



## **THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY**

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## Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly  
Talks with  
**Judy Bennett**  
HOMELAND  
Webster, Texas

*This interview was conducted at the home of Judy Bennett in August 2002 by Sandra Miller.*

*How did you get started in dogs?*

Back when we were little more than newlyweds, to pick up extra money my husband Dean threw a large paper route. I was in charge of doing the books and collections, and there were people you had to collect from directly, so we had to go out collecting. I went to one lady's door, and when she opened her screen door, this little white ball of fur came rolling out. I chased the pup down for her and brought her back; the dog was about eight or ten weeks old. I had always had dogs when I was growing up, but they were always mixed breeds. I could not understand why anybody would consider paying for a dog when there were so many around for free. But I saw this puppy, and I fell in love. I said to my husband, "Oh, honey, look, she has white eyelashes!" That was the end. We went over and bought her sister a day or two later. She

was purely a pet. Someone had a Samoyed, so they bred it to someone else's Samoyed. The parents were out of town, actually, and the kids were saying, "Chinook is in season, so we had better get her bred." They went out and found somebody else with a Samoyed and bred her while their parents were out of town! That was the best socialized litter in the history of the universe!

Nanook was our first Sammy; she lived to be fifteen. She had severe grade-five dysplasia, but it never held her back. Dean put a CD on her. She was a wonderful little lady and a great dog for a lot of years, but she was very clearly Dean's dog. He and Nanook really bonded; it was love at first sight. I was the one who wanted the dog! We lived in Idaho Falls, Idaho for one year in the mid-'70s, and it turned out that Mable Dyer lived on the outskirts of Idaho Falls. I went to her house, met her and talked with her. We took Nook out there; we thought Nook was the most beautiful dog that ever roamed the earth. Mable said, "Oh, what a beautiful tail!" (laughter) That is the famous line many breeders use. If they can't find anything nice to say about a dog, they will say they



*Judy and "Sara."*



*Ch. Timberline's Katy Homeland, "Katy."*

have a beautiful tail. It is kind of a little joke.

We reserved a puppy from a litter, and that was Ginger of Caribou. Ginger was never a

really healthy dog; she had a lot of skin problems. I learned a lot about skin problems very early on. We never bred Ginger or Nook. We went to a skin spe-

cialist, and did the antigen shots, and everything like that. Out of desperation, I discovered my magic cure, phenolated calamine lotion with antihistamines, which I mentioned in the Ward's book. It is wonderful stuff and is worth all the veterinarian cures in the world. You don't have to use prednisone or any of the steroids. I always try to stay away from that, although later in life we had to resort to steroids. We went many years without using those, though, very successfully.

Our third dog was a dog I got from a well-known lady. His name was Bear, but I won't mention his entire name. Bear was a lot of hair. I had taken a handling class, and I heard a handler say, "Well, if you can get a Sammy with a good rear, you can win. All you have to have is a good rear." At that point in my life, I thought a good rear meant no cowhocks. I didn't know anything about angulation or structure or what have you. Bear's breeder wrote articles in a major magazine, and I thought she sounded great. I thought if I could get a great dog from anybody, it would be this lady because she sounded so wise. She said all the right things! She had sold Bear dog to a couple and they had put a point on him. Now they couldn't keep him and needed to sell him. I was very impressed with the fact that he had one championship point. So I bought him from her. After showing him for about a year and a half or two years, I learned a lot about handling. I had to learn a lot about covering up faults. Not that I am a great handler, but Bear was something. Bear was a sweet dog, but I did ultimately place him in a home. That is probably the only dog I ever placed as an adult, or after receiving it from somebody else. When they come here, they come here forever. They are here until the day they die. If somebody comes who has bad hips, oh, well, there is another one. We love them just as much. We enjoy them.

