

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed people



Ch. Murdock's Maurador of Seelah

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Merrill and Rowena Evans
SEELAH
Waukeec, Iowa

Part III

This interview was conducted at the home of Merrill and Rowena Evans in June of 1996 by Katy Merseal.

When showing the Sammy, what

special grooming do you do?

Rowena: If you keep the coat up, you won't have that much grooming. I won't say you will not have to groom them, because you will have more grooming than you will on many dogs. I will not take a dog into the show ring if it isn't washed, and I usually try to wash it one to two days before the show. I do not believe in putting anything like chalk in the coat. I think a lot of people

still pack the coats full of corn starch to make them stand out. If you have the proper coat, you don't need any corn starch or packing. If you have the proper coat to start with, you don't need to worry. If it rains and the dog shakes its coat, it will stand right out. I love to see a wet day because then you know which is the proper coat and which isn't. If it isn't a proper coat, if there is chalk in there it will run out, and if there isn't any chalk the coat will go flat. If

the dog shakes and the coat stands out, you've got a good coat, but you usually don't get that until they are almost two years old. I do put chalk on the feet so the dog has nice, white feet. I hate to see dirty hocks or feet when they go into the ring, although when you show outside sometimes it is hard to keep them clean.

Other than that, we just do a lot of brushing. We wash them in ordinary shampoo. I used a people shampoo on them for





Ch. Di Murdock of Seelah, Ch. Murdock's Masterpiece of Seelah, Ch. Murdock's Magnetic Miss of Seelah

years and years because its cheaper. I probably used it for 30 years and I still use it every now and then. It's called Queen Helene and you can only get it at beauty supply places. One bottle is a little over \$1 and it will make gallons. You only need just a few drops. We don't have anything particular we do. We never trim. We are not allowed to trim whiskers anymore. We do the bottoms of the feet, the shape of the foot, and that's it. We don't do anything else. Once in awhile we will spray a little bit of sheen stuff on the coat, but we have never done anything else. I try to convince new people not to do it, but I will see them at a show and somebody has gotten a hold of them and they are putting all this stuff in the coat. When you do that, you will have a nice white coat, but you will not have those natural silver tips. If you get a nice clean dog in the ring, that's all I ask for. That's all I ask when I sell a puppy. I tell them, "Don't let me see you in the ring with a dirty dog. Don't show it if you are not going to give it a bath." Some people are too lazy to give them baths and so they keep using chalk and all this other stuff.

It's a lot of work. If you are showing a dog every weekend, it is a lot of work to keep the coat up and keep it nice. You will have to have a few extra baths. We used to use a hand drier, like the ones you use on your own hair, and it would take all day to get them dry. My first two bitches had thick coats and drying them would take forever. I was probably the first person in this part of the country to get the "cattle dryers," as we call

them. What a difference that made! The people who are starting out now who have the cattle dryers don't know what we went through! If your dog got wet, you were in trouble because you couldn't get them dry. There was just no way. It has made a big difference in

they didn't do anything! They had these shaggy feet. Everybody has improved. Pretty much everybody knows how to groom their Sammies now. If a dog has a stain, there are a lot of products on the market now so most of the time you can get the stains out. The coat does grab

