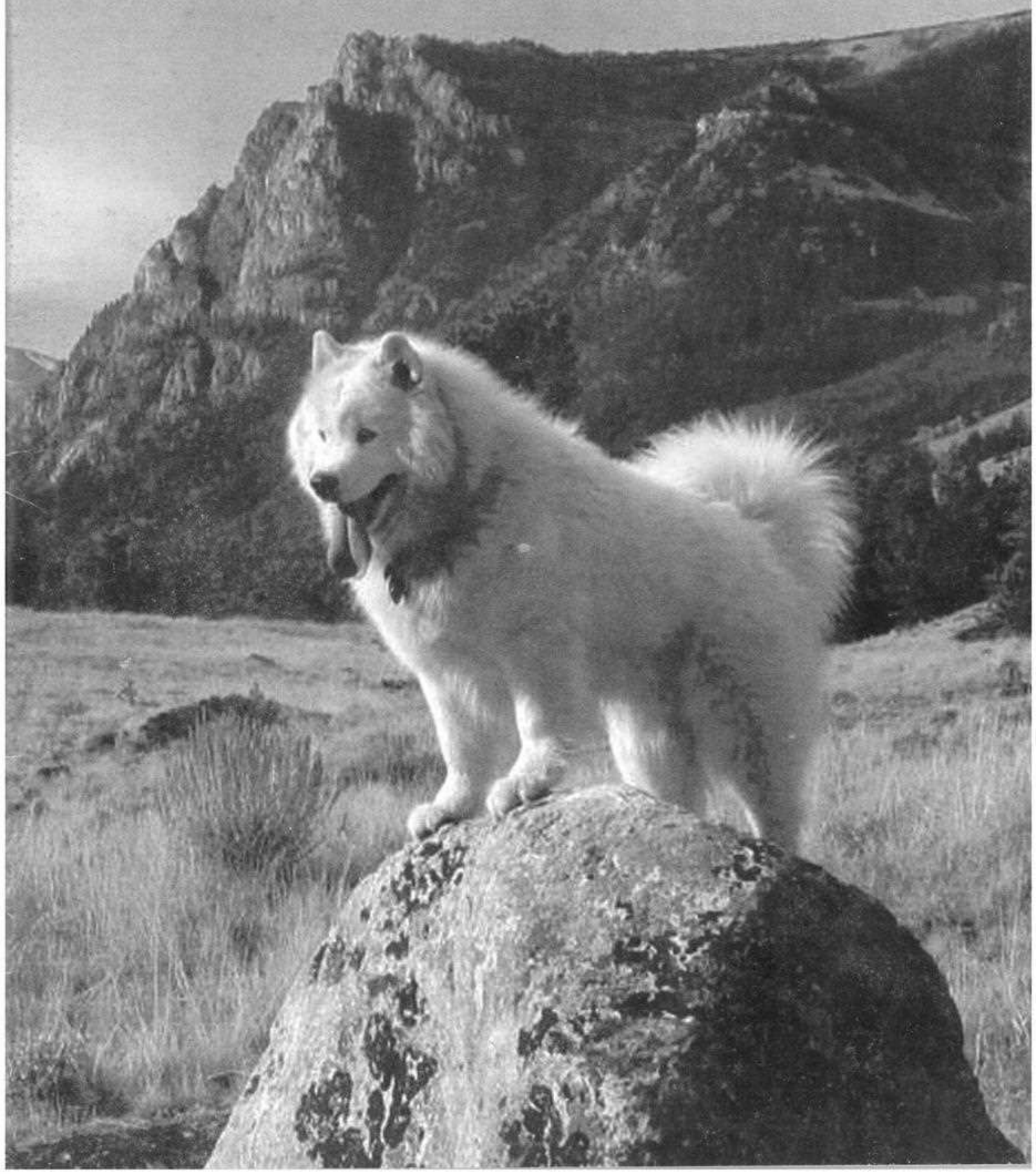


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THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Jim and Sharon Hurst
ORION
Florence, Oregon

Part II

This interview was conducted in the motor home of Jim and Sharon Hurst in October 2006 by Alona Robison.

Who or what has influenced your breeding the most over the years?

Sharon: I would probably have to say it was Lloyd Bracket who influenced us the most. But we really did it all on our own with help from articles.

Jim: [looking at photo] Here's Edd Bivin.

Sharon: Oh, yes. This is Jim's Breed picture with Edd. He was hitting Jim's hand. (laughter)

I know that you don't have any Samoyeds now. You've got your little Havanese now, but what was the largest number of dogs that you kept at one time?

Sharon: I think it was down to five because we wanted them to be house dogs and not yard dogs. That was the most we ever had in our possession, but we did many co-ownerships with Robin Gowen and Penny and Skip Miller. They're now in Alaska. In the last Samoyed Club of America Bulletin that we just got, one two-page color ad just sprung out at me. It was Orion's Shaman of something, and he's bred and owned by Skip and Penny. He's a beautiful dog and they were announcing his retirement from the ring. He's Bud's son, so he has to be pretty old. Bud was fourteen years old when he died of a tumor on his spleen. It really devastated us.

It always does.

Jim: We shouldn't forget to mention Dolly and Bob Ward.

Sharon: That's right. In the first Samoyed book Dolly wrote, she handwrote in it to me how Jim and I deserved to be in this book because I had come back on the scene and had done so many wonderful things. Then they put out a second Samoyed book. Unfortunately she died



Four of the Orion Samoyeds in the back of the Hurst's Mercedes.

just about the time it was being published, so I never got her to write in it. But she was one of the great breeder-judges. Mardee Ward-Fanning, who is another top breeder-judge, is their daughter.

I interviewed her two years ago in Montana.

Jim: Dolly liked Bud.

Sharon: In her most recent book, the one she and Bob wrote just before her death, she dedicated a good portion of the book to our Orion Samoyeds. In the book she actually says, "Of course, there will always be a soft place in my heart for Bud."

