarahill's Everybody Duck. This ad said, "the real working dog."

slow the dog down - I think training is less important at lower levels.

Can shy or aggressive dogs be corrected by training?

That depends on, first of all, the degree to which they are shy or aggressive and secondly, why? I think the shy dog is probably easier to deal with because the dog is usually shy because of lack of exposure to things and therefore, a lack of confidence. You can build up a dog's confidence by exposing it to different things and as it gains confidence in itself, that shyness disappears.

I've had less experience with

the dog to win?

Absolutely! No question.

Can you give any specific advice to owners who would like to handle their own dogs?

Besides all the obvious advice about taking tips and handling classes, having your dog clean and all the other obvious things that everyone else is going to give you, the best piece of advice that I ever got was from an old-time handler who is now deceased, by the name of George Carleton. He was an old English breeder and handler in Livonia, Michigan, and I used to take handling classes from him back in the very early

1970's. What he said to us novices was, "That lead is a telegraph and you are telegraphing everything to your dog. If you're nervous or uptight about this, you will immediately telegraph that to your animal." Take a valium, take a break, take a deep breath - do what you have to - but don't convey to your animal that he has a reason to be afraid. For novices, fun matches are a great way to build confidence because it's certainly a more relaxed setting.

Have you done any sledding or herding or anything like that?

No. The first herding-titled dog in the breed was a Tarahill dog owned by Sharon Parker, but I had nothing to do with that. She did it all on her own. I just bred the dog. First of all, sledding is out of the question here in Atlanta. (laughter) Even when I was living in Michigan, the problem with sledding is that you have to do it in the winter and it's cold. (laughter) There's snow on the ground when you do sledding and I didn't like that part either. (laughter)

That's a definite disadvantage. (laughter) Also, if you're going to herd reindeer ...

It's all back to that cold weather and snow thing that I had a problem with.

Do you feel that a breed should do what it was bred for?

Absolutely! Obviously none of my animals have ever seen a reindeer, unless they saw it on TV one night when they were lying here on the floor. (laughter) I want to be able to think that they are capable. It's interesting, it's only been recently that the Samoyeds have been accepted into the herding, and it's wonderful to know that we're generation after generation removed from the Antarctic and the herding of reindeer. It's wonderful to know that the basic instinct is still so bred into these dogs that even people who were experienced with herding tests and instinct trials were just amazed at the number of Samoyeds that had the natural instinct and ability to herd. That was exciting.

You've trained your dogs over the years, but what have the dogs taught you?

The single biggest thing these dogs taught me was how to be a better parent. I had dogs for ten years before I had a child and in those ten years, they

stained carpets, they chewed woodwork, they tore up chairs, they got hair on the upholstery and in general just kind of trashed the house, not unlike a toddler. (laughter) They taught me that what they were willing to give me and the ways they were able to enrich my life were so much more important than having clean carpets. Because of that, I was able to have the patience with a child. I also realized that training a puppy and raising a child were not that much different: they both need lots of love; they both need parameters set; they both need consistency. The only difference is that your child will eventually outgrow his dependency on you and your animal never will. Very similar though, raising children and animals is very similar. They really taught me that the kid was going to spill cornflakes and mark on the wall, but it was going to be okay.

Were your breedings natural or controlled?

All controlled. I wouldn't risk injuring a stud dog or hurting a bitch.

How do you help the mating along?

We were physically there. Actually, Chris was the wonderful one. I was lousy at trying to get dogs mated. Chris has this natural charm to her. We would generally help the male or hold the bitch and encourage the male. We were real involved, just making sure that nobody got hurt.

Do you have an opinion about what is a fair stud fee?

I can say this with no hidden agenda because I don't own a stud dog. Gene Curtis and I discussed this years ago when Kolinka's Quilted Bear was still being shown, and my old Casey dog. He said then that our stud fees were way too low. The stud fee should equal the price of a good, show-quality puppy. When I got started in the breed back in the 1970's, a good, show-quality puppy was running about \$175 to \$200. The stud fee was running about \$150 or so. What's happened over time is that our puppy prices have increased far more rapidly than our stud fees. Our fee should be higher; it should be the same as a good show-quality puppy which today is averaging somewhere between \$850 to \$1,000. Stud fees are still somewhere

around \$600 or so.