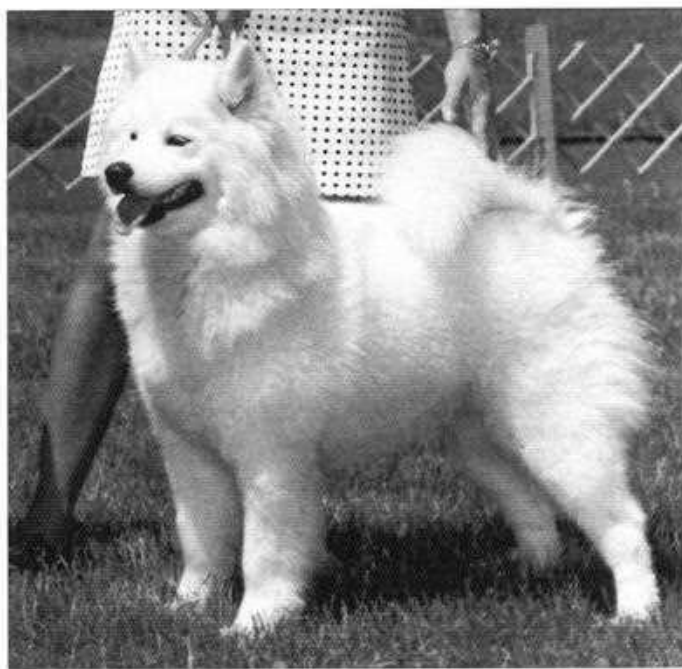
ring inside, under the lights, the judge said, "My, what a nice lavender dog." (laughter) You have to watch what you use on them. I don't think she ever used that shampoo again.

If you just keep your dog brushed and clean, they are not that hard to groom. If you are showing every weekend, you will have to keep that coat up, and if the dog gets out and gets dirty, you will have to wash him again. We have had them get into the mud and look a disaster, but we stick them into their crates, it dries off and after you brush them out it doesn't even look like they've been in the mud. If a Sammy has a good coat, that's what will happen. It's these coats that people let get dirty clear down in that are hard to deal with. I just can't imagine anybody letting a dog stay dirty. Ours don't get baths all the time. I don't mean that. I mean not brushing them or letting them get to the point where you don't do anything with them. It will just make more work later. They are coated dogs and we have to take care of the coat.

Some of the dogs today have beautiful coats because we have better equipment to take care of them. The drier has made a big difference, not only in grooming the dog, but in getting the dead hair out. You can take the dog outside, use the blower and get all the loose hair out. The birds come and take it to make nests, and you have a great time! (laughter)

How important is diet in raising Sammies?

Everybody has their own diet. When I first started out, I tried everything and got into all kinds of messes. Basically, all



Ch Snowfires Miss Muffel

their coats.

I think the dogs are much better groomed than they were. The Canadian dogs have improved immensely. I used to go up there and they didn't even groom their dogs. They just put them in the ring. Most of the time the dogs were pretty clean, but they didn't groom their dogs. They didn't trim feet,

color, like the one I told you about that had red carpet in its coat. I had a friend who had used some kind of shampoo for ladies' white hair and the dog turned purple. She got it to the show and didn't know what she was going to do, so she took it to the car wash and she washed him again. He looked white to her. When she got to the show



Ch. Murdock's Charity of Seelah



Ch. Dasha's Keno of Seelah

the dog foods are about the same, really. For over 30 years now we have used Ken'l Biskit. Very seldom have I had any problem with the dry biscuit. We have also used Pedigree in the last few years and I like it. We start our puppies out on Purina Puppy Chow, which has changed through the years. Now they have the lamb and rice and other things. The reason I tried Purina is that no matter where we ship a dog the people can find that dog food. I've heard a lot of tales about how terrible Purina is, but I say that is an old wives' tale. There is something else wrong with the dog if it got sick. If it started out on Purina and was on Purina for eight to twelve weeks, why would it get sick on Purina? The vets are pushing their own dog foods. I don't believe in paying \$20 or more for a bag of dog food when you can get a good bag of food for less than that, and if your dog is doing well on it, why try anything else? People come to me all the time trying to sell me dog food, but why should I change, when for over 30 years my dogs have done so well on it? When my bitches have their puppies, they don't lose weight as a lot of dogs do, so I don't have any problem with it. I have one dog right now that can't take the Kennel Ration and we started him on



Duscha's Encore of Seelah

Eagle. That's the only dog I've ever had a problem with and it's the only food that dog will eat.

Do you supplement-feed at all?

