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THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed People

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Jim and Marian Osborn
LYNTHEA
Northridge, California

This interview was conducted at the home of Jim and Marian Osborn in July of 1995 by Barb Matson.

How did each of you get involved with dogs, and when?

Jim: I've owned dogs all my life. I was born and raised on a farm back in Indiana and I would always have dogs around. They were not purebred. They were mutts that ran free. In fact, one of those mutts was part Sammy, which is how I got introduced to the Samoyed breed. When I went off to school, and for several years after that, I didn't have any dogs around, but when Marian and I got married and situated where we could have dogs, I was interested in the Sammy. We looked at other breeds, but chose the Sammies.

When did you get into Samoyeds?

Jim: We bought our first Sammy in 1968, which is 27 years ago.

How about your background, Marian?

Marian: We had dogs as I was growing up, also. We had a Dachshund and a Cockapoo. After Jim and I got married, I wanted a Poodle. We researched all the breeds and decided on a Sammy, particularly because of his having had the part-Sammy before. Dogs have been part of my life, too.

What is it about the Samoyed that has kept you involved for so long?

Jim: The general character of the breed, and character in this sense is a broad description; that is, the personality and temperament of the breed, the fact that it is a natural breed. They are beautiful. You can't deny the beauty. That's what attracts everyone. It's a combination of all those

things. If I was starting over again, I would choose no other breed. Not that I don't like other breeds. I like dogs, period, but I particularly enjoy the Sammies.

What made you decide to show and breed?

Jim: That was just by accident. I am sure we got hooked in like a lot of other people do when they buy a purebred dog. You look at the champions in the pedigree, and so on, and you wonder how good your dog is. You go to a dog show and, win or lose, you kind of get hooked on the sport. We just wandered into it quite by accident in that way. In fact, I didn't know anything about dog shows at all, had never been to one, and didn't care about them at all until

there. In fact, we bought our second one there, also. The first dog turned out to be dysplastic, which happens a great many times. We showed her a few times. She had a three-point major and another win or two, but she was not really that competitive in the show ring. Since she was dysplastic, we had to accept the fact that we could keep her as a pet, or get something else and start over. By that time we were hooked enough that we bought another dog, a young one that was already x-rayed clear with no dysplasia. That bitch became the foundation bitch for everything we produced.

Our very first bitch was White Tundra's Miss Mitzie. Our second bitch, which we subsequently bred from, was White Tundra's Victoria, that we've always referred to as "Mama Bear." We got her from Bob DiGiovanni, a handler and breeder in the Sun Valley area. We bought both dogs from him. They were well-bred dogs with good pedigrees. "Vicky," or Mama Bear, never finished. She was the first dog we showed seriously and we had a lot to learn about handling. She wound up with nine points, one five-point major, and I think about fourteen Reserves. I lost track of counting her Reserves. It was so frustrating. She produced pretty well. She had three or four kids that finished their championships. That was our start. One of her daughters,

Ch. Southern Star of Lynthea was our all-time favorite dog, an outstanding bitch, and she also produced well. Mama Bear and her daughter "Star" were the starting point for us.

How many litters have you bred over the years?

Jim: Somewhere between fifteen and twenty. Sixteen or seventeen, I guess. Not a lot.

Do you have any idea how many champions have come out of those litters?



From left to right: Jim Osborn, Jim's mother and Marian Osborn, and the Osborns' most recent bunch: Lyntheas Stardust Elegance, "Ellie," Lyntheas Last Chance, "Chance," Lyntheas Stardust Doll, "Dolly," and, of course, Kool Kat, "KK."

we got our first purebred dog, and then we got backed into the whole thing.

Where did you find the first dog you showed?

Jim: We got our first purebred Sammy from a kennel here in the Los Angeles area. We didn't know how to go about finding breeders at that point, so we looked in the yellow pages of the phone book. There was one kennel that had an ad, so we went there. It turned out they also showed their dogs, so it was not a pet shop operation or anything like that. We bought our first dog

Jim: I think there are at least ten, and maybe one or two more than that.

Does one of those litters stand out in your mind as having been the best?

Jim: Each litter is unique. Although I don't think there was a single dog that finished its championship in our last litter, largely because of our own lack of motive to show the dogs, any one of those six puppies could have walked into the show ring with my name on it and it wouldn't have disturbed me at all. In terms of evenness and overall quality, that was perhaps the best litter we had. At least two puppies from that litter should have been shown and should have finished, but didn't. That was at least as good as any litter we've had. There were other good litters along the way, but there isn't another one that stands out that much in my mind.

