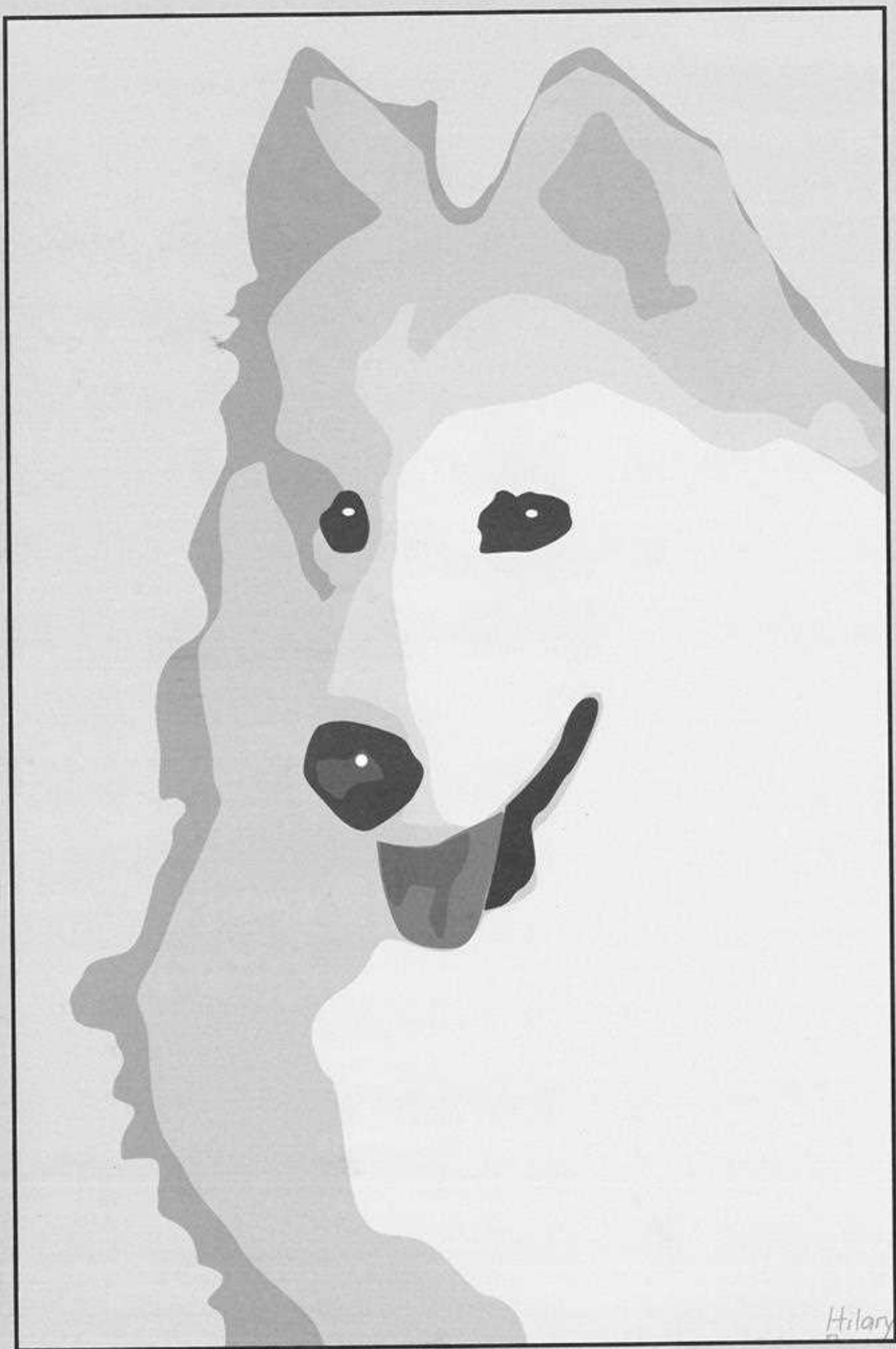


THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Carole Barnum Cheesman
SASSILLIE
Vista, California

This interview was conducted at the home of Carole Barnum Cheesman in February 1999, by Nancy Cozby.

How long have you had dogs in your life?

I've had dogs my entire life. My mom and dad always had dogs. They had Boxers and mutts, but they weren't breeders. We had one dog that was a pet. Then I got a Sam around 1960, right after my son was born. I got one for my husband on Valentine's Day. That's what he wanted for Valentine's Day - regretted that one. Now here I am.

Why this breed in particular?

Basically because that is what my husband wanted. I'll never forget when I was a very young kid walking with a friend and seeing these two really pretty white dogs on a porch. So I talked to the owner and he said they were very rare, and were really good with kids. They made an impression that I remembered the rest of my life. We got a Samoyed because my husband said he found them to be a neat dog, and really good with kids.

How did you find your first Samoyed?

In the newspaper. I bought my first one from a long-time sledding person. The man had gotten angry at a male Sam by the name of "Willie," because he wouldn't run right on the sled team. I called about the ad and when I went to see the dog (he was about four) he seemed to be petrified of the owner. His wife pulled me aside at one point and told me he didn't like to pull that much, and he literally beat him. I felt sorry for the dog, and he was still so mad at him that when he went to reach for the dog, the dog flung himself against the fence. My husband and I took the dog, not because this was the dog we wanted necessarily, but we knew he was upset and we couldn't see leaving the dog, so we took him and

that was definitely the beginning.

What made you decide to show and eventually breed?

I had this dog, and the wife kept in touch with me and asked that I show the dog. I never had done anything like that before, but it fascinated me. I started showing him in obedience and took him through obedience. I went to a few all breed shows that had everything going on. I decided to start showing. I real-

from there ... I became addicted.

So, your first dog was a show dog?

Yes, he never finished. He was my baby, though.

How many litters have you bred? Do you have any idea?

No, I have no idea. My last litter just turned two. Usually I breed one litter a year, sometimes two, but nothing more than that. With all the showing I do, I do not have the time to do a lot of breeding.

thing. And yes, I have sold many champions of dogs that have finished their championships, but in the beginning, it is for me.

What was your best litter?