My next dog came from Stephanie Kroell. She had dogs initially from Lynette Blue of Polar Mist Samoyeds. Stephanie's kennel name was Timberline, and she had a bitch named Ch. Polar Mist's Ain't



*Am/Mex/PR/SA/Int. Ch. Homeland's Sunni Side Up, "Daisy."*

She Somethin', call name Misty. Misty was a litter-sister to Ch. Polar Mist Pepsi Cola, who was Ch. Polar Mist Dr. Pepper's mother. Peppers was a very well-known dog in the breed, later owned and handled by John Ronald. I bought my Ch. Timberlines Sugarbear from Stephanie from a litter by Ch. Kohoutek of Polar Mist CDX and Misty. Sugarbear has to be the love of my life. She was fun to show, she was always a sweet dog. She took her majors pretty quickly, although other people put her majors on her. Then I put her single points on. With my handling, the single points took forever. I learned so much! Chris Middleton showed her some for me, and Betty Chamberlain showed her some for me. We really enjoyed her; she was a beautiful, little square bitch. She was beautiful to look at, and she made such a great



*Am/Mex/PR/SA/Int. Ch. Homeland's Sunni Side Up, "Daisy."*

picture. She was a nice-moving bitch. Then when you got a little closer, she had a little snipy muzzle, but you couldn't tell until you got on top of her. I remember one time she was showing under Bob Page with Betty, and she was looking gorgeous. She could stack like nobody's business. He kept walking up to her as if he was thinking, "What a pretty bitch," but then when he got close enough and saw that muzzle, it was like, "No, forget it!" (laughter) She did very well, though. John Ronald showed her years ago; he had her litter sister, Sparkle. That was Ch. Timberline Sparkling Kayta. We always had a good time with them.

The third pup in that litter who went on to greater things was Ch. Timberlines Lord Tikal. He produced some very nice get. Betty Chamberlain's Ch. Shadow Wood's Sis Boom-Bah and Sue Dye's Lotsa Dots came down from Tikal.

I bred Sugarbear the first time to Lynthea Star Studded Knight, and she had three puppies. Of the three puppies, I did place one in a pet home. I kept one, and the boy I placed with family friends, and I showed him for them. He did very well. His name was Ch. Homeland's Original Recipe, and we called him The Colonel. Betty Chamberlain finished him, and he was a very nice boy. When our friends moved, they could no longer keep him and I placed him with a family in Pennsylvania. He did very well. Betty showed him when he won a Group and some nice placements. He was a happy dog for the rest of his days.

I ended up selling his sister, Daisy, and then getting her back. I regretted the day I ever sold her, and I was so thrilled when I got her back. I really enjoyed showing Daisy. I took Daisy to Mexico, showed her internationally and took her to Puerto Rico, too. We had such a wonderful time; the international shows are a lot of fun. Of course, at the time I could have speialed her, that was the time that Quicksilver's Razz MaTazz was out and winning really big. He was a wonderful dog, one of the most beautiful dogs ever. That was Chris and Danny Middleton's dog. The most beautiful thing about Tazz was

that he was one of the greatest showmen I have ever seen. When he was showing, when he was "on," he was really ON. I consider that one of the high points of watching him show. You just got drawn into watching him do his thing. I like a dog that is animated; I like a dog that shows some personality, even if they are acting on. They have a personality! If they stand there like a statue and just breathe, they never twitch or ask for a cookie or anything, I am thinking the dog has gone to sleep. (laughter) I like to look in those eyes and see some wheels turning. He was always very on and a beautiful dog. He was lovely to show and great to watch. He was a show all on his own! It would have been worthless to get Daisy out during that period. Her name was Ch. Homeland's Sunni Side Up. It was useless to show her then, because it would be like entering Best of Opposite Sex class. If you are familiar with how that class works, you enter a bitch and nine times out of ten, the bitch is going to take Best of Opposite Sex. Anyway, that is why I didn't special Daisy, but I did take her to Mexico and Puerto Rico and did quite well with her. That was a lot of fun.

*Is there one litter that stands out as being your best?*

That was probably my first one; it has been downhill from there! (laughter) I have had some nice pups. For her second breeding, Sugar was bred to Ch. Iceway's Ice Breaker. Lynette could breed to Breaker and get excellent hips right and left. I would breed to him, and we always had bad hips. The combination with what I had with Breaker always produced poor hips. What I didn't know was that there is a lot of tick-borne disease in dogs. The primary ones are Lyme and Ehrlichia and there is more than one type of Ehrlichia. There is Ehrlichia ristici, which is also known as Potomac Valley horse fever. Of course, my dog did come from the Potomac area, and probably every dog in the Potomac Valley has Ehrlichia ristici. Also there is Babesia, which is a blood parasite. When I sent Sugarbear to Arkansas for breeding, I had no idea the tick problem there was so bad. I wasn't even aware of tick-borne

disease. The second time, I took her up there, and I stayed overnight. I now have Lyme disease. Also, another dog that I took up there - there were three dogs that went to Arkansas, and all of us have had problems since then. Now when I look back on it, and I see the symptoms, I know what was going on.