Rowena: Maybe we will put a tablespoon full of Pedigree

meat in there sometimes, and for the little dogs we will use Mighty Dog because they are in little cans. When you are traveling it's just perfect. There was a time when we cooked a lot of

different things, trying to put weight on the dogs. We weren't on Kennel Ration then. We cooked macaroni and a can of meat and I don't remember what all we stuck in there, but way back, before they had all this dog food, that's what people did. I don't think the dogs were any healthier then. In fact, I think they were healthier when we took them off all that and put them on the Kennel Ration. They just did better.

Once in awhile, if they are shedding, you might want to give them a little coat conditioner, but you don't need to buy an expensive conditioner. If you eat bacon, which we don't anymore, you can put a little bacon grease into their food. I tried Miracoat but it seemed to make the coat soft so I don't use that. Miracoat is fine for other breeds but it didn't seem to work for our Sammies. We haven't given any supplements other than a tablespoon of meat, and sometimes we don't do that every day. Our dogs have been fine. If anything, my husband over-feeds them, so Paula always says, "If they need to be fattened up, I'll bring them over to you, but then I have to put them on a diet when you bring them back over to the kennel." It's true! He loves to feed them all the time.

What training do you give your

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puppies?

Rowena: Before they leave us they are lead trained. We train them enough so you can at least walk them a little on lead. We also crate train them. Every puppy that leaves us has been crate trained. Some we haven't been able to crate train as long as we'd like. At first, they are all in a crate together, then we put them two in a crate and finally one to a crate. It has worked well. I have shipped puppies all over and most of the time they arrive nice and clean, which is amazing sometimes. I put Pampers in the bottom of the crate. That works pretty good.

That's about the only training we really do. We don't discipline too much. We don't let them chew on our hands or feet, which is what people let them do after they get them. Then they come back and wonder why they can't get their puppy trained and they say they are chewing on everything. Well, they are teething, so you need to give them something to teethe on. Also, people let them have the run of the house. I get complaints all the time and I ask if they let them have the run of the house. They usually say yes. I don't let mine have the run of the house until they are at least a year old because they are going to have accidents, that's all there is to it. People take the puppies home and turn them loose, so that's the way it goes.

If we are going to do obedience with a dog, we start that at about four months. We may not get a CD title, but we will do some training that way. Some of them can be very stubborn, and if you get one that is that way, then basic obedience is very good for them. It gets them socialized, too. Obedience training socializes them faster than you can do it in a conformation class, really, because you are finding all kinds of dogs, mutts right in there with the rest of them, and big dogs and little dogs.

When do the puppies go to their new homes?

Rowena: In the summer, if it is someone who lives close who can drive in to get them, I will let them go at eight weeks. It depends on how much socialization they have had. I would rather not let some puppies go at even eight weeks. It depends on how the puppies are. An ideal time is twelve weeks, but these

puppies grow fast and I think they should get into their homes before twelve weeks. By that time, they are beginning to get into your pattern of living and if you can get them out at eight weeks, then they fit right into the family.

I don't like to ship puppies, but I have and have had no problem with it. I would rather, if the people can, that they come in by car and pick up their puppy. I have had people come from all over to pick up their puppies. Some have come from



Kiam's Northern Exposure

the West or Midwest, or whatever. I had one doctor who flew in from California and picked up two puppies a couple of years ago. They were really nice little females that he is using for autistic children. They are doing just great. When he flew back with them, they did not ride in the baggage compartment. They rode beside him. He called me and I asked, "Is there something wrong?" He said, "Oh, no. I just wanted you to know that the hostess is holding one and I'm holding the other." (He was up in the air on the airline telephone.) He was the kind of person who if he wanted something he was going to get it. Both puppies went to his home and jumped into the swimming pool. They didn't know whether they could swim or not, but I guess they could.

Are your males at stud to outside bitches?

Rowena: Yes, as long as they are X-rayed and have had an eye check.

Do you do any other screenings, such as brucellosis?

