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THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Marion McNeil
STERLING
Plantsville, Connecticut

Part II

This interview was conducted at the home of Marion McNeil in September 2008 by Lynne Robertson.

Are some of the other countries more lenient about dog policies?

Actually they're more strict than the United States. You have to have a visa sometimes, you have to have a USDA stamp and importation records. You have to jump through a couple of hoops to get into, say, Bermuda. In Mexico you have to see a veterinarian to get in AND out. A lot of the other countries are much tougher than the United States.

What were some of your best litters and some of your better dogs?

I started out with a really good female that came from Tsiulikagta bloodlines, through Gail Mathews. Donna Pagel-Yocom was an old-time breeder and she was so full of information. She would write pages and pages of letters to answer my pages and pages of questions. When I wanted to breed my first champion, Mia, I sent her my questions and she sent me movies and photos and so forth. I started out very well-informed and advised by somebody who really knew what was going on. She and Gail Mathews were so helpful to me about how to breed my first litter. I had two champions from that first litter.

I was just thinking that the titles might not mean as much to you as just getting to travel.

No, I enjoy the traveling, but the competition is real and international shows are an adventure. If I'm going to show my dog some more I'll go to another country and go for another title. A dog from my first litter, "Kizzy," Int/Mex/Can/Am Ch. Sterling's English Piper Am/Can/Mex CD, HIC, went all over the place with me. She was a very pretty girl. I got obedience titles with her as well, in Mexico, Canada

and the United States. That was a long time ago, I think, 1985. I remember her being in the obedience ring in Mexico, and at that time they required that dogs such as Malamutes, German Shepherds, Doberman Pinschers and Rottweilers had to have an obedience title, because they

Rottweiler, Doberman, puffy little white dog, Rottweiler. It was such a funny picture! They were just sitting there and here's this puffy, cute little sparkling white dog in between all these tough, tough attack dogs, in the sunshine in Mexico. She went everywhere with me. She was

Moonlight Gambler and produced "Glitter," Am/Can Ch. Sterling's All That Glitters CGC, who was also a very nice girl. She was a big winner too. She got Group placements in Canada, and she did very well at the National Specialty.

Copper is a dog that was given to me by a friend of mine who bred her female to "Gabby," Sanorka's Moonlight Gambler. Copper has produced really outstanding offspring and that's what I mostly have in my house right now. He is a biscuit dog who has six International titles, and he's produced many champions, some who are also Int/Mex/Am/Can champions that I have right now. That's where I am now. I have his daughters and their daughters, a son and grandpups.

Conformationally, what does your line look like?

I like a dog with good leg length and a nice chest, long neck, and I like them to be attractive, nice dark eyes and eye shape, good pigment. Well furred; sometimes people like the shorter coat, I like a longer coat. I like a heavy coated, glamorous type of dog, and they need a lot of leg to carry that kind of coat. My most important thing is their movement. A Samoyed should be able to chase reindeer around all day long. If judges ask me, "What is a Samoyed supposed to do?" A guy I knew who worked in the UN said he saw Samoyeds working in Lapland herding reindeer in the 1950s. Of course today they use snow machines. He said the reindeer were five miles away and you couldn't see them. They would send out five or six dogs to go get them. He said the Samoyeds were very leggy, they had deep chests, and they could run all day. The herdsman would send them out and the dogs would go way, way out, casting back and forth behind the reindeer for hours and move the reindeer back to the people. That's what they are supposed to be able to do. I keep that in mind; that the dogs should be very effortless in their movement and be able to go all day - they have to be structural-



were big, macho, attack-type dogs. They needed to have an obedience title before they could be a champion. That was just something the Mexican KC wanted to have happen. So in the obedience ring on the long sits there would be: Rottweiler,

one of my most-titled dogs.

Kizzy was the one I bred next, and she produced a number of champions. It just went from there. Her daughter was "Gala," So. Am/PR Ch. Sterling's Renaissance, COA '92. Gala was bred to Ch. Sanorka's



Ch. Sterling's Dreamland Express, "Kelev."

ly sound.

Who are some of your other dogs that you'd like to talk about?