Probably the litter that influenced a lot of what I do today. I bred and showed everything, and then for about three or four years during a divorce, I got out of showing and found that I was miserable. So I got back in. Those few years that I took off, I still went to dog shows. I still looked. I still talked to many people. I watched other breeds and I think I got a better perspective of what I wanted to do. Then when I came back, I bought a bitch that I wanted to breed and found a male. It clicked, and that is probably what produced four champions out of a litter of five.

And he is?

He is "Chance." He is a two-time national winner of many specialties.

Is he the biggest winner of all your dogs?

He's one of them. Years ago, I had others. He's probably been the most successful. It's really hard to say. I don't know if I can say that. He is for now; for the present Sassillie Samoyeds. I'd say he won 95 percent of the time he was in the ring. Out of that, 85 percent of the time he placed in Group. But he never got a Best in Show. I just didn't have the money to advertise him.

How many champions have you had in the litters bred?

I don't have the slightest idea. I'm a person who hates to brag, I let my dogs do the talking, so I'm not one of those who keeps track of my dogs. I don't keep track of those who have finished their championships. People ask me how many he has finished. I didn't know until I sat down to count how many kids he has. I can't give you a good answer on that one.

Do you have a favorite story about a particular dog?

There are several. One that I do remember goes back to Willie. Willie and I were extremely close. I got him over being afraid of everything; I had



*Ch. Gamble One's Fortune, "Reno," (Akita)
and Ch. C-Song's Stormy Weather (Sam).*

ly started showing in obedience, I put through about three dogs. Willie had a CDX, and my trainee, Harold Pross (who is no longer alive), told me he strongly suggested I don't train him in Utility. So, I didn't, but instead put a Sammy through Utility and I put a couple of them through CDX. That was my first bug. Then I went into showing. Then I decided to breed my first litter. So, it went

Does any particular litter stand out in your mind? Any litter that you did for a particular reason?

When I breed a litter today, I usually have a plan for a couple of litters down the road. The reason I don't breed very much is that nine times out of ten, I do it for myself; I want something from it. The idea is to produce something to go on with. So, I can't think of any litters where I didn't keep some-

my son at the time and was pregnant with my daughter. We lived in Manhattan Beach, and my mother had come to the house to take care of my son while I went to the hospital. When my husband came home he was all excited of course, and my mother said, "Don't tell me what time you had the baby." She gave him a time and my husband said, "Well, yes, how did you know?" The dog had quit pacing and went over and laid down. He and a lot of other dogs have been very, very special. When I have gone to motels when we were showing him, he was very quick about coming to the door, and because I couldn't stay in the best places, he was very quick to growl to let me know that someone was out there. Never did he growl at anybody that was just coming up to see me, they had to be doing something.

Do you have one that has been the biggest character of all?

I would say Willie. He is a character. They all have different personalities and they all have been a lot of fun, but he is probably the biggest character. And I'm going to have to say when the time comes and he's no longer, I'm going to be one very upset lady. He knows how to push my buttons and he does it quite well. It was very well-known around the Sammy ring that I absolutely hated showing the dog. He knew exactly how to anger me and he did it repeatedly!

What kind of things would he do?

You mean in the ring? Oh, he would bark - he is a terrible barker. Loves to bark. It's hard to describe. There are so many things that he has done. He constantly goes in the van and refuses to leave when I'm getting ready to go to a dog show and he can't go. I have to literally drag him out. He sits in the front seat like he owns it. That kind of stuff. I mean it's just little pain in the neck stuff, but he does it well.

Do you think pedigrees in this breed can be trusted as to accuracy?

I used to think so, but I don't anymore. AKC has been proven so much of late that they are wrong in their pedigrees.

How have you used linebreeding, inbreeding and outcrossing, and when do you think they should be used?

I truly believe that inbreed-

ing stamps what you want. I have inbred him, but I don't think any person who inbreeds should even consider it until they have been in the breed long enough to know a total pedigree. I don't mean where you can recite it, but know the dogs that are there. Linebreeding I think should, and is, used more often. But again, too many newer people are breeding before they know their pedigree; before they even know what's in that pedigree. Outcrossing can give you some new things you might need. But the problem is reproducing it again down the road; it is very difficult unless you back-in and linebreed. I know several people who breed to the current winner and their pedigrees are a mish-mash. I don't know how they get anything out of it. Like I said, when I breed I pretty well have it planned, pretty much down

the road what I plan to do with that pedigree. That doesn't mean it doesn't change somewhere along the line. I may change my mind, but I pretty well know what I am trying to improve, and what I need to improve when I go into a breeding, and if it doesn't, then I have to go somewhere else. By now I know most of the pedigrees, what's there and what I need, and what I'm not going to get.

Who or what has influenced your breeding the most?

That's really hard to answer because there have been so many people, from the first person I met. I would say Bob Ward has had a lot to do with it; Dolly Ward, Marty, Chris and Ruth Heckerroth. Those are people who through the years I have consulted to find "whatya think?" Getting input. Heidi Nieman. I would never say there is just one person that has

been really influential, because I have tried to gather as much information by asking any number of people rather than just one person. There are a lot of people out there. I can't begin to think of them all. You know, I did my own thing but at the same time, I still to this day never go to look at a litter unless I have someone there with me, because they can help me: "You know, Carole, this dog is doing this." "Oh yeah, I didn't see that."

How many dogs do you keep now?

Including the Pom and the Akita, I have eight dogs.

What's the most you've ever kept?

Twenty-five. When I was younger and had kids and didn't work, I kept them all up.

How did you come up with your kennel name?

My first two dogs that I



Ch. Chance.

bred were Sassy and Willie; I took the two names and put them together - Sassillie.

Do you name your litters by any particular scheme?

No, I never do. I name puppies by their personalities. Often times when somebody comes to buy a puppy, I don't have a name for it. I have a color because I mark my puppies as soon as they are born. But I don't have names except for the ones I'm going to keep.

Do you feel you have established a distinguishable line, and if so, what do you think others are looking for when they think of it?

Generally speaking, when people say Sassillie, it's very big compliment to me that they think of soundness. I have been known through the years to produce very sound dogs, but not always pretty dogs. I'm hoping that I'm changing that. I'm trying anyway. I would say that most of mine when people talk about Sassillie, they say soundness is what distinguishes mine from somebody else's. That doesn't mean that someone else's aren't sound, but generally that is what people think of.