Rowena: Yes. Most of the breedings I've done I have known the people pretty well and I know their dogs, so I don't always insist on a brucellosis test. If I don't know the person well, if it is just an acquaintance, then I think the dog should have a brucellosis test. When it first

often show up positive, so we knew then to do a brucellosis test, if we were going to do one, before she came into season.

We learned our lesson. Oh, we were scared to death. We were new and we thought we were going to have to put all our dogs down. We called all the people we'd sold puppies to and it was just awful! So, it's an important test, because it can happen. We've never had it, but we thought we had it.

So, the eyes, the hips and the brucellosis are about the only tests I can think of that I'd want. I would like the dog to come in clean. Sometimes they don't. When I send one out I want it to come home clean, as well. Usually, when one comes in, I will wash the dog and wash the towel in its crate. I guess I'm a fanatic on that. I just like clean dogs.

Have you ever refused to service a bitch?

Rowena: I've not really refused, but I've talked people out of breeding. There is a right way and a wrong way to do it. I might say, "I don't think these pedigrees match. Call some other breeders and see what they have to say." I guess you'd call that a refusal, but I won't just come right out and say, "No, I won't breed my dog to your bitch." Sometimes I will ask them, "Have you had her X-rayed?" When they say, "No," I will say, "Then why don't you get her X-rayed and bring me her pedigree and then we'll talk?" Sometimes they don't call back and I know they have either found someone else whose male they used, or their dog had hip dysplasia. So, yes, I guess I've refused a few, but not too many.

How many litters should a bitch have?

Rowena: That's a big debate. Merrill and I don't always agree on this, but we don't breed anything after they're about seven years old. I've known some people who have bred their bitches as old as eight to ten years. Most of the time we end up with three breedings, and maybe four, at the most. We tried old Vegas, but she decided she wasn't going to have anymore, so we quit on her. She gave us three nice litters and decided that was it. I would not breed an old bitch. I guess they almost become my children and I feel sorry for

them.

What's the youngest you would breed a bitch?

Rowena: Two.

What have been the benefits of being in Samoyeds?

Rowena: The people I've met. I've met a lot of nice people from all walks of life. That is one of the nicest things. Of course, I've always had a pet, from the time I was a child, and I just enjoy being with the animals. We have a good time — nothing exciting, but we just have a good time.

Merrill: Our son asked me one time why we had so many dogs. There are four reasons: Dog's never talk back; they go to bed when asked; they clean up their dinner plate; and they never ask for the car on Saturday night. (laughter)

Rowena: We had four sons.

Have there been any drawbacks to having the dogs?

Merrill: If there were any drawbacks, we wouldn't have stayed in it.

Rowena: We would have been out of it long ago. If we had stayed in it for the money, we wouldn't be in it. Then there is all the politics. We just enjoy it.

Merrill: We enjoy the people we've met.

Rowena: Then, too, it is like anything else, any business, you can get hooked. It gets in your blood. I really enjoy showing and always have. Merrill likes to supervise.

Merrill: I like to win.

Rowena: I do too, but I'm not quite as adamant as he is about it. If the dog that wins is better than mine, that's fine. If it's not, then I might get a little uptight.

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

Rowena: I think if I were starting out and really wanted to get into breeding, rather than buy a puppy, I would buy the best bitch I could find and start from there. You can always find a male, but buy the best bitch you can find. You will pay for it, but that's one time you should expect to pay a good price.

Merrill: People who are buying puppies have to understand up front that you can't guarantee a champion. A lot of people have the idea that they can put the dog into the ring at six months of age without any training and expect it to win