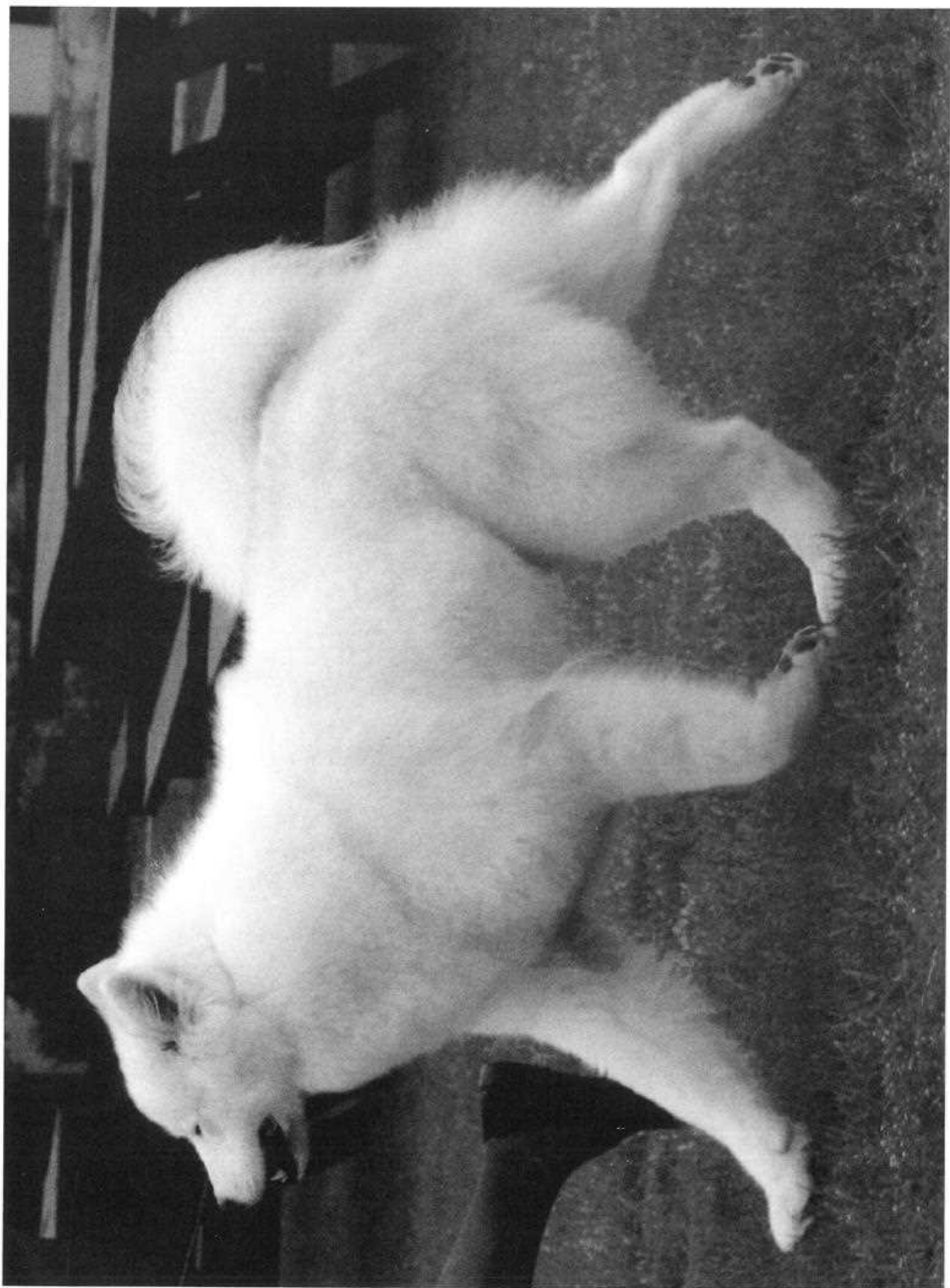
I would like to mention Ch. Sterling's Little Dickens,

"Angel." She was third top brood bitch for SCA in 1993. She was Mia's granddaughter through Kizzy, so my third generation. Again, that one female

was so important in the bloodline. She produced six champions, starting off three other breeders with her daughters. Because of Angel, three genera-

tions later I got Copper.

Angel's owners, my friends Mary Ellen and Tom Fydenkevez, had her at their wedding. And, 25 years ago, we





Nordic's Quicksilver Kodiak CD, "Kodi."

had many sledding outings with friends and doggy relatives based at their home in Massachusetts. Tom took his dog to Maine and successfully completed a 30-mile mid-distance race in the 1980s. So, the champions could also do their work.

My most important dogs, and I've already talked about

them, are Glitter, Copper and Kizzy. I do have a dog that I bred and co-own who's doing phenomenal winning. Her name is Ch. Sterling's Artistic Blend. I sent her to Kansas as a pup and now she's a multi Group and specialty winner. She's had her first litter and her daughter, Ch. Cuvée's Bridgitte Bordeaux, has multiple Breed wins as a puppy, four Group placements and just won Best Futurity Puppy and Best of

Opposite in Sweepstakes at our 2008 SCA Specialty. She just turned a year old.

I don't breed a lot, but when I do I try to better the generation before and breed for breeding stock as well as show dogs.

That's probably due to your genetic background.

It can be. I look long-term. Some people will breed to the winning show dog in the ring, and that's nice too, but it has to have all the other qualities

you're looking for to add to your bloodline to improve your next generation.

What process do you go through when considering a breeding? Obviously the pedigrees, and the dog itself, but what else?

I will go to the National Specialty and look at the young dogs, especially the Stud Dog class, Brood Bitch class, because that's where the breeders are showing their best dogs. I won't even know who the dogs are. If

Facing page:

Ch. Moonsong's Kiss From A Rose.



I see a dog I like I'll look up who the parents are. Then I'll go and see if there's anything related to them in the classes; see if there is a consistent type or something I'm looking for, physically. I'll talk to the person who either owns the dog or bred the puppies, then I'll talk to other people and see what they know. When you go to a different bloodline you have to get a consensus from a number of people about what they think about the dogs. That's when you can get into trouble with people making stuff up. You have to find out the truth about things. That's why I go directly to the person and ask. Really good, longtime breeders will be honest with you. Even if I have some problem that I want to avoid, if they don't have that problem that's fine because I'm not going to double up on something. You just have to have the information. For example, the tails aren't good, or the ears are long, etc. If you don't have that, you can work together to see what you're going to come up with. The important thing is to be able to go into a bloodline where the person knows what they are talking about and they'll tell you.