Marian: The last litter was our sixth generation, and I don't think anyone has been bred from that litter, either.

When was the last litter?

Marian: Eight years ago.

If you had to narrow it down, which would you say is the best dog that you've owned or bred?

Jim: Ch. Southern Star of Lynthea has to be the best. There were a couple of other fine animals over the years. There was another dog that never finished his championship, Lynthea's Star Studded Knight, commonly known as "Prince." He was a really fine dog. He did not have some of the "pretties" that some of the others had, but he was a structurally superb animal that was flawless in movement and structure. He was a big dog, 24 inches, and between 65 and 70 pounds. There were others that were good, too. Ch. Lynthea's J C is probably one of our better known dogs. He was used quite a bit at stud. He was also a fine dog. He detested the show ring and finished his championship - finally! (laughter) Chris and Danny Middleton in Houston had him there and showed him for us. He was in their pedigrees and they were aggravated at us that we hadn't finished the dog and they borrowed him and finished him.

Would you say that pedigrees in the breed can be trusted for accuracy?

Jim: Yes. That isn't to say there are not exceptions to that. Probably everybody has a story they know of some pedigree discrepancy someplace. As a general rule, however, pedigrees are accurate.

Could you summarize how you have used inbreeding, linebreeding and outcrossing, and when each should be used?

Jim: You pushed my button there. I'm a pedigree nut. Really, I'm a history nut, and pedigrees are deeply a part of that history. I study pedigrees a great deal and have from day one. I strongly believe in inbreeding and linebreeding. I believe that's the only way a combination of certain characteristics can be produced consistent-



White Tundra's Victoria (Ch. White Tundra's Little Yurok x White Tundra's Sukoshi), whelped April 1, 1968. Nine points, one 5-pt. major, 14 reserves.

ly, and produce dogs that will then reproduce themselves. We have always linebred to some degree. That isn't to say that there haven't been what would pass for outcrosses here and there. When I say "what would pass for," I mean it is difficult to produce a true outcross in this breed, because there are so few foundation stock back there that all current Sammies are related to a significant degree, but in a practical sense they are outcrosses. We have had a few of those along the way, but by and large we have always looked for dogs within the family to breed to. There are tight breedings you can make - father/daughter and that kind of thing - that may be disappointing at times. Nonetheless, breeding dogs that are generally related, uncle to niece, half brother to half sister, and full first cousins, all of those breedings which I consider linebreedings, are the kind of thing we generally look for. Even if there is not a strongly identifiable relationship, you look

for common lines back in the pedigrees of both the sire and dam, and that they both come from the same general stock in their backgrounds. We have practiced that with great consistency.

Who or what would you say has influenced your breeding the most?

Jim: Let's start with the who. I guess one of our first contacts in the breed, with whom we became friends, and someone who provided us with some tutoring in the early days, was Carol and John Chittum. They are both out of the breed at this time, although still active in dogs to some degree. Unfortunately, they are separated and Carol has moved away at this point. We have known them for almost as long as we've been in Sammies. There are some other people, like Jan and Wally Kauzlarich in the Bay area. We have known them also almost as long as we've been in the breed. I consider them both very knowledgeable, Jan in particular. We have spent long

hours with them, talking about every aspect of dogs you can think of. They were very helpful when we were trying to get started. There are Bob and Wanda Krauss. Back many years ago, Bob was spending quite a bit of time out here, although he lives and works back in Madison, Wisconsin. He was spending some time out here at JPL and we met them. When they were first getting started, they saw our Star and liked her very much, so they bred to her sire, a local dog, and that started them off in the direction they ultimately went. Bob and Wanda spent some time out here and we got pretty well acquainted with them over a period of several years, although we haven't seen much of them recently. They were people who studied the breed with great intensity. They studied dogs with great intensity and are very knowledgeable, so they were influential also. I could go on and on. There were a lot of people who influenced us to one degree or another, but the ones I've named are key.

Are there any "whats" that influenced your breeding?