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

I used to rate soundness as the most important, then type, and then temperament. But I have seen, in the last ten or fifteen years, where temperament has really been ignored. There have been a lot of Samoyeds out there that people say are not trained. No, their temperament (as far as sweetness and lovingness) is an inherited thing. I have seen it go by the wayside. People are accepting it as shyness. And they are not realizing that this breed is sweet and very loving, they are not what I call a real "guardie" dog. That's why I got an Akita, so I would have a "guardie" dog. It really frustrates me, so temperament probably has moved up to being the most important. I feel without temperament, we really don't have our breed. To me it's just so critical. I could go on and on. Temperament is a real bugaboo. If I see a bad temperament in a dog, I have a kitten. It just should not be in this breed. Put it to sleep, it is just not our breed. If you want a "guardie" dog, get an Akita.

What is your long-range goal in breeding dogs?



Ch. Sassillie's Change of Heart, "Chance," two-time National Specialty winner.

My long-range goal is, I hope, coming to an end. My long-range goal is to probably die with a good Samoyed. I would love to have a very sound, very pretty type Samoyed.

When you think of ideal conformation, can you describe the interpretation of the perfect dog of this breed?

That's an almost impossible question. Probably a dog that would be very happy-go-lucky; has a full standoff coat. I would probably describe a male before a female because I'm fairly partial to my boys. They should have bigger bone than most people see on them these days, because again, they are very light boned. They should be fairly square, with a good tail; there's a lot of type tails, and I have a few. A very proud dog. I would like to see a broader head than what I've got. Small ears and moves just as beautiful as can be; moves away and floats on the side. That's my dream.

Why do you think some dogs look good when they are standing and posing, but not when they are moving?

Because they are not structurally sound. It also depends on your interpretation of what beautiful is. I've shown some dogs that are absolutely gorgeous standing still. I mean full coats, drooping, which is very

incorrect. The dog starts moving and is no longer pretty and basically it's because it is not sound. I have a hard time looking at a dog that is standing still and thinking he is pretty if he can't move. He has to move. To me, that's when a dog is beautiful or he's not.

How should they move from the front and from the side?

When they are coming at you, there shouldn't be any rolling through the chest. They should be coming up and grabbing the ground and pulling it through. They should have good brisket, which we are losing a lot of in our breed. They shouldn't be throwing their elbows in every which way. You should see the dog coming at you, he shouldn't have his head up when he is moving because that is very incorrect. His front paws should hit the ground ideally just below his nose. On the side, they should be very balanced. He has an absolutely gorgeous side kick, but when he moves he has wasted kick in the back. It's an overextension, but it is beautiful. It is gorgeous. Everybody says they want a sidegait like that. It is beautiful, but he has too much. His grandson, which I think has a better sidegait, but it isn't nearly as flashy. It's very well-timed.

How should they move in the rear when they are going away, as to trot?

They should single trot, which means from the hip bone you have that "v." I don't know if you know anything about single trotting - a lot of people think it should be from the hock down, but actually it should be from the hip bone all the way down. And if you have a narrow dog, you have a narrower "v." If you have a wide, broad dog, you have a broader "v." There should definitely be a line that you can draw if you stop the motion, and you can see where that goes. They shouldn't toe in and shouldn't toe out, and they should grab the ground and come back out. You should see the pads when they are going away from you. The tail should be up, you want to see a lot of motion. The dog should walk away from you and the butt should be basically still when he goes away. You shouldn't be able to see front feet padding, those front feet should come onto those pads of the rear feet as far as the same spot. That's what I like about his grandson, he does that. Beautiful. You just see the dog straight ahead of you.

What do you look for in a head?

A broader head than what I have. I like to have a short or shorter muzzle. I like to have little ears. I like to have a definite stop. Politically correct, it should be wedge-shaped. I want to have a slant of an eye. A lot of times when you get a very, I hate the term "bear head," but a stocky head, you often get rounder eyes. I can't stand round eyes. I want a good slant in the eyes. I want darker eyes, ideally, black noses and black points. Just the world.

Do you prefer a parallel plane head or a down face? Can you talk a little about eyeset, ears?

That one I do not know how to answer. I do want eyes set obliquely. Ideally, you have to go with what is standard, and they should come in even with the bottom of the ear. I try to get fairly close to that. Like I said, I can't stand to have a round eye, definitely an almond-shape eye. I'm not fond of big ears. That doesn't mean I haven't had them, I just don't like them. I think we are getting a lot of them. They shouldn't be really low; some people like them very high. I want them on

the side of the head. Those are the kind of things that are left to people's opinion. I know what the standard says, but it is somebody's interpretation of the standard. To be very honest, heads have not been an important part of my breeding program. Length of neck, but not heads. And a lot of people will tell you, "I don't like Carole's dog's head." That hasn't been something I have really worked on until the last few years. I'm still not even close to the head I want.

How serious are missing teeth?

They are fairly serious. I mean, the dog has a hard time eating without teeth. Incorrect bites are more important than missing teeth. I don't know of any Sams with missing teeth.

How important is eye color?

It is very important. A friend of mine breeds a lot of very cream-colored, buff-colored dogs, and she has come up with lighter eyes on some of her dogs that have a lot of buff. We have been starting to keep track and going back to some of my older dogs; the more buff dogs seem to have lighter eyes. You want to keep the texture of the coat, but we would like not to have the lighter eyes. I do prefer dark eyes, definitely. Getting back to my own dogs, I have one back there that is lighter-eyed than I like, but he's not a white dog. He's cream, and has lots of buff. I feel the two go hand-in-hand. I prefer dark, but if they have buff, if they are cream, I will take the light eye.

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

Without the head, you don't have type, but still at the same time, there are so many variations. I don't know. I would give it a small percent.

How important is pigment and would you agree to a dog that had missing pigment?

Depends on where they are missing pigment. It also depends on the pedigree. There have been a few that I have bred that didn't have, in my opinion, the best pigment and yet the pedigree screened pigment. So, before I discount that dog as a non-breeding product, I would have to breed that dog making sure that I still bred the pigment. So, I can't answer that with a definite yes or no. It would depend on the pedigree of the

dog. And I believe that I breed pedigrees, and then dogs. There are some outstanding dogs out there that I would never breed to because of the pedigree. That's also the same thing with pigmentation. There are definitely some lines where the pigment is a problem. Would I breed to those? No.

How about winter nose?