Sugarbear's first litter was so great; I bred her to a JC son, Lynthea's JC. Back in those days, you went two places to improve your fronts. You either went to Ch. Lynthea's JC or you went to Breaker. The first litter was a JC son. I would have liked to have bred to JC, but he was 22 inches and I didn't want to get too small. I was afraid of going too tall, so I went to one of his sons who was larger, and I did very well on that litter. Wonderful muscle tone! The dogs were born with wonderful muscle tone. The puppies just came out with great muscle tone for their whole lives.

The second litter I went to Breaker and had so many hip problems with that litter. I thought it was just a bad combination so I went back with a different bitch and had seven puppies. Of the seven pups, I had three pulmonic stenosis pups. You are getting the dirt here; you are getting the things breeders will never tell. I had three pulmonic stenosis, one irregular heart rhythm pattern, one cleft palate, and one undescended testicle. There was one puppy in the entire litter who was clear of everything. I had a gentleman, a wonderful home, place a puppy back in my arms as he was sobbing. In three days, he had gotten so attached to the puppy. I require my puppy buyers to go to the vet immediately, and this puppy had a very severe heart murmur. That was one of the pulmonic stenosis puppies. I decided I couldn't do this; I could not breed puppies. I didn't know what it was; we could find no cause. My vet at the time was also an Elkhound breeder. She said, "You know, this is too much. This is not an anomaly; there is something going on here." I told her there was a crop sprayer in a rice field across the street about the time that Sugarbear was pregnant. He was flying over the house. Stephanie Kroell was sunbathing

in a bikini on my deck, so he was flying low across my backyard. Stephanie was enjoying every minute of it, you know, as she sunbathed on my deck. I will bet you some of that chemical got to the dogs. The vet said it was certainly possible, but she suspected it was of a viral nature. Those were prophetic words! This was my third litter, and the second one that had been to Arkansas.

A lot of things that we see happening, tick disease is behind the problem including many of the eye problems and so forth. Lyme in particular is very hard on the twelve cranial nerves. You get many eye problems. Right now, I have a pup with Ehrlichia. We are seeing a great deal of Ehrlichia dogs. I had this pup at the eye specialist two weeks ago; I came home from an out-of-town business trip, and she had an ulcer on both eyeballs. I looked at that and panicked, and immediately rushed her into a specialist. It is something called episcleritis, which you see a lot in dogs with Ehrlichia. Now I know when I get a puppy on these premises, the very first place I head is to my vet for testing. She had Babesia and she had Ehrlichia. That was what happened with my Sara and we have that cleared up now, but we are still taking our medicine.

These trips to Arkansas were very expensive, because I decided I couldn't continue to breed and have puppies that were anything but healthy. I wanted puppies that could live a long, promising life in their new homes. I couldn't do it. Not knowing what this was, I decided to let everything that I had die off, and start from scratch. You understand, I loved that line. Sugarbear was a litter sister to Ch. Timberline's Lord Tikal. He has sired many fine dogs, and a lot of dogs that Betty Chamberlain showed. Sue Dye showed a bitch that goes back to Tikal named Ch. Nerak's Shake-Em-Up Tiffany. They call her Tangee. I put her up for the points at a specialty, and three people ringside were trying to buy her. She was gorgeous. I loved that line.

I judge by the standard, no question. But for me and for my home, what I love is that square, tight body that is athletic and pretty and feisty. I like to



*Ch. Homeland's Bean Breaker, "Bean," a Katy x Breaker son.*

see the wheels turning behind those eyes. That line had a lot of that. Since then, I have seen so many great lines emerge in the last ten years. It is very rewarding to see that. It is like a kid in a candy store when you walk in the ring and look around, and you get a big grin on your face. You just feel really good about where the breed has gone. It is a nice thing to see.