Jim: Pedigrees have been an influence from day one. Secondly, is our own perception of the breed, and our own interpretation of the breed standard. I guess everybody has a personal interpretation. As

much as you would like to, you can't breed for everything. You have to focus on a few things, and you have to decide what your priorities are. The "whats," to us, would be the overall soundness of the breed, the breed staying a true working dog and not becoming a fluffy lap dog, although they are certainly fluffy and will certainly climb in your lap every chance they get. They really are, and should be, a tough, rugged working breed that has a marvelous history and heritage, and that character of the breed should be preserved above all other things. Fronts were terrible in the breed when we started out. There were steep shoulders and tight elbows and loose, sloppy fronts. Any front fault you could think of, you could see in any show ring. In fact, that was the predominant thing you saw. A good front in the breed was actually very rare.

There were other faults, also, but fronts were a real hang-up with me. They improved for quite a while. There were ten or fifteen years where I thought the breed was really making progress consistently. The last years, I think we have wound up almost back where we were 25 years ago. I am sad to say. I judged the Sweepstakes for the local club here in January 1995, and I was very disappointed. Not that there

weren't some good dogs in there, but I saw fronts there that were reminiscent of what I saw in the breed 25 years ago. We've gone full circle, I think. There was an improvement in fronts, and then people neglected that and started working on other things and now we've slid back to where we have the other things, but fronts are gone again. You have priorities and have to establish your priorities as to what you work for. I've named mine, and I think Marian and I agree, but I'm doing all the talking here.

Marian: He's the authority. I'm the kennel marm. (laughter)

Jim: We have both talked through all these things for countless hours over the years and we are in full agreement, I believe, on our view of what is important to us. When I say "me" I mean us. Although I'm doing all the talking, this has always been a two-person sport for us. The dogs are a part of our life, and Marian works as hard, or harder, at it than I do. As far as their feeding, grooming and handling, Marian did more than I did. It's always been purely a joint enterprise and partnership.

You have one dog now, but what is the most that you've ever kept?

Jim: We had six or seven around here at one point. We've had at least three for almost all the time we've been in dogs. It's only been in the last few months that we are down to just the one dog. She is kind of lonesome, as a matter of fact.

Do you think you will be acquiring any more dogs?

Jim: We have to decide what we want to do. If we are going to do any more breeding, obviously we have to get something else. It is difficult for me to see us without a dog, so we are going to have to decide what we are going to do. I am retired now, which changes our viewpoint of how we are going to spend our time. We would like to do more traveling, but that is difficult to do when you have dogs. A decision has to be made whether or not we are going to lease or buy a bitch and do more breeding, or if we are just going to have a dog or two around as members of our family. The question of what we are going to do hasn't been resolved yet.

Marian: We have had six to eight dogs, but we don't have kennel facilities. We have a backyard and a four-bedroom house with a dog room.

Jim: And there is a kennel run at the side of the house, which is the only facility we have for separating dogs.

Marian: Primarily, everybody has lived together in the house or the yard.

Jim: Having more than three dogs has always been a problem, as well as being illegal, because this area is zoned for three dogs maximum. We have never had a problem with it. We had a neighbor with a dozen or more Pointers. He lived there for quite a few years. He showed and was on



Ch. Southern Star of Lynthea at three years.

the show circuit every weekend; so we have never had a problem with neighbors complaining about our dogs, even though we had quite a few here at one time. We have also taken great care to make sure our dogs do not make a nuisance of themselves. Marian never worked outside the home, so there was almost always somebody here. We would bring the dogs inside the house and crate them when we left, so they were never left outside. We did everything possible to make sure nobody had any reason to complain about the dogs, and nobody ever has.

Where did you come up with Lynthea as your kennel name?

Jim: A number of people have asked that question over the years. It is a purely made up name that has no special significance or meaning. It's a combination of syllables that I liked the sound of.

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

Jim: No. Dogs named themselves. We would come up with lists of names, but when you have a litter and decide to keep a puppy, that puppy will inspire a name. There would be something about the litter or the pedigree or something that was unique to them.

What would you say distinguishes the dogs that you have bred?

Jim: When we were breeding and showing consistently, people could spot our dogs in the ring. I guess there was something about them in proportion, head type, and so on, a general look of related dogs, so people would frequently recognize our dogs, even if they didn't know that individual. They would think it looked like a Lynthea dog. It is difficult to describe what that was. It was just some of their physical features that would set them apart a little bit from other dogs. I don't think there is any one thing you could point to that distinguished our breeding. When you linebreed dogs for several generations, they start to have a certain look that a person with a good eye can see.

