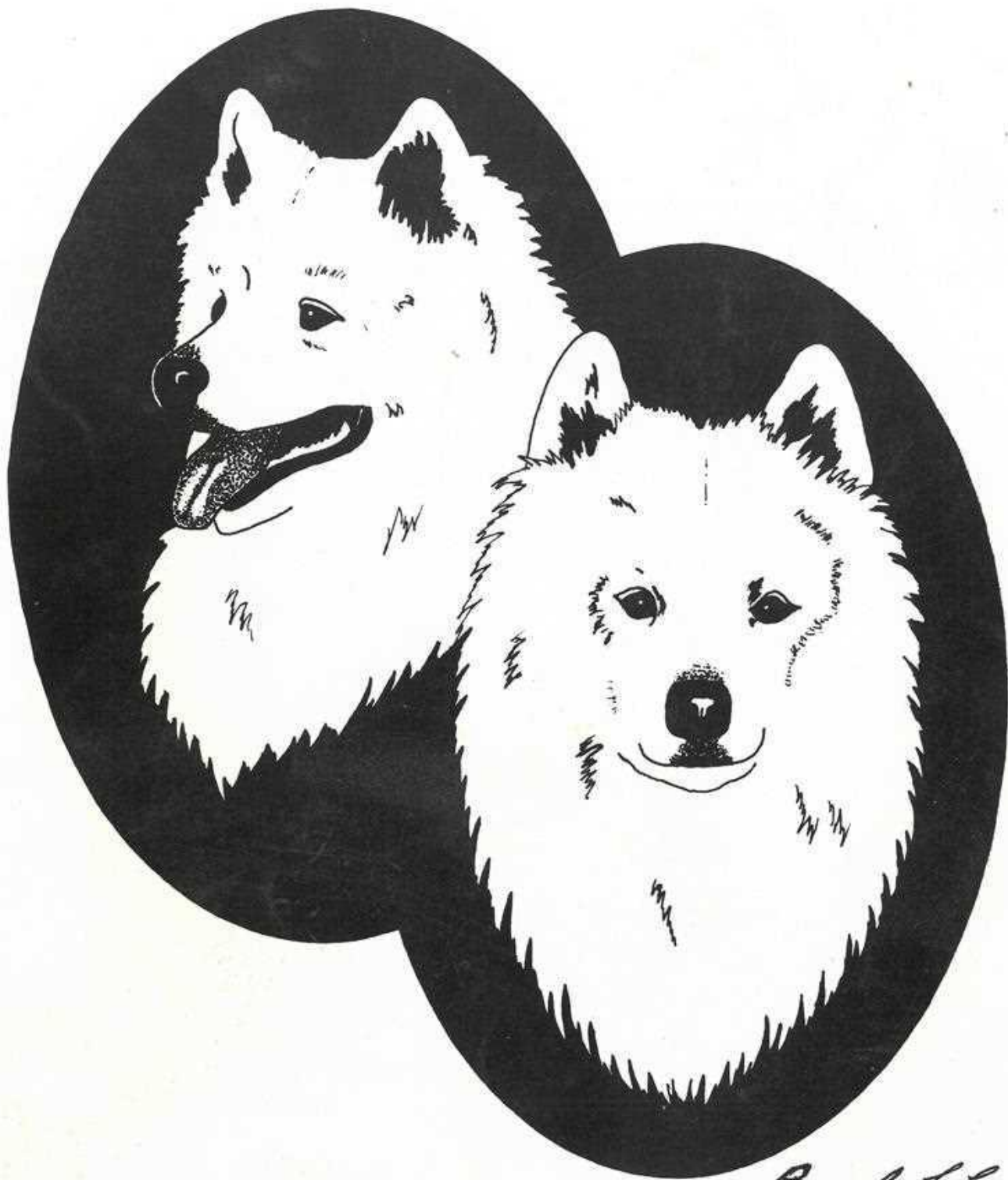


# THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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*Brenda LaCava/89*

## Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly  
Talks with  
**Judy Mears**  
**TRAILBLAZER**  
Arvada, Colorado

### Part II

*This interview was conducted at the home of Judy Mears in August of 1999 by Brenda Abbott.*

*Do you help your mothers whelp?*

I'm there. I watch them. I leave them alone and let them do it. I learned that very early on. I want my girls to be as natural as possible. If I have to do a C-section, I spay them when they are on the table, and I don't breed them again. I don't want to breed for C-sections. I want to breed a natural dog that can easily whelp. They break the sac. They lick the puppy. Then I take it and weigh it and put a collar on it.

*Check the toes. (laughter)*

Yes, count the toes and check that there are no cleft palates and then put it back with mom until the next one comes along. We've had three litters of ten puppies and that's too many puppies. Ideally, I like six or seven. But the girls do fine. Tiny little Allie who weighs 37 pounds whelped ten puppies when she was bred to Indi. We lost two of them. Two of them were stillborn but she raised eight nice puppies. And it's something that I really stress that if they can't whelp naturally and they can't raise the puppies without help, then I'm not going to breed them again, and I'm not going to sell the puppies as show quality. Breeding health is too important, and we have too many people out there breeding dogs that won't naturally breed a bitch and breeding bitches that can't whelp naturally. I'm not going to do like my husband who used to tease me and say, "Let them go out under the barn and have their puppies and when the puppies are old enough to walk out, then that's what you keep." (laughter) No, I'm not living on the farm anymore.

*But there are some things about the farm that you still keep.*



*Ch. Trailblazer Yukon Sunset UD, "Spicy."*

I still treasure the genetic help. The idea that a dog can breed a bitch without help and that a bitch will stand to be bred

without having to be muzzled. I have had bitches in here when I was using Kit and Buck that had to be muzzled to be bred. But I

wouldn't want a puppy out of that no matter how nice the bitch is. I want a bitch that will stand there and flirt and dance



Ch. Trailblazer Shooting Star and Ch. Trailblazer Winter Dawn UD, both at seventeen months of age.

and when it's time to be still, cock her tail over, brace her legs and get bred. I want a dog that knows which end and how to get it in without help. I'm there. I don't leave them alone. But to me, it's really important that they be able to breed naturally, whelp naturally, and nurse puppies without having to have help.