That's really special.

Sharon: I'm really sorry I wasn't able to get that second book autographed.

How did you come up with your kennel name?

Sharon: Orion is a star constellation and what I planned to do was breed many stars! I also felt it should be a short name so that if I sold a dog to someone who wanted to put their kennel name on it I was leaving them space to do that.

That's a great idea. A lot of

people don't think about that.

Sharon: Even Polar Mist is difficult for someone to put their kennel name and the name of the dog on there. There's just no room left.

Did you ever name your litters with any sort of scheme?

Sharon: Yes. I bred an Ice Way bitch out of Reno, her name was Marca, and I bred her to Omar. That produced Mishka who I named Orion's Mishka of Marcomar. I could just look at the name and I knew that it was from that breeding. I did quite a few litters like that.

Do you think that you have established a distinguishable line over the years? What do you think others are looking for when they think of your line?

Sharon: There are still people who remember us very well.

Jim: What we tried to strive for in our dogs was substance. The old Sammy. I think if anybody remembers anything about our breeding that was what we were trying to do. I like big paws, which they are supposed to have to work in the snow. I like big structure. That's what we tried to breed.

Sharon: We've saved quite a bit of Bud's frozen semen and we really would like to get another dog out of Bud and a beautiful bitch. But the last two breedings we've done, the people who owned the bitch wanted to keep the pick male. I really couldn't do much about that. Carol Hjort from back East, used Bud's semen and produced two males that she showed. She finished both of their championships quickly. Carol and I had fallen in love with the same male, which she kept and has gone on to do really good things with him. The interesting thing is she finished the second pick for the people she sold him to, a really well-known and respected doctor and his wife who email me all the time. Carol sold them what we had determined to be the second pick and he went on to win a specialty under Karen McFarland, a breeder-judge, and did a lot. So I would have been just as well off taking the second pick.

Don't you find with first and second pick, it's kind of that way? There's just nuances of difference.

Jim: Yes.

Sharon: Doug and Bo Gloster used Bud's frozen semen and they wouldn't let me have any puppies! (laughter) They either co-owned or kept all of them.

You need to make that a stipulation.

Sharon: We are actively trying to find someone and we've had a few people contact us. We would love to have another Samoyed. Bandit, this little guy who only weighs twelve pounds, loves all dogs. We were down at the Samoyed Club of Los Angeles specialty and they had a Havanesse specialty at the same time. I brought Bandit over to the Samoyed ring because I always like to see what's going on, and he absolutely fell in love with this big male that was there. He thought that was the greatest thing he ever saw! (laughter) The male was very good and a nice boy. They were kind of nose-to-nose and I think Bandit really liked all of that fur.

Your coach is big enough for a Samoyed.

Jim: Yes it is. We had six crates in that 33-foot Monaco stacked in the back end.

Sharon: We had to take the dinette out and build in wooden crates. Another thing when we were in Canada, we were talking to the Sammy people and they actually referred to Jim and I as being "awesome!" (laughter) That made us feel pretty good.

It's not bad to be awesome, is it?

Sharon: I thought it was great, but I didn't really know that I was awesome. (laughter)

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

Jim: They pretty much run neck and neck. Samoyeds generally have good temperament.

Sharon: Yes, you don't have to worry about the temperament.

Jim: I haven't seen very many ill-tempered Sammys, so I don't think that's something people spend a lot of time worrying about. Structure is important. After all, it's a sled dog.

Sharon: We like the bear-type. Structure and type are probably almost hand in hand.

Jim: Typey is bear to us.

Let's talk about conformation. What should a dog's front, rear and side movement be like?

Sharon: I like to see really fluid, sound movement. That's

the first thing that catches my eye. Then if they have that, I look at their coming and going. I don't want them to be too close or spread out. Of course, to single track. I want a nice, balanced look and that's very difficult to find. You often see fabulous sound movement on a dog that's absolutely beautiful but it will have the worst front on it that you've ever seen.

What are you looking for in a head?

Sharon: A bear head - small, very fluffy ears.

Is there a problem with missing teeth at all in the Samoy?

Jim: No, we've not had a problem with that. When Bud was twelve or thirteen years old, we did.

Sharon: His teeth were not

real great at that time.

How important is eye color?

Sharon: Very important. It needs to be very dark.

If you could rate the whole dog on a point scale of 100, how many points would you assign to the head?

Sharon: At least 33 percent.

Jim: You've hit it right on the button.

You both are so in tune with each other.

Sharon: That's the thing that was really great for me - to find someone who is so into this and with whom I'm able to share my life. Jim got so hooked when those people started clapping. He wanted to know when the next show was. That's when I had to go buy another puppy to get him started.

Jim: We really miss the shows.

I know. It gets in your blood.

Jim: So many of the people we don't see anymore were great friends.

Well, keep looking and you'll come up with that other puppy.

Sharon: I hope so. We still have about twenty vials of Bud's frozen semen but finding the perfect bitch to breed him to is difficult.

When you have semen frozen like that, do you will it to someone when you're gone?

Sharon: Yes, that's what Jim and I have talked about doing. I know that Bo Gloster and Doug Haldeman are two people we feel we might do that with. Out of their litter of only three puppies, all are champions.



BIS, Ch. Orion's Bud Light of Polar Mist, "Bud," Group 3, judge Les Kodner, March 1992, #1 Samoyed in America.

Naah ↑



Bud on one of Jim's subdivision waterfalls.

We'd like to give a portion to them, and we're thinking of Carol Hjort because she's done such a great job showing those males.

That is a consideration when you have frozen semen, isn't it?

Sharon: Yes. If Robin Gowen were still in it, we'd give some to her too. But she now has a daughter and she hasn't been to a show all year. She sent me a picture of her daughter who is going into the sixth grade. She's running around to soccer practices and everything else and doesn't have time for the things she used to do. She and her husband, Ralph, were so much fun to be with. Ralph's big claim to fame was that he raised snakes. He was a wonderful guy and a lot of fun to be around. He never brought any of his snakes to the dog shows. (laughter)

How important is pigment in the Sammy, and would you breed to a dog that had missing pigment?