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

Jim: We could get into a long semantic discussion about the definition of type. People frequently use the term type incorrectly. When they talk about type, they are too often talking about a general appearance. Type goes far beyond general appearance. Structure, gait and temperament are all a part of type. They are specified in the standard as part of the breed type, so type isn't just the superficialities of general appearance. There is a whole lot more involved than that, so if you want to talk about general appearance versus structure, or something like that, then there is room for conversation. If you want to talk about those things with type thrown in, type includes all of those things, in my

opinion.

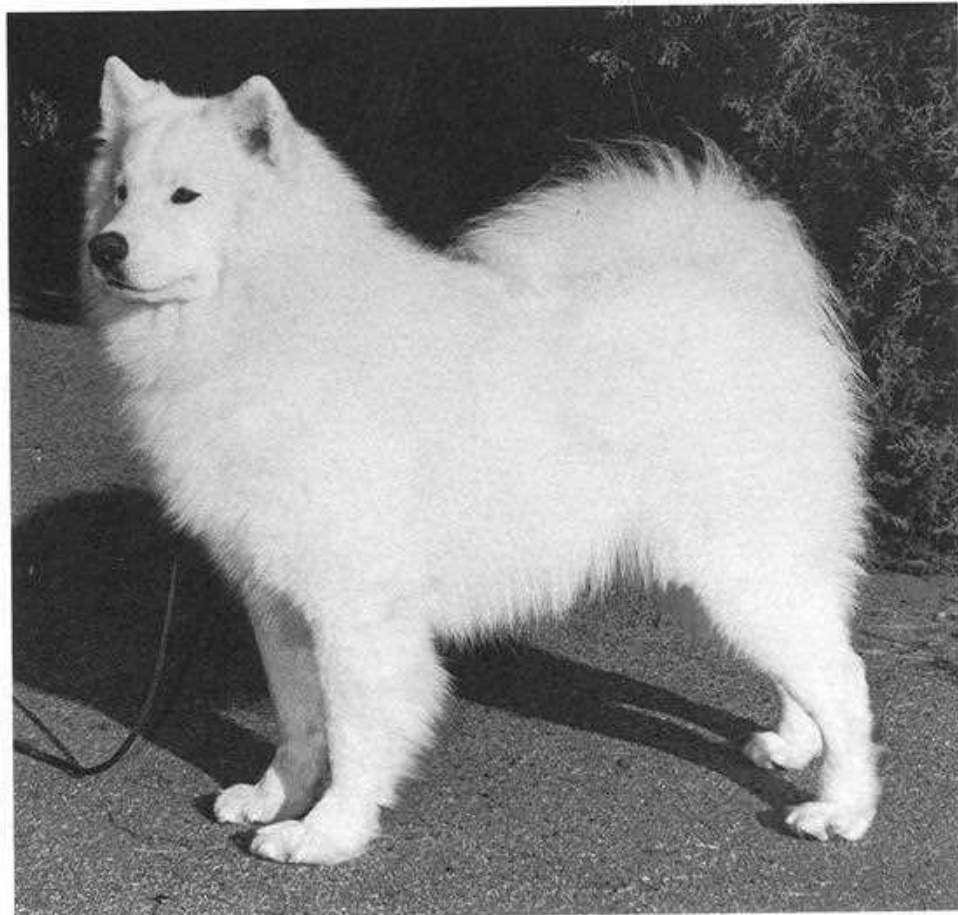
Soundness always has to come first. There has been a time or two when you might come up with a dog you like very much and want to breed to. You find out there is something unsound about him. Maybe the hips are only fair or there is an eye defect or something else. It is very disappointing, but you still refrain from breeding to that dog, because any dog has to be a sound, functional animal, first of all. If it isn't that, then the rest of it doesn't matter. Soundness has to come first.

Once that is established, you do some trade-offs, sometimes, between features of appearance or characteristics of structure. A dog may have an absolutely marvelous head and coat, and a lovely temperament, but maybe he is a little straight in the stifle and doesn't have quite the sidegait you would like to see. You breed to him anyhow, because you feel you have a bitch that needs the qualities he has, and maybe she is good enough to overcome the deficiencies that he has. So you look for dogs that complement each other. I never focused on just structure and movement to the exclusion of all other things. I tried to breed the whole dog, but I set priorities, and any individual breeding is not a mating of two perfect animals. It is a mating of two animals, each of

which has some defect(s) or deficiencies. You try to balance those so that you come up with animals that balance each other, and if you are very lucky, you come up with puppies that have the best of both, or at least a puppy or two that have the best of both. That's really the name of the game in trying to strike a balance in what you breed for.