Do I like it? No. But I happen to know that I have a girl out there that has a winter nose, and she got it from digging holes with her nose. No, I can't discount them, they are there and I just as soon not have them, only because it is pretty to have a Samoyed with a black nose. I think judges are finally recognizing that having them is not a fault, which I am glad to see, because it isn't.

What do you think generally causes it?

Digging with their noses; my dogs do a lot of rooting. His is caused by the saliva. I do my own tattooing of most of my dogs on the stomach. He's always had a liver nose, which I hated. When I did his belly, it immediately turned liver. There is something in the chemistry that he has a liver nose. RC has the lighter eyes, dark, and when I tattooed him, he stayed dark. So I have no idea other than maybe with some dogs it's chemistry, and with other dogs that live in the snow, it's definitely a winter nose.

What should the relation of the chest depth be to the rest of the dog?

The depth should definitely come at least to the elbow, preferably below the elbow, but it should also have good brisket.

Do you feel that most dogs do come to the elbow?

I would say a lot don't. I think more people are concentrating on the depth of the chest, and are not worried about the front of the chest or the brisket. That is a hard question to answer because I haven't felt most of the dogs, so I don't know.

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

Definitely. That's a visible thing. When the judge is sitting there and looking at all the dogs, he can point and say that dog is fully coated. Or that dog has no coat. And he doesn't have to think beyond that. Yes, I do believe it is a very important factor.

What colors of coat do you prefer, and do you think all colors should be accepted?

Are you asking an Akita question or are you asking a Sam question? Needless to say, I have (obviously, showing as long as I have) a driving desire to win, and to win 99.9 percent of the time you need a white coat. I like having some buff on the dog, but again, white wins far more than buff. I have both.

I have a buff dog and a fairly white dog; in fact he is very white when he is clean. It's hard. I always want to have some buff, because buff gives us our pigment. If you have an all-white dog, he is usually a flat, white dog. There are a few lines that have bred for all-white and their dogs are flat. I want to have silver tips on the end, so I want to keep the buff in there.

So your observation is that, all else being equal, the white will go up before the others?

Oh, definitely.

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

Forty-five degree has been discussed many, many times in articles, and people feel that is too much. It's in the standard. It depends on the interpretation. I do believe that the upper arm and the layback should be equal. You have better movement when you have that, and the dog can go for much longer when he has that. But I wouldn't say it has to be a 45-degree angle. But I also don't want a straight up-and-down - then you have a short neck. It should be equal and not straight up-and-down.

What about the croup drop-off? What is the ideal?

Again, the standard says we should have just a slight drop-off. When you have a steep one, you have a tail that doesn't



Chance.

MARCO'S SIRE

come up right, or when it does, it's really tightly curled. If it's flat, then it's too pushed, and it has to do with the structure in the rear. You want to have just a slight, slanted croup with a nice slink of line, then you are going to have a nice sidegait - then you are going to have a very powerful dog.

Can you describe the correct topline, and do you think that's functional or for beauty?

Oh, the topline is very important; it should be flat with a slight curve for the croup. A dog with a weak back can't do his job, whether it's hurting, or for any length of time, he can't do it. Almost any dog that has a weak back can maybe do it for a short time, but for an extended length of time he needs that back, he needs the muscles in his back to do the job. I think he would get tired if the rear were too high; that means he would be pushing down on the front end if it were slanted. I think then he would put too much power in the rear; then the front doesn't take it. No, I think it is very important.

What is the ideal height of a dog and a bitch?

Now we are getting into the politically correct. I want mine to be at the very top. I personally would like to see a Samoyed that, when out with the group, is a bigger dog. Particularly now that the American Eskimo has come into the picture. I do feel that a Samoyed that is small, at the bottom of our standard, is going to have a hard time pulling in the deep snow. We go through cycles where we have big dogs, then really small dogs, and I'm not overly fond of small. I have a few. But if someone were to say, "What do you want to change?" I'd give them a little bit more. I like a good-sized bitch and a good-sized dog.

What is the ideal tail length and set, and why?

I want a nice, long tail. Ideally, I want it to be very long. I want it to go at least down to the hock, and I want it to go a little bit further with lots of plume. Set, I would rather have a tighter tail than a looser tail. Neither one are correct, but that's what most people want in order to see through when the tail comes up. I've owned a few like that, and the problem is when they get in the ring, the

tail stays up and goes down according to the mood at the moment. Or relaxes to the mood at the moment. I want a tail that I know is always up there, which requires a little bit of a tight tail, which is incorrect.

How about an ideal foot? Do you think a dog with bad feet should be used?

Again, winning - obviously, most of your judges want cat feet. It's not correct; it's very incorrect, but I would be willing to bet that the majority of people don't even know what a hare foot looks like. Because if you look around, the majority of them have cat feet or trim them to have cat feet. But they should have a hare foot. I would like to have a hare foot, but I can tell you they are not going to win as much as a cat foot. Most people groom them

for cat feet because they want the dog to be up on his feet. Most of my dogs have hare feet, but they aren't groomed that way.

Would you like to add anything more about temperament?

I just think it is super important.

What do you think are some of the most serious faults in the breed today?

Temperament. We have very, very narrow fronts. I have some, too. It's something that is going clear across the country. Another serious fault is lack of bone, particularly on the West Coast. I haven't done a lot of traveling, but lack of bone is becoming very serious. People are breeding and they are not reading the standard. This is supposed to be a large-boned dog. A lot of people are not

breeding for the large bone, they want a small-boned dog with lots of leg hair. The other thing is fronts. They are very, very narrow. This is not a racing dog; this is not a Siberian Husky. This is a Samoyed that is used for pulling, he's used for herding, he's used for a multitude of things. So a narrow front or a narrow body doesn't work in this breed - it shouldn't.

Do you think the standard is a good one, is there anything you would like to see changed?

Yes, it is a very good one. Taking out the whiskers things was a bit ridiculous. But it is a good one, because it tells you how the dog should move; tells you ideally what the dog should look like. If you try and adjust it to fit everybody's whim, you are destroying the blueprint.



Ch. Critza's One Step Beyond, "Steph," Group placing bitch.

Maura's
DAM

That's what the standard is. It's a blueprint.

Do you think champions should be specialed?

They all can't be specialed. I don't think all champions should be bred. I would say out of ten dogs that finish their championship, you're lucky if you have one that should be specialed. Ninety percent of the dogs that finish should never walk in a specials room.

