



*B. les Paris / 90*

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

Winter 2000-01 • \$13

## Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly  
Talks with  
**Chris Higley**  
SITKIN  
Ramona, California

*This interview was conducted at the home of Chris Higley in February of 1999 by Nancy Corby.*

*How long have you been in dogs?*

When I was growing up, my folks had a dog, but I wouldn't say that is really being in dogs. I didn't get into dogs until 1970, when we moved back from Alaska. My husband was in the service, and we moved back from the Aleutian Islands. We had an old hound dog there. This was going to be my husband's last duty station, and we bought our first home. We then decided now that we had gotten our first home, it was time to go get a dog. When I was a little girl growing up in England, we used to go to the park and play. This guy used to bring three of the most beautiful dogs I had ever seen in my life, and lo and behold, they were Sammies. He used to let us play with them. Every time we went to the park, we hoped that those white dogs would be there, so we could play with them. They just had such a magical quality to them. I looked forward to seeing them all of the time.

When Dick, my husband, was growing up, he didn't have any of his own pets, but one of the little girls that he played with had a Chow Chow in her family.

When we decided to get our own dog, we immediately had a little tug-of-war going between a Sammy and a Chow, and I won. (laughter) We didn't really look back after that. Dick just fell in love them, as I had. I had such a nostalgic view of these white dogs. So that's how we got started.

We didn't know anybody who had any in San Diego. We didn't know anybody who had ever had any. Therefore, we looked in the yellow pages, and we got our first Sammy from the yellow pages. A big bitch, and we called her "Kiska." In fact, her name is so pretentious. I

have to tell it to you because we were so thrilled that we had this purebred dog. We didn't have much money, and we felt that we paid good money for her. She was going to be our dog. We looked and she had the pedigree and the whole nine yards. It was really something



for us, so we thought, "Gosh, we have to give this dog a special name." By that time, we had read a little bit on the background, but we really did go into the breed blind. She had some Russian sounding names back in her pedigree. She ended up being officially named Higley's Royal Czarina Kiska. You can print that if you want. Later on, when we got to tell people in the breed what we had named our first dog, we had a hard time getting over that one. She was very big.

My husband knew a fellow in the Navy who trained the police dogs. He was telling the guy about Kiska, and how she was totally unmanageable. This fellow suggested that we go to some of the obedience classes, and we did. I will never forget Kiska. She was trained to do the military finish, and she would leap up in mid-air, turn around and do a perfect sit. He also told us about a match that was being held and suggested that we take Kiska to the match

and show her in obedience. It was the Silver Bay Kennel Club Match. So we went. Dick, at that time, was the one handling the dog. I wanted nothing to do with it, because I didn't think I could do it. She did pretty well until the long sit. He left her and told her to stay and walked away from her, turned right around, and there she was right in his face.

At that match, we met some Sammy people who were showing puppies in conformation.

Dick walked in the ring with a regular, round leather collar on the dog, wing tip shoes (he nearly broke his neck in those wing tip shoes), and we went three out of three, and we were so disappointed. As we started talking to people, we realized Kiska was not show quality. She was a big bitch, with great big ears and a huge gay tail.

Believe it or not, we were gluttons for punishment, and we went back to the same kennel to get a show dog, and we got a boy. He was a beautiful, beautiful boy. Unfortunately, he was so severely dysplastic we had to have him put down at ten months of age.

We got to talking to Kathi and her dad. They had two boys from Whitecliff, Midnight Sun Kimba and Kobe-Wah, so they put us in touch with Wilna Coulter, and Wilna had a litter coming up. We told her that we wanted a male, so she picked the puppy out for us. On New Year's Eve of '72, we drove all the way to San Francisco and picked up our puppy. Don and Wilna gave us a champagne breakfast New Year's Day, and then we came home with the puppy, and that was "Czar." When we were stationed in the Aleutians, they had some very pretty names there, and there was an active volcano named Kanoga, so we named Czar after that volcano. He was Ch. Czar's Kanoga of Lakewood.

We started showing him. Dick started and then broke his toe, so I had to go in the ring. I just didn't think I could do it, but I did it. He won quite a bit. He took some Reserves from the Puppy classes, which in those days was not that easy to do. They had very large Open classes in southern California, and it took something like twenty-odd dogs in those days for a three-point major. In American Bred, there would be six, seven, eight dogs. Today you hardly ever see an entry in American bred, other than at our specialty. He did very well. He was practically undefeated, and people kept asking, "When are you going to put that dog in Open?" Open was like the Best in Show ring to me in those days. I thought, "Me? In Open? Me and my dog in Open? Can't be done."

Well, Kathi and Art had a handler, and Kathi said, "If you really don't think you can do it,

The one person we met was Kathi Horton and her dad. We got to talking with them, and they told us about the San Diego club and invited us to the next meeting, which we went to. In those days, it was a big club and a very active club. We met a lot of wonderful people. They really made us feel so welcome and offered any help that they could give with our puppy. So we became members of the club and started attending regular meetings.

Then we heard about conformation. Since we thought our dog was beautiful, she was going to win the whole nine yards. So we entered Kiska in a show. I believe it was the Silver Bay show. We had not been to one training class for conformation. We knew nothing really about the conformation of the breed. We thought we had this beautiful animal, and she was going to win. We entered her in a class. I forgot what class it was. Derek Rayne was the judge. I'll never forget this.

see if Jim will take Czar in Open for you." And Jim did. He did a really nice job with him and finished him quite quickly. Czar finished in the Top Ten as a class dog, because his last two times out as a class dog he took the Breed and went on to a Group II and Group III placement, which in those days before the Group was split, the huge Working Group gave him enough points to put him in the Top Ten. He was really a special dog for me. He lived to be about ten.

Then we got a bitch and named her "Sunny." She was born in '73. We realized pretty quickly that she had a wonderful, wonderful personality. She always had to have the last word. You chastised her for doing something, and she would woo you right back. I'd say, "Sunny, don't you talk back to me," and she would walk away from me, then turn her head, and I would barely hear that last woo, but it was there. (laughter) She got the last word.

She didn't have a good front, and we wondered if we should breed her. We took her to Jim Osborne and he went over her structurally. Jim is very, very diligent regarding the structure of the Sammie. He's a retired engineer, so he is into all the angles. He really couldn't figure out why Sunny moved in the front the way she did, so he was willing to take a chance and let us use his "JC." We bred Sunny to JC in 1976, and that was our first litter. We had seven puppies out of that litter. They were born in August. Dick was a demo tech in the Navy, and we were so worried about this litter. We had read all the literature. People helped outfit us with an emergency room, right down to faucets and so forth. However, Sunny was a very primitive bitch, and she said, "I'll do this by myself. Thank you very much." And she did.

They had always said that you have to keep puppies warm. It was in this house, in August, with no air-conditioning. There was no way those puppies were going to get chilled. In fact, they were screaming. I called Marion Osborne one time, and I was just about in tears. I said, "Marion, these puppies are crying, and I don't know what to do." She said, "It sounds like they are



Ch. Sitkin's Sunrise Symphony, "DeeDee."

hot. Put them on a wet towel," and I did. It was like a miracle had happened. They all shut up and went to sleep.

We kept a bitch out of that litter, and we bred her three times. The first time was to the Wards' "Pinto." We got three puppies out of that, and two of them finished. We kept one. We always kept at least one out of the litter, because that is why we bred.