I would never breed to a dog I felt was seriously defective in structure and gait, even if he was the prettiest thing under the sun. I just couldn't do that. I sold a couple of dogs as pets that I thought were just absolutely gorgeous, as long as they stood still. When they moved, I just couldn't take it. In fact, I've had dogs I've put points on and I know I could have finished them, but I sold them as pets because I didn't want to ever breed to the dogs, and I didn't want anybody else to, either. They shouldn't have, but they COULD have finished their championships. Those are my priorities.

I can't get past the fact that this should be a sound, working breed, able to work at least, even if they are just house pets. When you look back at the history of the breed, the original foundation animals that worked on the Polar expeditions, and all of the terrible physical hardships those dogs



Ch. Lynthea's J C.

went through and survived, which is what today's breed is founded on; we just should not lose that. I should be able to look at my dogs today and see the same characteristics that were embodied in the foundation animals. If you can't see that, then you have lost something very important. The whole object of breeding is to try to improve, but, first of all, to hang on to the good stuff you started with. If breeders don't do that, they are doing the breed no favor at all.

What was the question? (laughter) I really went off the subject there.

No, that was a very good answer. Regarding conformation, how would you describe your interpretation of the ideal Samoyed?

Jim: I take the standard very literally, but you have to know a great deal about dog structure and anatomy in order to interpret a standard. Although I think we have a very good breed standard, I am sure almost anybody can find flaws in it. There are some things that should be emphasized a little more, but I don't quarrel with the standard itself. I take the standard literally, based on the fact that I have spent a great deal of time studying dog anatomy, structure and gait. I've studied in great detail the conformation and movement of hundreds of Sammies, and based on the culmination of all of that effort on my part, I interpret the standard in a certain way. To me, the standard means what it says. I carry in my mind's eye a picture of the perfect Samoyed and every dog I see is automatically compared to that. It is a moving picture, not a dog standing still. I believe I have the capability of seeing a great deal about a dog when it moves. I think some people, including judges, just do not see what a dog is doing when it moves. There is some block of eye-mind coordination so that the things the dog is doing don't register. Of course, some movements are so quick that it is very difficult to perceive them visually. I'm certainly not alone in the ability to do that. Many people can, but there is a significant portion of the population that can't.

How would you describe the ideal temperament of the breed?

Jim: People-oriented, first of all. They are intelligent. Of course, intelligence and people-oriented means they are trainable and responsive. A typey Samoyed, a Samoyed with typical Samoyed temperament, should be trainable to almost any task that a dog is trainable to do. They should be fun to live with, with some qualifications on that statement. The typical Samoyed is smart, active, and with a little streak of independence that some people don't want. They want a dog that will go out and lie on the back stoop for twelve hours until it is called in. A Samoyed won't do that. They have to be with their people, busy doing something. That's part and parcel of the intelligence

and physical energy the breed should have. All those things combined produce a dog which is a little bit demanding to live with. I enjoy that. There are people who do not. They want a dog that is a little less demanding in all respects. The typical Samoyed temperament encompasses all of those things - intelligence, independence, people-orientation and trainability.

The first mongrel Samoyed I had had to be the smartest four-footed creature I have ever known in my life. I was just a kid on a farm at that point in time and he was never trained to do anything, and he learned to do an enormous number of things by himself that, in retrospect, are unbelievable, and he picked them up totally on his own. I know now that some of that Samoyed intelligence was coming through on that dog, although there were some other breeds in there that were probably contributing, too. He was an enormously intelligent animal. All of our purebred Samoyeds have exhibited much of that same thing. They are certainly not all alike. They are

all unique personalities. Some are smarter than others, and some are more independent than others, etc. Some are more active and enthusiastic than others, and some more sedate. There are some individual variations, which are all allowable in normal breed variation. The Samoyed temperament and personality has a unique combination of things that should be there to be a good Samoyed.

What things in the standard would you like to see clarified or elaborated on?