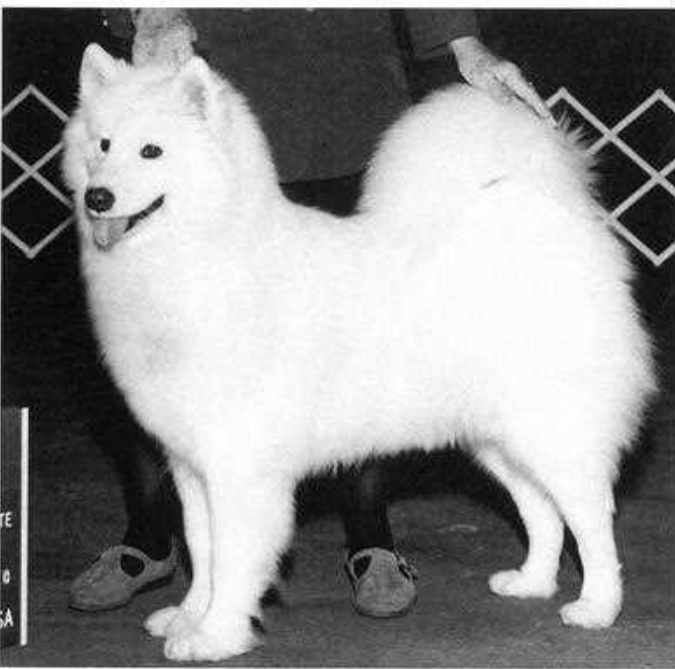
because it has a good pedigree. It may be from champion bloodlines, but you make the champion. Some people jump to the conclusion that you are selling them a champion, but this is not true. It takes a little while for people to understand that.

Rowena: Some breeders guarantee a champion. The only way they can guarantee that is if they take the dog and finish it. They will do it. They will eventually get the dog its championship if the dog has any quality at all. Starting out,

then get a nice male, but you can't go out and buy an adult male very easily. People just won't sell them. They are going to keep a good male for themselves to show. Once in awhile somebody will sell you a nice male.

Do you recommend they join a local breed club, the national breed club or an all breed club?

Rowena: I'd say join them all, if you can. We tried a local club, but there are not enough people in this area with Samoyeds to have a local club.



Dasha's Keepstake of Seelah

though, if you want to do breeding, buy a good bitch, and I mean the best. You will have a hard time buying one, because whoever has it will try to keep it. If you want a show dog, it doesn't make much difference and you can get a male.

Merrill: If I want a suit for \$5, I can go downtown to the junk shop and buy one. The same is true with a dog. You get what you pay for.

Rowena: Puppies start out looking so good, but then they get into the gangly stage and you may wonder, "What in the world have I bought?" You have to wait for that swan to develop. It is an ugly ducking and then all at once it begins to show its beauty and pretty soon you have a beautiful dog. If you want a show dog and you don't want to bother with a puppy,

I've been in the local kennel club all along and the national club. We used to have a Midwest Sammy club. We kept it going for several years and then we dropped it because it was just too much.

Is the parent club doing enough to educate judges and new members?

Rowena: They're trying.

Merrill: The solution to judges not knowing the standard is getting them to come to judge's seminars. We put on one at our National Specialty every year and there are usually anywhere from five to fifteen judges who attend, and we put on a two-day deal for them. We need to do more of it because there are judges judging our breed who don't know our standard. What's the solution? We're not going to fight AKC and their licensing of judges, so

somehow we must educate them through seminars. They have so many breeds and so many clubs that they can't educate them all, but we can do it at the national level, or if we have a regional club, but it is difficult to have seminars at a local club. What breed do you pick to have a seminar for? That's why we don't see very many seminars at the local level.

Rowena: Another thing, the members do not help each other enough, but I think that is true of all dog breed clubs. If you have something wrong with a dog or a litter, you don't pass the information along, but you keep it to yourself. Nobody will buy puppies if you let them know something is wrong. That's not right. I think others feel as I do. If we would give information to each other or have an information bank that had records on which dog produced what, then people would know whether or not to breed to a certain dog. Maybe I shouldn't breed to a certain dog, but maybe somebody else could breed to it. If we would let people know we have a problem, then we wouldn't be passing on the problem.