Speaking of judging, sometimes I will have a dog in the ring and they will go down and back, then when I ask them to do it again, most of the time people will think there is something wrong. "Oh my goodness, she sees something wrong," that sort of thinking. A lot of times I am thinking, "That is gorgeous; I just have to see that again!" (laughter) I learned a great deal about movement and structure. I attended Rachel Page Elliott seminars, and I have known and cultivated many people in the breed who were very knowledgeable. It's like when you build a house, if you don't build on a strong foundation, with a strong framework, it will not stand. If you have a great foundation, then you hang on the gingerbread, with the shutters and curlicues, and you paint it the color you want. I feel the same way about dogs. These are working dogs, and they should still be able to do that work. The breed standard just shouts stamina, strength and structure, as well as beauty. These are working dogs, and they should be able to cover ground with a smooth, ground-covering gait delivered with an economy of motion. That is very important. The less energy they can expend doing the job, the longer they can last and the more valuable they are. The fact that they are just an absolute treat to live with doesn't hurt anything at all.

*How would you rate type, temperament, and soundness, in order of importance?*

Type is a very ambiguous term. Most people think that type means do they have big ears, little ears, a short muzzle, a long muzzle, or what? Do they have a bear head, or do they have a wolf head? What kind of body do they have, how much coat do they have? These great big balloon things with all of this coat - that to me isn't

necessarily type. Our standard allows for a range of appearance and individuality in the breed, yet it also calls for a certain type of dog, one that can do what he was bred to do. If a dog cannot move properly, if they don't have the strength, stamina and structure to deliver the job and the work they were bred to do, then they are automatically out of type. Hang it up! It doesn't matter how much coat they have, it doesn't matter about anything else. It matters if they can do the job. Coat is very important; coat is something

pretty, but I have to have the things that make the dog a Samoyed. It has to look like a Sammy, and it has to be able to work like a Sammy.

I learned something very interesting when I was visiting with my friend Carol Chittum in the Seattle area. All these years, we thought that the Samoyed was extinct in Russia and in Siberia. We have joyfully found out now that is not the case. Carol brought back a videotape of a French documentary she acquired on a recent visit to France. She travels there

dogs to herd the reindeer, not to pull the sledge. They were used for sledge work, but very rarely. Most of the time they were used as herding dogs for the reindeer, and the reindeer pulled the sledges. That was the most dynamic and interesting piece of film work I have ever seen. Since then, there has been another documentary on TV that also had a Samoyed. That was also a working Samoyed. This was on the Discovery Channel, and it was about the Woolly Mammoth. There was a Samoyed in it, and it was just - your chin hits your chest like, "Oh, my gosh, they still exist!"

Another interesting thing was when you asked about the importance of temperament. The Samoyeds lived in the huts with the people. They were an "extra blanket," and three dog nights were hellacious! (laughter) There was one family of nomads in that French documentary, a young woman had gone into town and became pregnant. She was apparently not married and she had to return to her family to have her baby. Everybody was gone that day, out working the reindeer or hunting, and she was left in the hut with the baby. There was a Samoyed there, and the baby was sitting up near the table. She was being fed, and here was this Sammy, licking the cheeks of the baby and cleaning up all the droppings. That is where that temperament came from; it is just there. It makes them partners, it makes them more than just utilities. It makes them companions and family. It makes them people! Dogs are some of the best people I know.

We are really blessed with a wonderful breed. This is an incredible breed; they have so many facets. They have so much that they give us every day. Most of it is just as family pets. I love to show, and I love shows, but their real value is in daily companionship. That is why I don't send back dogs that have bad hips or Lyme disease. Trendy, Polar Mist Homeland Trendsetter, is a dog who, when I got her, had Lyme and Babesia. That is how I found out that I had Lyme. My veterinarian quite literally saved my life. I nearly lost my vision; I almost lost my sight. Thank goodness, she sent me packing off to my doctor. I was able to



*Ch. Timberline's Katy Homeland.*

that if they don't have the proper coat, or texture, they can't do the job, either.

There are things relating to type that are considered tier one and tier two. Tier one contains those elements which are necessary to make them capable enough to do the job they were bred for and still survive. If you don't have ears that will fold back, they will freeze. If you don't have the proper coat texture, they freeze. If they don't have the structure to withstand the elements and be able to do the job, they freeze or they become dinner. Type and structure are hand-in-hand. I can forgive a lot of things; I can forgive a head that maybe isn't quite as

frequently because she is a Francophile and she taught French for many years. She brought back this French documentary, and in it, there were working Samoyeds. They were there doing a job. We have always thought of the Sammy as a draft dog, yet they are herding dogs, too. It is rather like they are ambidextrous or something. (laughter) They can indeed be both. In this documentary, the Samoyed people were nomadic, had herds of reindeer, and they had to keep moving to new areas so that the reindeer would have forage. They would take a couple of the reindeer, cut their antlers off, and put them in draft. They would then use the

regain some health, so it was a great thing.