Jim: I've written a little bit about that a couple of times. There is one clear error in the standard in that it does not allow an overlap between the size of the sexes. This is a biological absurdity that should be corrected by increasing the bitch height by one inch. The standard does not specify the tasks that the breed is expected to do. It describes a working dog that is a member of the Working Group. There are some references in the standard to the act of pulling, and things like that, inferring that it is a sled dog, but there is no set of tasks



Miss Cheevious of Lynthea, "Missy," winning 6-9 Puppy class at '73 SCA National Specialty under judge Phil Marsh. Missy was later a champion.

spelled out that the dog should be able to do. There is no real emphasis on working ability, even though most of the standard is devoted to describing the structure of the dog. It describes a dog which, if it conforms to the standard, is obviously a good working dog, but there is not a lot of emphasis on working ability. I wouldn't mind seeing a few words added in there, a short paragraph at the end, perhaps, that lends some emphasis to the fact that the Sammy is a working dog and should be judged as a working dog. That's not a serious criticism of the standard. If I was going to tinker with the standard, that is one area I would tinker in a little bit, but I don't really like to see the standard tinkered with. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

What tasks do you think are best suited to the Sammy?

Jim: Historically, the Sammy was a hunter and a sled dog. There are people who say they are herders and that's nonsense. They were never used to herd reindeer, which is the popular perception. I have taken modern-day dogs and computerized a database of pedigrees, and I have traced those modern dogs all the way back to the foundation dogs; the imports. Where did those imports come from and what were they used for? Those imports came from the forested areas of Siberia, they were used for hunting and sled work, and they were trained to harness when they were delivered to the expeditions, if they were expedition dogs, which many of them were. No import is traceable to tundra areas where there were any domestic reindeer - not one animal - and there are not very many foundation animals behind this

breed. There are surprisingly few, and I have quantified that also in my research.

The Sammy is certainly capable of herding and capable of a lot of other things, too. They have even been trained as seeing eye dogs in a few instances. They have been trained as retrievers. They would make a pretty good field dog, actually. They are hunters and sled dogs historically. In some cases, modern dogs have deteriorated physically and are not able to do that work, but it is still back there behind them, and the instincts are there, certainly. The intelligence is usually still there also. It's tough work. A working sled dog has a hard life. Sammys should be a tough, sound, working dog, based on the work that is historically associated with the breed.

Besides bad fronts, are there other common



Kivalina's Sir Ryan of Lynthea (Ch. Belaya Tony Taiga x Ch. Southern Star of Lynthea), Best in Sweeps at 1973 SCA National Specialty Sweepstakes under judge Gertrude Adams. "Sir" went on to a CDX but never finished his championship.

faults that you see in the breed today?

Jim: You can find almost any fault in the breed ring today. If you go to a specialty show where there are 100 dogs or so, you can find almost any fault visible somewhere in there. I mentioned fronts because when I started they were so bad, and we have gone full circle back to that again, but I didn't mean to single that out as being paramount to other things. Perhaps the emphasis I gave that was wrong. It was just kind of an example that really goes back to the point in time in which I entered the breed and the point in time where we are now. In between times, you see straight stifles, cowhocks, dogs that are short on leg, or dogs that are too square. Virtually all faults appear in there someplace. Perhaps they go in cycles a little bit, too. That largely depends on the popular stud dog that comes along. He sires a bunch of dogs, throws some good things and some faults also. While that dog is popular, or while his offspring are being shown, there are certain common characteristics that seem to be pervasive in the breed, and it is due to a particular dog or a few particular dogs. That happens a lot. There are a crop of virtues and faults that come along due to one or more popular stud dogs. A generation or two later, there will be a crop of another combination of virtues and faults. Those are short-term variations that are traceable to a given dog.

Longer term trends in a breed have to span several generations. You can't judge what the breed is doing based on looking at it over a five-year span. You see only one or two generations of dogs in five years. You have to look at it over ten, fifteen or more years. Over a span of 25 years, we have raised six generations of our own dogs, and perhaps seen seven, eight or ten total. From that perspective, for half of the time I thought the breed was improving overall, slowly and modestly, but improving. Now it seems like it is back to about where it was 25 years ago. What appeared to me to be long-term improvement turned out to be perhaps just a cycle. Maybe there is no real improvement. I hate to state that as a fact, and I don't mean to. That is a perception based on dogs I have seen over the last couple of years, but I haven't traveled and seen the breed all over the country. Most of what I've seen is in California.