*Do you supplement your puppies?*

This last litter, when I bred Allie to Indi, we had eight puppies. She is a tiny bitch and two of those puppies were four-ounce puppies. So we supplemented those two puppies and they did just fine. We just supplemented them once a day, in the evening. But under normal circumstances, no, I don't.

*No heroic efforts.*

No, I went through that with the first litter we had with Paymaster Stormproof Cotton when she had whelping prob-

lems and the autoimmune problems. We hand-raised those puppies. We were hand-feeding them every two hours and they still all died. At that point I decided, with Jerry's strong help, that if they can't breed naturally and they can't raise the puppies naturally, I am not going to continue with it.

*You are not doing anybody any favors, are you?*

No, I'm not going to raise Bulldog puppies that have to be bred artificially, to be C-sectioned, and hand-raised. I'm going to breed a natural, strong bloodline or I'm not going to do it at all. And little, tiny Allie had ten puppies and she raised them with our help only with the two four-ounce puppies. They are pretty nice puppies. I try to do as little as possible. I love to sit and watch them. I weigh them every day. I take them to the vet and have their

dewclaws done and their shots. I don't do all of that stuff myself. I figure that's what vets are for. I want a natural dog. I want a dog that can breed naturally. I want a dog that can whelp naturally, that still has the instincts of the primitive dog that we are supposed to be breeding.

*What kind of routine do you use when you are raising your puppies? Is there anything special that you do?*

I don't like to have a lot of people over to see them until they are three weeks old. I might let one or two special people come over to see them as youngsters. But I try to keep things quiet for mom. I don't do any supplemental feeding until they are about fifteen to sixteen days old and then I start making little hamburger balls like Doris used to feed. It's so much fun to hold those little hamburger balls and have the

puppies suck them out of your fingers. (laughter) And that's when I'll start having special people over. I'll say, "We are going to do hamburger balls tonight. Do you want to come over and help feed the puppies?" I feed the bitch Iams Puppy food. I start them on puppy food when they whelp because it's higher in calories and vitamins. I feed it to them wet. Generally by the time the babies themselves are three weeks old, mom is eating nine cups of food a day to keep the puppies fat and healthy. But with that, they stay fat and healthy. If I whelp a puppy, I don't lose a puppy. Probably in the last fifteen litters I've had, I've lost one puppy. I made Susan put that puppy down because he was in the birth canal too long. He was mentally deficient.

*Oxygen deprived.*

Yes. We both knew that there was something wrong with him but she kept working and working to get him to nurse and pull through. She finally said herself, "Mom, he's not right." And I said, "Okay, this is growing up and being a breeder. You have to take him in to the vet. You have to make the decision." So she took the puppy in and had him put down. If puppies are born alive, they survive because I try to do it very naturally. I let mom whelp. I let mom clean them up. If mom can't do it, I don't want to breed her. I don't want to continue with her. It's always been a fear of mine. What if I'm at work and they whelp early? Would they lay there and all the puppies die because I couldn't be there with them 24 hours a day for a week before they whelp? Or maybe a week after they are due? Natural breeding health – the ability to breed naturally, to whelp naturally – is extremely important to a bloodline. And it's necessary that we don't lose it.

*It's one that is often overlooked. People are willing to forgive those things.*

Yes. If a dog can't mount a bitch and breed her, one of them should not be bred. Maybe other people will feel that I'm wrong, but I really do believe that.

*At what age do you like to evaluate your puppies?*

You can't keep from looking at them from the time they are born. I will never say that I can tell anything about a wet puppy – they are squashed and wet and little squirmy puppies. I can tell which is going to be a pretty head for what I'm working with. I can tell if they have bone length that I like. You can tell a short neck. You can tell a long neck. You can tell if the upper arm and shoulder blade are of equal length and if the upper thigh and lower thigh are of equal length on a newborn. You can take your fingers and measure them. I feel that with anybody, evaluating a litter is something you do every time you look at them. You do a lot of it just sitting by the whelping box and looking at them. How can you not just sit and watch them squirm and grunt and nurse and sleep? I waste a lot of time doing that when I have puppies. That's one reason why I don't

do puppies very often. I'm evaluating them constantly. I don't make any final judgment until they are about ten weeks old, because there are so many things that grow and change and shift. You have to watch a puppy in the litter. You have to watch them outside playing. You have to watch them to see who tries to do things, who's into stuff, who's running across the yard without stumbling, who's surefooted, who's always into mischief.

I start bringing the puppies upstairs when they are two and one-half weeks old. At first, all they do is lay on the blankets (because I'll spread out blankets) in the family room. We'll just sit and watch them squirm and nurse. Then I take them back downstairs after an hour. But as they get up on their feet and stumble to the door and start going outside, I am constantly evaluating them. You have to. It's just automatic. "I like the way this one walks around. I like the chest shape on this one. I like the length of arm on that one. I like the head on this one." Sometimes there is one that is just so adventurous that it stands out. Sometimes there is one that is shy. It's a constant process and that's why when people come to evaluate a puppy and pick a puppy out of the litter, if they insist on doing that, it's okay. But I'd much rather know what they want and tell them which puppy will have the qualities they want. You are constantly evaluating that puppy from the day it is born until the day it dies.

Structure, body shape, chest shape, length of upper arm, length of shoulder, and length of leg are very important to me. The way the pelvis sits. The length of the upper thigh, the lower thigh and the hock all mean a lot to me. I'm more a body person than I am a head person. I like a pretty head, but heads are more subjective. And a lot of the heads that I see now are, to me, very coarse. But the body type is so thoroughly discussed in our standard as to what the angles are supposed to be and what the movement is supposed to be, that that has always been my concentration – a good body.