Sharon: Pigment is very important. If a dog had a small break in pigment, I might, if he had everything else I wanted.

How about what they call "winter nose?" Do you have that in the Sammy?

Sharon: We didn't have it in our line. We always had nice, black noses.

What should be the relationship of the chest depth to the rest of the dog? Should the chest come to the elbow, above it, below it?

Sharon: Maybe slightly above, I suppose. I would actually have to put my hand on one to think about that.

Jim: When we were picking dogs or bitches out of the litter, or evaluating one, movement was always a very big thing. Movement and the head.

Sharon: The other thing is the attitude. When we saw a puppy we looked for attitude. I remember Marilyn Gitelson had a litter and I was going to buy a bitch and had already bought a dog. She told me she was keeping the first pick female for herself but I could pick from the other three running around in the backyard. It didn't take me long at all. I saw them all running around and there was one bitch that sort of walked away from the other pups. She would stand there, pose and look around. I always look for that. I look for a dog that is standing out and saying, "I'm apart from

all of this." So I told Marilyn that I really liked this bitch, but I wanted to see the one she picked. She brought her out to the yard and moved her around. I said, "Thank you very much!" And I picked up Mishka and hit the road! (laughter) In my opinion, she was by far and away the best of the litter. That proved out because she did better than any of them in the show ring. In fact, I don't think the rest of them finished.

You have to go with your gut instinct sometimes, don't you?

Sharon: Jim is very good at analyzing litters.

Do you have a method, or do you watch for what hits you?

Jim: It's kind of an instinct, you might say. It's a feeling I get about one puppy over the other. Maybe it's the way it takes to me or looks.

Sharon: We like them to pose.

Natural show dogs.

Sharon: Yes. It does help. When you bring a dog in the ring that is not going to look at you ...

Jim: You never know what they're going to do. Mishka was a beautiful bitch and very showy. But she had this habit, when we got to the finals and the judge picked her out ... maybe we were in Group or in Breed and the judge had pulled out four or five, and she was just absolutely a picture. When the judge would come along and start looking, she would turn one foot. I have it on video. I don't know what made her do it.

Sharon: She would move that foot to a position that would almost make her look like she was straight stufled. She did it every time.

Jim: She was perfectly stacked and everything was going great. I'm feeling good on the lead, here comes the judge, and there goes that foot!

Sharon: It was always on the judge's side.

Jim: I don't know how many losses she got because of that foot.

And her perfect bad timing.
(laughter)

Sharon: It was always hard showing males, too. We were at some shows in Arizona. Darla Cassidy and her husband have beautiful Samoyeds and they were at the show. They had a male and a female special



Bud, always the down, taking a bow after taking BIS over 1,792 entries at the Santa Cruz KC.





Three of Bud's puppies.

entered, and we had Bud entered. When they got to the show I saw they only had the bitch there and not the dog. I asked Darla where her dog was and she said her bitch was in full-blown season and he doesn't do very well when that happens. I looked at her and said, "Well, guess what you're going to do to me!" (laughter) I went in the ring and we did take the Breed, but it was tough. I stayed away

from her as much as I could.

It's hard to keep their minds on business then.

Sharon: Yes. Bitches are much easier to show. They stick with you a lot better than a male does. But we kind of like the males. That's why we'd like to get another male, and we'd like him to come down from Bud. But we haven't found a bitch yet.

You'll find her.

Sharon: We usually get several inquiries and we've had a few that we've had to turn down, because they have to be champions. We're not going to breed to anything that's not a champion first. It has to have a compatible pedigree and I have to look at them.

Jim: If you're going to get one, you'd better get with it, kid. (laughter)

What do you think is the ideal

front? What's the shoulder layback? Is it supposed to be 45 degrees, or something else?

Sharon: Forty-five degrees.

What is the ideal topline for a Sammy? Is it just for looks or is it a functional topline?

Sharon: It's functional because of the sled pulling. It's slightly lower in the rear than it is in the front.

What is the ideal height for both a dog and a bitch?

Sharon: Twenty-one inches for bitches and 23 1/2 inches for males. The judges did seem to want to go toward the heavier boned and bear-type.

What is the ideal tail length and set?

Sharon: It always has to be up over the back, but loosely, not tight. The length has to come down to the hock.

You already said you wanted the ears to be smaller. What is the earset?

Sharon: Not too close, but

fairly close together. The ears have to be rounded and not pointed.

What is the ideal foot?

Sharon: I guess you'd describe it as a little pad.

Jim: Something that will work in the snow.

So a little bit larger foot then?

Sharon: Yes, to go with the larger legs. You don't want it to be overly large so that it detracts from the dog.

What are the most serious faults in the breed today, or the most com-

mon ones?

Sharon: Fronts are probably one of the worst things. There just aren't very many dogs with good fronts. I have to say rears too, followed by side movement. I see more dogs that look good from the side, and then aren't good either coming or going.

Jim: We saw a beautiful dog in Canada.

Sharon: Yes, he looked a lot like Bud. The gal had bought him from Sweden. I contacted

Lynette Hansen-Blue, the judge, and told her about the dog. I respect her opinion and she said he was good to look at but his front was terrible and that wasn't acceptable in any way to her. Jim and I only saw the dog from the side, but he took two or three Bests in Show. He's really flashy, and some of the judges miss the coming and going. As long as they look good from the side and if they are showy, and this dog was so showy. In fact, it was cute



Many of the Orion owners and handlers at the San Rafael specialty, early 1990s.



The specialty again without the owners.

because there was one day that the handler had him in the ring and Jim was watching outside the ring. The handler suddenly realized she didn't have any more bait left and she asked her assistant for more. The assistant came running back with a great big hot dog. That dog was just jumping and bounding around the ring and trying to get at that hot dog. It ruined him and he was just awful. (laughter) That was in the Group and I think he actually ended up placing.