I have been at a National Specialty or two where you do see dogs from all over the country. At a National Specialty, there are enough dogs there that you can usually find some dogs you like, so it would be difficult for me to say the breed disappointed me at those shows. The big winners are usually good dogs. At local shows, you are seeing dogs from a more regional area that may not be comparable to what is going on in the Midwest or the East Coast. Maybe

it is a generation of mediocre dogs here locally that is catching my eye, but I'm afraid maybe that isn't the case. I'm afraid it is a cycle thing and that any perceptible improvement in the breed will take so long that it would take a person a lifetime to see it. I am afraid that may be the case. I hate to be a pessimist. To breed dogs, you have to be an optimist and think that you can make a difference. If you are not going to make an improvement, the whole thing is futile, other than the fun you get out of the activity itself.

Should champions be special?

Jim: That's a toughie. My natural inclination is to say yes. I'm afraid titles don't mean very much. A good handler, if he campaigns long enough, can put a championship title on a white table. (laughter) The majority of dogs that finish their championships I would not breed to. Should a

champion be special? If the championship really meant something, then, yes. Since it doesn't mean that much, in my opinion, then it doesn't matter.

What does making the Top Ten or Twenty mean?

Jim: A dog that is campaigned heavily and makes the Top Ten of the breed, it probably takes a pretty good dog to get there, although I don't have a lot of faith in a title per se. If you can win consistently against other specials in the breed, or go on to Group or show placements and things like that, if you can win a National Specialty show, or any specialty show, even a regional specialty, it takes a pretty good dog to do that, so show records do have some significance. From that point of view, if you have a good dog, it should be campaigned to prove that it is a good dog. Some people are so tired out that once they



Missy winning her first major and BOS under Ken Mueller, Cabrillo KC, May 18, 1974.

finish a title they are willing to lie back and coast.

Also, it is very tough to special a bitch. We have done that with a bitch we thought was as good as any Sammy around. You get an occasional Breed win and a bunch of Bests of Opposite Sex, because it is just tough to win the Breed with a bitch. They are smaller and they don't carry as much coat. All those gender variations are specified in the standard, but judges don't really judge by what the standard says. They want the most impressive looking dog they can find to send into the Group ring, and that is usually a male. Even though the standard says the bitch is two inches smaller than the male, she doesn't carry as much coat and she is a little longer in back, and so forth, judges forget about what the standard says when they are thinking about Best of Breed. Specialing a bitch is very frustrating. I say that from my own point of view, but I can also name countless other individuals who specialied nice bitches that should have done more winning than they did.

The best bitch around is usually about as good a Sammy as there is, and she will not have anywhere near the show record of the best male - never, ever, ever! Special your champion if you enjoy it - if you love the show ring, love all the work and expense and the hassle that goes with it. It does prove something. The top winners have proven that they are more than just another champion.

What breeds have you judged?

Jim: Only Sammies. There has been a fun match or two where I judged all the Arctic breeds, but I am not an AKC approved judge. I have debated about doing it and resolved that in years past. I do enjoy it and do an occasional Sweepstakes or match show, or whatever. I think I'm a good judge. Of course, everybody who goes into the show ring thinks they are good judges. (laughter) Actually, the other breed business is the reason I never went for approval as a licensed judge. You can get regular judging assignments and earn your pay only if you can judge six or eight breeds or more. I would never be satisfied with myself judging other breeds unless I felt like I was an authority on that breed, and I do not want to spend the time and effort to become an authority on multiple breeds. That was really the key reason why I decided not to go for approval. I just did not want to get involved in trying to learn and judge other breeds, and I felt you were so limited in terms of the judging assignments you could get. Since you cannot really earn a day's pay by judging only one breed, I leave the judging to other people.

Is most judging fair?

Jim: I think most judges intend to be fair. There is a difference between



Ch. Lyntheas Cinderella CD, "Cindy" (Lyntheas J C x White Tundra's Victoria), whelped September 22, 1975. Owned by Dr. Jo Anne Tenorio of Hawaii.

INTENDING and BEING fair. The difference arises from the judge's capabilities. I said I would not be interested in judging a breed unless I thought I was an authority on that breed, and I really mean an AUTHORITY. Most people who judge most breeds are not authorities on those breeds they judge. They may be authorities on dogs in general, and they may be authorities on a few breeds, but on any given breed, the majority of judges you will encounter have a passable knowledge of the breed and not an AUTHORITATIVE knowledge of the breed. Therefore, their judging reflects that knowledge. Politics enters into it, of course, and a lot of other things. Most judges intend to be fair, and I would have to say the majority of them are basically competent. There is a lot of judging that I would consider to be marginally adequate, and the issue is based more on competency than integrity or honesty. That's something we could probably go on for hours about.