How do you choose a potential outcross? Are you looking for the overall dog, are you matching certain specific characteristics - one's lacking, one has it - how are you fitting in beyond the pedigree what you're looking for?

I look for a particular dog that will match with my female.

Define "match." Do you breed like traits, or complementary traits?

I actually breed extremes.

That's interesting.

Rule of thumb is like to like. I don't do that. (laughter) The female who has puppies now is beautiful structurally, she has a shorter coat, she's everything I want physically but I want to pretty her up a little more. Because she's tall and has a lot of leg length, her first litter are very large dogs, beautiful dogs, but they're big. So I

Left to right: Gala, Rugby, Glitter, Ollie.



Ch. Sterling's Artistic Blend, BISS and multi Group winner. Co-owners, Karen and Ken Allison.

said, "I'm going to breed her to a smaller male." He's smaller than she is; he's very, very pretty, he's sound, too. I won't give up the soundness. When I say "extremes," what I mean is type. The whole dog has to move right, the body has to be good. But I'll fool around with head type, coat, eye shape, size, those things.

Because you can fix those things quickly?

Yes. But I would never give up structure. I would never breed, say, a dog that had a good front to a dog with a bad

front. That's crazy. You'll lose it so fast.

If you can lose that trait so fast why couldn't you lose these other traits fast, too?

You can. It's interesting, you're making me think about this. Basically the structure will be maintained and the "frosting" will be changed. Hopefully you're always going to have the good, basic structure.

What are you hoping to get by breeding a tall dog to a shorter dog? Will you get mostly medium, then a few of the extreme?

I never know until I get it.

(laughter) People think they'll breed the dogs and get this and that. But you don't know until you do it. You don't know what's going to come through the genes. I always look at the person skeptically and say, "That's a good plan, but you really don't know what you're going to get." Especially when you have outcrossed dogs that aren't related, you just don't know. You have to do it and see what happens, and enjoy the results. I don't depend too much on predicting the future of what I'm going to get; I want to

see what I'll get, and keep the best.

Do you agree that linebreeding is the best way of getting what you want?

Yes, to be consistent. If you have a line of dogs that you're happy with, which I do, after a few generations you have to go out and get another bloodline to bring in. Then you can go back again.

But it's out to some relation that you have?

Usually to some relation, some common bond. Or to a linebred dog that's been consis-



Am/Can/Mex Ch. Sterling's English Piper Am/Can/Mex CD, HIC.

tent for a number of generations that is not related at all. That's what I look for.

Have you done some successful outcrossing where you've gone to some line of dogs that have shown consistency but have no relationship to your dogs?

Yes. The breedings I did to Gabby were very successful. Copper's breedings have mostly been linebred to half sisters, that's been very successful. Now his daughters are producing. The winning girl who is in Kansas, Ch. Sterling's Artistic Blend, is his granddaughter and she's from an outcross, so that's

been working really well. I kept the other two sisters from that breeding myself.

The Samoyed breed doesn't have that many original dogs, maybe a dozen that were imported. Over the years through selective breeding we have a lot of different types. That's a big problem we have in the breed.

They all look different.

And everybody is absolutely certain that they have the right type. (laughter) But they can all work and they all show, they're all good dogs. There are certain differences in people's interpreta-

tions of the standard.

How many generations back is relevant to the breeding you're contemplating doing?

Once you get back like four generations that influence is pretty dispersed, unless you have somebody that is very prepotent, but usually that fades over time. The most important are the first three generations. There is an old saying that the puppies will look more like the grandparents than the parents, and I do find that's true.

A lot of breeders say that they always look at the grandparents when they're considering a breeding.

Yes. You'll get more of their influence.

I think that's true of humans, too, with my own personal experience of knowing people who resemble their grandparents. I don't know why genes would skip a generation.

Maybe the parents' DNA is split in half and if there are common ancestors behind the grandparents more of that will come through as opposed to the two parents. It's really hard to know what those genes have done. That's why when people are so sure they will get specific traits from a breeding I think, "No, you don't know what you're going to get."

Some people do think they know. Then other people say it's all a big crapshoot, it's all luck. It's interesting. You must have some criteria that you personally buy into to be able to move forward with any kind of breeding.

Yes. But it doesn't bother me to breed to a dog that has a completely different look to him than what I have.

What kind of look do you prefer in a Samoyed?

I like a dog that really has a lot of type. The Samoyed is so beautiful, their faces, expression and pigment. I like a very elegant-looking dog. But they really should be able to move; I like a lot of leg length, so I like a tall dog that's very beautiful. Sometimes you can't get that because of the leg length, the heads will be longer.

You mean like the muzzle and the skull?

Yes. All the bones will be growing and it's hard to get the very pretty head if it's a long-legged dog. Because of the structure - if you want the long legs, you get the long head. Someone told me that years ago. I keep trying. (laughter) So within moderation I have been successful.

Do you get a long body with the long legs?

No, not really. You can have a shorter body length that doesn't cause interference with the movement if you have good angulation on the dog. I like that look. The most important thing to me is the beautiful long neck, so that will shorten the back a little bit, with a nice long leg, with moderate angles, not extreme, not like a German Shepherd.

I like them to carry a nice dense, glamorous coat.

Of the things you've mentioned what are the easiest to get and to keep in one generation?