Were your males at stud to outside bitches?

Yes, they were. We owe that to Penny Nunnally. At one point I got on my high horse and said that my dogs wouldn't be available to anything outside my own kennel. Penny Nunnally is a very famous Irish setter breeder here in the Atlanta area whom I've know for twenty years while she was in Cleveland and I was in Michigan. After I moved here to Atlanta, we reacquainted ourselves. We both use the same vet and we were talking one day and she asked if my dogs were available. I said, "No, not really." She asked if there are problems in our breed. Of course, there are, and she said, "If you have what you think are above-average dogs that you think can correct some of the breed problems and you aren't making them available to approved bitches, then you are part of the problem." I thought about that and realized that she was right. So yes, my dogs were available.

Did you ever refuse to service a bitch and why?

Yes. I either felt that the bitch did not have enough redeeming qualities that she should be bred, or that she didn't have the proper clearances for me - the OFA, the CERF

Would you breed to a dog with a very serious fault if it were outstanding in other areas?

Yes. Absolutely. In a heartbeat.

What faults would keep you from breeding to a dog?

Temperament. (laughter) We're back to the temperament thing, but over the years I won't say that I wasn't breeding for the show ring because I was. I was breeding for myself and I was breeding for the next great winner, but I was also very, very aware of the fact that in the process of that, I was producing animals that were going to be someone's pets. They were going to be a child's pet and companion animal. I was always very concerned about the genetics, the health and the temperament of that animal.

Have you handled a lot of matings?

No. As I said earlier, we didn't do a lot of breedings at my kennel. Even though I kept somewhere between fifteen and eighteen dogs around, it was



Ch. Tarahill's Everybody Duck.

rare for us to have more than two litters a year. Occasionally, we might have three litters in a year, but that was very rare. Most years it was two litters. In three litters, however, I was producing what everyone else was producing in two litters, because I was averaging four puppies per litter. We were producing eight or twelve puppies a year. We weren't having a lot of outside bitches brought to us, and we were only breeding two or three litters a year so, no, we didn't have a lot of breedings.

Is it a good idea to breed to a top winning dog, regardless of the pedigrees?

You know what I think about that: if you want to breed to a top winning dog because he is a top winning dog, then just breed to his ribbons! (laughter) Let the stud owner send you a Best in Show ribbon in the mail and breed to that. (laughter) It's obviously not the dog you're interested in anyhow.

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

That will vary from bitch to bitch. First of all, the youngest absolutely cannot be younger than two years old because you have to have an OFA certification and you have to have a CERF number, in my opinion anyway, before you should even consider breeding. That's number one. How old should be they be? It depends. Nature was kinder to us women than to our canine companions. At some point Nature said, "You're too old to be a mother and I'm going to fix it so you can't be a mother." Mother Nature wasn't as kind to our animal companions when she said, "I'll let you be a mother until the day you die." Obviously, it's going to depend on the bitch and her health, weight, muscle tone, etc. We had personal policies at my kennel: one was that the dog

only got bred four times in her life. I didn't care if the dog was the greatest producing bitch I ever had. I didn't care if everything the bitch produced was a multiple Best in Show winner. Four times. Period. End of discussion. If I didn't get something in those four litters that was good enough to take into the next generation, then the bitch didn't need to be part of my breeding program, and why would I think that I'd get it in the fifth litter? (laughter) That was my personal feeling: four times and out.