Merrill: One problem is that many people have a very limited knowledge about pedigrees and the background of genetics. They just do not understand why they can't breed a certain male and female together. They don't understand that the pedigrees just don't fit. It takes years to understand the genetics behind dog breeding. I was born and raised on a farm, but I will still say that farm people have little conception of how to breed dogs because they breed them just like they do cattle. They seldom look at the pedigrees. You are not going to breed a dog with a bad rear to another dog with a bad rear, but some people don't understand that. Rowena is good at analyzing pedigrees, and she can pick a puppy out at six weeks old and say, "That's the best one," when I can't see any difference in them. She's good at it.

Rowena: Sometimes, but it doesn't always turn out. I really do think that if people would put their heads together and help each other that we would have better dogs. We would have sounder dogs if we would share the information we have.

Ch. Pursley's Show Dancer



OFA-11013G24F

Dancer has two 4-point majors and a 3-point major. She has won over specials and needs 2 points to finish. Planned breeding to Ch. Cot'N Pic'N Shotavodka.

Ch. Wolf River's Eagle
Ch. Winterfrost's Gyrfalcon
Ch. Winterfrost's Moonlighting
Am/Int Ch. Polar Mist Mover N-A Shaker
Ch. Ice Way's Ice Breaker
Ch. Polar Mist Crystal Keesha
Ch. Polar Mist Saucy Minx

Ch. Polar Mist Law Breaker II
Ch. Polar Mist Code Breaker
Am/Can Ch. Polar Mist Naughty Angel
Ch. Polar Mist Show Girl Pursley
Ch. Ice Way's Ice Breaker
Am/Can Ch. Polar Mist Uptown Girl CD
Am/Can Ch. Polar Mist Society Girl CD

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That's one thing I will say about Judy Mears. She is really good at informing you. She will send you a printout of everything her dog has produced, and the faults. If there has been some problem, it's in that sheet she gives you. I think that's wonderful, and if more of us did that, we'd have less trouble. We'd still have our pretty dogs, but they'd be much sounder than they are now. People aren't thinking of that, though. They are just looking at this pretty dog and that pretty dog, and they put them together, thinking they are going to get the perfect dog. We are all trying to get that perfect dog, but that isn't the way to do it. Every dog has a fault.

Some clubs put all their information together. The Portuguese Water Dog breed does this and they have had fewer problems through the years than some of the rest of us have had. They did that when they were a new club. Nobody wants to admit they have problems. If someone has PRA, they won't admit it. I have heard people say they have never had hip dysplasia, but I can't believe that. Everybody, eventually, will have hip dysplasia at some time in a litter. But I have heard people say that they have never had it, or that they have never had any immune system problems. There are so many things that are there to watch for, and if you double up on something, you are in real trouble. Sometimes it is something that won't develop for years. You may not have anything for the first five or six years and then something crops up. If we just told each other these things, it would make it so much easier, but people won't do it, because they can't sell puppies if they admit they have a problem. Some of these things are really bad faults.

The breeders of our Tibetan (TJ) are judges now and they have quit breeding. Back in the pedigree there was PRA - way back - but they admitted it. Some of the club members were very upset about it, but they admitted it and said, "Do not breed anything to this or that, or anything that has that dog in its background." When I got ready to breed my little bitch, I sent both pedigrees to Dr. Padgett at Michigan State University and asked what the chances were between the two dogs. There

was one dog in both their pedigrees, way back. He said it was less than a one percent chance that it would develop. I bred them and we got nice puppies. Now we will just wait and see. I don't think anything will turn up. At least these people were honest enough to tell everyone about it.

The Tibetan Spaniels are one of the foundation dogs for the Pekingese, the Shih Tzu and



Ch. Willow Brooks' Bakan of Seelah

the Lhaso. I couldn't understand how they could be the foundation for some of these other dogs and yet they themselves were not recognized until the late '80s. There's not very many of them around. Instead of the Pekingese look, which has a flat look, they have a slight dome and have a sort of monkey look about them. Mrs. Jean Fancy, who is a judge, said, "These little dogs have that worried look. When they look at you, they have kind of a worried look." She is right. But when they open their mouths, they have a big grin. It's the way the eyebrows come together. They have a worried look, while Pekingese will have a mean look about them. It's a real frown, a mean look. The Tibetan doesn't have a frown. It's just kind of a worried look. I never thought I'd ever have a really little dog. The first time I went to class with that little dog, oh, did they razz me! (laughter) I had made fun of others with their little dogs.