When I first started breeding I put the most emphasis on the front, because I was told that was the hardest to get and keep. At first I might not have gotten the best fronts in the world but I had great rears. (laughter) For some reason the rears were rock solid. But I was concentrating completely on the front. Copper has pulled the genes together to consistently produce good fronts. I am fortunate to have him. He can fix a front, in most cases. He's consistent in improving fronts on his puppies. He's a great dog to have.

Is he your most influential stud dog?

Yes.

Who or what else has influenced your breeding decisions the most?

Donna Pagel-Yocom taught me a lot early on. I learned a lot by just paying attention to the dogs that I saw and not listening to gossip that other people liked to put forth. Many times people would say, "I wouldn't breed to that dog ..." I would go right

ahead and do it. (laughter) They'd say, "Oh, that came out well." As I've said, before I did any breeding I watched movies of some of the greatest dogs in the history of the Samoyed that Donna sent me. I studied them ... I had slow motion ... I entrenched myself very early on before I began to breed. What I could see, how the dogs moved, how they were related. I studied it. Now I don't do that anymore, it's just in my head. Donna taught me and answered all my questions. I visited her and saw her dogs when she was older and I was totally impressed. She was an incredible woman; very smart, beautiful dogs.

Is the gene pool diversified enough in this breed?

Yes, I think so. There really isn't so much concentration on a particular animal. One stud dog will come into fashion for a few years, but there are enough people who breed independently of that so everybody doesn't get locked up into the same bloodlines. There have been very nice bloodlines developed all

over the country that are consistent and have nice dogs, maybe of different types, but it's a pretty healthy group of dogs as a breed.

Do you know how many litters you've bred over the years?

Probably ten or twelve litters total. Right now I'm breeding about one litter a year. I have a lot of females but I don't breed them to just breed them. I breed them if I find a combination, or a dog, or something I'm looking for.

Overall do you breed them just for you to show and finish?

Yes, pretty much. I'll do a breeding for me to pick what I want and the rest will go as pets, mostly.

Do you have any aspiration to judge?

I would love to be a judge. I judged the Sweepstakes at the 1987 National Specialty. It was a lot of work; it's a lot of dogs. It was really neat to go through the classes and pick out the best ones that I liked. I wasn't influenced by any people - I never am. I just look at the dogs. At the very end my placements

from the classes were like cookie cutters.

Has the breed evolved well over the years since you've been involved?

I started 30 years ago and in those days there were dogs that were large and clumsy. There were hip problems. They weren't as typey as a lot of the dogs are now. We have improved on structure and the movement in Samoyeds is very nice, a lot nicer than when I first started. I think the Samoyeds are in a good place, I do. We don't have any horrible disasters in the breed. There are things that people have to work on. When I go to the National Specialty I see so many beautiful dogs that are just striking, from puppies on up.

The state of the breed is very good.

Yes. We have some very outstanding dogs being special, too, that are really nice representatives.

Do you want to name a few?

I probably shouldn't ... they know who they are.

How about outstanding dogs from the past?



Ch. Windward's Vintage Sterling, "Rugby," showing in Bermuda.



Am/Can Ch. Sterling's All That Glitters.



Copper and his daughter, Delilah.

There was a dog from long ago that I had videotapes of who came from England, his name was Eng/Am/Can Ch. Delmonte This Is It. I never saw him in person but he is in my bloodline. He was a big dog, heavy coated, very English type. He was the most magnificent-looking Samoyed I have ever seen in my whole life! In recent years I've shown people whom I have developed relationships with who have gotten a puppy from me and gone on to be breeders themselves, I ask them if they want to look at the tapes of the old dogs and when they do they'll say, "Where is THAT dog?" I say, "He's gone." We never see any dogs that look like

him anymore, they don't exist.

What was his bloodline?

He came from England. I would have to look it up. He was bred to Donna Pagel-Yocom's Tsiulikagta line. He's in some other bloodlines too. He's way back. English lines behind him were Fairvilla and Sworddale.

Do you want to talk about the wrongful death judgment you were awarded for two valuable breeding dogs? I understand it was the biggest award ever given at that time.

That's still very sad. Two of my dogs got loose from the yard, one was a puppy and one was two years old. I was looking all over for them. I had flyers put up, called every agency.

They wandered onto a farm. I actually went to the door of the people who had killed the dogs and I handed them the flyer. I said, "Have you seen these dogs?" They said, "No." I said, "They've been spotted in this area and if you see them, call me." This was about two days after they were missing. I just kept looking for them, I wouldn't stop. I was going to find them one way or another. I didn't care if I got arrested for walking on people's property and yelling their names. I left stuff out for them ... food, socks, anything ... I just kept looking. I think it was the third day that somebody who lived on that street called me and said,

"Your dogs were shot on the Wilmerding's farm." I was just there the day before. I went up to their door and knocked and said, "I heard my dogs were shot, are they okay?" I didn't think they were dead. I had no idea anyone would do such a thing. They denied it. I called the police. They came and I was hysterical. The police told me to stay at a distance and they talked to the people and came back to me and said, "Yes, they shot your dogs and they're dead." I said, "Where are they? What happened?" I went into a tirade of "I want my dogs' bodies." I had to see them and make sure they were dead. How did I know they didn't tie

them to a tree, or something. I was just nuts, crazed. I got the SPCA involved because they wouldn't let me have the dogs' bodies. One thing led to another. Because these people were so incredibly cruel to me, I said, "I'm going to get my dogs. I don't care what I have to do, I'm going to get them." I tried to trick the police into telling me the location on the farm where the bodies were. I was going to go over the fence.