What hereditary problems can crop up in Samoyeds?

Sharon: Hereditary problems include hip dysplasia, found in many large breeds, and progressive retinopathy, a blinding eye disease. These must be controlled through a careful and regimented breeding program, and all breeding animals must be certified clear.

Also, recent studies have shown a significant increase in autoimmune diseases stemming from thyroid disturbances. Dr. Dodds, 938 Stanford Street, Santa Monica, California 90403, (310) 828-4804 is the BEST cer-



An Orion litter of six in front of the mural on the rear of the Hurst's RV.



Orion's Standing Ovation

Co-Owner/Handler: Robin Gowen



Orion's Crystal Image

Breeder/Co-Owner/Handler: Sharon Hurst

tifying agency. Hips are cleared by OFA and eyes by ACVO (your vet or canine ophthalmologist will give you the information). As these diseases often do not surface for many months or years, certification of sire and dam is the ONLY protection for your puppy.

Do you think the Samoyed standard is a good one? Is there anything about it you'd like to see changed?

Sharon: There are some things, but basically it's pretty good. Any standard you have is just the judges' interpretation of it anyway.

Do you think champions should be special?

Sharon: If I had one, I certainly would, if it was good quality. Always.

Do you think making the Top Ten or Twenty means anything?

Sharon: Yes, definitely. That's the thing to make everyone know who you are and where you came from and where you're going. To have had the top-winning Samoyed in the nation was a very big deal. And then having him be top producer. Normally it takes six champions in Samoyeds to make your dog a top producer. Bud had nine that year.

Do you think judging is fair, for the most part? Is there anything you'd like to see improved?

Jim: I don't know if we really have much expertise in that right now. We've been out of the ring for so long. It's very unusual that we find any of the judges we used to show under. They are all new people. To try to critique them and not know them, would be wrong. I really can't say.

Sharon: Whenever we have watched the Samoyeds being judged, we usually pick the one the judge puts up. So I think they're doing a pretty good job. Oftentimes, they will put up owner-handlers over regular handlers.

Jim: The main thing I am happy about is the return of the bear type. We are seeing that now.

Things go through fads in breeds.

Jim: I see some really great dogs in the ring now.

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

Sharon: Normally an all breed judge. There are a lot of really good breeder-judges too. But an all breed judge has an overall look.



Ch. Orion's Tchucon of Oakhurst

Co-Owner/Handler: Tom Weems

In the past when you were showing, when you ran across what you thought was poor judging, do you think it was politics or the judge being unfamiliar with the breed?

Jim: (laughter) Politics has always been, and always will be, a big part of the dog show world, as it is with horse shows, cat shows and whatever you're showing. I think the good thing about the politics is that you get some sort of strength with some judges because they know you. You've paid your dues. You've been in the ring hoofing it and showing dogs for twenty years. Some of the judges take that into consideration and I think that's good. The other part of the politics, where money gets involved in a big way, is not good. There was a scandal in the judging. I can't remember what year it was and the judge is now gone.

There have been a couple of scandals where judges were doing what they should not.

Sharon: There are people who invite the judges out to dinners. They wine and dine them and that makes it pretty difficult for somebody who has never SEEN the judge before.

Jim: The owner-handler has a tough row to hoe. You have to have a pretty exceptional dog to get anywhere as an owner-handler. When a judge flies across the United States to judge he sees that same handler in the ring, day after day, and they lean that way.

Sharon: When I was showing and I would get the premium list, the first thing I would look up was where the judge was from. If the judge was from back East that was so much better than a California judge.

Because the California judges knew every single one of the handlers.

I've heard that before.

Sharon: I always asked where judges were from. Sam Pizzino and Bill Hickson were both from Ohio.

Jim: The Midwest has always been good to us. When you get to Westminster that gets pretty political.

Do you think advertising influences judges?

Jim: It can.

Do you think it's ethical to retouch advertising photographs?

Jim: We would never do that. Not to the dogs.

Sharon: If there was something in the background that you didn't like, you could cut it out, but never touch the dogs.

You've always shown your own dogs. Did you ever use a pro han-

ller?

Sharon: Yes, we did occasionally, because we wanted to keep the pro handlers happy with us. We didn't want to make enemies out of any of them, so whenever we were at a show and we entered an extra dog, we'd hire one of the pro handlers to show.

Jim: Not very often.

Sharon: Most all of the handlers really respected us. We did very well with all of them.

Jim: Most of them are still friendly. We see them at the shows now and even though we're not showing they'll still talk. We don't see a lot of the judges, though.

Sharon: A lot of them are gone.

I've been out of it seven years and that's very true.

Sharon: We really liked Lina Basquette.

Jim: Did you ever meet her?

No.

Jim: She had a very interesting life.

Sharon: Before she was a respected dog show judge, she danced in the Ziegfeld Follies in New York. After that she was a silent movie actress.

Jim: She had a notorious friendship with Adolf Hitler.

Oh my goodness! There's a claim to dubious fame. (laughter)

Jim: She was quite a character. She bred Great Danes for more than twenty years, her kennel was Honey Hollow, located in Pennsylvania.

Then there was the tragic loss of that one couple ...

Sharon: Betsy and Quentin LaHamm. They lived in California, near Sue and Tony DiGiorno who were very good friends with them. They always did very well by us in the show ring. I really loved it whenever they were judging because they really judged dogs, and we felt usually that we had the best ones there. They treated us very well. They both gave me Group Ones with Bud. For one of the Group Ones, I went back in and took Best in Show.

Jim: They were neat people.

Sharon: They got called back to Florida for a judging schedule. They flew down there and were getting ready to judge the next day. They were out driving in the late afternoon and a car piled into them. There was no alcohol involved.



Orion's Princess Vela

Co-Owner/Handler: Diane Landstrom

Jim: It killed them both.

Really. I had not heard that. What a shame.