What we generally did was finish their championships between the ages of two and three, depending on the dog. When Buddy was really running hot and heavy at the height of his career, Chris couldn't take a lot of class stuff to show. It would hurt Buddy's chances if she went Winners Dog or Winners Bitch, or she was traveling by herself or flying, so when

Buddy retired we had a lot of young dogs in the kennel that had been waiting for the opportunity to show. Generally speaking, though, they would finish their championship between the ages of two and three and at that point they had their OFA and CERF. What I liked to do was breed my bitches back-to-back seasons, which I know a lot of people don't agree. Many people believe in breeding them once, giving them a season off and then breeding them again. I did back-to-back seasons because my bitches rarely had a problem whelping. I rarely had a c-section, my bitches were usually very healthy with few problems and very little human interference and, again, small litters which weren't likely to drag down the bitch. I did the back-to-back seasons and then skipped a year. Then bred back-to-back seasons again and then spayed. Sometimes they stayed with me and grew old, like Lucky Duckling; sometimes they were still young enough, maybe only four years old at that time, to be somebody's pet. Obviously you can place a four-year-old; placing a six-year-old is a little tougher.

Did you help your bitches whelp?

Yes.

Did you supplement feed very young puppies?

No, I never had to because I had these very small litters.

Did you wean the puppies or let the bitch do it.

No. We generally weaned.

At what ages did you evaluate puppies for pet or show quality, and what did you look for?

Generally, when they finished their championship I decided they were show quality. (laughter) I always get tickled with these breeders that say they have a whole litter of show-quality puppies. In all the years that I bred, I was never able to accomplish an entire litter that I thought was show quality. What I found even more amazing was these breeders who could accomplish it when the puppies were three days old! (laughter) I had a conversation with somebody telling me they had a whole litter of show-quality puppies that were only three days old. This was at a dinner party that I was having, and somebody else at the table looked at them and said, "What can you tell on a three-day-old

puppy?" I turned and said, "It's alive. It's breathing." That's it. Obviously these people are better than I. What I used to tell people who would call me and say they wanted to buy a show-quality puppy was that I couldn't sell them a show-quality puppy because no such thing existed, in my opinion. I can sell you a show-prospect puppy. I can sell to you based on the pedigree, based on the parents, based on the lineage, based on what I know of this dam's prior breeding, based on what I know of the stud dog's prior puppies, based on what I see in this puppy today and based on my experience: what I predict will be a show dog when it matures. I cannot guarantee that it is a

Over the years I've heard a lot of breeders stand ringside with a less than sterling example of their breeding program in the show ring. Everybody knew that the breeder sold that puppy as a show puppy at a big price, now the breeder's standing there saying, "I can't even believe they're showing that puppy when it was sold strictly as a pet, and they've broken the contract!" When the AKC limited registration came into being, it said you cannot register the offspring of this puppy; therefore, the financial incentive is taken away, and you can't show it, so no longer did breeders have the cop-out of standing ringside and saying they had sold it as a pet. (laughter)

tracts forever is crazy. If the dog was that good, I had no business getting rid of it. (laughter)

At what age do you think puppies should be placed in their new home?

That depends. I've read all those articles that talk about the critical periods in a puppy's life. It depends too on the breed. Samoyeds are very unique. You think this male dog, whose umbilical cord I cut, is devoted to me. I promise you, he will get in the car with you right now, and by the time you're two miles down the road, he'll look at you and say, "Cheryl who?" (laughter) That's part of the reason I never had a problem placing adult dogs in homes. They are very adaptable. This little Pomeranian would be heartsick if something were to happen to me. She would mourn my loss. These Samoyeds would be happy with whomever is feeding them tomorrow. They are very adaptable. Ideally for puppies going into new homes, eight to ten weeks because that's giving the breeder a chance to evaluate, and by then they are single tracking. I have a problem placing younger puppies, particularly younger bitch puppies, because they learn a lot on how to be a mother from their own mother and if you take them too early, they don't get a chance to learn those maternal instincts. Learned instincts? That's an interesting oxymoron, isn't it? (laughter) I have no problem placing older puppies. I don't think the new owner has missed anything by taking the puppy at twelve weeks or six months or whatever.

What do you feed your dogs?

For years and years and years, I fed Iams. I raised a couple of generations on Iams, and I think in the last couple of years they have changed their base, if you will. It's kind of an interesting phenomena that has occurred, and it has nothing to do with anything, except that it's one of those interesting things that has occurred. It's like mothers with babies: every pediatrician in the world will tell you that there is no reason for a baby who is teething to ever have a runny nose or a sore throat. Every mother of a toddler will tell you that babies will have a runny nose and sore throat when they teethe. All of a sudden, when I moved to Georgia, my dogs were missing



Ch. Tarahill's Everybody Duck.

show puppy.