*Is there one dog that stands out as being your biggest character?*

That was Ch. Timberline's Katy Homeland. Katy was like Scarlett O'Hara. Katy was never into discomfort. She had a definite personality. She slept with me every night; she expected to sleep in a soft bed. With so many dogs, it is too hot on the bed. They don't like to sleep in the bed because it is too hot up there. They want to sleep on the floor. If you turned over in the middle of the night and your head left the pillow, when it found the pillow again, there was that dog between you and the pillow. I am serious! It happened that quick.

When we would show, I found it was much better not to bait her. I don't mean that I didn't use bait, I just didn't hold it in front of her face. I left it in my pocket and ignored her. I would look anywhere but at her, and she would be staring a hole through me. After a while, she would reach forward with her little scissor bite, and she would nip me on the thigh. It was like being pinched with pliers or something! She was like, "Are you going to give me a cookie NOW?" She learned very early on that she could sing for us ringside, and the only way to shut her up was to give her a cookie. This dog would get applause in the classes! She was just the funniest thing. She was a great little mover. She was a daughter of Ch. Timberline's Lord Tikal, out of Tracy, Karon's Traces of Timberline.

Tracy was a beautiful bitch too, and Katy was out of them. So she was my Sugarbear's niece. She was a little stinker. There was one time when I was showing her to J.D. Jones. He loves a showing dog who can move and really put on a show. Jim Young from Nacogdoches was in front of me with his bitch. He made a big thing of baiting his dog; he would pull his jacket back and show that bait. We were right behind him, and Katy got locked in on him, like "Ooh, HE has a cookie!" I thought, "I'm no fool; I am going to stand back out of the way." J.D. Jones was going to put her up; he looked over and saw that, and he knew exactly what was going on. He moved us to the front, he had



*Am/Mex/PR/SA/Int. Ch. Homeland's Sunni Side Up, "Daisy."*

this look on his face like, "That little stinker!" And she was, she was just a very self-centered little cutie. She was very much into herself. (laughter) She played everybody for everything she could get out of them.

Years ago, Dave and Connie Richardson had a bitch named Kondako's Anybody's Girl. I always loved that name. I loved Dave and Connie's sense of humor. That was Katy; she was anybody's girl. "Have cookie? Will travel!" Katy was fun. She was very much a character.

*How did you come up with your kennel name?*

It came to me in a dream. I have dreams sometimes, and it just was. I wanted something that suggested values and old-fashioned ways of doing things. Something that suggested honesty and consideration, as well as ethics and morals. These things are not old-fashioned at all, really. The original logo that I have is "Where old-fash-

ioned values are still important." That was kind of the genesis of the name. You should choose a short kennel name, whatever you do. When you have someone that you breed with a lot, like Timberline or Polar Mist, and you try to add Homeland to it, that really leaves you a limitation on what you can name a dog. If I had it to do over again, I might choose something a little different, but that was the thought behind that name.

*Have you named your litters according to any scheme or theme?*

No, not at all. I just name them whatever I happen to like. My Breaker litter, I had one puppy out of the litter I called Nacho. I had a Ch. Homeland's Beau Breaker, meaning beautiful Breaker. I had one puppy that was Homeland's El Nino Nevado. I do like Spanish names. I just liked the name Nacho, because he always wanted the nacho chips. I pretty much name them for their per-

sonalities. Daisy was always such a happy girl, and Colonel was such an imposing presence. He always had such a commanding presence; the dog was built like the proverbial brick outhouse. He was just solid. He had a presence, so I named him The Colonel. It was Original Recipe because it was the first litter and the first puppy to finish.

The second litter, out of Breaker, the puppy I sold as a pet was the first one in the litter to finish. Sheila and Walter Herman in New Orleans owned him. That was Ch. Homeland's Southern Blizzard. The dog did quite well, taking Group placements and everything else. I sold him as a pet! But isn't that nice? I would always rather hear a puppy turned out better than I thought than worse. That was their first show dog, and they have done quite well since then.

*To be continued ...*