Is the AKC video on Sammies a good one?

Rowena: It's pretty good.

Is there enough literature?

Rowena: There are quite a few books out now on the breed. For awhile there was nothing. The Ward's book was about the only one out. I had a book years ago that I loaned to someone but didn't get it back. It was called *The Samoyed: New Zealand*. It was two books.

had to go out the upstairs windows to get to the kennel to feed the dogs. Then we found this place, and we thought we could have a kennel here, but we couldn't because it is restricted. I was very upset. We found another place that is just seven miles from us. It's an old farm house, a big brick one, and the property had a couple of other buildings on it. We put up a boarding kennel there and turned it into a dog kennel. It's only about three acres, but it's all we needed and it is right out in the middle of nowhere, so there are no houses close by.

Merrill: It's tough to get a kennel license. You have to go before a board of supervisors and get a variance. It takes about six months. The only way we got it is there are no neighbors for a half mile.

Rowena: When we went before the board here, not necessarily for a boarding kennel, but just for our own dogs, a couple of the neighbors said they would rather have hogs next-door. (laughter) These are people who know nothing about dogs.

Merrill: They said the dogs would get loose. We haven't had a dog loose in years.

Rowena: Some people have dogs and just let them run, but we don't do that. One man said, "You'll be having dogs in to be bred and there'll be all this noise." He was thinking of when you bring a cow in to breed to a bull, I guess. I don't know! (laughter) I said, "We don't have anything like that. The dogs come in, are bred, and are shipped right back home." He said he didn't know about that and he didn't want all those dogs around. Across the road they had Foxhounds and horses and he said, "Those dogs over there just bark all the time." After we moved in here, the only time we heard the dogs bark is in the morning and the evening when they fed them. That's the only time the dogs barked, and they didn't run loose. They didn't bother anybody. I asked him if he had dogs and he said, "Oh, yes. They just run loose." That was okay. They are very strict on kennel laws, at least in this area.

Merrill: We've been here about fourteen years this summer.

Rowena: I wouldn't want to move away from here permanently, but I'd like to go some-

About four years ago, I found it again and had to pay double the price. It has some of the really old dogs in there, which were all numbered, and which were mostly from New Zealand and that area of the world. There is sufficient literature out there now. I never tell people to buy the pet store paperbacks because they don't give you enough information. Our club also has literature. If you have puppies, you can give the literature to your clients.

How long have you lived here, and where did you live before?

Rowena: We've been here about twelve years, and we have lived mostly in this area. We had a kennel south of here. It was out in the country and we thought we would open a boarding kennel there. It was so far out in the country, on gravel roads, that people couldn't have gotten to us. We had a hard time getting out in the winter and Merrill was traveling a lot of the time. We'd have these snowstorms and I practically

place else in cold weather. I've never stayed away three or four months and I don't know whether I'd like that or not. We have someone who plows our driveway out, but it is hard to get in and out of this driveway when it snows. We're between two hills.

Merrill: In all the years we have lived here, we have never had anybody on our property who shouldn't be here. That's one thing I like.

Rowena: Well, there's only one way in and one way out. Back here is the woods, which come down, so anybody would have a hard time sneaking in here. And with these little Tibetan monsters barking ... (laughter) Anybody who has a dog doesn't really have to worry about people. We've had robberies all around us.

Do you mind if I ask your ages?

Rowena: Do you REALLY want to know? (laughter)

Merrill: Seventy-four!

Rowena: I'm 72.

Strangely, it's usually the men who don't want to answer that question.