Does making the Top Ten or Twenty mean anything to you?

No. To give you an example, I had a long-time friend, a Sammy breeder, offer to buy RC and put him on the mat. I said no. They asked why. I said, "Because he is what I have been breeding for at this point in my life, and whether he makes number one dog isn't important to me. He has to make me happy for being a dog before anything else." If I am satisfied with him and he doesn't make number one, oh well. All number one does these days is tell people you have money. That's all.

Do you think popularization will help or harm the breed?

It will harm it big time. Do I think it will ever get there? No. Everyone is going to American Eskimos.

Do you think most judging is fair, and is there anything that can be done to improve it?

I do believe very strongly it is fair in the classes. Judges really try. The specials ring, no, it's not fair. Can there be anything done to improve it? Yes, get rid of all the magazines, or don't let the judges subscribe to them, one or the other. Dog showing is an ego trip for the judge, the handler and the owner. In specials, it's a totally different game than in the classes.

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

There are advantages to both. Breeder-judges (when I went under them) were an honor; they've awarded me a win or a placement and I was flattered. An all breed judge, at an all breed show, if he is used to judging our breed; I don't know if I can say it's a compliment, but sometimes it's fair. Needless to say, we all have our certain judges we like to show under, but with specialties, I like to show under breeder-judges. I really do. A lot of people don't.



Ch. Sassillie's Take Your Chances.

I like to show under the breeder-judges because I believe they give you a fair judging. Usually at specialties they do. Some of them don't. Again, in the specials ring it's a totally different game. In the Breed ring and in the classes, I think they really do try.

Do you think poor judging is more often a result of politics or is it because the judges don't know the breed?

Both. Usually judges have a mentor, which may be one person. They get one person's opinion, and we all differ in little ways. I do think it is political in the Breed ring. I guess the biggest problem I see is that our breed has changed drastically in so many ways.

Does advertising influence judges?

Very definitely, and that is not politically correct. Again, it is an ego trip. The judge likes to see his picture out there. And if

you take a judge who doesn't know a standard really well, the breed is all right but it's not one of his favorite breeds, if "Joe Blow" has picked the dog up and advertised about it, and he knows and likes "Joe Blow" and thinks "Joe Blow" knows dogs, then that must be the dog to put up. I don't know if it is done purposely but it is very definitely done.

Is this where your statement comes from about getting rid of the magazine or not letting the judges subscribe to them, is that from the advertising?

Yes, definitely. I mean there are some magazines where that's all they have. The breeds have truly gone downhill, and it's not just my breed, it's other breeds. They have lost a lot because of the advertising and what the judges put up. When you consider the majority of dog people showing dogs are in a breed from three to five years, in that three to five years, they have to

be influenced by somebody. Generally, it's whether they win or lose, and if they can't win with a very correct dog, then they are going to try to win with a very incorrect dog that is advertised all the time.

Do you think it is ethical to retouch advertising photos?

No. Is it being done? All the time.

Do you always show your own dogs?

No, I don't. I am a handler, and I went to handling just because I love to show. Oftentimes I will put my dogs in Bred-by so I can finish them, but if I don't or can't, I often take people who are just starting and want to learn how to handle. Sometimes it is even clients. They want to learn, so I give them one of my dogs; in fact, I can think of several of my dogs that have been finished by people I now consider very good handlers in the breed. And they

started oftentimes with my dogs.

Right now, I am starting with another gal who wants to become a handler - that is her dream, and so she is specializing my two specials. I'm getting a little old to run around that ring a dozen times. No, I don't use the handlers that much because I handle.

Have you handled for other people as a favor or professionally?

Both. If someone can't afford to have a handler or can't do the dog justice, I've done that several times. I'm also one of those that if somebody brings a dog that needs trimming - I can't tell you how many times I have trimmed and groomed my competition. I think that is my job.

How do you train puppies, and at what age?

I start them from the whelping box by picking them up and loving them. Formal training, I usually don't start leash breaking them until around ten weeks on a Flexi Lead. Then I go to a regular lead. I also do each one differently because of, once again, the personality of the dog. I find as I'm getting older I'm very much a softy, which I didn't used to be at all. I used to have very rigid standards that they had to be trained by. They usually were trained by the time they were three or four months old. But as I have gotten older, I'm much easier. Sometimes they don't even get formal training until they walk in the ring.

Do you attend fun matches or training classes?

I used to have training classes, but I don't anymore. If there are fun matches at the dog shows, sometimes I'll go. I usually go to a Sammy special, a specialty fun match, and that's only once a year.

Do you believe in obedience training?

I believe very strongly in it. It is very important and I feel it gives, besides the dog training, a connection with the dog. They begin to understand how the dog thinks, how he acts.

Have you ever done any tracking or agility?

No, but I would really like to do agility. I have started to train my Akita for obedience, hoping that he will go into agility. I really want to try agility. It looks like fun, it's not formal.

How intelligent do you feel this breed is in comparison to other breeds?



Ch. Beardstone's Thief Bandit.

It is very intelligent. The problem is it does too much thinking. They're really quick to learn your weak points and strong points. My dogs know exactly when I'm angry and they better behave. They also know when I'm going to give them a mile, even though I yell at them a half-dozen times. I do believe they are extremely intelligent. Often times we are the dumb ones.

Do you think it is appropriate to take a dog anywhere off-lead?

No. I do it more than I should with dogs I feel I can trust. But even the dogs I feel I can trust occasionally will take off. And just because I enjoy having them at me, doesn't mean everybody else does. Also, often when you take your dog off-lead you are not by yourself. There are other people around and maybe they don't want your dog in their face.

How important is training to

winning in conformation?

Training is very important. Formal training, obedience training, I don't think those are important. But training - walking on lead, knowing how to bait - is important. In fact, right now there is a dog that is over a year old, and I have tried for a long time for the owners to bring the dog here so I can work with him. He is so spoiled, he doesn't do anything he is supposed to do.

Do you think a shy or aggressive dog can be corrected with training?

It depends on why he is shy or aggressive. If he is shy or aggressive for inherited reasons, no. If he is shy or aggressive because something has happened to him, yes.

Do you think handlers should be used, and does a big-name handler help the dog to win?

They do in the specials ring. In the classes, no. If a person knows how to handle their breed, they have a good chance.