Jim: He judged at Westminster.

My mother went to some of his talks. She had Shepherds.

Jim: He was an expert in conformation.

Sharon: Yes. He held a class in Eugene, Oregon that Jim and I went to. It was about soundness and movement, bone structure.

Jim: He really went into it very deep. And Betsy was a good judge.

Let's talk a little bit about training. How do you train your puppies and at what age do you start?

Sharon: I start them around four weeks. I set them up on a table and teach them to stand there. I lift up the rear end, under the crotch and drop it. I just keep doing that. For the front, I lift the chest and drop it. I try to make sure that every time I drop it, it comes into the correct position. That's how I grade them. When I'm ready to choose a puppy, I pick them up from the rear and drop them and look how they land. I do

the same thing in the front. Usually when they land correctly they'll move correctly.

You used to go to a lot of fun matches and training classes, right?

Sharon: Yes.

Isn't it a shame that there are not nearly so many fun matches anymore.

Sharon: I know. For awhile, they were making all the clubs do an extra one per year. It's interesting going back - when Sam Pizzino called that day. He had never called us before and out of the blue he calls. Jim put me on the phone and Sam had read the article

that The Samoyed Quarterly had printed up about our history. He wanted to make sure I got my judging license. Which I never did get.

Had you thought about doing that?

Sharon: Yes, I wanted to do it, but the Orange County Samoyed Club invited me down to judge once. The timing wasn't good and I didn't do it. I just sort of dropped it then. I have ring stewarded a bit, but I just am not able to get the judging assignments.

That is a way that you two can get back into the shows.

Jim: We've judged at Santa Cruz.

Sharon: Jim did Best in Show. Dino Marazzi is the president of Santa Cruz Kennel Club and he would have us come. I did the Groups and Jim did Best in Show. What was that you put up? Was it an American Staffordshire? Anyway, Jim put up this dog and he was beautiful. I was sitting outside the ring and I could see why he put him up. I took pictures of Jim with the dog. Then I found the owner and it turned out the dog was out of the number one Terrier in the nation. So obviously, he was big time.

You missed your calling, Jim.

Sharon: Jim knows how to pick them, no matter what breed they are. He just looks at them and knows. I would never attempt to pick a dog without his input.

Have you done any sledding or any obedience other than conformation with any of your Samoyeds?

Sharon: No. I bought a sled from Dog Show Specialties once. I paid \$300 for the thing. At that time we lived on top of a hill in Newcastle. I went out there with this contraption. I had bought all the harnesses and hooked up the Samoyeds. They looked as happy as heck, but the thing was, I couldn't go down the hill. If they start going down the hill the sled will go faster than the dogs because it's on wheels.

So what did you do with the sled?

Sharon: I returned it. It was slightly used, but we never did anything.

How important is training to winning in conformation?

Sharon: Very important. You have to have a dog that will pull into position with both front



Onion Reflects on Perfection

Co-Owner/Handler: Robin Gowen

feet and both rear feet coming down nice and straight. The stifle has to be in the correct position. You can't get to that point without doing substantial training to get them to appear to be a natural presence in the ring.

Do you have specific advice to owners who want to handle their own dogs?

Jim: Good luck! (laughter) In almost every breed there have gotten to be so many professional handlers, it appears to me to be really tough to start now.

Sharon: You have to be absolutely certain that your dog is well trained and impeccably groomed.

Would you suggest they join an all breed, breed club or go to handling

classes?

Sharon: Yes, all of the above. If there are any Samoyed clubs around, that would be helpful. They would probably be able to put you on to handling classes. The way I learned was by going to handling classes every week. It didn't take too long to where I was able to go in and do it myself. I work with people as if I were the judge - telling them what to do, where to stand, to go down and back. They're in line, I call them forward and make sure they learn that they have to bring their dog around and have the rear end of the dog right in front of me. They have to be off a couple of feet to the side. That is one of the biggest

mistakes people make. They go down and back, and the judge can only see THEIR rear end going down and back, not the dog's. Being unable to go in a straight line is one of the biggest problems that owner-handlers have. It was my original problem. I was all over the ring.

Do you think a breed should do, or be able to do, what it was bred for originally?

Jim: Yes.

Sharon: It would be nice, but it's very difficult.

Jim: Think of the hunting dogs - Terriers and Sporting dogs. They have to go out to these trials to go all the way. So they should be able to. I'm trying to think of a dog that was bred for what it can't do any-

more - the St. Bernard doesn't carry his jug anymore. I don't know what the Havanese was bred for. To grow hair, I guess. (laughter)

You've trained a lot of dogs over the years. But what have the dogs taught both of you?

Jim: I've always had dogs as pets. But getting into dog showing and breeding became such a big part of our life. A good part, because of the friends we met and the traveling we did. We showed in Mexico, in Canada, back to Westminster. It was a way of life and a darned good one. We met a lot of people from all walks of life.

Sharon: Almost always when you meet motor home people, even if you're in an RV park, they're always neat. We were in an RV park and I needed a cube of butter for dinner. I went into the little store there and the guy said they didn't carry butter. And a guy who was in there said, "Oh I've got butter back in my rig. Come with me." I went over there and got a cube of butter. RVers are very thoughtful and that's why Jim and I like this life. There was a period a few years ago that we actually did this full time for three years. Now, it's been a year and a month since last September.

Jim: We kept a lot of the letters that we've received from people we sold puppies to. The Christmas cards that say, "Grandpa and Grandma, here I am under the tree."

Sharon: I was just looking at some the other day. I started collecting the letters and putting them in an A-to-Z file. All of these people were wildly raving about their dogs and how happy they are that they bought them from us. It makes us feel very good.

Jim: There were some great letters.

Sharon: I do the same thing with Jim's contracting business. In the past, when he's built houses for people they send him really nice notes to let him know how great he was. I started a binder of all the letters and call it First Built Home.

You wonder what people think after time, don't you?