*Do you think the standard is a good one?*

I believe it is one of the best

standards that AKC has. I was very glad that it didn't get rewritten and reordered when AKC was asking everybody to do that. There is some logic in AKC's desire to reorder the standards because there were some that were very vague, but ours is not a vague standard. Ours is very precise. The people who wrote that standard spent years measuring the angles and describing exactly what is there. I'm glad that it is a little bit vague on some of the head qualities. The things that set basic head type are exact, like the equilateral triangle between the middle of the stop and the ears. That gives you a good head shape, a good skull shape, a good placement for the ears. The fact that the outer edge of the ear should tip up to the base of the ear tells you that it's an almond-shaped eye that tips up, not sitting flat on the head, unless you have ears that sit on the side of the head. Then I guess if you have ears that sit on the side of the head then, well ...

There are so many exact requirements that are set in our standard that are so beautifully described. The exact 45-degree angles. I know there are people who say it's not possible, but you and I both know that there are dogs that have very good angles. The length of back, the length of rib as opposed to the length of loin. I've learned what I can find in my puppies and what will come through. I've been fooled sometimes. When you outcross to a dog, sometimes you get things that you don't want to go with the things that you want. There is a young boy that I co-own and show right now that is too short in loin. He has taught me exactly why Ice Breaker went wide in the rear. Ice Breaker was too short in the loin. And this dog has one of the prettiest fronts that I've ever seen on a dog but he's too short in loin. If he's too excited, he goes wide in the rear. He also has a wonderfully long neck and a perfectly shaped chest and long shoulder blade and long upper arm and a wonderful attitude toward life. So I'll suffer with his wide rear. Every dog has good qualities and every dog has faults. Our standard really describes perfection and a breeder has to decide, "This is what I'm going to strive for first." I don't know if you

remember Silveracre's Trailblazer or not.

*That was before I actually moved here, but you finished him about the time I did move here.*

Sparky had a pretty head. He had a long neck and pretty coat. He had a terrible front and not much better of a rear, (laughter) He taught me about bad fronts and bad rears. Luckily, I got Silveracres T'Blazer Regina who had a very good front. She had soft pasterns and bad feet. (laughter) She had a very good front, extremely good sidegait, a wonderful clean rear, nice V-rear that was really, really good. And, except for her flat feet and her curly coat, she was as good a structured dog as anything I ever had. She taught me so much, but she was strong for that front and I wanted to keep the front. She taught me what good fronts looked and felt like. I tried hard to keep it, and I think I have. I've gotten the front that I want consistently.

I'm still working on rears. I still get that narrow rear sometimes that drives me nuts. But I get better rears. I get good sidegait most of the time. I wish more people paid attention to the fine details of the standard. I'm tired of seeing tight tails. We see more tails right now that would belong to an Akita better than they do to a Samoyed. I heard one very respected judge say that she didn't mind a tight tail because at least the dog didn't drop it in the ring. Well, our standard says that the judge should see the tail up over the back, naturally, once during judging. The standard says the tail doesn't have to be up the whole time the dog is in the ring. So we have people breeding for tight tails so they will be up over the back when our standard very specifically speaks against that.

Our standard calls for a good foot. But if you read what our standard calls for opposed to Malamutes or Siberian Huskies, we have a looser foot, longer toes, and that is why we come up with some flat feet sometimes, especially with the back feet where the toes pop up, which is really a very weak foot. There are a lot of them in the breed and always have been. There is a lot of variety of type, but what bothers me the most right now is we are getting so many dogs that are really big



Ch. Dusha's Trailblazer of Seelah, "Belle."

and over-boned - coarse. They have bone and head that belong on a Malamute instead of a Samoyed. If you look at the size of the heads on some of our dogs, they are as big as Malamute heads and we are not supposed to be breeding Malamutes. We are supposed to be breeding a mid-range dog, something between a Malamute and a Siberian. They are not a racing dog. They are not a freighting

dog. They are a general purpose dog. They are a dog that should be able to function in agility, run and play, and not be a heavy, plodding show dog.

*Are there any changes you would make in the standard?*

Not really. We have a very good standard. We've had some interesting interpretation of the standard lately. I like the variety in styles that our dogs have. I have found, very much

as I've matured in the breed and learned about the breed, what I want to change. I want a more moderate dog instead of a big, heavy-headed, heavy-boned dog. I don't think the Samoyed was originally supposed to be a great, big, overdone dog. And we see a lot of those now. It's a moderate dog with moderate bone and a moderate coat. There are short-coated dogs and there are long-coated dogs.

Both are okay, but the Samoyed is supposed to be a moderate dog in most ways. Not extreme teddy bear head, although I've seen some pretty teddy bear heads that I liked.

When I first started, I thought I wanted a very short, square muzzle with a longer backskull. My ideal now has changed to a little bit of a longer muzzle, in proportion, probably 60-40 skull to backskull, rather

than 2/3 to 1/3 which I thought was ideal fifteen years ago. It's interesting that in some parts of the country, in California, most of the heads are half-and-half - half muzzle and half backskull. On the East Coast, we have a lot of very short, very heavy heads. Just a lot broader, heavier head. The head has to fit the body. I had a dog, Silveracres Trailblazer, and his head was way too big for his body. He looked okay in coat, but out of coat he looked like he was going to fall over on his nose. (laughter) He did a lot for me. He got me started. Unfortunately, I can see a lot of faults in the dog now that I couldn't see then.

*Wasn't ignorance bliss? I mean we all start that way. (laughter)*

Yes, and you love the dog in spite of faults, period. Sparky also did a lot for us. He got us started. But I don't think that if I had the dog now that I would breed him. I adored him. But I would never have anything out of him now, and yet, he gave me my foundation stock - Trailblazer's Silver Talisman and Trailblazer Talaria - and everything I have goes back to one of those dogs.

The only thing that I believe I would change in our standard is the description of the foot. A hare foot has a tendency, with the long toes, to be flat. It says slightly flattish. The hare foot that is slightly flattish is not as healthy as a tighter foot, but not necessarily a tight cat foot. I don't want to go to an extreme cat foot, but an oval foot, something on the order that the Sheltie or a Collie has. Then you don't have the splayed poppy toes. I've never seen a Collie with splayed back toes. They are very common in Sammies. A rounded snowshoe foot or an oval foot, I really think is healthier than the longer, slightly flattish hare foot that our standard calls for. When you have a slightly flattish foot, genetically, you have a connection to a weak pastern. There is just a fine line between a slightly sloping pastern and a weak pastern that is so easy to cross. If you don't keep a dog with soft pasterns exercised and on good footing, then they end up with weak feet that have problems if the dog needs to do anything besides lay on the couch.