Did you sell on terms or cash only?

I was willing to sell on terms and did sell quite a few that way. I always kept the papers until the dog was paid off. Knock on wood, other than one bad experience, I never was cheated. I always felt that people might be willing to cheat MasterCard or Visa, which were faceless corporations, more so than they were willing to cheat an individual.

Did you sell pet puppies with spay/neuter agreements?

Yes. Absolutely. In fact, I think the limited registration by the AKC is one of the greatest things to come down the pike.

How about puppies back when you've sold a bitch?

No. First of all, I got messed up with some of those contracts early in my show career and I always felt that I charged a fair price, sometimes more than a fair price, but I charged a good price for my puppies. I figured it was my job to mentor and educate you before you took the puppy out of my possession. Then it was your puppy. Hopefully I did a good job in screening out unethical people. Hopefully I did a good job in educating you as to what the breed was and what you should do to improve the breed. It was your puppy to do with as you pleased. This tying up in con-

breedings. I was missing with lots of bitches. I was breeding lots of combinations of stud dogs and bitches, and I was missing everything. I was racking my brain trying to figure out what it was. I literally had the same tile in this kennel that I had in the Michigan kennel. I was trying to figure out if it was the adjustment to temperature or just what it was. The bottom line was that I switched dog food and stopped having problems, interestingly enough. Maybe it's a coincidence. I don't want to knock Iams.

Now I feed Science Diet and I also feed Nature's Recipe. I like both of those foods. First of all, you don't have to worry about feeding Samoyeds because these dogs eat. If they don't eat two days in a row, take them to the vet because they're dying. (laughter) These dogs don't miss a meal. I've never had a bad eater. I've never had a dog that didn't scarf down everything within twelve seconds. You could feed them rocks or anything, and they thrive. They're not like Boxers or some other breeds where you have to really worry about what they eat. They are just a healthy breed. Don Hastings, who used to work for Science Diet years ago, told me that one of the leading causes of death in dogs today is kidney failure, and the reason they're having kidney failure is that we're feeding them a diet that is too high in protein. Kidneys can't digest all that. He also said that we are waiting too long to switch our dogs, and this was in the old days before all these senior light diets came onto the market, and that we should be switching them over to a senior formula sooner. What I did was switch everything in my kennel over to the senior formula by the time they were four or five years old. Unless the dog was being actively campaigned or actively bred, it was put on the senior formula. Most of my dogs live to be thirteen, fourteen or fifteen.

Do you feed any supplements?

I give them some canned meat with it. That's all.

Do you condition your dogs and how?

When I was running a kennel, I did not condition them, they conditioned themselves. My outdoor runs were all gravel and every two indoor runs led to an outdoor run, so they had

somebody to play with. The reason they were on gravel was to keep those nice tight feet and to reduce the number of calluses the Samoyeds would get. Those are nasty. All my runs were designed on angles so the dogs had to run uphill and downhill. They exercised themselves, barking at squirrels and neighbors and each other, and running back and forth. We conditioned the specials dogs on a treadmill.

How much grooming should be done?

That's an individual dog question. The difference between grooming this bitch and grooming this dog is dramatic. Some dogs need very little grooming. If they have a correct coat, it kind of takes care of the standoffing by itself. Some dogs are just like children: the kid walks through the yard and he's filthy by the time he gets to the other end of the yard. It depends on the individual dog: the quantity of coat and the quality of coat.

Do you have any favorite grooming products or tools?