From 1976 to our last litter in 1991, we bred a total of eight litters. That's not a lot. Also, we have never had more than six dogs. As you can see here, I don't have a kennel. They are my pets, and they are house-dogs.

With Dick and I both working, we didn't feel we could do justice by having a whole lot of litters. We were always concerned about placing puppies.

We have always thought, in many cases, some of the pet homes are better homes than some of the show homes, because they get the attention. They get the exercise. They get walked by the owners. You have to know what your limitations are. Hopefully, we knew what our limitations were. We both were working and raising a family, so we couldn't become professional kennel people, if you will. Consequently, we chose to limit the breeding.

What I enjoyed most was raising a litter of puppies and picking one out. There would be a real hopeful for me to keep, and taking that puppy and finishing it myself, which I did. After Dick broke his foot, he never entered the ring again. He was the kennel help.

I never campaigned a special. It takes a lot of money and

it takes a lot of time to do that. Once they finished, I enjoyed showing them periodically at specialties. In fact, my old Czar won the SCLA specialty one year. That was really a big thrill for us. As I recall, they had a very nice large entry, so that was really special for us.

One of the litters we had, we bred "Star" to "Hoss," Kolinka's Quilted Bear. We kept a bitch from that. She was Ch. Sitkin's Stardust Melody, otherwise known as "Dusty," because of I have three-quarters of an acre of dirt, and she always had a dusty butt. We bred her and the agreement was a puppy - a bitch. We had three puppies: Two males and a bitch. When "Scarlett" was born, she immediately took over. She knew who she was coming out of the whelping box. So the Lunas came down, and they took Scar-

lett, and Joannie helped make our kennel name known. She took Scarlett and she campaigned her. She was a top winning bitch. She was a show dog. She was a very, very pretty girl, with lots of pizzazz. I was really proud of her, and I was really grateful to the Lunas for doing what we would not have been able to do with such a special bitch.

The other claim to fame, if you will, was we bred the maternal granddam of Razzmatazz. That is kind of a little story in itself. We kept Star, and there was another bitch puppy that we sold to some people in Arizona. They called us when she was about four or five months old, and the circumstances were such that they couldn't keep her, so we took her back. The Middletons, Danny and Chris Middleton, in Texas had been looking for a bitch with the type of pedigree that we have, and so they called and said that they would take "Puddin'."

Well, she came back to us with a severe case of demodectic mange, so we tried to tell Chris and Danny. "Let's take care of the mange before we ship her." Danny wasn't fazed. He said, "We have dealt with this before. Ship her, and we will take care of her." So we did very hesitantly, but we did. They took her to the vet, and Puddin' at that age was not what you would call a pretty Samoy puppy. She was all legs and big ears and head and everything, but we had seen the potential. They ended up shaving her down to her neck. I never did see a picture. I told Danny, "Don't you dare take a picture of that bitch shaved," but she must have looked like a buzzard. She got over that, and they showed her and quickly finished her. Then they bred her to one of their males, who was also a JC son, and kept a bitch out of that, and then they bred that bitch to Hoss, and the result was Razzmatazz. Therefore, I like to think we had a little hand in Razzmatazz. I don't think his record's been broken. I don't keep track too much on records anymore. We kind of sailed along on "Taz's" laurels for a little while, but we had a very small piece of it.

We bred Star to Hoss twice. The second litter was a small litter, just two puppies. We sold



the bitch as a pet quality, and we kept the male, "Sam," who we subsequently did finish. He was another very nice dog.

Let me see. We bred Sunny. We bred Star three times, once to Pinto, and twice to Hoss. Dusty, the bitch we kept from the Star/Hoss breeding, was bred three times. Once to "Smasher" and once to Mardee Ward's "Tug," and we kept "Sara" from that breeding. We started to show her, but I didn't like her front, and I didn't

like her round eyes. I probably could have finished her, but I didn't. She spent the rest of her time here fat and happy and spayed.

We bred Dusty for the third and last time to the Cassidys' "Cowboy," who also comes down from Hoss. From that, we kept "DeeDec," who is meditating on the couch there. She finished quite quickly. I thought she was going to go Winners Bitch at the National in Alabama. She took the Bred-by class,

a nice big Bred-by class. I like to think she was a favorite, but she didn't get Winners Bitch. However, I was really happy she took the Bred-by class at the National, because she went to the National needing one point to finish, and then I finished her very soon after that.

She was born in 1988, and I bred her in 1991 for the first and only time to "Carol's Chance." From that, we got a litter of nine puppies, and the guy under the table is the one we kept. That was the last litter. "Toby" was a big, gangly puppy. In fact, I would look at him periodically and think, "Toby, I think I made a mistake keeping you." When he was pretty close to four, I looked out and thought he was ready to take out and show and have some fun with. We put three five-point majors on him and finished him in one weekend. (laughter) I was ecstatic, but by the same token, I was a bit disappointed. My husband's health by that time wasn't good at all, so we knew we weren't going to put much time into specialing any dog. It was an Arizona weekend, and we kind of looked at each other and said, "It's done. It's over."

That was the last litter I had. It was in May of '91 that Toby's litter was born, and in December of that year, Dick had a serious stroke. He recovered somewhat, but not to the point where he could go back to work, and his health was very bad. Therefore, it wasn't something where I could work throughout the week, then on the weekend go running off to dog shows, so we didn't.

That is basically where we are with a breeding program. We always agonized over a breeding, who were we going to take a bitch to, and always tried to learn as much not only about the dog that we were taking a bitch to, but also his siblings behind him. With very limited breeding, we have done okay. We had our problems just like anybody else.

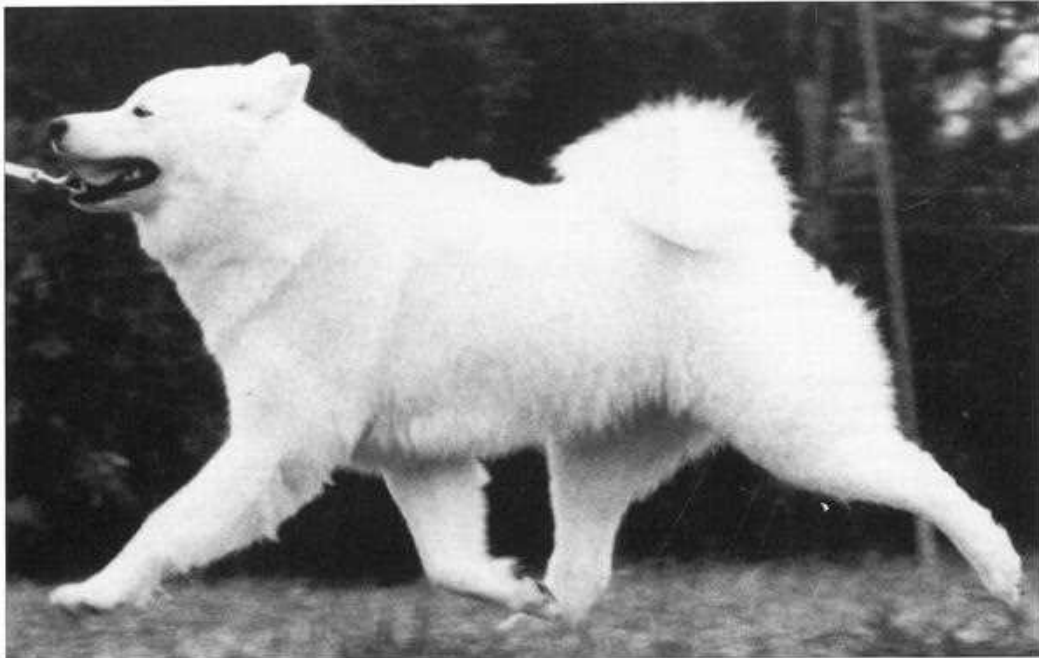
One of the dogs that we bred, I had high hopes for him. He was a very typical Sammy. He wasn't exaggerated in any way and had really nice movement, but was moderately dysplastic, so he was a heartbreaker. We had him x-rayed, and we just couldn't believe it. We waited six months and had him x-



rayed again, and he was definitely dysplastic. We had him neutered and he stayed home with us. If something happens and we can't show a dog, we normally don't place it. We just keep him as a member of the family.