Of course, AKC has recognized this over the years. Some years back they started the program of judge's education, and I've always been an advocate of that. I helped the local club organize a symposium many years ago, before the AKC got into its current judge's education kick. In fact, I worked with the AKC on that and they were interested in what we were doing, but didn't want to sanction it. All the materials we generated for our symposium were sent to the AKC, and ultimately turned over to the SCA, and SCA came out with their judge's education committee a few years ago. I think what we did probably influenced both the AKC and the SCA to some degree. This was an all-day symposium aimed at both breeders and judges. It was aimed at understanding the breed and understanding the standard and all of those factors that go into making a person competent in the breed. Of course, you can't make somebody an expert in one day, but I always felt those things were important and

always did what I could to try to improve the situation. One of the things I did to improve the situation is to NOT become licensed to judge breeds that I am not an authority on.

Is the parent club doing enough?

Jim: Under the current scheme of things, it probably is. There is a fundamental flaw in the whole thing. AKC has 137 breeds, or some such number. Nobody can be an authority on 137 breeds of dogs. The all-breed judge who judges Best in Show, and may be called upon to judge any combination of those 137-odd breeds, cannot possibly do justice to all of them. That is beyond human capacity, to have that breadth and depth of expertise. We are demanding something from human beings they are not really capable of, and that's the flaw in the whole scheme of things. That doesn't mean that you should do away with any part of dog showing or grouping as it is done today. I don't mean to criticize that at all. I just mean that we have to accept the fact that if we play the dog show game, we are going to be showing under people who are perhaps not as familiar, not as intimately expert, in our breed as they should be and as we would like them to be, but they are probably doing all that can reasonably be done as human beings to get there.

What can the AKC and all the various breed clubs do to help the situation?

There is a trend over the last ten years or so towards more emphasis on judge's education via seminars and the like. I participated in a couple of the recent things they have done under AKC's current plan of having judge's workshops take place in conjunction with a show, particularly a specialty show. There are the ringside tutoring of prospective judges, one-on-one with a "breed authority," and the instructional seminars that go along with them. All of those things have come into being in the last few years and I believe they are definitely steps in the right direction. How much farther they could go, I'm not sure.

More can be done with video. Here again, AKC and the parent clubs have come up with more videos, which I think are lousy. That's too strong a word! Let's say they don't accomplish what they should accomplish. They focus too much on "here's the perfect head," or "here's the perfect outline of a dog," or "here's a perfect rear," or whatever. That's good in so far as it goes. They should also start comparing dogs that are imperfect - I don't mean FAULTY, but IMPERFECT - and try to train the observer to see the differences. I am dissatisfied with what has been done in the video area. They are technically superb and beautiful to watch, but the content is not what it could be. Perhaps my comments here have been overly critical. I didn't mean to castigate the people who



Brother and sister, Lyntheas Star Studted Knight, "Prince," and Lyntheas Miss Conduct, "Connie" (Ch. Lyntheas J C x Ch. Miss Cheevious of Lynthea).

have done this work. I just think they have missed the boat a little bit on what could be done with video. I have spent over 25 years standing at ringside with catalog in hand, watching countless hundreds of dogs move in the ring. You can compress all of that a great deal with the proper video, or proper set of videos. They have not really done what could be done with the tools they have to work with.

The trend towards more emphasis on judge's education, towards using the tool of videos, judge's workshops and ringside tutoring, is good. That says they are working to do a better job at educating judges, and to try to see that the judge is a little more knowledgeable before he or she is approved for a breed. That trend is good, but a deficiency exists and the powers that be are working to overcome it. That's all

good. As to what degree they have succeeded, or to what degree they can succeed, there are some limitations there. It isn't possible to be a true authority on 137-some odd breeds. Being human beings, we are all fundamentally lazy and will draw the line at how much time and effort we will put into doing any given task. We are dealing with human limitations. That doesn't mean the process is all wrong, or anything like that. It just means we have to accept the limitations that are there, and we will be disappointed and frustrated at times. That's part of the dog show game.

Would you prefer to show under a breeder-judge, then?

Jim: In general, I would prefer to show under a breeder-judge.

To be continued ...