The greatest thing ever invented, and for new people in the sport who will find this unbelievable, in the early 1970's, there were none of these forced dryers on the market that are so popular now, these cattle dryers. We would bathe a Samoyed and literally blow that Samoyed dry with our hand-held hair dryer like we use on our own hair. We're talking six hours on a male with a full coat! We're talking a nightmare! That forced dryer is the single greatest invention that ever came along. Chris always gets mad at me because I don't bathe them. She thinks I can do it better than the groomer, but I hate bathing dogs. Now that they're just house pets, I send them to the groomer every two or three weeks to be bathed. These dogs haven't had a bath in two weeks. Once a week they're put on the grooming table and I use the force dryer on the coat. All that dead hair goes blowing away. That's the single greatest thing to come down the pike.

Should these dogs be scissored?

The standard says no. The standard says they should not be. When I had big winning dogs out, I got a lot of criticism about them all being scissored, and I will tell you now that they were not, absolutely not, scis-



Ch. Tarahill's Everybody Duck with Judge Warnock.

sored. There are very few people out there who believed me, but I don't think they should be scissored. It's one thing if you want to enhance something for the show ring, but it's quite another if you want to visually change the outline of a dog. If a judge has any smarts at all, the minute they put their hands on the dog, they can tell it's high in the rear; it doesn't matter how much you scissor the topline.

Can you describe your kennel setup for us?

I was fortunate in that every kennel I've built kept getting more and more elaborate. The kennel here in Georgia has some things done differently than the kennel in Michigan. The Michigan kennel never had air conditioning because there was no need for it. It was set in the woods and it had radiant heat set in the floor. Another thing from Dr. Mastosky: he believed that if you were keeping the floor warm, it was not that important to keep the air warm. Makes good sense because it helped keep the dogs in better coat. I didn't have to keep the kennel as warm because the radiant heat ran through copper tubing under the tile. The Georgia kennel, which was the last

kennel, was about 3,000 square feet. One of the things that I learned with every kennel I've built, was that I made the indoor run smaller. Every indoor run was four square feet. Young Samoyeds tend to be piggy and, by confining their space to four by four rather than four by six, they tended to stay a little cleaner. They all had pick-wick doors which opened in and out, and guillotine doors on top of that. Everybody was locked in at night. The inside kennel was all done in ceramic tile up the walls. I had a horse trough running through the back of it so the kennel was powerwashed every day. You'd come in with the powerwasher, turn the troughs on, powerwash everything, and it sloped to the back of the run, through big drains that were covered and off it went. The outdoor runs were all twenty feet. As I said before, every two indoor runs went into one outdoor run, so nobody ever got bored. The dogs were separated at night to sleep or they were separated to eat, but other than that they had a playmate, unless it was a bitch in season. The specials dogs always lived by themselves. We did have a few runs that were

isolated. The outdoor runs were dug down three feet and had sealed cement with French drains. On top of the sealed cement was limestone, on top of the limestone was patio cement block and on top of that was crushed river rock.

When I moved to Georgia everyone said my dogs were going to be full of red clay; they could hardly wait to see these white dogs full of red clay. One time I had a handler who came to the kennel who said, "I know now why your dogs look the way they do. It's not what you do at the dog show, it's how they live every day of their lives." That's true. If you're very serious and competitive, you can't let the dog run around the yard and pull it out the night before, give it a bath and expect to be competitive. It's what went into those dogs all the time, every day of their lives.

Back to the kennel setup: they had these indoor-outdoor runs. The kennel was air conditioned, the dogs were let out every morning and were free to come and go. Beyond the outside screened fence, we had a wood fence with screening and a roof. They were never in the sun or mosquitoes or whatever. They were really protected from the elements. They could go inside to lay in the air conditioning any time during the day they wanted. They could go outside to play. They could come and go at will. Clean water was at their disposal at all times, provided by an automatic watering system. That's how they lived. There were eighteen runs, nine on each side. As you walked in, the front of kennel had a kitchen area to one side and beyond that was the treadmill area, with tables and chairs and then a storage room for dog food, etc. On the other side were two half-curved glass block walls. One of the things that I learned to do at this kennel was to isolate the grooming room. My other kennel was more open, and every time you got done grooming you had to sweep the whole kennel because dog hair was everywhere. Now I confine that more so there is less to clean. Beyond that was the bathing tub and washer and dryer, and on the other side of that was a separate area for puppies. Puppies were always whelped and grew up in my house. In fact, at the

old house they had their own puppy room, with tile four feet up the wall, next to my study because I thought that human socialization was important to the babies, that they not be in the kennel but in the house. Then when they got to be six to eight weeks old, they went out to the kennel. They didn't go in with the adult population. They still stayed isolated but in an area where there were lots of people. They were still in the middle of things, with people coming in and out of the kennel



Ch. Tarahill's Everybody Duck.

all day. The puppies had their own indoor-outdoor area as well.