*So the slight slope to the pastern is important.*

You have to have SLIGHT slope to the pastern. I don't mean a straight pastern, by any means, because if you have a straight pastern then you run into the straight upper arms and the straighter shoulders and the dog comes down too hard and destroys their feet. You have to have the spring. But we are also not supposed to have the German Shepherd Dog where they are down on their pasterns. And there are some Sammies that are down on their pasterns more than I would like. I've kind of always had a thing about bad feet because my foundation bitch, Silveracres T'Blazer Regina, had bad feet.

Good feet are important. You have to have a good foundation. You have to have a good body and a healthy dog. You should have a good coat. You shouldn't have to brush a coat everyday to keep it from being matted. Allie hasn't had a bath and she hasn't had a brush on her for six months and you couldn't tell it because she has a hard texture to her coat. It sheds dirt. She goes out and plays and runs and digs TREMENDOUS holes (laughter) and because of the quality of the coat, the dirt falls out. It's just not a problem with her. Coat quality is something I've always really wanted. I don't want a long, droopy glamour coat. I can admit that they are beautiful. And I don't want a coat that has to have so much junk in it to hold it up at the dog show. When I judged the Sweepstakes at the National Specialty last year in Southern California, I took two wet towels to the ring with me because I knew I would have a lot of puppies with a lot of garbage in their coats and I wanted to be able to wipe my hands off and keep them clean. I don't think wipes with the sticky stuff is what you want so I just took two wet towels ringside with me so I could tell which dogs had garbage in the coats. I used to do it myself. I had a retail store and sold all of that stuff, and I used it, too. But a correct coat doesn't need a lot of stuff. A correct coat, with just a little bit of water and some brushing, looks good. How many dogs now do you see with real silvertips? If you hold the hair up to the light, the last half inch of that guard hair is translucent, so you really see the silver-

tips glisten.

*You have to leave it on in order to see it.*

Oh, you could pull out a hair or two. You don't want to be scissoring hair. (laughter) And that's something else. How can a judge be fooled by a scissored coat? Scissoring cuts off and blunts the ends of the hair. All you have to do is run your hands against the texture of the hair and you can feel it. Circuit Breaker, in coat, had too much coat. That's why I loved to show him in half to three-fourths coat because he was pretty then. When he was in full coat, he looked like a haystack. But a true coat is when that dog can go out and roll and play and run and come back in the house and shake (they always shake in the house) and they are almost clean. Or you can brush them and they look great.

*When did you decide to become a judge?*

I've had friends say, "Judy, you need to be a judge," for about ten years. I didn't want to get into the politics of getting judging assignments. I've seen too many people trade assignments for wins. I didn't want to do it. Then I saw two different individuals apply for and get licenses for Sammies, and these are not necessarily Samoyed breeders. They are just two people whom I have absolutely and utterly no respect for and they were judging my breed. I said to myself, "Judy, if you don't have guts enough to stand up out there and tell people what you think in public, then you need to keep your mouth shut." So I talked to Jerry and he was very supportive. We talked about how expensive it would be to do this. But I felt that if I'm going to criticize other people then I need to put my ideas on the line and let other people criticize my ideas, too. Or I could let other people change my breed and let them do what they want to. I don't expect everyone to agree with me. I don't expect everybody to respect what I do on any one day. I'm sure I'll make some mistakes, but they will be honest mistakes. I'll do them because I saw what I saw at that time and not maybe something else that was covered up.

It's an interesting process. I don't know how many people have even checked into being a

judge but it's a very expensive process. The paperwork is not expensive. It's just time-consuming. In a way, the requirements are not high enough - ten years in the breed, five litters, and two champions out of five litters. If you can't produce two champions out of five litters then you haven't learned anything. It gives me horrors to think of someone breeding five litters and not finishing two champions. You don't even have to finish the champions yourself. You can take a mediocre animal and put it out with a professional handler and still count it if you bred that dog that the handler finished. There are people who don't have the ability to show dogs, who don't have the talent (and it does take a certain talent and coordination to get out there), and an ability to forget what a fool you look like. But I really decided that if I was going to criticize other people and feel upset that other people were judging my breed, then I needed to put what I felt on the line and do it.

I talked to Jerry about the monetary commitment and told him that I figured it would cost a minimum of \$5,000 for two years. I've been lucky in that I've gotten my five provisional assignments. I had my first one in March and the fifth provisional assignment will be Labor Day weekend. Then I can think about going for a second breed or doing something else, if I want to. And I will. I'll apply for Siberians. I have plans to go to the Siberian Husky National Specialty already made. I've always liked Siberians, so that's a logical follow-up.

Judging is educational, too. It's a chance to see other people's dogs and to go over other bloodlines. I've had my hands on some dogs whom I've watched but had never touched. I've been really pleased with some of the animals I've seen. I was very flattered with one dog that I saw in California last spring because I had done the Sweepstakes in California last fall. A particular handler had two or three dogs in Sweepstakes under me and I think he got ribbons on a couple of them. But they didn't really move like I like a dog to move. He obviously watched very closely for what I liked because he brought me something I really liked the



Trailblazer Winddancer, WB with Ch. Cascade's Kokopelli, BOS at Central Wyoming KC, May 22, 1998.

next time. That is the key to it. You watch a judge and say, "Okay, this judge likes what I do or this judge doesn't like what I do. Or this judge values this ..." If you can't watch a judge and see what their emphasis is, either they don't have anything that they like in the ring or they like them all. That makes it tough either way. But you should be able to see where the emphasis is. When you have someone who watches what you do and brings something you like next time, that's very flattering.