The one dog that we did place - he was about seven years old when we did it - was a finished champion, but he had an overexaggerated sense of territory. His territory was as far as he could see. It got to be a bit difficult keeping two boys together, so we placed him, because there was a lot of tension around. Did I close the door? Did I shut the gate? Do I have two boys together?

In fact, I did get bitten one time, and it was absolutely my own stupidity. I had a bitch in season. I was getting ready to go to work, and I thought I had all the dogs corralled in their own little places where they should be. I walked back in here, expecting to find a single dog, and found four. Toby was just a really young dog, not even two years old, and he was always a mellow dog. He doesn't have any signs of aggressiveness, but he and my old Sam were what I call assuming the positions. As soon as I walked through the door, they went for each other. That gives you a real adrenaline rush, and you instinctively try to pull them apart, which I did, but then Sam



Ch. Silvercreek's Puddin' O'Sitkin, maternal granddam of "Taz."

got away from me and he lunged at Toby and got me right here and really clamped down on me pretty good. I was in a soft cast for a few weeks. He really crunched on me.

However, you had to know Sam. He was the sweetest, sweetest dog, and he never knew he bit me. If he had known, he would have been absolutely mortified. He was going for this guy right here.

From that point on, we

couldn't keep the two together. Prior to that they had run together with no problems. Of course, we were never stupid enough to think we could run two males together with a bitch in season, but if the bitch wasn't in season, it was just like one big family, and they all got along. I always thought if left to their own devices, they would establish a hierarchy, and they might have a scar or two to show for it. We just weren't willing to

take that risk, and I don't think many people are willing to go to that extreme anymore. So we kept the two boys separated.

In fact, until I lost Sam a few months after I lost my husband, we had a big old crate setting right here. They were always with us, but they would take turns in the crate. It was the very first crate we ever bought, because we had gone to the dog shows and we had seen the dogs in their crates, and we thought, "They can't stand up in them," so we went and bought a Great Dane crate. (laughter) And that Great Dane crate was a fixture right there. In fact, I have a snapshot somewhere of my two-year-old niece standing up in it. That's how big it was, but it really did come in handy, and it was a fixture in this corner for many years. We'd be sitting here having Thanksgiving dinner and there was the crate right there. When I lost Sam, that just left the one boy, so I was finally able to replace the crate with something a bit more decorative. (laughter)

*Which would you say was your best litter?*

Gosh, that is not an easy question, because whenever you have a litter of puppies you evaluate them and think, "If I could just put that rear on this puppy and these ears on that puppy and this coat on that puppy, I would have an amalgamated



puppy, and I would have the perfect puppy."

Probably my best breeding of all was my first breeding of Star to Hoss for overall quality. It helped to stamp what we thought we were looking for, right or wrong. We have generally had pretty dogs, although we also had a couple of ugly ones. We've had our movement faults. The biggest one, I believe, is a tendency to close rears, but what I can't abide is what I call a double diaper rear. It just won't single track in at all. I don't like a close rear, but if I have to have the lesser of two evils, I will take the close rear over the double diaper rear because the dog simply cannot track in at all.

*What is the best dog you have owned or bred?*

In terms of conforming to the standard? Again, that's a difficult question. I would have to say Dusty, but she was a substantial bitch. Solid as a rock in both temperament and movement. There are some people who may not agree with me, but I lived with her. I didn't just watch her in the show ring, but I also watched her out in the backyard, and I watched her interact with all the other critters in the house. She was just a really solid, stable bitch. A little big, pretty, but she got a little doggy in her old age.

*Which one was the biggest winner?*

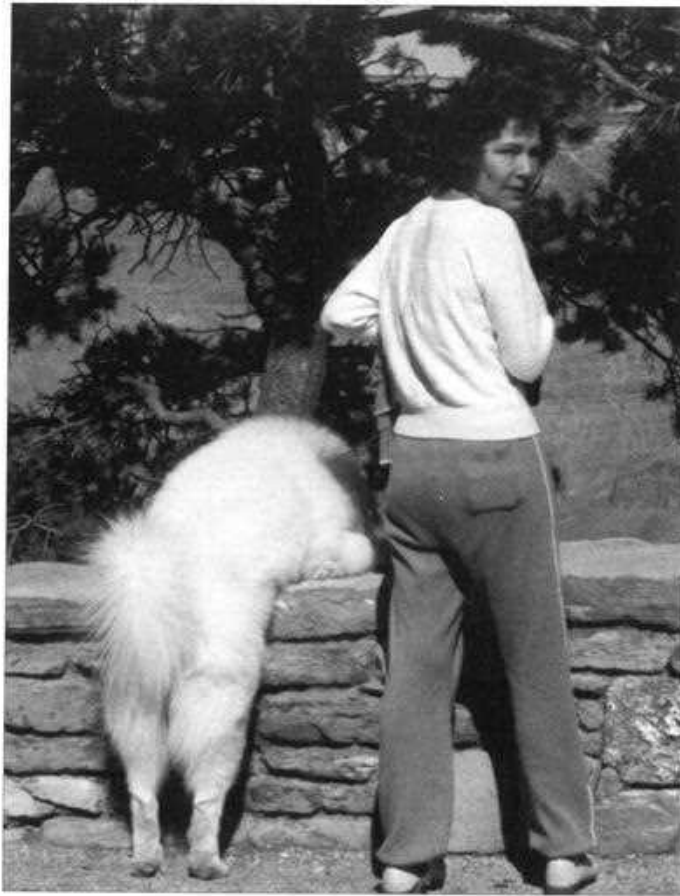
Scarlett, without a doubt. Absolutely. Hands down. She's my Best in Show bitch.

*Do you have a favorite story about an individual dog or several different dogs?*

We used to call my old Czar a tattletale. If the other dogs were getting into mischief, he'd come in and he'd bark at us saying, "Come and see what these guys are doing, and I'm just being so good." Well, I caught him one time. One of his favorite toys was a squeaky Coke bottle. In fact, his handler never let me live it down. I insisted that squeaky Coke bottle go on a tour of shows with Manley. I was looking out the window one day, and Czar was bent on burying that Coke bottle. I rapped on the window and said, "Czar, you stop that right now," and he goes, "Who? Me?" He had this hole halfway dug, so he laid down by the hole, and if a dog could whistle,

this dog would have been whistling. He had this one paw cocked as if to say, "Maybe she

me. Not only had he been skunked, but he had a baby skunk in his mouth. I wanted to



Sitkin's Samra Pac-Man, "Sam."

won't see me if I do this?" Just filling it in. He was bound and determined to bury that bottle, but he was very careful about it after I had rapped on the window and told him to stop.