Can adult males and females be kept together in the same run or exercise area?

Absolutely. Generally they get along better than two females or two males do.

How important is animal husbandry?

As I said, Nancy Martin taught me a great deal about animal husbandry. It's very important. That's probably one of the single biggest mistakes backyard breeders make, and I made it too. We assume that taking care of two housepets and breeding livestock are the same. Most of us do not make that distinction. Taking care of a breeding live-

stock program is different than going from two pets to six pets. It's a whole different mental attitude. I had some hard and fast rules and some do-not-break rules at my place. One of those rules was that when you had puppies, when you came home from a dog show, you did not go to the puppies' room until you had showered and completely changed clothes. Once bitches were bred, they never went to a dog show. Dogs that went to and from dog shows were completely isolated from

from outside my breed. Number one, it will help you get a better perspective on your breed, and number two, people from outside your breed are not in competition with you. They have no puppies to sell you, they have no stud fee to sell you, they have no personal gain or jaded interest in this. It's sometimes easier to get a more honest opinion from outside the breed.

Which kennels would you consider to be the best today?

For years when people would call me about a puppy, they would tell me they had contacted such-and-such a kennel, or they would ask me what I thought about a certain breeder. My comment was always that it was my personal policy not to discuss other breeders or breeding programs. I think there are a lot of good kennels out there today and people are working with a lot of good bloodlines. I think the advice I gave to myself years ago still holds true today: I won't discuss other breeders or their bloodlines. (laughter)

Would you recommend joining a local breed club, a National breed club or an all breed club?

Of those three, the one I would say that you should absolutely belong to is the National breed club. I had a bitch from Ohio come to me for breeding a couple of years ago. A nice bitch. In fact, several of the puppies have finished their championships. I was on the phone with this gentleman one time and he was saying that he didn't think they could make it to the National this year, but that they were going to make it to the Garden instead. I kind of chewed him out on the phone a little bit. I said that before he had the audacity to call himself a breeder, the most important show in the country that he needed to attend was the National Specialty, before he worried about going to Madison Square Garden and the Westminster Kennel Club. The single most important dog show in this country, if you're going to consider yourself a breeder, is the National. Attending the National and belonging to the National breed club gives you a broader perspective.

In terms of the local breed club or the all breed club (and I have been a member of both and am still currently a member

the rest of the population.

What advice would you give to breeders just starting out?

Besides be smarter than I was in the beginning? Read your standard before you buy your first dog, besides that kind of advice? (laughter) If you can, find someone willing to mentor you. There's no one right answer. As Flo said, "The standard is like the Bible and we all have our own interpretation of it." The same advice that I'm sure you've heard in every interview you've ever done: read lots of books, talk to lots of people, etc. Not to say that the Samoyed people have not been valuable in my education and growth, but some of my most important lessons have come

of the Metropolitan Atlanta Samoyed Club), it depends on what is in your area. The problem is that many times we tend to get very political and have political agendas. Many times, local all breed clubs can be divided into factions and have warring factions with highly political agendas within the club. If you are a novice just starting in this sport, that may not be the best place for you to get an education. Local breed clubs are many times wonderful and it's a wonderful way to enjoy your breed with local fanciers who may or may not put on a show or fun matches. Sometimes it is dominated by one particular bloodline or one prominent breeder, and if you don't have that same bloodline or are of a like mind, it may be difficult for you to have a different opinion. It depends on the local breed club and the all breed club that are in your area, but without a doubt join your National breed club.

Do you think the parent club is doing enough to educate judges and new members?