*When you step into the ring, where is your emphasis?*

I use to hate it when people said balance because it took me a long time to understand what balance is. But you can't go looking for just one quality. I want an athletic dog. They are

supposed to be a working dog. And granted, I've never bred sled dogs. I've never worked sled dogs. I've worked obedience, but I've always aimed at a dog that was capable of doing what they were bred to do and that have the brains and body to do it. It's easy to get lost in a pretty head, pretty coat and showmanship. But you have to have the body. You can't judge the brains. No way in the show ring can you judge the talent and ability to be a working dog: an agility dog, a herding dog, a sledding dog, a multi-function athletic animal. But that's what I want. The first thing I look for is the dog that is so smooth and easy on its feet. I don't care if they bait. It is pretty to see a dog that baits, but if the weather is bad and it's hot, I'm not going to penalize a dog that is not bait-

ing or standing square.

*Tail up or down, right? As long as you see it up once? (laughter)*

Well, yes. As long as I see the tail come up while they are moving. The tail comes up by itself without the handler holding it up. But if you read our standard, it says that the tail should be up once. It doesn't say that they have to stand there like a rock with their ears up all of the time. You need to be able to judge the head. You need to be able to judge the expression and where the ears set. And I don't think you can judge where the ears set by pushing them up, either. The way the neck sets on the body, the topline, the way they use their feet and the quality of the feet, the quality of tailset is all so much more important than whether they hold up their ears all of the time.

Yes, it is a dog show, but dog shows were designed to prove that the dog meets the standard, not that it can stand and bait like a fool for a piece of liver.

*If you only had two dogs in the ring and one had what you considered type and the other had good movement, which one would you pick?*

You can't do that, Brenda.

*But you might have that situation.*

I already have. (laughter)

*Okay, what did you put up?*

I put up the dog with type that day because the dog that had good movement did not have the qualities that I consider. The standard calls for certain qualities in head shape and coat type. I'm not saying an in-coat or out-of-coat dog. An incorrect coat is wrong whether they are in coat or out of coat. You can tell a correct coat even

when they are out of coat if you know what you are looking at. I had a dog that moved well but just simply was not a good type. I put up the poorer moving dog that had correct type. It wasn't exaggerated type. It was correct type. You always hope for both, though.

*You think that over the years you have seen breeder-judges or all-around judges do a better job?*

I'll go at that sideways. When I first started showing dogs, the Herding dogs and the Working dogs were in the same Group. And we had a lot of Collie breeder-judges judging Sammies. A lot more than we do now. They always went for the dog with the ears up and looking pretty. Grooming and showmanship were more important. I want all of it, but mostly I want the body. Not a fat body. I want a showy dog if I can get a showy dog. I want a correct body in good working condition. Does that answer the question or did I go at it wrong?

*Over the years you've seen styles in judging change. Who do you think over the years does a better job - the breeder-judge or the ones that come from all-around, not necessarily just one other breed?*

The judges who have more than one breed have a tendency to look more at the whole dog and not just a piece of the dog. I'm not denigrating our breeder-judges. We have some good breeder-judges. But I overall like to see a judge who has the full Working Group, at least. We have some good breeder-judges who do the full Working Group. We have some good breeder-judges who only are doing a couple of breeds. But knowing all dogs and studying the canine, not just the outside covering, but the inside of the dog, makes a better judge.

*You mentioned that you are going to apply for Siberians also. What other breeds, and why are you going for other breeds?*

Because I love dogs. For ten years I had a retail business called the Kennel Shop and, at that time, I had customers for all breeds because we went to the shows constantly. So I had to study the standards. I had to learn how to groom and how to train so that I would know how to recommend both grooming and training products for the various breeds. I really learned to enjoy studying other breeds.

I had very good friends with Malamutes, Siberians, Labrador Retrievers, Collies and some of the Terriers. I learned to really appreciate some of the other breeds, besides just Sammies.

If I want to be able to judge and be able to afford it, I need to think about judging other breeds. I feel like I have spent enough time traveling with and talking with people who have Siberians and Malamutes just to continue my knowledge of Sammies. Contrasting the three and working with the three helps. I've always loved Akitas. I had a friend, Leslie Fields. Do you remember Leslie? She runs a sled team. She had Akitas at one time and I really enjoyed watching her Akitas and watching Akitas with her. There are a lot of breeds I like. When you start judging, AKC prefers that you stay within your Group and your style of dogs. So it's logical that if I have Sammies, that I go for Siberian Huskies or one of the other northern breeds next. So my plans are, as I stated before, to attend the Siberian Husky National Specialty this fall and apply for Siberians sometime this fall. Future plans would be then probably Malamutes and Akitas. I'll stick with the Working Group. I don't know that I'll ever apply for the full Working Group, though. There are individual dogs in all breed that I like but there are some breeds that I'm not as fond of as I am of others. I don't particularly like dogs that slobber. I don't like Sammies that have loose flews because when they fling their heads, they slobber everywhere.

*I don't think judges should judge breeds they don't like, do you?*

No, I don't. If you can't like the dogs that you are working with, you shouldn't be working with them. So I don't really want to judge dogs where I can't appreciate the aesthetics. There are qualities of all breeds and mixed breeds. There are qualities in dogs that you love and admire in an individual dog. But I'm 60 years old and I don't want to spend twenty years getting the full Working Group. (laughter) I'm too old. If you are going to do the whole Group, you have to start a lot younger than I did. (laughter) I'd like to do all the northern breeds. I'd like, eventually, to do Sammies, Siberians, Mala-

mutas, and maybe the Akitas (since I've always liked Akitas since they first came over). There are some other working dogs - I love Dobermans. Bobbie Fleischaker, who had Doberman Pinschers, was one of my early mentors and taught me tremendous amounts about structure and gait in the Sammie and the Doberman, and I've always really enjoyed Dobies. So, someday, I'd really like to do them. I admire Rottweilers but I don't know that I'd ever want to judge them. I like Boxers, and I also like Pyrenees, maybe because they are white. There are a lot of breeds that I really enjoy and not all of the breeds that I enjoy aren't necessarily in the Working Group. AKC likes you to stick with one Group as much as possible instead of jumping around. My original purebred dog was a Shetland Sheepdog, and I still love Shelties and Collies, but I don't know that I want to judge them. I'll just wait and see. I love Poodles. I worked with the Poodle Review and Del Dahl. I always read Poodle Review and when I got to working with Del, I got to enjoy learning about Poodles from him. It sounds kind of strange to have Sammies and want to do Poodles, but I do, although I doubt that I ever will.