The police knew where they were?

Yes. They are the police and knew what I was going after. They said, "No." Months and months went by and I wanted these people in jail. The New Jersey SPCA came to help me but they couldn't get anywhere. Finally I went to the courts and judges and asked for the legal means to get the bodies off that farm; I went to the health department ... I was relentless. I just wanted them. Probably about three months later a judge had someone call me and said, "You have 45 minutes to get those dogs off their property." A really nice police officer came with me and he scooped them up, because by now there wasn't much left of them. It was terrible. But I got them and had them cremated. The people who shot my dogs trashed me in the newspaper about how vicious Samoyeds are; how they are wild and had killed and eaten their sheep. They just don't do that. Anyway, I took them to court. It took two years. I took them to court because I really wanted them to go to jail.

The police officer told me exactly what happened. The woman told the farm manager to shoot them. They were sitting under a tree and he shot them repeatedly until they were both dead. I continued to go back to the police to ask for reports, etc. - I was very professional about it - I was relentless. The police told me that they had shot a lot of dogs before they shot mine. I said, "They shot the wrong person's dogs!" He said, "Apparently."

Anyway, in two years I got an attorney involved. She said, "What do you want? Do you want them to have a criminal charge and go to jail, or go to court for a civil charge and money?" I said I wanted them

to go to jail, I wanted the criminal charge. They did the wrong thing. So we did. We went to many courts, appeal courts, etc. Finally their insurance company came to an agreement and said we could have \$2,500 for each dog. They said, "What are you asking?" I said, "\$25,000 for each dog." I wanted to make it expensive. I didn't care about the money, I wanted them to feel it. The insurance company said, "We'll give you \$27,500." I said, "No." I wanted them to go to jail. I wanted them to have a prison sentence. My attorney said, "You know what, Marion, people whose children are killed don't get this kind of award. They're punishing them, their social status is destroyed. They're convicted of a crime. The judge is giving you every single thing. The only thing they want is for you not to charge them in a civil suit later on." I said, "What's that?" She said, "You could really take them to the bank on a civil suit. It would take four or five years, though." Well, I couldn't go through that. It was killing me to bring it up all the time and to go and fight them. It's torture to go to court and have to relive it and fight it again, get all the details again, think about it again. So I said, "That will be fine; I'll take the settlement." That was the end of it.

The farm owner came out of court and said, "I guess you got what you wanted." I said, "I didn't get anything. You killed my dogs. I can't get them back." This is how mean these people were. Anyway, it was not a victory. I was defending my dogs as not being bloodcurdling killers that had to be destroyed on their farm. I had to prove that these people were wrong in what they did. My dogs are beautiful and didn't do anything wrong. I had to fight for the dogs.

Years later, when I returned to New Jersey and I saw the police officer who helped me, he told me, "Those people have never shot another dog. You did so well for the people in that area. When people lose dogs they use your technique of putting up flyers, etc. So you did a lot for the dogs." I just wish somebody had stopped them before I had to do it.

How long ago was that?

About 1986. To this day I

still don't know who called me and told me who shot them.

It must have been a neighbor of theirs.

Yes.

You must have wondered about that a few times.

Yes. If they had never called I would have never found them. It became a political thing because the people in that family were very, very wealthy. They were big land owners and big shots.

So they had the money to pay lawyers.

Right. I was just one little person. Most people would have just gone away and let it drop because of who they were. But I didn't care who they were, they couldn't do this to my dogs. I told my attorney, "I want them to understand how I feel." She said, "They never will. They don't care. They're not going to be sorry." I wanted them to apologize. If they'd said, "We're so sorry ... they were dirty ... we didn't know they were Samoyeds ... we didn't know they were pets ..." If they'd said anything that made sense and had any kind of remorse, I would have just wanted their bodies and gone home and cried for years. But they didn't.

So because those dogs were like my kids I was going to do right by them and that was it. I have to tell a story about Kizzy. She was a little puffy white, glamorous, pretty as all get out, such a lady, petite, just adorable Samoyed. The newspaper - influenced by these wealthy people - kept putting in editorials about how vicious Samoyeds were and how unreliable and related to wolves, etc. Every week there was another editorial. My attorney said, "Don't answer them." I said, "It's killing me every week that they're putting these in to destroy my personal dogs and the breed!" This went on for months. Other people would respond back for me. And I didn't even know them. So there was a battle in the paper between them under false names and other people who were backing me up, who I didn't even know. The whole town was involved with it. My attorney said to stay out of it, don't give them any credence, don't give them any ammunition, don't answer their ridiculous

charges. Stay out of it. Well, I couldn't stand it anymore and I went to the newspaper with my dog. I knocked on the door asking to talk with the editor. I walked in the office with Kizzy - nobody was keeping me out of there - and they were looking at me with the dog and thinking, "I think we know who this is!" (laughter) I walked up and said, "THIS is the kind of dog you're writing about and I want it to stop!" He said, "I can't control what people write in their letters." I said, "THIS is a Samoyed and she doesn't even want to be in here because of you." The editorials slowed down after that. People in the office said, "What a beautiful dog!"

It probably opened their eyes to what the breed really is and what they were printing in the editorials. They had the power to stop it.

Yes. I didn't have the power to stop it by myself, but I stopped it by showing up in the office with my dog.