Jim: Yes. It's so nice to get those Christmas cards.

Sharon: Speaking of Christmas cards, Jim does this every year. He is a great writer and



Orion Calls The Wind Mariah

Co-Owners/Handlers: Valarie Zimmerman

writes poems. Every year we do a special Christmas card. It's always got a dog on it. We send it out to a couple hundred people.

Jim: That's why we get these letters back.

Sharon: This is a card we did last year. I went into Fred Meyer and saw this big Santa. I went to the manager and asked if I could bring my dog in and stand him next to the Santa. I took him in and got this picture. This is one of the poems that Jim wrote:

"It's that wonderful, beauti-

ful time of the year, when crisp winter winds carry songs of good cheer. When each of us plan in our own special way, the gifts we might give on this Christmas Day. Our thoughts wander back like leaves in the breeze, to earlier days and bright Christmas trees. We smile and remember the ones we hold dear, friends and relations who are no longer here. But most of all we wish to say to each of you here, Merry Christmas to all and a Happy New Year. - From Sharon, Bandit and Jim."

That is very pretty.

Sharon: Jim does this every year. I just have to put some Christmas stuff around, I sit him down and give him his notepad and tell him to write me a poem.

A cup of hot apple cider to bring in the feeling? Let's talk about your breeding and whelping practices now. Are your breedings natural or controlled?

Sharon: Natural, always.

How do you determine a fair stud fee?

Sharon: The stud fee should be about what the first pick puppy would sell for. But it doesn't always happen that

way. Usually the stud fees are much lower than what the person could get. That's why I always prefer to take first pick. I just got an email from a woman who bought a Samoyed from us years ago. It died a couple of years ago. I get calls almost every week from someone who wants to buy a Samoyed. She told me how great we were and I told her I still had her letters. She asked if I knew anyone. I told her I had three people I could recommend. One is Lynette Hansen-Blue (Polar Mist) in Oregon who breeds beautiful dogs. The others are Bo Gloster and Doug Haldeman (Shaman) in Washington. I told her I was hoping to find a bitch to breed Bud to, but it was something I could not give a timeline for. She said that was fine and she was going to wait. Then she asked how much of a deposit she could send to me. I told her not to, but it made me feel good. I think every single litter we've had over the years was sold before it was born. I would make people fill out questionnaires and send me pictures of their families so I could get a feeling about where the puppy was going. Also so I could pick out what kind of temperament to pick out for that person.

Were your males at stud to outside bitches?

Sharon: Only if they were champions.

Have you ever refused to service a bitch?

Sharon: Oh yes, all the time.

For what reasons?

Sharon: First if they aren't a champion. Or maybe they have a Dudley nose and pigment breaks. Maybe they're just too wolfish-looking. There are a lot more reasons to turn them down than there are to accept them.

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

Sharon: No, I wouldn't breed to a dog with a serious fault.

Jim: That would be carrying on something you don't want to carry on.

What faults, other than eye color, would keep you from breeding a dog?

Sharon: The pigment, lay-back ...

Jim: Hip dysplasia, teeth, bad bite ...

Sharon: Presence and attitude. As I said, being able to pick it up, drop it and have it fall into place.

How many litters do you think a bitch should have? What's the youngest a bitch should be bred?

Sharon: The youngest would be between a year and eight months and two years. Normally the maximum is two times.

Do you ever help your bitches whelp? If so, how do you do that?

Sharon: No, I don't really help them other than be with them and have oxytocin just in case I need it. I have my trusty vet standing by in case I have a

problem.

Do you supplementally feed your very young puppies?

Sharon: Oh, yes.

What do you use?

Sharon: I give them fish oil capsules, egg yolk and Lipoderm. I also give them a digestive enhancement powder.

At what age and how do you wean puppies? Do you wean them or let the bitch do it?

Sharon: I assist the bitch and make sure she gets enough breaks. I have the puppies get less and less time with her.

At what ages do you evaluate your puppies for pet or show?

Sharon: I start getting a good idea at eight weeks. I'm absolutely positive by the tenth.

Have ever culled a litter or put a puppy down?

Sharon: No, I've never had to, fortunately.

How do you determine what a show puppy should sell for?

Sharon: Normally whatever the market is at that particular time. It's pretty hard to get the prices out of Samoyeds. I feel they have always sold for less than what they should. It's interesting that for the Havanese you can't touch a puppy for under \$1,400, even for a pet. They go up to around \$3,000. Yet the Samoyeds sell as pets around \$600. And you MAY be able to get \$1,500 for a top show, but probably more likely, about \$1,200. I keep up with things by looking at *Dog Fancy* magazine. I saw that there were about eight ads for Samoyeds

and 28 for Havanese. I don't understand how they can keep the prices up so much, and yet they've got so many on the market.

Unless they're small litters.

Sharon: They don't have as big of litters as Sammies do.

Do you sell on terms, puppy-back contracts or cash?

Sharon: I sell sometimes for cash. Normally if it's show quality, I co-own it and give the people a reduction. Then I'll take a puppy back and approve the stud.

Do you sell on spay/neuter contracts?

Sharon: Limited registration is the way I do it.

It's a nice tool that we didn't have years ago.

Sharon: Yes. There is only one thing I don't like about limited registration. I feel that AKC should set it up so that you cannot breed or AKC register the puppies, but I don't feel it should prohibit you from being able to show. Maybe someone buys a pet, sees it's a really nice dog and would like to take it out and see how it does in the show ring. If it makes its championship, then you release them.

There is some kind of process where you can reverse that, but you have to reverse it before you can show.

Sharon: I'd like to be able to reverse it after testing the waters. Say that it's a limited contract. You may not breed this dog or register anything that's from it, but you can show it. You can take it to an AKC



Christmas card photos.

feel happy about the stability of the home.

Do you have any whelping stories that you would like to share?