Czar came in one time, and he was showing us a prize. He had this oozy thing hanging out his mouth. I jumped up on the couch. What it turned out to be - the kids had these little plastic molds that you could make monsters and lizards - and that was what it was, but by the time he got ahold of it, there was saliva all over it, and it looked like the real thing.

We have lived here since 1976, and this last year was the very first time that I ever had a dog get skunked. I must have been living right until then. It was Toby. I heard this ruckus. The dogs were just raising Cain out there, and it was dark, so I went out with a flashlight. I could see Toby coming toward

rescue the skunk, so I rapped him on the muzzle. He dropped the skunk. My first instinct was to get the skunk and get it out of here before he can do more damage. I ran into the house to get a paper towel to pick up the skunk. In the meantime, Toby is right behind me, and the first thing he does is just rub his muzzle all over the carpet. I ran out there and got the skunk and put him in the field next door. I found him dead the next day, but he was still alive when I put him in the field. That was my first experience with a dog getting skunked. Toby must have taken a direct hit right on the muzzle. I tried everything. It seemed like for months afterward whenever I would get his muzzle wet you could still smell it.

It wasn't two weeks later when I came home from work and they all made a beeline for the couch over there. I won-

dered if they had one of the cats corralled. I got all the dogs outside, and I lifted up the couch and I saw these two beady little eyes looking at me, and lo and behold, I now had a baby possum underneath my couch. I don't know how it got in the house, whether the dogs were chasing it outside, and it came through the dog door and under the couch. We have a wildlife refuge not too far from here, so I called them up and asked, "How do I corral a possum in my house?" They told me to get a broomstick and a pail and this, that and the other. Nothing worked. I finally got a pair of gardening gloves, and I was able to manipulate him where I could pick him up by his tail, and deposited him outside. I think he survived. He went off and just hissed at me. So within the span of two weeks, I got skunked and possumed. They had a ball. They just had such a good time. They thought it was wonderful.

*Which one would you say was the biggest character?*

Probably my old Sunny girl. As I said, she always had to have the last word. She really had an empathy for people, too. She knew when something funny was going on, and she seemed to enjoy it right along with you, because she would wag her tail and woo at you. By the same token, she seemed to really sense if you were just a bit down, and she would quietly sit there with you.

After Dick lost his mom, Dick's dad came and lived with us for a little while. They had never been around animals, but Dick's dad got to the point where he really did enjoy them, and they were a lot of company to him while Dick and I were off at work and the kids were off at school. Dad was sitting in his rocking chair one time, and he was eating an orange, and he was talking and his hands were moving while he was talking. Well, Sunny girl was watching this hand with the orange slice in it, and she timed it just perfectly. She walked right by him, never broke stride, took that slice of orange right out of his hand and proceeded to eat it. (laughter) She was a character.

*Can pedigrees in this breed be trusted as to accuracy?*

I can only relate to the people I have dealt with, and I

would have to say yes. I would be very disappointed if they turned out to be wrong. The people we have dealt with over the years, we have shared our successes; we have shared our problems. I'm not saying that everybody tells everybody everything. There are some skeletons in the closet. However, by and large, we made friends with the people we dealt with, and we trusted them, and hopefully they trusted us. I just never could see the point in being anything other than straight forward. You are hurting the breed if you try to be anything else but. This is not an easy breed to keep, and most of the people in this breed are not what you call money people, and so you have to think they love the breed, and if they do that, they are going to do right by it.

*How have you used inbreeding, linebreeding and outcrossing? When should each be used?*

You really have to know what you are doing to do inbreeding, and I have never done inbreeding. Linebreeding is good. When you start seeing something going a little awry you know it is time to introduce something new. Then you go look and investigate. Hopefully that new element that you introduce is going to correct whatever problem you have.

Inbreeding is chancy. In my opinion, not only do you have to know what you are doing, but also you have to have really extensive knowledge of the dogs, and not just the dogs you are using for breeding but their siblings and their cousins. Also, you have to be willing, if necessary, to cull. You have to be absolutely honest. Honest? I think I am. Willing to cull? Probably not.

*Who or what has influenced your breeding the most?*

There have been a lot of people. Sitting around the campfire at dog shows talking. That is not really an easy question to answer. I wouldn't single out any one person. It has been a conglomerate of shared information, the people you trust, and who will honestly critique your dogs. You never stop learning.

*How many dogs do you have right now?*

I have three Sammies right now, and the youngest is almost

eight.

*What is the most you have ever kept?*

Six.

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

Sitkin is another funny story. Again, out in the Aleutians, there is an island called Great Sitkin Island. We liked that, and it was a northern name, so we were Great Sitkin Samoyeds. Then Kathi, my darling Kathi, I got a postcard from her one time, and it was addressed to Great Shitcan Samoyeds. (laughter) We thought that if we are going to be shitcanned, we sure don't want to be great, so we dropped the great. And that's how we became Sitkin's. That's the hon-

est truth.

*Did you name your litters by any sort of scheme?*

We kind of did. We went astro, because the first homebred bitch we kept, Star, was Sitkin's Morning Star. The second litter was Dusty Bottom, and she was Sitkin's Stardust. The third one, we went out of character. That was Sam. Sam as a puppy ate everything in sight, and that was when the game Pac-Man became very popular, so he was Sitkin's Samza Pac-Man. Then, when we bred Dusty, we kept a male and he was Sitkin's Starbuck. Then when we bred Dusty to Tugga, she was Sitkin's Moonlight Serenade. When we bred Dusty to Cowboy, we had

Sitkin's Sunlight Symphony. Then when we bred DeeDee to Chance, it was such a big old gawky puppy that he got his call name before he got his registered name, and he was just a Toby to me. He was kind of comical and gangly, and in England, they had a comic called Toby Jones. Well, he looked a little geeky at times, and he just looked like a Toby, so he got his call name before he got his registered name. He's based on Star Wars. It is a play on words. He is Sitkin's Tobe One K'nube - "to be one can you be." We did kind of stick with that astro thing, with the exception of Pac-Man.

*Do you feel that you have established a distinguishable line? What*



Ch. Sitkin's Joshua of Ramona.



*do you feel others are looking for when they think of your line?*

There were times when calling a Sammy pretty was almost derogatory because that implied that the dog couldn't move, but hopefully we had a fairly decent combination of the pretty dogs and fairly decent movement.

However, as far as establishing a stamp, I'm not sure that I would want to do that. What I wanted to do was try to conform to the written standard as much as I could. If all things were equal, I would take the larger Sam over the smaller one, although I love a very feminine bitch. My Dusty Butt was not feminine, but she was one super bitch. I'm not sure I agree with a breeder going out to put your own stamp on something. I believe the effort should be in trying to conform to the standard.