I don't only handle Samoyeds, but they're a big part in what I handle. I handle all breeds, but on a very limited basis. If you know how to present the dog, in general those handlers who have come up in your breed know how to handle your breed. There isn't a blanket way to handle. The biggest problem with all breed handlers is that they handle each breed the same way. I don't think they can win as often as somebody who handles your breed and does a good job.

Can you give some specific advice to owners who would like to handle their own dog?

Personally, I would suggest they get a video camera and have somebody videotape them. Videotape somebody who you think does a very nice job of handling. Don't just stick to Samoyeds, but definitely do Samoyeds. Learn to be realistic about your dog's faults; his pros and his cons. Have a big mirror

and stack the dog. Look to see what he looks like. And practice. Don't practice with just one dog, but practice with several dogs.

Have you done any sledding, pulling, or herding?

I've done herding. I haven't done any sledding; too much work. Weight pulling; no, I haven't. I won't do weight pulling because I don't do it on a regular basis, and I believe we shouldn't put the dogs through weight pulling once or twice a year. I think they should eventually be worked up to it, and I just think it is wrong.

Can you talk a little bit about the herding that you have done?

I haven't done a lot of training in herding. We tried to get a group together to learn how to make our dogs herd. I encourage my other people who have time to do it. I've done it at Mission Circuit, or if I have an opportunity to do it somewhere else, that's where I'll do it. I've never had any formal training.

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

Yes, I do. Do I think it should do it well? Not necessarily. But they should have some basic instincts.

You have trained your dogs, but what have the dogs taught you?

They seldom can be depended upon. They have humbled me many times. They have been my best friends. When I have cried they made me laugh. They have taught me a lot.

Do you do breedings or consider pups with obedience performers in mind, or do you feel most dogs from any line would do fine in obedience if given correct training?

Do I consider intelligence when I'm breeding? Yes. I do believe if someone knows how to train a dog, almost any dog can be trained if you have the patience and the knowledge. When I was giving training classes, and I did for several years, I always ended it with the comment, "I have yet to meet a stupid dog but I have met many a stupid trainer." I firmly believe that any dog can learn; obviously there are some more intelligent than others.

Do you think there is an age that is too young to do obedience work with a puppy?

It depends on what you consider real obedience. If you consider it when they are very young, don't make it strict and

don't expect perfection, there is no problem starting them between eight to ten weeks with little things. I know several people who are into obedience who do that. For formal training, where you really get out and work them, four months is the minimal age. I really prefer Sammys to be started at least from six to seven months depending on how bad they are.

What obedience method do you practice?

I have, through the years, used the Bill Koehler method, which is correction and praise. That is not politically correct anymore. The clicker method has become very popular; there

Probably the easiest is heeling; hardest is precision. Every exercise has its hard parts, but making it like they want it in obedience, which is precision, that's probably the hardest.

Do you have a particularly funny or perhaps embarrassing story about one of your dogs in obedience?

My first Samoyed, Willie, when I was doing Open with him, he made two legs - one was 196 and the other was 197 - and then he blew fifteen shows. The only way I could get him to work, which was suggested by my instructor, was one week prior to him being shown not to feed him, but let my husband feed him. Not touch him, talk

No, I quit that about ten years ago.

What do you do about a sloppy sit?

With my Akita I just straighten it. I never let him stop sloppy; we never quit until it's straight. I reach down and slap his butt; I correct it.

How do you correct a dog that comes very slow on the recall?

I had one that did that. I took off and ran, and that dog freaked. He came running, "Mom, you are leaving me!" From then on he never did a slow recall.

Would you show conformation and obedience at the same time?

No.

Are there any problem or pitfalls?

No, there isn't really. When I first got started in this game that's what I did. But I prefer to do my obedience at obedience shows. The obedience people are far more considerate than the show people. There is a camaraderie. Anybody who has shown in obedience and trained in obedience, if your dog fails, if it does something wrong, they feel sorry for you. Conformation people, on the whole, are kind of rude and obnoxious. I don't think there is a problem with the dogs, there is a problem with the people.

Have you ever attended any national competitions, like Games?

I have been asked a couple times, but no.

You got a near perfect score with one of your dogs, have you ever gotten a perfect 200 score?

No, just 199.5!

Have you ever had any Highs in Trial?

Yep, he did that night! He actually has had a couple of them. But that's the one I remember.

How do you feel about run-offs?

They are fun. I haven't shown in obedience for years, and I understand that now they are very deadly - but when I was showing they weren't.

Do you think trainability is due to intelligence or attitude in the dog?

Again, I don't think there is a dumb dog out there. Trainability has to do with the person who is training more than the dog. If the person has a good attitude, and can train the dog and does it consistently, you can have a phenomenal working dog. But generally speaking, people don't.

Are your breedings natural or



Ch. Sassillie's Chance of a Lifetime, "Colt."

are several other ways that have become very popular. I still believe in the Koehler method. I have incorporated several other methods in my training, but I still basically believe in this one.

Which level of obedience did you enjoy the most?

I did enjoy Novice. I really enjoyed Open; I enjoyed Utility a lot, but without a good basic Novice, you can't do either one of those.

Do you think intelligent breeds are easily bored with Novice exercises?

Yes, very definitely, particularly Sammys. They are bored very quickly if you don't get out there and throw them for a loop.

What exercise do you find the hardest to teach to most dogs and what is the easiest?

to him, or do anything with him. Totally ignore this dog for a week. Which I did. I cried a lot. He came out with 199.5. The high dog of the night.

That's why he suggested I shouldn't do Utility with him. And I never did. That to me shows intelligence. No two shows were the same. He did not goof them doing the same thing. That proved to me that they are extremely intelligent. I just had to out-think him.

How many degrees have you put on your dogs?

Have I counted? I've done it through UD but I don't know how many dogs I have put through. I don't know. That was several years ago.

You don't still do obedience classes?

controlled?

Controlled.

How do you help the mating along?

My first Samoyed, Willie, did natural; he did it all. The problem is he picked the bitches he wanted to breed. If it was a particularly difficult bitch, I never did get a breeding. I decided at that time that it became very important for me to control them. So from day one I control my breedings by actually training the stud dog to allow me to help. I don't want my males injured and sometimes the bitch is a bitch, but you still want the breeding.