Sharon: Only a bad one. A lot of times the vets didn't have scales in their offices like they do now. You didn't go in and weigh your dog before you saw the vet, which they're doing now. I remember we had a litter when we were living in Auburn, and the vet had to do a c-section. She just couldn't push them out and she had been given the oxytocin shot. I just didn't want to wait any longer, so we did a c-section. He put her so far out, because I think he saw all that hair and thought she weighed 25 pounds more than she did. Not only did she not wake up for a day, but all the puppies died. He was pulling the puppies out and I was trying to save every one of them. But I couldn't save any.

That is sad.

Back when you had the dogs, what did you feed them?

Sharon: I used to feed the puppies Purina Puppy Chow. It was a little round kibble. There was some kind of sugary coating and the puppies loved it! I can't find it now or I'd still be using it.

It was a milk coating and they took it off the Puppy Chow now.

Sharon: I've bought several different bags of it to see what it looks like. I can't find it anywhere, so they don't carry it anymore. That was one of the best things. I also used Redbarn food but you have to grate it. You used to be able to buy it grated or solid. Now you have to grate it. So I had to buy a special grating tool and have Jim chop the food into pieces before I could start grating it. Then I'd freeze part of it. Right now I'm using Flint River Ranch dog food. Any kind of dog food you feed to Samoyeds there should be no beet pulp in it. Beet pulp makes them turn a bright red when they drool or lick themselves. So you want chicken meal or lamb to be the first ingredient. You don't want to start out with a soy product or something else. You want to make sure it's a meat content and no beet pulp. I think 98 percent of dog food has beet pulp in it. I had to go to Flint River Ranch and it is a really great food. It's high quality with no beet pulp.

How important do you think diet

is in raising a Samoyed?

Sharon: It's very important. Jim doesn't feed them. He just drives them. He's been driving all of our motor homes and buses everywhere. We'll be going to some show and we haven't been there for a year but he knows exactly where to turn to get there. I don't remember it until we get inside.

What are your favorite grooming techniques that you use?

Sharon: I found recently at Sally's Beauty Supply a really wide-toothed comb. It is so nice to comb them with that first and then use the smaller combs. You can get all the mats out with the wide comb. Also, when you're bathing them shampoo first then condition. Leave the conditioner on for awhile and take a hair lift comb and run it through every part of the dog's body. It eliminates all the mats and tangles.

Do you have a favorite conditioning product or shampoo that you like?

Sharon: It's called Green Apple.

A people shampoo?

Sharon: No, it's a dog shampoo. Bandit's hair was kind of curly for awhile and I was told I should use Pantene shampoo to take the curl out. I did use that on him a few times and it came out pretty good. The Green Apple is a little better. It's a really deep conditioner.

Do you do any scissoring with a Sammy?

Sharon: Just the feet.

What about whiskers? Do you leave them on or off?

Sharon: On. I used to take them off because everybody was taking them off. Then I saw a few people letting them grow and I decided I was going to let them grow too.

When you had all of your dogs, did you have the males and females all together, or did you need to keep them separate?

Sharon: Normally they were all together. There was one of Bud's puppies that I kept. I finished his championship and he was an absolutely beautiful dog. He and Bud just could not get along. I found a fantastic family who had bought a dog from me twenty years before. I placed Harley with them and kept breeding rights and show rights. Since they live out in Grass Valley and I'm up here in Oregon, I really didn't do too

much with it. But I always keep the rights just in case I'm in the area and want to do it.

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

Sharon: Look at the Top Ten Samoyeds listed in one of the breed magazines. Research the pedigrees. I would really like to be able to find one of those Top Ten dogs that is an owner-handled dog. I would look at type also.

Do you think they should go to the kennels with the big winners to purchase a pup?

Jim: It's a good place to start. Racehorses prove the fact of what breeding does. They prove it over and over again and you can't argue with it.

Do you want to mention what kennels you think may be the best today and why?

Sharon: Carol Hjort's Jubilee kennels. Doug Halde-man and Bo Gloster of Shaman kennels are doing a very good job too.

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

Jim: I don't think we can speak to that.

Do you think there is adequate literature out there available on the breed?

Sharon: Yes. Dolly Ward's book is really fabulous.

Jim: It's the bible.

Sharon: Dolly and Bob were both all breed judges. She died and - you know it sometimes happens with couples - a few months later Bob was gone too.

I know you said you have your dog photos on the computer. Do you use the computer in any other way with your dogs? Do you have pedigrees online?

Sharon: Yes.

Are you on any internet lists with them?

Sharon: With the Samoyed Club of America, yes. That's why we're still getting calls after all this time and people still remember my kennel name. In fact, if Robin had stayed in the breed, I would have liked to have her carry on our line. We really were enmeshed on who to breed to.

How have the dogs affected your lifestyle?

Sharon: It revolves around them.

Jim: If you're in it whole hog and you're going to shows, it is your lifestyle. It hasn't

affected your lifestyle, it IS your lifestyle.

Sharon: I can't wait to get the AKC Gazette and find out which shows are within a 500-mile radius.

Jim: Where are we going to spend our free time, or where are we going to go for vacation? Are there going to be any dog shows there? Well we could swing here, go to Montana, go here, oh we'll make the circuit. It tells you where you're going, when you're going, how long you're going to be there and the people you're going to meet.

Sharon: We flew back with Bud to Chicago. That was the time he took the Futurity and the Sweepstakes. I think he just about took everything, plus an Award of Merit. He was less than a year old. At the end of the trip, the plane made a stop in Texas. That means they have to transfer our dog. We had several other people going on flights in other directions. We got to the Texas airport and I walked up and told the gal that before I got on the plane I wanted to make sure my dog was on board. She said she couldn't do that. I told her I wanted her to call a manager and be sure my dog was on that plane. I wasn't going to leave Texas without knowing Bud was in his crate.

They brought a manager over and determined that Bud was NOT on the plane. Jim and I looked everywhere for him for four hours! The manager was trying to help find him. I started calling all of my friends to find out if he happened to be put on one of their planes.