That says a lot about you. You had enough gumption and stick-to-itiveness to go through with that. Most people would have just been mad and harbor it, shrink away and not pursue it.

It was very difficult. I was not ranting and raving and crying my eyes out. I went to a lot of different lawyers and talked to judges, knocked on doors, and said, "What do I have to do? Can you help me?"

You just went to the courthouse and knocked on doors?

Yes. I walked around there and talked to the attorneys. Some people said, "We don't have anything to do with this. Why don't you go talk to so-and-so." I worked and worked at it. I was very professional, I was polite. I'd say, "I just don't know how to proceed here," and they'd send me to another office. One attorney who did pro bono said, "I'll ask the judge; you stay in the hallway." That's how I got the order to get the dogs' bodies. He wrote it. He just did it for no cost. He probably thought, "That poor girl, she's always over here. She's always talking to somebody." (laughter) Everybody felt bad about the dogs getting shot.

That's a sad but interesting story.

Still to this day I can't look at their pictures. It just brings up bad memories. Also everything that surrounded it, like the



Tom Weigand
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Sterling's Got It In Gold, shows biscuit shading.



Sterling's Best Kept Secret.

politics in the town, the police. I was so lucky to find one really good cop who would help me. And that one neighbor who called me to say who shot the

dogs. SPCA came to my aid and helped me. I would be so close to having to quit and then someone would come forward and help. It was both a very

bad and very good experience. It really changed my life.

How did it change your life?

I really learned about politics, the police department, the

town, the legal system. I mean, I never even had a parking ticket until then! I didn't know how to do any of this stuff. I got help from everybody and I learned about the system and learned that it was really fair. When we went to court, I told my story and they told theirs and the truth came out. I said, "You know, no matter what, the judge knows what is going on," and he was fair. I also knew that after this no matter what happens in my life I can take anything.

After that, I also wanted to get out of dogs. I couldn't take this kind of thing again and I just said that was it. A friend of mine, Mary Ellen, had repeated the breeding of one of the dogs that was killed. I said I didn't want anything to do with it. She understood. But she did send me a videotape of the puppies and asked me to pick one out for her. (laughter)

She's sneaky!

Of course I saw a special little boy in the litter. I said, "Oh my, that dog..." She said, "He's yours." I said, "I don't think I want him." She said, "He's your dog, you have to come and get him." His name was "Rugby," Ch. Windward's Vintage Sterling. And that's what happened. People told me that I loved my dogs so much I couldn't give up and I had to keep at it. So I did.

That's the good thing about being in a dog breed, there are a lot of nice people.

There really are. So that started me up all over again.

Did the people ever say in court why they shot them?

No. They made stuff up. They thought they had rabies, they just kept inventing one thing after another; they looked ridiculous.

From being at the bottom of the pit and totally done after this, I now have ten dogs and a litter of puppies.

You probably also have a lot of funny stories about your dogs. Do you have any you remember?

I traveled a lot with Copper, and we went to the Bahamas and it was hot. We had to wait for the room, and I had shorts on under my pants so I could change and roll my warm clothes up. I was standing around in the lobby of this very fancy hotel with my dog. There were several choir groups there who were to compete in some kind of contest. They clamored over to my dog and wanted to take their picture with him. So that dog is in photo albums from like Mississippi to the Bahamas. We were waiting for quite awhile and I said, "Let's go to the beach." Copper and I went to the beach and sat under a cabana. I went to the bartender and asked for a drink with some kind of an umbrella thing in it. I didn't care what kind it was as long as it had an umbrella, and a water for my dog. So there we were, Copper and I with our drinks, sitting on the beach. (laughter)

Did Copper get an umbrella in his drink, too? (laughter)

No, he didn't get an umbrella. I thought it was really cool ... this is how I vacation with my dog! (laughter)

What are some of the funny things your dogs have done around the house? I've heard Sammy people tell stories about how smart and funny they are. Do your dogs do that?

Because of what happened I am very overprotective of my dogs. I don't give them a lot of loose, free time. I'm afraid to have anything happen. But one time there was a payroll envelope on the table with some twenty dollar bills in it, along with a stack of mail. Rumpfeazer grabbed the mail, and I came into the kitchen and I saw two dogs with twenties playing tug-of-war! I screamed, "Oh, no you don't!" (laughter) She ran into her crate with the envelope and was sitting on this money. It was funny. Someone said I should have taken a picture of it. But I was trying to get the twen-

ty dollar bills, because they would run off with them. It was like the dogs were saying, "I got this one!" And I would say, "No, no, no, you can't have this one." (laughter)

Then there Rugby. He was spoiled rotten, but he behaved very well. We were at a dog show and he was being groomed. He was fussing around, being an idiot, and I was trying to brush him. Three or four kids came around who were developmentally challenged and I thought he would be too rambunctious for them. As soon as they approached him he sat down and was absolutely still. He let them touch him, pat him, hug him, kiss him. He calmed right down. He knew that he had to behave for these kids. I couldn't believe it because he had been behaving like such an idiot right before they came.

Dogs must pick up on nonverbal cues, more body language cues than we do.

I've also done dogsledding with my dogs. That's really fun. I haven't done it lately because I don't have a lead dog now, but I used to hook them up in the driveway when it was snowing and go up and down the road. It's just a hobby, I don't do any racing. I'd like them to race, but I'm not doing it. (laughter) But they have the ability and I have a sled. I keep saying every year I'm going to train a leader and start up again. It's a lot of fun to see the dogs do it.