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

I'm going to cheat on this one, because I think you roll it all up into type. What is type? If you read the standard, it's the bottom line. It's the whole dog. I'm paraphrasing something a

judge said one time - it might have been Derek Rayne - that if you were to silhouette a dog against a full moon, no matter how well that dog moves, if you can't tell what the breed is, then you don't have type. I've seen mixed breeds beautifully single tracking down the road, but it is not a Sammy. You need the expression, the way the dog carries itself, the way the dog moves, the way the dog interacts with people. That is all rolled up into type, and I just don't think you can categorize by splitting that up. If you do that, sooner or later you are going to run into trouble.

*You are not breeding right now, but you are thinking of getting a puppy. Is that correct?*

Yes. I finally made up my mind, and I got the official word today that I am going to retire on the 30th of September. I am probably going to move. I have three-quarters of an acre, and I'm really tired of the dust in the summertime and the mud in the wintertime. My sisters live in Hemet which is about 75 miles northeast of here. If I do sell, I'm probably not going to be able to buy in San Diego Coun-

ty; therefore, I'm thinking of moving up there to the 'burbs.

It might be fun to get another puppy. It will be the first time I have gone out to buy a puppy since 1973, because, as I said, we have always kept something from what we've bred. That will be a challenge in itself. I'll probably be the most finicky person. I'll probably be lucky if I end up with a puppy. (laughter)

*Do you think you might start breeding again?*

I haven't decided one way or the other. I do love the bitches. I love them all dearly, but sometimes one will capture your heart just a little bit more, and this guy here, Toby, does. I really haven't made up my mind.

*Ideal conformation. Describe your interpretation of the perfect dog of this breed?*

A dog that fits the standard. It is not underdone or overdone. One of the dogs I had one time would pace, and once I knew what structure was all about, I found out he was well angulated in the rear but straight in the front. A dog has to be equal fore and aft to not interfere with

its movement. I don't like a short neck on a dog. I like that beautifully arched, strong neck. I don't like a tight tail. I just can't abide round eyes. In fact, that is one of the reasons I never did show Sara. Her eyes look too round. You have to have that expression. You have to have that beautiful almond eye - the darker, the better. I have had a couple of light eyes. The set of the ears. The mouth. The smile. When you see a dog sleeping with its mouth shut and it is curving up, then you know you have the correct Sammy mouth. Correct movement; good coming and going, and a very, very stable temperament. I might be describing a lot of breeds here; however, the one thing is the empathy that Sammies seem to have with people. If we ever got rid of that, you don't have a piece of the Sammy left.

*Why do some dogs look good standing and posing, but not so good when moving?*

The skeletal structure, and the way the skeleton and the muscles all fit together. We often fault dogs for standing with a foot out, but then look at

us. How often do we stand perfectly? How often do we move perfectly? Yet, we do expect our dogs to, but there is a reason for that. That is, as Kay would say, form does follow function. We weren't built to pull sleds and herd reindeer; whereas, these dogs were. You can't take that away from the breed, even though they don't really do it anymore. It would be such a disservice to let yourself lapse on that movement. Let's be realistic. How many breeds do what they were bred to do in this day and age? Not many. However, I would like to think I could take Toby out and he would do his job. That is one of the things that drew us to the breed.

*How should they move in the front, and from the side?*

From the front, they need to have a nicely extended front, with nothing deep coming in, on a good single track, nice and clean and covering ground. They have a good forward reach. They reach out and touch the ground here, then pull back. It doesn't waste any energy. This guy here actually has a very, very nice front on him. I love to see him come up to me from the back of the yard. Last year he was bitten by a snake in the leg and there was some tissue damage, and he was on three legs for a long time. It took him a long time, and he is still not quite over it. I would see him limping and think, "Oh my goodness. What happened to that beautiful front?" He was such a pleasure to watch, coming at you and going around. The gait has to be well timed, with no interference fore and aft, no weaving or crossing over, and good, good drive from the rear.

We do see some flashy side-gaits, but they are not necessarily correct. They are really flashy, and nice to watch; however, if you were to put the dog in slow motion, you would see some wasted motion there. So a well-timed, far-reaching front, well-driving rear, and nice and easy - light on his feet. I hate to see a Sammy lumber. I don't care if he is in the ring, or in the backyard. When you see a Sammy lumber, although he might be moving correctly, he is moving heavily. When I say moving correctly, I mean he is putting his feet in the right place,

but he is having a hard time doing it. I hate a lumbering Sammy.

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

At a slow trot, it gradually has to come in to a single track, and you have to see power in the rear, pushing off that rear. Again, I don't mean that flashy, far-reaching kickoff, but you have to see obvious power. Also, you have to see the rear pads when the dog's kicking. If you see the dog in the show ring going away from you, you like to think that if that dog was pulling a sled or if he was herding reindeer all day that he wouldn't get tired, and he would pull that sled to its destination. You have to have good muscle tone. Without the good skeleton and without the good muscle tone, the dog's not going to be able to do it.

*What are you looking for in the head?*

A correct wedge-shaped head, nicely shaped ears. I've had a couple of big ears in my time. Again, that beautiful lip setting, with the Sammy smile; those almond eyes, preferably dark. As I said before, I've had a couple of light eyes, and even though the eye was correctly shaped and it was a pretty head, the light eyes detracted from what would have been otherwise a very, very nice head on a Sammy. I like to see lots of thick, plushy fur on the forehead, and a nice dark nose. Again, I've had a light nose or two, and I like the nice black nose. Also, the nice dark eye rims. If you are missing any one of those elements, no matter how good the others might be, it will detract.

I had a beautiful puppy one time, and her eye rim never filled in completely, and she had this little pink right in the corner of her eye. She was a very, very pretty bitch, but that little bit of pink just detracted from the overall look of the head.

*So you feel that pigment is very important?*

Yes. Missing pigment does detract. Also, that pigment does allow for a certain amount of protection from the sun, so there is good reason to have good pigment, and not just appearance-wise.

*How serious are missing teeth?*  
I haven't seen that as a real-

ly serious problem. I've seen a few bad bites, but bites overall aren't a serious problem in the breed. However, I have seen a few. In fact, I had one. Missing teeth aren't penalized as far as the breed standard, not like the Dobies. Personally, missing teeth are not a problem that I have had. I had a funny bite with one dog.

*Is eye color really important?*  
Yes.

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

I don't like point scales, but if I had to do it, maybe twenty.

*How about winter nose? Is that a problem?*

No. I've had winter nose, but I don't consider it to be a problem.

*Do you know what causes it?*  
No, I really don't. Do you?

*I always suspected sunlight, but I don't know for sure.*

That could very well be, because you are talking pigment.

*What should be the relationship of chest depth to the rest of the dog? Should the chest come to or below the elbow?*

It needs to come to at least the elbow. You have to have that nice deep chest, and you have to have that nicely sprung rib cage for the heart and lung room, because if the dog is otherwise structurally sound without that deep chest and the heart and lung room, then you have an endurance problem. In some of the Sammies I've seen - and I haven't been to that many shows lately, so I'm not the best critic in the world at this particular stage of the game - they are lacking forechest. There is some shallowness in the forechest that could be improved upon. You have to have that, and you have to have the depth of chest and the nicely sprung rib cage. It is very important.

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

When the rubber hits the road, yes. I've won with dogs out of coat, and I have lost with dogs out of coat, too. (laughter) If you are really intent on winning, if you want to finish your dog, be patient. Wait until the dog is in coat. If you think there is a judge coming along who doesn't care about coat, then yes, by all means, show to that judge. However, by and large, it is the overall impression that

your dog gives to that judge. There are a lot of different types of judges in the world, and they all have their own opinions and subjective interpretations of the standard. There is a good description of coat in the standard, and that is one of the things the judges are looking for.