What is a fair stud fee, and do you think it should be the same for proven or unproven dogs, regardless of titles?

No, it should be the same. Also, if they have a lot of expenses, shipping and things, I sometimes will reduce the stud fee for them. I don't breed for everybody who comes along and says they want to use my dog. Stud fees are so variant depending on where you are in the country.

Are your males at stud to outside bitches?

I generally want to know why they are breeding their bitch to my dog; what they expect to get, and I try to be very honest about what they produce. Sometimes people think when I'm being honest I'm not telling all the truth, because I go the other direction. I want them to know all the pros and cons of what my dog can do for them and what he can't.

Have you ever refused to service a bitch, and why?

Yes, several, because of lack of quality that should never have been bred. That's exactly what I recommended to the people. Don't even consider breeding. If you want to breed, go and buy yourself a good bitch. The other ones I have said "no" to because I felt the pedigree wouldn't do well with my dog's pedigree. I direct them elsewhere. I have loads of pedigrees, and I have sat down with someone who has come to me for stud service and recommended someone else. I would tell them my pedigree wouldn't work, but this other pedigree would work better.

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



Ch. Sassillie's Best One Yet, "Kobe," at thirteen months, 1997.

Depends on the serious fault and the pedigree. If I don't know the pedigree, no way. But I probably wouldn't breed to them anyway.

What faults would keep you from breeding?

Bad movement; that's done it more times than I care to say. Really light in bone; that's because my dogs don't help, they can't help. Most of them because of structure problems. If I see a structure problem or if the eyes are blue, or if they don't have any pigmentation, no I won't breed.

Have you handled many matings?

I've handled all of my dogs, and I have handled several for other people.

Is it a good idea to breed to the top winning dog regardless of the pedigree?

No, I would never use that as a criterion. That's not even in my considerations.

How many litters do you think a bitch should have, and what is the youngest and the oldest you would breed?

The youngest I ever bred was eighteen months. I get a little squeamish at six or seven. The most my bitches have ever had were two litters, but I don't see anything wrong with three. I don't think they should be bred every other season or every season - definitely not.

Do you help your bitches whelp?

Yes, I'm right in the whelp-

ing box with them. If they don't want me in the whelping box, then I'm sitting right outside the whelping box.

Do you supplement feed very young puppies?

Only if they need it. I do more supplementing of momma, so that momma can naturally feed them.

What do you supplement her with?

She gets milk, cottage cheese, yogurt, vitamins, anything her little heart desires.

What would you supplement feed the puppies with if you felt you had to?

Goat's milk works really well. By three weeks, if I've had to supplement, I start them on pabulum. In my many years I've been very lucky, I've only had to supplement one or two litters. It's usually goat's milk, egg yolks; that kind of thing.

Do you tube feed or bottle feed?

Bottle. I hate to tube feed. I'm scared to death that I'm going to kill the baby.

Do you wean the puppies yourself or do you let the bitch do it?

I pretty much let the bitch do it, but I start cutting back on her food. Then she cuts back on the manufacturing of milk, and I feed the puppies. Between the two, they don't require as much. If she hasn't gotten serious about it by six or seven weeks, then I do it. But I would prefer that she did it.

At what age do you evaluate your

puppies for pet or show qualities, and what do you look for?

Of my own litters, they start from day one. I write down in a book what I see and observe. Puppies that I take for stud fee, which I don't very often, the earliest I want to make a decision is eight weeks, although I start looking at them at five weeks and every week from then on. I would prefer ten weeks would be the week I make a decision. That isn't always optimum, because most people want to get rid of them by eight weeks. But I don't think you see a front until close to ten weeks. But my own, I start from day one. Through the years I have gotten a feel for my own; what's going to go and what isn't.

Do you cull?

Cull by killing, no. If I have cleft palates, yes I would.

What do show puppies go for?

I vary my price of show puppies. If I end up selling my pick show puppy, I usually put strings on it; I want a puppy back or something like that. They start at \$700 up to \$800 or \$900. It depends on the person who is buying the puppy, what they are going to do with the puppy, how well I know them, and whether they can afford it. Oftentimes I have almost given away my pick puppy to someone who wants to show, and were willing to give me something back. I'm not in this for the money. I'm in it for the dog.

Do you sell sometimes on terms or for cash?

Both.

Do you sell pet puppies with spay/neuter agreements?

Yes, and I put them on limited registration. That's the best thing AKC ever came up with. Every pet puppy that leaves here has spay/neuter in the contract. I'm also aware that some of them I will never see again, but I do know that I can control whether they can register a litter or not, and they are sold unlimited.

What age do you place them in their new home?

The very earliest is eight weeks. I prefer to wait until ten, but there are several books out on animal behavior that believe six to eight weeks is the ideal age to put a puppy in its new home. I don't happen to agree with that, so I try and push it to as close to ten weeks as I possi-

bly can. But none below eight weeks.

Do you have a particularly sad, funny or strange whelping that you ever sat in on?

Well, I have a sad one. My very first litter, the bitch was having her first litter, and I was naive. She got all the puppies whelped. She was having a rough time, and I believed people saying, "Oh, they will do it naturally." I sat with her through all the puppies, then she went for the placenta and started devouring her puppies. We never bred her again, and I had her spayed.

Another time when I was with my first husband, the bitch started whelping while he had company. They were playing cards, and I, of course, stayed in the bedroom. He had ordered pizza; I guess I had made him totally sick. I had the pizza, but he didn't think that was so nice.

What do you feed your dogs?

They get dried dog food, cottage cheese, yogurt, fish oil and vitamins.

Do you think diet is very important in raising this breed?

It is important in every breed, just as it is with us. It's very important.

What are some of the supplements you use?

✕ Fish oil for coats. Also, some canned food depending on how finicky the eater is, and generally that's just males.

How do you condition your dogs?

Yes. I run them next to the car. I go and find a dirt road on Camp Pendleton. Once they hit two, or close to two, they run three to four miles a day at a gait. I had bought a treadmill, but my dogs didn't enjoy it as much as they do next to the car. I take them a minimum three, four, or five times a week. Even this one does it. A mile-and-a-half at night. He loves it. I firmly believe that is what has kept him acting as young as he is. He's an old dog. He's ten and a half. But I do feel keeping him in condition is the reason he gets around so well.

How much grooming has to be done?