Our parent club is doing a good job. We have a judges' education committee. We run symposiums at the National every year for judges and we've put a committee together to do that. Could we do more? Well, that's like asking if we are doing enough to cure cancer. Well, yes we are, but more certainly could be done. Are we doing enough for world peace? Well, yes, but we could do more. No matter what it is, you could do more. The tools are there and available for education if a judge wants to learn. You can't force-feed anybody but if you have judges who want to learn about this breed, it is certainly available.

The same answer applies for novices: you can't force-feed anybody. Some novices come into this sport eager to learn and want to acquire all the knowledge they can. Some novices come into this sport eager to learn and in less time than it took me to get an OFA number on my first dog, they know more than I know today! In eighteen months in the breed, they have managed to acquire more knowledge than all of us old-timers have acquired in twenty or thirty years. It's available there if you have the right mindset.



Ch. Tarahill's Everybody Duck winning the Veterans class at the 1997 National Specialty.

Is an AKC video available for your breed?

Yes.

Is it a good one?

Yes. Actually, right now Karen McFarland is putting together a CD-ROM that is supposed to be even better because it's supposed to be a computer enhanced thing for faults and whatnot.

Do you feel there is adequate literature, books and magazines available for your breed?

Yes, but again, this isn't like Rottweilers or Dobermans. We're not a real popular breed with large numbers, so I'm not sure that the breed could support another magazine even if somebody wanted to start one. We have the national breed publication. We publish the minutes of all the board meetings in it, along with all the club business, a letter from the president, the AKC report, and we do a liaison from all the local breed clubs that want to submit. Then there's advertising. The

Samoyed Quarterly, of course, does their breed rankings every quarter, they do advertising and they also have articles from different breeders and judges.

How long have you lived here in your present location?

Physically, I have been in this house just over a year, about fifteen months. We've owned this house for about three years but just hadn't moved into it.

Why did you move here?

I spent the first half of my life acquiring things and I'm spending the second half of my life getting rid of them. When Chris decided to move to Chicago, I decided that was a crossroads for me. I had been very successful in showing dogs and had enjoyed it tremendously, but it was time for me to do something else. I still don't know what that is but something else. I'd had the big house with the kennel up for sale anyway. Although I didn't know where I was going to move I knew that I

wanted something less. Chris' decision to go to Chicago was really a turning point for me in that I realized that I really had gotten bored showing dogs and it was time for me to do something else.

I had already purchased this place by that time, and I had a Morgan mare and had gotten involved with the horses a little. This is an equestrian subdivision. We've got trails, a riding ring and this house had a barn. We like this part of Atlanta. It's pretty, and it's close to my husband's business, and it had enough land to suit me.

Where had you lived previously?

We moved to the Atlanta area a little over eight years ago. We spent the first seven years just next door here in Roswell, and as I said we've been here a year. Prior to that, my husband and I are both from Michigan, the Detroit area.

How old are you and are you or have you been married?

Do I have to tell the truth on

how old I am? (laughter)

No, not really. (laughter)

I'll be 47 this year. Do I have to tell you how many times? (laughter) Yes, I am married.

What have you done for a living?

My background is marketing. I received my Bachelor's from Eastern Michigan a very long time ago and spent a lot of my career with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan in their marketing division. Then I became part of the largest HMO in Michigan where I was an account executive. Then I met my late husband who was the CEO of one of my competitors. He and I married, and my company immediately fired me for conflict of interest. I told them when I was engaged that I was marrying the CEO of a competitor. We were by and large the biggest HMO in the state, and my CEO and marketing vice president both assured me that my marriage was not a problem, that my soon-to-be husband and I were both professionals and if anyone could handle it, we could. So, about three months later we got married and a week later they fired me. It was kind of interesting, and my boss had tears in his eyes and was just devastated over it. I said, "Joe, you do what you have to do and I'll do what I have to do." At which point, I contacted an attorney. Their attorney very wisely told them not to take this case to court. We settled out of court.