*What about the buff color in some Samoyeds?*

I don't mind it, probably because I've had it. In fact, my Star was born with spectacles. The spectacles faded with age, but she got more body biscuit. I had her under a Siberian judge one time, and she went Winners Bitch, and I could have hugged the judge. She was going through Star's coat and said, "My, what a beautiful coat!" And I could have just hugged her for it. So, yes, I have had biscuit, and it does seem to become more accentuated with age. If I was judging, I certainly wouldn't penalize a dog because of that. Some of it is less attractive. It depends on how it is through the coat. If it is splotchy, it can be somewhat less attractive. All else being equal, I would not penalize a dog for it.

*Do you think that sometimes, all else being equal, biscuits are not put up because of it?*

I do. Too often, they want the sparkling white dog. Sometimes the sparkling white dog is not sparkling. It is just white. I feel you need those silver tips to the coat, and I feel the buff helps preserve that. A dull white, to me, is less attractive than a Sammy who is not white, white, white but has the sparkling tips to the coat, which is more correct and is more attractive.

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

There has been so much discussion on that 45-degree angle. If you can get close to the 45-degree, with a nice long upper arm, you are in "front heaven" as far as the Sammies are concerned. How many Sammies have that 45-degree angle? I suspect not that many. I've seen quite a few who have come really close to it. This has been hotly debated over the years. I don't think I have ever had one right on 45 degrees.

*What would you consider an ideal croup drop-off?*

A nicely sloping one.

because you have to have that strong back, good loins and that nicely sloping croup. If it isn't, sometimes you have not going to have the correct tailset. The tailset and the tail structure on the Sammy is very important.

*Describe the correct topline? Is this functional or for beauty?*

A correct topline is a thing of beauty. That beautifully arched neck coming down to the withers to a good length of back and nicely sloping croup, and when you see that topline move, it is as smooth as silk. With a dog that is moving correctly, that is light on its feet, it is a thing of beauty.

*What is the ideal height of a dog and a bitch for you?*

For me, I like the top of the standard in a dog. I'd go below the 22 inches on a bitch, but not too much. My Star was one of the smaller bitches. She was very, very feminine in appearance, and very, very feral in her nature. Her size was no deterrent to her being a very, very primitive bitch. Dusty Butt was a good 22 inches. She was probably 22-1/2 inches, and as solid as they come. I do prefer the males to be at the top of the standard.

*How about ideal tail length and set?*

If it is longer than the hock, it's perfect. If it is shorter than the hock, then chances are it is not going to serve its original purpose of protecting the dog in the Arctic cold. If it is double-hooked and is not mobile enough, again, it is not going to serve its purpose. Also, it is not as attractive. To me, the funny thing about the standard is it discusses the tail: for instance, if it is not correct, the dog could freeze, and in my opinion, if it is not correct, it is also not as attractive. Again, form does follow function. That form is beautiful to behold when it is correct. I have seen some incorrect tails lately. Too tight, and I don't think it is attractive, and I don't think it is correct.

*What about ideal ear and earset?*

Not too big. As I said, I've had those before. Nice and thick, well furred outside and on the inside, and expressive. The ears tell a lot about a dog. A Sammy with a correct earset, if he is in a certain mood, his ears can go east/west, and you think, "My Goodness. I'm glad that's not permanent." I just don't like

big ears. Again, if I had to take the lesser of the two evils, I would take a smaller ear over a bigger ear, but it has to be thick. If it is not thick and well furred, then again it is subject to freezing.

*How about the ideal foot?*

Nice and long. Again, well furred in the pads. Nice thick pads. It is spread, but not splayed, so that it can get a firm grip. A small, skinny foot I cannot abide. A little scrunched up cat-type foot might be attractive in the show ring, but it is certainly not correct.

*What's the ideal temperament?*

Doesn't know a stranger. Stable, no matter what the situation. They have to be loving, and absolutely no signs of aggressiveness toward people. When they say aggressiveness, dogs are dogs, and you will under certain situations have dogs who have aggression toward other dogs, just like humans. I would not tolerate a Sammy who showed any signs of aggressiveness toward a human being. I just would not tolerate that. They are funny, intelligent, stubborn. They have a mind of their own. As I said about my Dusty Butt, just solid and stable and loving.

*What are the most serious faults in the breed today?*

We need to work on fronts, which is not an easy task. I like a nice length of leg on a Sammy, and you don't always get that. Compared to the length of the body, sometimes the legs are too short. The rounder eye. I'm not saying these are predominant, but these are things we need to be vigilant on.

*Is the standard a good one? Is there anything you would like to see changed?*

I do believe the standard is a good one. As I mentioned before, I don't like points. They tend to cut the dog up into too many little pieces. We have had a lot of discussion with the national club and the local clubs about the breed standard, but overall when I read it and compare it to other breed standards, it is well written.

*Should there be any disqualifications?*

Well, blue eyes is already a disqualification. And aggressiveness, that should be disqualified.

*Should champions be specialied?*

It depends upon the owner. If we had had the money and

the time, we had a couple of champions that we would have loved to special. It's a very personal thing, though. There are champions that are finished and are never seen again. If you really want to show everybody what you have, it makes sense to special. But in my book, you don't sacrifice other things to special a champion. You don't sacrifice your family. If you can do it, wonderful! If you can't, don't lose any sleep over it.

*Does making the Top Ten or Twenty mean anything?*

Yes, it really does, especially if it's your dog. (laughter) However, you have to bring some common sense into it. You have to say, "Okay. Yes, this dog made Top Ten or Twenty, but by the way, this dog is backed by money, and the dog is out every weekend, and more power to the dog and the owner who can do it every weekend." Unfortunately, what you don't know are the dogs who are sitting in your backyard because you can't afford to, or you don't want to, or you don't have the time to devote to it, who would be quality-wise every bit as competitive as the dog who did make the Top Twenty. It is a sport. It is a very competitive sport. It depends on how much time, money and energy you are willing to put into it. I don't know that even if I had the time and money I would be personally cut out for that level of competition, but more power to those who are.

*Would popularization help or harm the breed?*

From what I've seen with other breeds, it would harm the breed. We've managed to stay fairly stable in the middle of the rankings as far as popularity is concerned, and I don't see that as a bad thing. Dalmatians became really popular after the movie. I don't think that type of popularity does any service to the breed. They are overbred, incorrectly bred, and unfortunately, it gets to be a dollar sign in somebody's eyes, and that can be nothing but detrimental to any breed. I'm glad to see the Sammy where he is.

*Is judging fair?*

From where I sit and from my experience, I would have to say, by and large, yes. Nevertheless, it may be very different for those who are campaigning

specials, but I can't talk about that because I haven't done it. I can only talk from what I have enjoyed doing. We have enjoyed breeding and raising a litter and puppies pooping on the floor, and taking the puppy that we have kept and going out and finishing that puppy. I'm not saying there haven't been times when we felt we should have won, but we didn't. Also, maybe someone else should have won when we did. By and large, I don't see any really severe problem with judging.