AKC offers the AKC Judges Institute which is wonderful, and I went to it last year and really learned a lot about judging procedures and how to judge. But judging is expensive. A lot of people don't realize just how expensive it is to go through the process. Most clubs pay a provisional judge \$3 per dog. I promised myself when I started out that I would never judge Samoyeds in Colorado since I know every dog in Colorado and have forever. It is not fair for me to go into the ring and judge dogs locally, so I have to pay expenses to go to an out-of-state show. Costs include airfare, motel room, meals - an average of \$350 to \$600 to go to one show to judge - and for that you get paid \$3 a dog. And so far, the most dogs I've had in one show is 45. That is something you do for the love and fun of it or to do something with your retirement, not because you are going to make money at it. You do it because you enjoy seeing the dogs and meeting the

people. I'd say play with the dogs. I feel in my mind that I enjoy going over the dogs and looking at the dogs.

*Will you continue to breed?*

About like I have bred in the past. In the past, I have bred a litter every two years or so. I will not and never really have campaigned a dog nationally. I've specialied three dogs but it has been mostly at local shows that I have specialied. I doubt if I'll ever special a dog again. I love them too much not to work with them. Jerry would be perfectly happy if I didn't do any more breeding. With his health issues, he's not real patient with the time I spend with the dogs, sometimes. But he's pretty tolerant most of the time. And I'll continue to breed occasionally. Just enough to keep me in puppies.

*Just enough to keep us humble. Gee, they aren't perfect.*

I haven't had one that was perfect yet. I've always said that if there is a perfect one that comes along, I'm going to quit and enjoy it.

*Which dog have you ever seen that was the closest to perfect?*

There is a dog in California that belongs to Leah Benson whose call name is Indi. I'd put a little better head on him but as far as his body, coat, feet and gait are concerned, he's probably as close to my ideal as I've seen in a long time. He has fewer faults and nothing that I consider a major fault.

*Big dog? Small dog?*

Probably a hair bigger than I really like. He is, I would guess, 23 1/2 inches. He's not over standard but he's at the top of the standard. I like a little bit broader backskull than he has. But he has a beautifully balanced head with wonderful eye shape and very, very nice movement. He is not a flashy dog. He is a sweet, easy to live with, calm dog which doesn't make for a big winning show dog. He'll go into a big class and usually make the final cut and the win goes to somebody that has more flash or a pushier handler. A lot of times it is a pushy handler that wins rather than a good dog. Or at least, I've seen it happen, although not all of the time.

*Is there anything that handlers do in the ring when you are judging that you would like to address in a general way here?*



Ch. Cascade's Kokopelli, BOW at Garden City Kansas KC, pictured with Judy's granddaughter, Caity.

Have fun. I do this because I love the dogs. If you are going in and you are so serious that you are pushing a dog around, or making a dog miserable, than you are not doing either one of you a favor. If the dog doesn't feel like showing that day, then do the best you can, but don't push and shove it around and prop the tail and the ears up. I've done that myself but it

never looks as good as a dog that is allowed to relax a little bit. The main thing I've seen so far that bothers me are people who show dogs that are too fat and don't have any muscle tone. These are supposed to be working dogs. If they are a little bit lean, I don't consider that a fault. If they are so fat that they roll, I consider it a major fault. If I have a big class, the fat ones

will go to the end of the line. I don't have to have a dog that stands there and baits and shows. If they drop their tail, it is not a big deal as long as they move well. I don't want a pushy handler that is always shoving a dog down my throat. I'll find a good dog - you don't have to stand in the middle of the ring and show it to me.

*How many dogs do you generally*

*keep?*

Four is my ideal because my dogs are housedogs. I don't have a kennel. I always seem to have an old dog. Right now I have five girls. I don't have a boy right now; my last litter was all girls. The oldest one is eight. I have one that is going to be seven next month, one that is five and then the youngest is almost two. It's easy having all

girls. You don't have to worry about boarding anyone when they are in season, just be careful and keep them in. I don't have a kennel set-up at all. We did for awhile because we had a neighbor who had kids who would stand on the fence and throw rocks at the dogs and tease them - so we put in a kennel. That just made things worse because the kids then would throw rocks at the dogs and make the dogs bark. So when I'm not home, the dogs are in crates in the basement where it's quiet and they are cool. We don't have air-conditioning or anything like that. They are outside in the backyard as much as they can be or inside the house with me.

Allie is the oldest. She's eight and she is a couch potato. She sleeps on the couch at night or in my rocking chair, whichever she chooses. Kokopelli usually sleeps in the bedroom on the floor next to the bed and the others kind of rotate in the bedroom if they want. Otherwise they sleep downstairs. The youngsters sleep in crates. I don't leave youngsters loose in the house to get into things. You can see that I have gates across areas. They can jump flat-footed over the gates when they want to, but it's at least a mental barrier, if not a physical one.

*Do you have a preference between the boys and the girls?*

Well, with five girls, you are going to ask me that question? The dogs that I have absolutely adored have been boys.

*Do you miss not having a boy?*

Very much. I really, really miss Kit. Even now, and it's been almost three years since he's been gone. The first dog that I bred and kept was Jonathan, and he taught me a lot and he was a lot of fun. He gave me some good kids. But boys aren't as reliable in the show ring as girls. With most girls you take a piece of liver and go into the ring and they will stand and show for you. My boys are always interested in everything else that is going on. You have to be sure that they are having a good time or they shut down. When I was showing Kit, if I got rough with him or said to him, "I want you to do this," and he thought I was pushing him too hard, he'd just look at me and you could see

him say, "If you want to do it, you go ahead and do it. I'll stand here and you can be the show dog." (laughter)

Buck, Ch. Trailblazer Tumultuous, was probably the easiest dog I had to show. He didn't bait for food, he baited for a toy. It could be just the teeniest little toy and you didn't have to stand there and squeak it a lot. You just had to show it to him, and when you were at the end of the line, you just had to hand it to him so he could squeak it in his mouth once. Then you could take it back and he would stand there and wag his tail and watch that toy and have such a good time.