And it must be fun to be on the sled.

It's a lot of work being on the sled. You have to make sure that they don't drag you down. They don't listen ... they just run. (laughter) Well, if you have a lead dog they'll listen, they'll stop and go. I've also done obedience.

One of my dogs has a Schutzhund title, probably the only Samoyed who does - an AD, which is an endurance title. I think you had to ride a bike twelve miles and then do some obedience exercise at the end. I said, "I can do that." I knew my dog could do twelve miles, I didn't know if I could ride the bike for twelve miles. (laughter) The dog was doing sledding with Tom in Massachusetts and he came back from sledding in great condition. He was hard as a rock, so I knew he could do

the twelve miles. I said, "We can do twelve miles in 45 minutes; I'll just hook the dog up and he'll drag me around and we'll be done." It was in half-mile sections and we had to go back and forth. The judges were from Germany and didn't speak English. There was a German Shepherd, a Doberman, a Terv, some other breeds of dog, big dogs, and then my Samoyed. I put the harness on him, grabbed ahold of the front of my bike, and he took off at a full gallop. The judge was yelling, "Nein, nein, nein, nein, nein!" (laughter). I was like "What, what, what!?" The other dogs were trotting along and I was at a full out run. "No, no, you all have to go together." I said, "I can't do that. How do I slow my dog down? He's used to running on a sled team." He said, "No, you have to go together, you have to go together." I had to put him on a choke collar and yank him; I thought I would fall off the bike. I was choking the dog, I couldn't do it. What I did was I kept him on the choke collar and let him pull me to the end of the half-mile section and I would wait for everybody. They could see I couldn't hold the dog back. We did the twelve miles and they were all huffing and puffing because they were peddling. I wasn't peddling, I was coasting and just letting the dog pull me ... by the neck so he would slow down. Then at the end we did the obedience exercise. The judges were like, "Nice dog, very strong." People were huffing and puffing and said, "You're not even tired." I said, "No, I didn't have to peddle." They said, "That's not fair you didn't have to peddle." They were yelling at me. I said, "Not only didn't I have to peddle, I had the brakes on most of the time." (laughter) I still see some of these people to this day and they say, "I remember you with that Samoyed." It was really funny. I think the endurance test would be a good thing to add to our Versatility test.

How many dogs have you put an obedience title on, or other titles?

Only two. I put a CD on my first dog, but he never went past that. Then Kizzy, my international traveler, got a CD in Canada, the United States and Mexico. She was trained to

Graduate Novice, but I just never went on. I went to an obedience class with Rugby and he was very good, very obedient, and he stood very well. He was one of the best dogs in the class. It was an obedience club training class - I'll probably get into trouble saying this - the instructor said, "If you want him to do really well I'd put a prong collar on him." I said that wasn't going to happen. I got really angry at that, because my dog was better than all the other dogs, and I thought, "You want me to hurt him?" I got turned off by the intensity they were asking for.

Was that awhile back? They don't use that much anymore.

It was way before the food incentive method. At that time I guess it was a new technique, using prong collars, because I went to other classes and they put them on puppies. It was ridiculous. I got turned off.

Have you done any other performance with your dogs?

No, not really. I've never done agility because I don't want to teach them to walk on top of things and crawl under things. It's a protective mechanism; I don't want them to be any smarter than they already are, knowing they could jump up on something and get out. They'll run along the fence and jump up but they don't know they can go over it, which they could. I'm sure they would love agility, but I don't want them to learn.

How tall is your fence here? It's about five feet.

They probably could get over that.

Yes, if they learn to jump over things, they could.

You have ten dogs here now. What's your kennel setup like?

My dogs are all in the kitchen, they stay in crates. They go out in the big open yard and run around, then they come in and get fed and go into their crates at night.

What do you feed? How important is their nutrition?

I feed Purina, or Iams. I add a little canned food to it at every meal. I don't supplement with anything. Their nutrition is taken care of with the dry dog food. I don't use raw food, not that's it's bad, but I'm happy with the research that Purina and Iams do on their food and I feel it's very good.

How much showing are you doing now, and how much time does it take for you to get the dogs ready to show as far as grooming?

I go in spurts. Now with the gas being so expensive I don't drive as far for a small show. I don't want to spend \$200 in gas and maybe not get one point. (laughter) I have to plan where I want to go.

I'm sure that's true for everyone.

Yes, the shows are shrinking. I would probably go about two weekends a month. My dogs basically live in the house but they go outside and dig holes to get underground and they get really dirty. They're dogs. I take them to the kennel where I have a grooming room and I get them ready. I pre-groom and get all the dirt off of them first, brush them, then wash and dry them. It takes maybe two hours to get a dog ready. Unless they're blowing coat, then it's like a two-day process.

Do you do much clipping or trimming?

No. One of the reasons I like a Samoyed is that it's a natural breed, you don't have to cut things off of them. I just neaten them up, the hocks and the feet. I see a lot of dogs in the show world that look like they've been to the hairdresser. I don't think a Samoyed should have that done to them.

Do you see that getting rewarded?

Yes. And if those dogs are winning, people feel like they should do it too. I don't do that, though. My dogs have fringes and different lengths of hair, they have a mane, they're not all like one plush dog. Maybe they grow that way, maybe they don't. They're a natural dog and I like to show them that way.