*Would you rather show under an all breed judge or a breeder-judge?*

That's a tough one. I'm not sure I have an answer for that. I've shown under both. I've shown under breeder-judges who I could hardly wait to show under, and then I was disappointed. I've shown under breeder-judges that I thought, "I'm going to give them a chance," and they have done a pretty darn good job. Of course, we have shown under lots of all-arounders. I do think, as breeders, if we are going to go for our judge's license, we have to go in there with a thick skin, with a total sense of honesty, and with the sense that you are going to look at the dog. It's such an individual thing, and it depends so much on the individual who is doing the judging. Some breeder-judges are wonderful.

*When judging is poor, do you think it is more the result of politics, or the fact that a lot of judges don't know the breed?*

It's a little bit of both. Some judges do tend to go for licenses for breeds that they really are not all that keen on, and that's very wrong. If you are going for a license for any breed, you have to like the breed. If it is just another job, I don't want to show under that judge. There is a mixture of both politics and that this is just another breed which really isn't my breed and is just another one that I can get paid to do. I have been under a couple of judges who didn't express a real interest in the Samoyed. It was just another breed on their slate.

*Does advertising influence judges?*

It has to have at least a subliminal influence. To what degree, I don't know. However, the dogs who are being advertised are those very same dogs

who are being shown every week.

*Did you always show your own dogs?*

Yes.

*Did you ever use a handler?*

The one time with Jim when I was too chicken to go in Open.

*Did you ever handle other people's dogs as a favor or professionally?*

Just as a favor. In fact, I was less uptight with other people's dogs than I was with my own.

*How do you train puppies and at what age?*

That's a loaded question. When we first started out, we were religious in going to training classes. Until the puppies were at least four or six months old, we'd train them up and down this dirt road out here. It made a wonderful training place. We also made the 50-mile round trip drive to go to conformation classes. As I got busier and busier with my job, the formal training classes sort of went out the window, and we did a lot of training in the ring, to be perfectly honest with you. (laughter)

If you establish a rapport with your dog, most of them want to please, and most of them want to be responsive. If you do that, and even if you do your training in the 6-9 month Puppy class, the dog is usually amazingly responsive, despite their lack of formal training.

*Do you believe in obedience training? Getting a CD, CDX, UD?*

I have nothing but admiration for the people who do it. I'd be a hypocrite if I said I believed in it, because if I believed in it, I would do it. That's how we started out, but you have to make choices; and when you are working and raising a family, you have to decide what you want to do. If the decision is that you want conformation and you have to sacrifice obedience, so be it. Conversely, if you are more interested in obedience, as many, many people are, then so be it.

*Have you done any tracking, agility, herding, sledding?*

No, I haven't, but agility is one thing I would like to get involved in when I do retire. It challenges the Sammy, not only physically but mentally. It might be challenging for me, too, to take a dog through that. It is one thing I am fascinated by, and I would really like to do it.



Ch. Sitkin's Samza Pac-Man, "Sam."

*How intelligent is this breed as compared to other breeds?*

They are very intelligent. They are instinctively intelligent. I've seen my dogs look as though they are figuring something out. I had a puppy one time, and the door was ajar, and he couldn't quite get through it, so he stepped back. It almost looked as though he was pondering this problem on how he was going to get through this door that wasn't quite open wide enough for him to get through. Almost like a cat, he took his paw and pushed that door open, and then went through it. So, yes, they are pretty intelligent.

*Is it appropriate to take a dog anywhere off-lead?*

It totally depends on the dog. Most Sammies, I would say no. By and large, I would say no. There would be circumstances where you could. Even out here, I get more horse traffic than car traffic, and they are

usually pretty good, but if they saw a rabbit, they'd be gone.

*How important is training to winning in conformation?*

As I said, I've done most of my training in the 6-9 Puppy class, and from the limited amount of showing I have done, I have been fairly successful. Actually, if you are really going to be serious about showing your dog and campaigning them, it is really important.

Nancy Golden does a beautiful job of training. She'll take a six- to nine-month puppy in the ring, and that dog is perfect. She'll move a foot, and that's an indication that she wants the dog to move its foot, and it moves its foot. It will stand there like a statue when it is supposed to, and it will move correctly when it is supposed to. It is very nice to see. It's obvious that she has put a lot of time and effort into training that puppy.

It is important, and training does show. Lack of training

also shows.

*Do you think big-name handlers help dogs to win?*

Yes. If that sounds like a qualified yes, maybe it is because my theory is that if they are truly big-time handlers, they are not going to take an inferior specimen in the ring. If they are ethical, big-time handlers, they are going to tell a potential client that they are wasting their money on their dog. A good handler taking a good dog into the ring sometimes has the edge over a novice taking an equally good or maybe even a better dog into the ring.

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

Take them to training (laughter) and try to be really honest about the dog that you want to take into the ring. Don't put blinders on, like we did with our first dog when we thought she was going to go Best in Show. If you've done



Ch. Sitkin's Starbuck, "Buck."

your homework and you have a good dog, take the dog to training. You give a good dog every advantage. That is something I didn't always do; however, if you are going to do it, do it right. If I had it to do over

again, I would.

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

It would be nice if they could, but in this day and age? I don't live in Siberia, so it would be kind of hard to sled.

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

They have really taught me so much. They taught me to be more empathic toward people, oddly enough. They have

taught me patience. They have certainly taught me commitment because they are so committed to pleasing us. They teach you how to care about things, not just dogs but all the other little critters running around.

*Were your breedings natural or controlled?*

If you mean am I holding the bitch while she is being bred, yes, I am. Maybe more for my sake than hers, but I feel better if I'm there and I'm holding her and saying, "There, there, there." So, yes, if that is what you mean by controlled.

*So that is usually how you help it along is just by holding the bitch?*

Yes.

*What is a fair stud fee?*

A fair stud fee would be the going price of a show potential puppy.

*Were your males at stud to outside bitches?*

Yes, but it was very limited. I didn't advertise that much, so it was on a very, very limited basis.

*Did you ever refuse to service a bitch?*

Once. It was very poor quality.

*Would you breed to a dog if he had a very serious fault if he was outstanding in other areas? What faults would keep you from breeding?*

A very serious fault would be really hard for me to go along with. A very serious fault, to me, would be a movement fault, a cowhocked dog, a dog with a bad temperament. A dog with a bad temperament who was beautiful I would not breed to. Structurally unsound I would not breed. I'd like to think that if I needed to get a pretty head (which I don't think I need, but if I needed that) and I saw this dog that had it, but he couldn't find his way out of a paper bag, I just couldn't use that dog.

*Have you handled a lot of matings?*

Only my own, and I have helped a couple of friends, but basically my own.

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

No.

*How many litters should a bitch have? What is the youngest a bitch should be bred, and the oldest?*

I certainly wouldn't breed before she was eligible for OFA certification and eye clearance. As far as the oldest, the oldest that I have ever bred was a six-year-old, and that was her third litter and she was in good health. If the bitch is in excellent health and in good physical shape, maybe eight years of age, but I haven't personally done it.

She would have to be in excellent condition with a history of easy whelping.

*And how many litters?*

Well, if you take that age span from two to even seven, five would be tops. The most litters I have ever had from a bitch is three, but five would be tops.