Jim: They found him on the tarmac in a crate. Somebody had just parked his crate outside and never loaded him!

Sharon: He was just sitting there.

Wow, that's scary.

Sharon: Yes, it was scary. So then I asked them to put him on the plane and confirm that he was on it.

It's a good thing you didn't leave until he was on there. Who knows how long he would have sat there.

Jim: Or where he would have wound up. They thought he might have gone back to Chicago.

Sharon: They had some ideas on where he might have gone.

I had a handler friend showing the number one Akita many years ago,

and that Akita wound up several states away from Portland where he was supposed to be. So that's a very real thing.

Sharon: When you're traveling with dogs like that, always make certain. If you push the people, they will check, but they don't want to.

That's a very good lesson for people. What are some of the benefits of being in dogs?

Sharon: It's fun to go to the shows and we like to be with them. Just sitting here, I still remember Bud and he would always lay behind that chair there. He would lay up there on the carpet and Jim and I would sit down at 5:30 and have a cocktail before dinner. We would take out the ice cubes and throw them across the room. Bud would lift up his head and catch them.

Jim: That was his cocktail hour. (laughter)

Sharon: We didn't give him very many. At night, he would lay on my side of the bed and sleep. In the middle of the night, he would move over to Jim's side. They don't like to sleep with you because it's too hot.

What have been some of the drawbacks of being in dogs?

Jim: Well, you spend a lot of money that you should have hung onto. (laughter) I can't even estimate how much money we've spent.

Maybe you don't really want to either.

Jim: That's probably why I can't. I'm talking about kennels we've built, fencing we've done, crates we've bought, vet bills, motor homes, gas, parking, registration fees. You know how it is. They don't even blink an eye to charge you \$50 to park at one of these shows.

Sharon: For the Eugene



Kennel Club show, I called Bob Danberg because we wanted to go to it and I didn't get the premium list. The fees to enter the dog went over \$25 a day and the parking was \$50.

Jim: You can go stay in a first-class RV park with 50 amp and all they had was 110 plug. We can't even function on that in this bus. It blows it. It's just very expensive.

Sharon: That's what was good about Canada. They don't do it anymore, but at least in '86 they'd give you money for doing these things. Here in the States, I'd win a Breed and would get a trophy. Certainly if I got Group One, I'd get a bigger trophy. And Best in Show is a great big giant trophy. But now, you win the Breed and all you get is a medallion. They don't pay you back in any way. It just doesn't seem right. I'd rather pay a few dollars more for the entry fee at the start, giving some people some money for awards. It helps keep the game going.

Looking at the benefits and



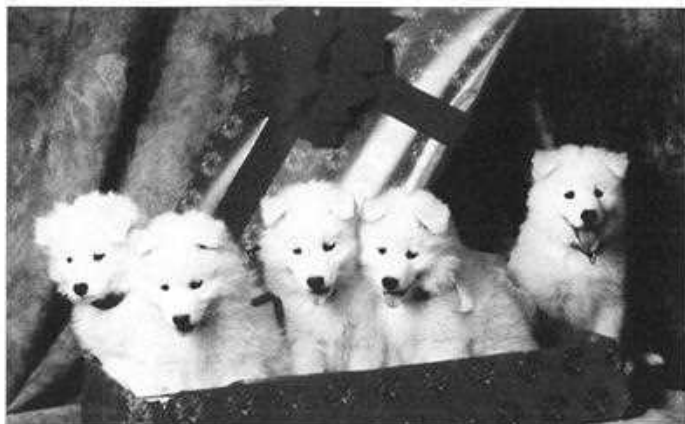
drawbacks, would you say it's been worth it?

Jim: Yes. It's a great way of life. You see these people who have families who are still in it with the kids showing now. It may be expensive, but you can go out and shoot a round of golf

and it's a couple hundred bucks. If you belong to a club, you got your dues to pay. So I guess you spend that money somewhere. You've got a speedboat or you've got something.

Thank you very much.

Both: Thank you. •



Corner... continued from page 7.

majoring in liberal arts and dabbled in art history. She did take a few art classes but she did not do well. This was the time when abstract painting was all the rage and Alice was not able to think in the abstract.

In the years following graduation, Alice continued to dabble in many artistic ventures. She enjoyed glassblowing and making jewelry in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. It was here that she

became fascinated with someone she saw doing airbrush painting. She bought one for herself and started practicing in her kitchen for many months. She got a job working with tourists in Gatlinburg and was on her way, starting by painting people's pets on t-shirts. Her vet saw her artwork and talked to her about dog shows. Having no experience with dogs shows she really had no idea what her vet was talking about, but four years later there was a Saint Bernard

National Specialty in the area and her vet talked her into getting a booth. The show was held outdoors in the constant rain, but the people there helped her keep her tent up through the downpours and even bought some of her items. She went away amazed at the world she had found, hoping that maybe she could make a living painting something she loved. Although she stayed at her tourist job for a few more years, eventually she was able to work full time doing art for the dog show community.

Alice has been doing dog shows now for about 25 years, meeting some wonderful people, not only the exhibitors, but also the fellow vendors who have made her life on the road so pleasant. She airbrushes just about anything people bring to her from shirts, toilet seats, slate, rolling pins, ironing boards to leather bags, agates, mailboxes and tire covers. She also does some scratchboard drawings as well as brush painting with ani-

mals, her favorite subject.

In 2000, Alice met the man who was to become her husband, George Fawver. They have been married for four years and he has become her best friend. George goes with Alice to shows, helping to drive and unload the van and setting up the booth. He has become an accomplished "clear coater" of her paintings, enabling her to complete most of her orders at



the shows. Since most of us want instant gratification, taking the finished picture home is a bonus.

A small, 150-year-old log cabin in the mountains of east Tennessee is where Alice and George call home. With the newly added studio from where she is able to view nature at it's finest, Alice is able to create her works of art. If you are interested in a special item of your own, contact Alice at: alice@poochpainter.com.