I take them out once a week and blow them out with my blow-dryer. I have a big blower, and I do blow them out to get the dirt out of their coats. I don't comb them as often as I should. I think the person who doesn't blow them out has to

groom them at least once a week. Blowing them out helps get rid of the dirt down to the skin.

Do you have any favorite grooming products or tools?

A good comb; a good shampoo. I happen to use "First in Line," a fairly new product, and I really like what it does. I'm using a comb more and more, even over pin brushes. I like the look and getting down there, and I use the dryer all of the time. The dryer does not give off hot air, just a powerful shoot of air.

How and where should these dogs be scissored, and do you trim whiskers?

We can't. That is one thing I think is stupid in the standard. I used to if the dog had a broad head. I scissor the hocks and feet. I'll never forget Marilyn Gitelson, who is a judge now. We were talking about dogs and grooming, and I loved her phrase, she likes the "neat in a dog." And that's exactly what trimming feet and hocks does. It neatens the dog. This is a dog show; it's a beauty contest, and if the dog doesn't look tailored then he shouldn't be out there.

How do you kennel your dogs? What is your set-up like?

I only have four runs. Ninety percent of the time the dogs are loose when I am at home. They are kenneled when I'm not at home, and that is basically for their protection and to save my trees. I can't tell you how many times I have replanted trees. But I really like to have the dogs loose. I have four kennels there, four kennels in the garage and I have four exercise yards out in the yard. Generally, they are all running free.

So you feel adult males and females can be kept together?

Except when they are in season. I don't put this one with the Akita and RC because he feels very threatened. He feels he losing his "top dog" status because of his age, which is normal. But I keep the Akita and RC together when I'm here all the time. They play together. I just don't put him with them. He likes to get in with RC, but he likes to tell him where he belongs on the totem pole. I firmly do believe in the pack syndrome. There is a "top dog" and they work down from there.

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

Talk to several people, get input from them. I can't emphasize that enough. I think people generally find one or two people and they listen to them. Read all they can and don't be so quick to breed. I really believe that AKC does the dogs more harm than good because they insist on the dog being shown. I think the horse people have it absolutely right - unless it happens to a superior animal, it is better to geld it, or in our instance, spay or neuter them. A lot of people say, "Oh, that dog isn't that great, but he's good and he will finish." And a lot of people believe once they have finished the dog, it should be bred. I don't think so. There are a lot of dogs out there that should never be bred that are champions. I think people jump into breeding too soon.

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

Again, they need to talk to several people. Look at dogs, determine the type they like. Generally speaking, new people usually don't buy their first dog thinking they want to be a show person. They buy their first dog because they want a cute, fluffy puppy, or they wanted a Samoyed and the breeder said, "Well, this is my pick or my second pick and it has to be shown." And that is how they get into the dog show.

Are there kennels that you consider to be the best today?

There are several outstanding kennels out there. I don't think that any one is the best. They have nice dogs. They have been influential in the breed.

Would you recommend joining the local breed club, national breed club and all breed club?

I feel you should belong to all three. You learn more. You learn about your breed in the local club and the national club. But from the all breed club you get perspective. To be good at what you do, you need to be part of all three.

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

I think they are doing all they can; it is an overwhelming job. I don't think they are doing enough, but I think they are doing all they can.

Is there an AKC video for the breed?

Yes.

Is it a good one?

I think it is. I've seen it. I have it. I know some of the dogs. That's where the big rub comes in. Somebody recognizes a dog and feel that their dog should have been on it. I think they did a good job at picking dogs. We were supposed to be part of it, but weren't. There are some dogs that do better than some of the dogs they chose, but there is no way they can know every dog in the country.

Is there adequate literature, books



Ch. RC Sassillie.

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and magazines available on this breed?

We could always use more, but there is a lot out there.

Do you have any more funny or interesting stories about your dogs or experiences?

I've had several dog show experiences. A very good friend and I always used to go to dog shows even before it was the fad to go to them. We would go in a camper (we couldn't afford motels), but we wanted to go all the of the time. We were going to go to Arizona one year and she had gotten an overhead camper. Her husband was calling to us as we were pulling out, "Don't go under any low hanging bridges." We laughed and said okay. We headed to the dog show. A friend at the dog show invited us over to her motel after the show to use the shower, since we didn't have one in the camper. So we said okay. So, we drove right underneath the overhang of the motel, and there went the camper right

off the truck. And of course my friend just panicked at what her husband was going to say. I'll never forget that. To this day, whenever I go under a low bridge, I kind of duck.

Another time I went to a National Specialty with her, and I had broken my ankle at a Santa Barbara dog show showing "Tracer." I went around the ring and stepped in a hole. They rushed me to the hospital and x-rayed my ankle after the Group - I would not allow them to do it before the Group. My ankle was so swollen they couldn't tell if it was broken, but my doctor gave me some pain pills. We went to a dog show up in Washington and I showed six dogs. I was in a lot of pain but I showed every one of them and won. We had so much fun. Generally speaking, dog show people are a lot of fun. Outside of the ring we have a lot of fun.

How long have you been at this location?

I've lived in this house

approximately seven years.

Why did you move here?

It's a house I could afford. I've always rented but I never stayed very long. I finally decided to become a little bit more stable. I bought this house; my folks helped me. All it had was one tree in the backyard. I've done all the fence building and run building. I've had some help, but 90 percent of it I did myself.

Are you or have you ever been married?

Twice, and right now I'm not married.

What do you do for a living?

Right now I work at Camp Pendleton for a group of lawyers. I'm a budget analyst and office manager.

What type of education do you have?

I have a couple years of college but I never got a degree.

How have dogs affected your lifestyle?

Totally, they overrun it. Truly, I can't even go on vaca-

tion without taking a dog. They have become such a big part of my life. Yes, I would like to get married again, or at least have a social life. But that person would definitely have to like dogs, much more than my last two husbands.

What are the benefits of being in dogs?

I have met some of the neatest people, absolutely. No doubt about it, my best friends are in dogs. I think I have met some fantastic people; whether I agree with them all the time is immaterial.

What are the drawbacks of being in dogs?

No social life outside of them. That's basically it. They pretty much run my life.

Has it been worth it?

Yes, it really has. The neatest part about my dogs is no matter what I do, they still love me.

Thank you for your time.

You're welcome. *