*Did you help your bitches whelp?*

With one of Dusty's litters, I did. I've been there, but most of the time all I do is watch them and they have done it all by themselves. Sometimes when they come fairly quickly together, I'll be rubbing down one puppy while she is whelping the next one. By and large, they have been good, natural whelpers and haven't had any trouble.

*Do you supplement feed very young puppies?*

No. Never had to, not even with the nine-puppy litter. She did a great job.

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

I wean them, although my old Star didn't like it very much, because she did regurgitate her food for the puppies. She said, "You don't need to do this. This is my job."

*At what ages did you evaluate puppies for pet/show quality?*

Of course, I checked them every day from the day they were born, but the so-called formal evaluation where I would invite friends over was anywhere between eight to ten weeks.

*Did you cull?*

No.

*What should a show puppy sell for? You may not want to talk about this, because as you said, you have been out of the market for quite awhile.*

The last time, almost eight years ago, show puppies in this area were selling for about \$600. I really don't know now, but it probably has gone up.

*Did you sell pet puppies with spay/neuter agreements?*

Yes.

*How about puppies back when you sold a bitch?*

No. We always figured if we sold a puppy and we asked a fair price for that puppy, then that puppy belonged to those people. The only strings that we asked for in the agreement were that if for any reason the owners decided the puppy wasn't for them, then we had

first choice of taking the puppy back. But we never did go with these complicated selling agreements, stud agreements. I think more friendships have been broken over some of these complicated agreements than are necessary.

*At what age did you place puppies in their new homes?*

Absolutely not before eight weeks, and if they were flying, ten to twelve weeks old.

*What do you feed your dogs?*

Over the years, we have gone through a variety of foods. We've jumped on a few bandwagons as I am sure a lot of people have. Right now, I feeding Nutro Lamb and Rice with a little treat of various Pedigree canned, chicken or whatever. We've fed Nature's Recipe. We've been on the ProPlan feed. Very, very early on, we did Breeder's Choice. Right now, they seem to be doing quite well on the Nutro Lamb and Rice.

*Do you feel that diet is important in raising this breed?*

Yes, I do. I can't remember what food it was, but it was one of those jump on the bandwagon types because everybody was feeding that, and a couple of the dogs in the house at the time got some intestinal upsets from it, so I went back to whatever food I was feeding.

*Do you feed any supplements?*

With bitches I plan to breed, yes. About two months before I plan on breeding them, I start supplementing them with vitamins, and with lactating bitches and with growing puppies, but the other adult dogs, no. We did. We fed everything. We had to feed all these supplements, but when you read the ingredients of a good well-balanced dog food, you really don't have to. I personally don't take any vitamins myself. I like to think I eat moderately, and I eat what I should be eating. During periods of time, we supplemented everything, thinking we were doing a wonderful thing for the dogs, but in retrospect maybe we weren't.

*Do you condition the dogs?*

I did, but I've gotten lax as the dogs have gotten older. But we'd go out on the bike, and we would actually go to the football fields and take the dogs around the football fields on the bikes, and they loved it. Also, I got some exercise. However, I must

admit I have been pretty lax lately with me and them.

*And your adult males and females are kept together?*

Yes.

*What advice would you give to breeders who are just starting out?*

Learn everything you can before you buy. If you want to breed, do your very best to buy the very best bitch that you can. To me, a super foundation bitch is just that. It's the foundation that you are going to build on. It is easier said than done, because nobody in their right mind wants to give up a great bitch, but that is what I would strive for if I was starting out all over again.

*Should they go to the kennel with the big winners to purchase a pup?*

They should try to go to as many places as they can: the big winners, the lesser known breeders. Sometimes those breeders who aren't out campaigning every weekend are busy at home studying and learning and might be doing a better job than the people out on the show circuit. Go as wide as you can, as far as you can, to as many people as you can. Watch the dogs. Don't just go and look at the dog that you are interested in, but look at all the dogs in the kennel.

*Is there a particular kennel you would say is the best today?*

No, I wouldn't say that.

*Would you recommend joining a local breed club, national breed club and/or an all breed club?*

All of the above, because you gain from each of those experiences. The local breed club you form closely knit friendships, and you watch each other's dogs. You share your concerns and your victories with each other's dogs. On a national level, if you are really interested in going anywhere with any breed, then your vacation, in my opinion, is the National Specialty. And the all breed clubs. You can always learn by watching other breeds, by listening to other people who have other breeds. I don't personally belong to an all breed club, but that is something else I am going to do when I retire.

*Do you feel that the parent club is doing enough to educate judges and new members?*

In recent years, they have really focused on the importance of doing just that. In the early years, it was a bit haphazard,



Ch. Sitkin's Tobe One K'nube, "Toby."

but in recent years, they have really put a lot of attention into judges' education. They have done an awful lot in recent years. They have had judges' seminars; they have invited judges to National Specialties. We are going in the right direction as far as that is concerned.

*Is there an AKC video in this breed?*

Yes.

*Is it a good one?*

I have only seen part of it, and the part that I saw I liked.

*Do you feel there is adequate literature, books and magazines available in the breed?*

Yes, I do. The illustrated standard is great. I can't go without saying The Samoyed Quarterly is a really good magazine. There is a lot of advertising in it, but it has some really good articles in it, too.

*How long have you lived at this location?*

In Ramona, 23 years.

*Why did you move here?*

For the dogs. We wanted more space. If you lived closer to town, you couldn't afford something with three-quarters of an acre. At least, we couldn't, so we came up to this area and started looking, and this is

where we ended up.

*How old are you?*

I'll be 60 next Tuesday. I'm a widow now. My husband and I were married for 35 years.

*And what have you done for a living?*

I'm a computer specialist working for the Navy. My division maintains all the applications software that support the Navy supply system with logistics and getting all the widgets to the ships and the planes and this, that and the other.

*What is your educational background?*

I was born and raised in

England. I graduated from grammar school in England, which is high school here. Without bragging, I would have to tell you that an English high school education is the equivalent to at least a two-year college. They really did stress academics. I had five years of Latin, and four years of French, and three years of German, and passed on Greek. (laughter)

*How have the dogs affected your lifestyle?*

Well, the decor is "early dog." (laughter) Instead of going out and buying good china, you go out and buy something for the dog. The most important thing, apart from the dogs themselves, are the friendships all over the country. My husband was in the Navy, and we traveled all over the country and met a lot of people, but the closeness and the camaraderie that we get with dog people is unique. In the Navy, they would sit around and tell sea stories. We would go to dog shows and sit around and tell dog stories and loved every single minute of it. The friendships and the associations we have made and the lessons the dogs have taught me far outweigh any financial burden we might have incurred, such as the vet bills, the food bills, the carpet cleaning bills. I wouldn't have missed it. I just wouldn't have missed it for the world.

*So it has all been worth it?*

Absolutely.

*Is there anything we haven't covered, or any soapboxes?*

I'm not much of a soapbox person. I don't like dishonesty. I don't like criticizing other people's dogs, when in your heart you know you have a mess of dogs in your own backyard with just as many if not more faults than the dogs you are criticizing. I admire the people who have the stamina to go and compete weekend after weekend. Maybe it is not my bag, but if it is theirs, I admire them for doing that. You have to be your own worst critic. The best of all worlds, if you are that, and you can go weekend in and weekend out with a super dog, that is the ideal. I just haven't been able to do that.

*Thank you very much. I appreciate your time.*

Thank you. \*