*I remember Buck in conjunction with a fire.*

Yes, my business partner, Bill Graessle, lived in Aurora in a very, very old boarding kennel. He rented a room from the lady who owned the kennel and had his dogs there. There had been a tremendous blizzard. We had over three feet of snow. The propane tank on this old kennel was almost out before the snow came. Bill couldn't get out of the property. He didn't come to work for a week because the snow was so deep and they were down a dirt road that didn't get plowed. So the first day they plowed, this propane truck came to fill the tank, which was next to the kennel runs out in the backyard. The guy had hooked it up and was wandering around waiting for the propane tank to fill when he realized that it had been feeding propane into that tank for too long. He had not backed up close enough to get a good connection so he was leaking propane all over the kennel area. He ran to the house, which was about fifteen feet from where the tank was, and said "Open all of the windows and get out of the house!" He wanted them to open the windows so they wouldn't be blown out. They got the windows open and got on the other side of the house.

Buck and his sister, Trailblazer's Patience, "Patty," were in the kennel run right next to the propane tank and naturally had been standing right next to the guy as he stood next to his truck, watching what he was doing. The propane tank blew up. This was a 500-gallon propane tank. Both dogs were totally enveloped in the flame.

The only thing that saved them was the fact that the ground was covered with snow. The kennel boy who worked there was coming to work. He literally walked around the house, saw it happen, saw them enveloped in a ball of flame and, this high school kid, rather than turning around and running the other direction, ran to those dogs and rolled them in the snow to put out the flames. I still get goose bumps.

I was at work and Bill was at home. He called me and said that Buck and Patty had been burned and I had to go out and take care of them. It took me two-and-one-half hours to drive from downtown to their house because of the traffic jams, due to the snowy roads. I got out there and they had the dogs on the floor in the kitchen. I said "Well, who shaved their coat off?" That was my first reaction. They hadn't been shaved. Their coats had been burned off and that was what saved their lives. The coats had burned and the fire didn't get to their skin. And God bless the high school kid who saw what was going on and ran to them and not away. The corneas on Buck's eyes were burned off. His eye rims, lip line, nose leather - all had bare skin. His anus was raw meat. He was standing between Patty and the tank so she wasn't burned as badly as he was. He kept pushing her back.

I picked the dogs up and called my veterinarian who was completely on the other side of town and told him that I had two dogs that were badly burned and for him not to leave the clinic until I could get there. He waited for me and looked at Buck. He said, "Judy, I don't know if he will live or not. We can try. But if he inhaled when the flames hit, his lungs are burned and no matter what we do, he will die." He gave him an antibiotic shot, Panalog ointment, and told me to buy aloe vera. He told me to put the ointment and aloe on every two hours, night and day, to all of the exposed flesh on both dogs. So I basically sat with Buck in my lap for ten days, slathering him with ointment. He lived and the black pigment grew back. The coat grew back. He won Groups after the fire.

*Any scarring?*

He had scarring on his nose

so it looked like he had a streaked black nose rather than a solid black nose. He had some scarring on his anus. They had to remove about one half-inch of ear leather. But the hair on the shorter ear grew longer so it looked like the ears were the same size. You had to feel the ears to realize that one was a half-inch shorter. He was a very courageous, very special dog. He finished a CD after that. He trained for a CDX and I showed him a couple of times, but I didn't have time to do any more.

*Did you do a lot of obedience with your dogs?*

I put CDs on three different dogs. I have Ch. Cascade's Kokopelli that I'm showing in obedience right now. I am trying to show her too soon. She's about a month away from being ready, but we have local shows now and she wants to do it but isn't ready. I've bred two dogs that finished Utility degrees. I've bred other dogs that have done CDs and CDXs. It takes a lot of time to show in obedience.

*What food do you feed?*

I've fed Iams since Dr. Kirkley brought it in, since 1976. I'm probably going to be looking for another food to feed soon because I understand that Iams has been sold to Procter and Gamble and so will be in grocery stores now. It has been a good basic food and I've been satisfied with it but I will look for something else. I don't like to add a lot of supplements. I use Dog Bloom vitamins but use half of the recommended dosage, if I'm trying to show them. My dogs shed twice a year right down to the skin, but they come back in about six weeks. Then I give them Extra Bloom Weight, a product made by Dog Bloom. That's all I supplement. When I'm cooking, they get raw vegetables and fruit. They love apples, oranges, strawberries and grapes. Allie barks constantly if I'm fixing lettuce. She likes romaine.

When I first got Allie back from the Geletichs, she really wouldn't eat. She was obviously accustomed to being fed in the kennel and my dogs all eat together in the kitchen. They each eat from their own dish but they eat as a group. She just didn't like eating in public. It was probably a couple of weeks



Ch. Trailblazer Spruce Kiva, "Kiva," BOB, Garden City Kansas KC with Judge Chuck Mulock.

before she would really eat well, and the first thing I found her really eating were the strawberries in the strawberry patch in our backyard. I had to work hard to beat her to the strawberries. (laughter) She'd go out and check them every morning, and when they were red, she ate

them. I've always liked to feed fresh fruits and vegetables and a little bit of meat sometimes, but not a lot of meat. Just fruits and vegetables and a good basic dog food.

*Can you tell us a little bit of personal history?*

I was raised on a cotton

farm in west Texas. I've always been crazy about dogs and always curious about genetics. The pet mixed-breed dog that we had on the farm, and that Dad brought home from somebody as an adult, had a short tail. This was a bitch that was about 40 pounds and stood

about nineteen inches. Her tail was about two inches long and hadn't been docked. And, naturally as a farm dog running loose, she had a litter of puppies every time she came into season. If she had a litter of five, three of them would have short tails and two had long tails. So I was



Ch. Trailblazer With Flair, "Jeep," Bred-by-Exhibitor winner at the National Specialty in California, September, 1988.

always fascinated by genetics - why did they have short tails, why did they have long tails, why did they have prick ears, why did they have drop ears? I wanted dogs and to play with animals. I couldn't afford to be a vet and it wasn't something women did when I was growing up.