By the time we settled, I was pregnant and gave birth to this wonderful child, and I'm grateful everyday that he's a part of my life. When he was just a little over a year old, his father died. When he was in first grade, Floyd Seal and I got married. If you ask him, that's not his stepfather and if you ask my husband, that's not his stepson. They say "my dad" and "my son."

How do you feel dogs have affected your lifestyle?

Tremendously. Years ago when my late husband and I married, one of the first things that we did was to sell his house and sell my house and buy our house. We moved onto acreage out in the country, and it was quite a commute for him. He asked me then if I would like living there if I didn't have dogs? I remember looking at him and



Ch. Tarahill's Everybody Duck winning BOB at Westminster, 1993.

saying, "Dogs are such a part and parcel of who and what I am that I can't ever separate the two." I could never imagine living anywhere that wouldn't accommodate my dogs. That's how they've affected my life. I've never gotten to live in the nice subdivisions or the upscale part of town because I always had to be someplace where I could have the zoning and acreage for my animals. (laughter) I've been fortunate in all the years that I've had dogs that I've been able to have live-in help, so I've never had to worry about my coming and going. Now, for the first time since my son was an infant, I don't have live-in help anymore, and all of a sudden my schedule has gotten far more restricted based on my animals.

What are the benefits and drawbacks of being in dogs?

You're not talking about owning dogs as pets, you're talking about the sport of dogs? The benefits are that this is such an amazing sport. If you look at other sports, such as golf: golf tends to attract athletic people who enjoy being outdoors, who are relatively affluent, who are generally white middle-class or

upper middle-class, tend to belong to country clubs and those kinds of things. If you look at tennis or skiing, these tend to attract athletic outdoors types. Whatever sport you want to choose, they tend to attract a certain stereotype of individuals. When you look at dogs, we cross all boundaries: we cross all religions, all ages, all ethnic backgrounds and all financial backgrounds. Jane Firestone was a very good friend of mine. Not only was she married to a Firestone but she was from the Eastman Kodak fortune. Megamoney spending how much money on Manhattan. I had friends who were blue-collar workers working on the line at General Motors. It crosses all backgrounds. Dogs are the great equalizer and the wonderful, wonderful thing about this sport is that you can do anything or everything you want to do in it. When you talked earlier about agility and herding, you can have a station wagon and one dog that goes in the back of your station wagon; you never spend the night away from home, and you never go to a dog show more than 50 miles away. Or you can get on a

plane and fly somewhere every weekend with a top handler, and do two pages in full color in every magazine every month and go for the Quaker Oats Award or anything in between. That's the beauty of the sport.

Are there any drawbacks?

There are lots of drawbacks. To be at the top echelon and be competitive, it is extremely expensive. Unfortunately, many times we confuse our own egos with our dog's winning and losing, and we take it personally when a dog loses, rather than considering it a subjective opinion of one person. We take it as a personal offense that we've personally had this thing happen to us rather than the dog lost a dog show. It certainly restricts your lifestyle, not necessarily if you're going to have one or two dogs, but if you're going to have a kennel full of dogs, in terms of where and when you can go somewhere. The other restriction is that the rest of the world isn't showing dogs. What I discovered after I'd been in the sport for a few years was that, uniquely, I still had a few friends outside the sport, which doesn't happen often. Our lives get so wrapped up in this, and we forget there is an outside. My friends would be talking and saying, "Remember the time we all got together for so and so's graduation, but Cheryl, you weren't there, you were at a dog show." Or, "Remember the time we had so and so's baby christening? But Cheryl, you were at a dog show." I finally realized that most other people socialize on a Friday night or a Saturday night, but I wasn't there. I was at a Holiday Inn somewhere getting ready to go into some Quonset hut the next day for a dog show. Those are some of the drawbacks.

Has it been worth it?

It's an experience I wouldn't trade for anything. I've made so many wonderful friends in this sport. I've had some great times and the dogs have enriched my life tremendously. Cathy Horton and I were at Samoyed National and we were talking about how some people had gotten so wrapped up in the sport. I said to her, "I can't imagine a life without dog shows. I would hate to imagine a life without dogs."

Thank you so much for your time.