Because you don't do all the cutting, sculpting, etc., does it make any difference in your winning?

I don't think so. That's not the ultimate criteria to win. If the judge knows the breed, if they like your type of dog, if your dog behaves well, moves well, looks well-groomed and in good condition, that's everything. It's annoying to people in the breed to see a dog over-trimmed, but I don't think it makes a huge difference to the judges.

But if you see that rewarded in the ring ...

Well, it's rewarded but it's not looked down upon. I just don't like to see it.

What else would you like to talk about that we haven't?

I do think we could make progress if the Samoyed club would set up a genetic registry for Samoyeds. Which would be - if you have a problem, submit the pedigree with an accurate diagnosis. The database would be coded so that nobody would ever know whose dog it was. Everybody is afraid that people are going to find out that it was their dog. That's so self-defeating. But that's what happens. So I would love to suggest that we find an independent person from some other breed, or a researcher, who would be willing to keep the database and code the pedigrees in so if you had problems you could figure out how they are inherited. You could do that if you had enough information.

How could you then access the information and correct the problems if you don't know who any of the dogs are, where they're coming from?

What it would tell you is the mode of inheritance, so if you have the problem you would know how to avoid it. You would know if you have a carrier, that kind of thing. Right now we have problems that nobody has any idea how they are inherited. If somebody submitted the information to a coded database - which nobody would know that you had Fluffy the 3rd, it would be number 62. Nobody would know who number 62 is, but if Fluffy the 3rd, number 62, came up in four different bloodlines you know this dog was involved. Then you'd see how it is related to anyone else - Fluffy's grandchild, number 674 - then when you get all the number together in code and you do a genetic pedigree, you can figure out the problem. I wish people would be able to do something like that. That way there isn't any retribution, and people don't think it's a big witch hunt. Because it's not a witch hunt, it's trying to help get rid of a problem.

You would think some research companies would do it.

Yes. But I think people are worried that their name will get out. It would have to be done anonymously by the researcher. They have to do it that way anyway when they're coding

genetic problems in any kind of database. They give them a number.

People don't know that.

No. Coming from my background I know you could do that very easily.

That's why you're a valuable resource to talk to, because there's not that many who understand it, it's not a common vocation.

And there's different types of genetics, too. I dealt with hundreds and hundreds of dogs. Some people deal with a disease entity. I learned a population approach to breeding.

There is something we've not talked about yet which is the biscuit color that's made you sort of famous.

Copper is the biscuit dog that I have, who has won titles from all over the world. I'm often asked by the judges' education at the Nationals to bring Copper. So he gets to go to almost all of them. He's such a great dog; he gets up on the stage and looks at everyone like, "I see you looking at me ... and I'm looking at you." Because of that, people out West who don't know me, know Copper. They don't know who I am but they know my dog. (laughter) Someone told me that they were talking about him at Crufts. He has been really interesting to show as a biscuit dog. That color has been discriminated against all over the place.

Isn't it okay now? Aren't people enlightened?

Well, they have been because I kept showing all these biscuit dogs. I have Copper and he's structurally unbelievable, moves great, shows great, and is just an ideal dog. He loves everybody. I can put him with anyone and he shows like a million bucks, it doesn't matter. That's unusual for a male Samoyed. Anyway, people would breed to him and I would keep the biscuit one of the litter - and it's a recessive trait so there's more white dogs than biscuit dogs, etc. He's only been bred to white dogs and often will get a biscuit puppy in the litter. That proves that the dam carries biscuit. I keep those and show them to their championship, and after awhile people say, "Here she comes again with another one of those biscuit dogs." (laughter) So the judges have learned that it's okay. Sometimes they'll say, "This is a biscuit Samoyed." I say, "I

know!" So because of him, not intentionally, I've promoted the color as being okay in the breed. Now I see more people showing biscuit dogs. It's good, there's nothing wrong with that. It is part of our breed.

A lot of Samoyeds have biscuit spots.

Yes, biscuit tinting, or biscuit ears.

Is he completely biscuit?

Yes.

What's in your future in the breed; what do you still hope to achieve, where do you see yourself in five years?

I'm getting older, but I'm going to keep going until I can't run. (laughter) At this point I'm trying to breed a special - not that I haven't always been trying to do that - a dog that is absolutely the epitome of what I'm trying to do. Everybody tries to do that in every litter. I keep trying. I would like to apply for judging, because a day will come when I can't run with the dogs anymore. I just love the dog shows. I love to see the tents and get all excited about it. I want to still be involved with dogs. I always have been. I don't want to ever give that up. I'd like to do more artwork when I retire. So I see myself in five years semiretired and doing more artwork, judging, and hopefully have the dog I'm trying to breed out being campaigned.

If there were no obstacles whatsoever as far as money or time, and you dream big, what would you hope to achieve? Other people I've asked this question say, "To win a National Specialty," or "To win Westminster."

I would like to JUDGE Best in Show at Westminster. That's a big dream. I would love to have my hands on those fabulous dogs and make that decision. That would be awesome! Copper is a Best in Show dog and he won a National Specialty in Canada and I handled him to these incredible wins. That was really special. I would really like to have a dog that I would say to myself, "This is IT! This is the best dog." Like the Delmonte This Is It dog I talked about earlier. This is a dog for history to remember.

*Thank you. **