*And yet they make wonderful ones, don't they?*

They do. But Jerry and I

went to high school together. He joined the Air Force and we were lucky enough to go to Germany with his tour with the Air Force. We ended up in Denver, where he was teaching at Lowry Air Force Base. When he got out of the Air Force, we went back to Lubbock for a couple of years and said, "No, the sand blows and it's too hot." So we came back to Denver. After we could afford to get a house I

then asked, "Now do I get a dog?" There was a little tiny shop in downtown Denver called the Kennel Shop. They didn't sell animals, but I went in and talked to the man who owned the shop and told him I wanted to get a Samoyed. He said, "Well, if you want to get a Samoyed, these are the people you need to talk to. They are the ones who have all the dogs that win most of the time." He

looked them up in the phone book for me and gave me Doris and Harold's phone number.

*Was that Bill?*

Yes, Bill Graessle. When he got out of the service in World War II, he bought a partnership in the Kennel Shop and it was so small that you walked in and walked down an aisle with merchandise on both sides. You bought your merchandise on the way to the cash register and

turned around and walked out. I bet the whole shop wasn't fifteen feet wide. It had a green front. It was awful.

*And you continued that after Bill's death, didn't you?*

Not much. Bill and I were partners for twelve years. He never married. We were good friends. He had Parkinson's and could hardly get around at all. While he was really sick, Jerry, my husband, had a major heart attack and bypass surgery with every complication in the world. He was in the hospital for 53 days and was a long time getting well because he had multiple strokes. So I had a very unhealthy husband and a very unhealthy business partner. Bill fell going out of his house in the winter to pick up the paper. He laid outside for ten or fifteen minutes before the neighbors saw him. They took him to the hospital and then he went to the nursing home and never came out. Bill never had health insurance. When his savings - and he had substantial savings - was gone due to his extensive health problems, I couldn't keep the Kennel Shop. I couldn't qualify him for Medicare or Medicaid as long as his name was still on the Kennel Shop. So we sold the business. I made the decision to sell the shop one weekend. I told Bill and Jerry that I couldn't do that much work by myself and we had to sell it. Two weeks later, I was sitting in the shop and Cindy Kerstiens called. She said, "Judy, do you know anybody who would come to work for us as an editor?" I know Cindy had no idea what was going on with me. So I told her, "I will. Let's talk about it." I worked for Hoflin for two and one-half years before I went to work for the sheriff's department. It took all of the money we got from the shop to pay for the hospital bills that Bill had incurred.

*So, what do you do now?*

I work for Jefferson County's Sheriff's Department. I am a fingerprint technician. I classify fingerprints. I research files for matching fingerprints for people who come in under a different name. It's really interesting.

*It sounds really interesting. Like a mystery story, huh?*

It is. It's a blessing. I've been there seven years now so I have enough time with the sher-

iff's department that I have three weeks' vacation a year. It doesn't pay a lot of money. We really have to watch pennies. Luckily, we've been in this house since 1976, so we have very low house payments. The house is almost paid for so I do have a little discretionary money to play with my dogs. I enjoy working for the sheriff's department. I enjoy the people I meet there a lot. It's an interesting world.

*And Jerry looks like he's made a wonderful recovery.*

He can't see. The strokes have affected his eyesight. He has extremely limited vision. He has some cognitive problems but not so most people will notice. He has some problems remembering things and saying things.

*But we all do. (laughter)*

Yes, but he is doing very well. He hates being retired. He hates not being active and using his mind, but his body can't stand the stress. The last year that he worked he had two bypass surgeries and lots of strokes and heart attacks. He hasn't had a heart attack since he quit work. It makes life tough but he's alive and that's what counts.

*What about your kids?*

Susan is going to be 40 this year.

*You didn't have to say that.*

Isn't that awful? (laughter)

*I think she was only sixteen or seventeen when I first met her.*

She's divorced and has a girl who is eleven. They live in Arvada, close to us. She helps with the dogs. Jerry Joe is two years younger than Susan. He has a wonderful wife and two little girls whom I don't get to see nearly as often as I would like, but we get to see them once in awhile.

*Are they in the Denver area?*

They are in Aurora. It's an hour drive.

They have a busy life and so do we. We get together about once a month or so as a minimum and I talk to them on the phone. I have three granddaughters, no grandsons. My kids are a blessing to me and very helpful. I consider myself extremely lucky in that Jerry and I went to high school together. He has been good to me and good for me. He has let me grow up and do a lot of things that another man wouldn't put up with. He's a pretty special guy.

*So what have been the main benefits of all these years you have spent in dogs?*

The dogs give me unconditional love. The people I've met. Some of them have been just incredibly wonderful and supportive. I have made friends, literally all over the world, not just in Sammies but in all breeds. I've had an opportunity to learn about cosmetic things, about physical things, about the way the world works. The way God works. I've met some really super people.

*Drawbacks?*

If the best thing about dogs is the dogs then the worst thing about dogs is the people. You meet people who are using the dogs for their own glorification. I don't have enough time for the things I want to do. That is the only real drawback, not enough time.

*Is there anything you would have done differently? Anything that you would go back and fix that you did or*

*didn't do?*

There are a lot of things that I wish I had done differently, but I wouldn't have learned. Everything I have done, right or wrong, has taught me something. The main thing that I have learned is to relax and enjoy the dogs for what they give me.

*And we are going to make mistakes, aren't we? (laughter)*

I'm going to make mistakes. The dogs are a joy. They have brought me friends. They have brought me themselves. They have taught me so much.

*We should mention that you have held national offices in SCA. How many national offices and terms have you served?*

I was President of the Samoyed Club of America (SCA) one year and on the board for three years, and I'm running for the board this year. SCA has been very good to me. I have had a lot of people who have been willing to teach me, but not just Sammy people have taught me. I've learned from other people. So many people have opened up their hearts and minds and taught me so many good things about the dogs and about life. That's the best thing about dogs, the people you meet.

*Well, I've enjoyed the interview. Thank you very much.*

It's been fun. Thank you. •

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