Merrill: I had a birthday yesterday, so I have to tell you.

Rowena: He usually tells everybody how old I am and then he adds a year to it. I'm 72 and he's already got me at 73! (laughter) If we let this out, then people will know how old I am. People ask Paula all the time how old I am and she says, "I don't know!" I don't mind. After you get this old, you don't mind anymore.

Merrill: She's this old lady running around the show ring at 72 years old! (laughter)

Rowena: As long as my legs hold out, I'm okay. When they give out, then it will be time to sit in my rocking chair, but it's going to be a fight all the way. I had a little problem a few weeks back and my son said, "You will have to give up the dogs." I said, "That will be over my dead body. I will not give up my dogs!" One day I cornered the photographer that Bucky liked so well and said, "I want to tell you something. I will probably drop dead in the ring, so I want you to be sure and get a good picture!" I see him all the time and he looks worse than I do! (laughter)

How long have you been married?

Merrill: For 52 years - GOING ON 53! (laughter)



Ch. Shadrack of Seelah

What have you done for a living?

Rowena: I've done nothing! (laughter) I've raised kids and dogs.

That's quite a bit.

Rowena: I worked off and on at little jobs before we had kids, but we had kids right away.

Merrill: I was in the military for 37 years. I was a major general for many years and stayed in the Army Reserves. I also was executive vice president and general manager of several insurance companies, until I retired in 1987.

Rowena: He's done nothing since. (laughter)

Merrill: I also taught school at Ohio State and Michigan State.

What did you teach?

Merrill: Both economics and business courses at the undergraduate and graduate level.

Rowena: He's a busy man. That's why I didn't have time to do anything. I had to keep up with him.

Merrill: We've had fun. I've enjoyed the dogs. Now, I work out every morning to keep my artificial hips moving.

Rowena: We had four sons. We lost one about four years ago. It was very sudden. That is probably the worst thing that

has ever happened to us.

Merrill: Yes. He was teaching at the University of Iowa and he keeled over just as he started his class. He was our number three son.

Rowena: He'd been to Viet Nam, went through all that, and he had such a rough time when he got back. Then he went back to school. He was to get his masters degree in August, and this was in April. I get so I hate April. Every year there is always some disaster in April. They called us and he had just dropped over. He had had a physical just a week or ten days before. You never know from one day to the next what's going to happen, but you keep going. So we keep going.

Merrill: We don't sit in rocking chairs.

Rowena: No! When my son said I might have to give up my dogs, I said, "I'm not going to sit in that rocking chair." I don't care what's wrong with me, I'm not going to sit in that rocking chair, until I can't move anymore. They thought I had a mini-stroke. It didn't last more than ten minutes and the test came back negative, so everything was okay. It was kind of weird, but I'm fine!

What are your son's names, what do they do, and how many grandchil-

dren do you have?

Rowena: Son number one is James, he's a manager at a health rehabilitation center. Son two, David, is executive vice president for an insurance brokerage firm. Son three is Michael and he's deceased, and number four is Daniel, who's a sales associate. We have six grandchildren, three step-grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Is there anything we haven't talked about that you want to touch on?

Rowena: We could just sit here all night and talk, if you'd like. (laughter)

It beats sitting in a motel room!

Merrill: It's getting tougher and tougher to take dogs to motels.

Rowena: That's a shame.

Merrill: We've been going down to Florida for the circuit for six years now, and when we went down in January, one motel was charging a pet fee, per night per dog. Five bucks a dog? If you have three or four dogs with you, that's \$15 to \$20 a night.

Rowena: Some show people have ruined it for us. No, I shouldn't say just show people, because sometimes it is just people with pets who don't clean up after their dogs. They don't really know how to travel with them.

Merrill: We do take care of our dogs.

Rowena: Some people do terrible things, such as letting their dogs tear up things, and the rest of us pay for it. That's not right, but it happens.

Do you want to see our collection of Sammies?

Sure! Thanks so much for taking the time for this interview.

