

# THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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## Samoyed People

The Samoyed Quarterly  
Talks with  
**T.J. and Nelda Dendinger**  
**SILVERTIPS OF DIXIE**  
Killian, Louisiana

### Part II

*This interview was conducted at the home of T.J. and Nelda Dendinger in June of 1995 by Brenda Abbott.*

#### *How did you raise puppies?*

T.J.: The whelping box was normally in the den. After they were weaned, we'd start putting them out for short times.

Nelda: I was the puppy whelper. T.J. kept track of how many dogs and how many bitches and how much each of them weighed. We did not breed many litters, one litter a year, if any. One year we had two litters and it nearly did us in. (laughter) We kept the puppies inside a long time and they just took their place as part of the family. T.J. had built a whelping box from a design made by a German Shepherd breeder friend and it worked very well for us. I would put newspapers in the bottom to line it and then, later on after the puppies were old enough, I would put linens in it for them to have a little area to rest on. Eventually, I would make the size of the newspaper smaller. They knew that was their exercise area, but it didn't take them long to get housebroken, because we would open the door and let them all run outside. They would frisk

and frolic and take care of their needs and then come back in. Sammies like to be clean, so they learned right away where to take care of their needs. They stayed very clean. Memory was very fastidious with her puppies and she would keep them spotless. She would get in the whelping box with another bitch and take over if the other bitch would permit it. She loved all puppies.

T.J.: We had one litter of eight. When we put them in the kennel run to keep them from getting out whenever we'd go in to feed them, I put a barrier across. It was between eighteen inches and two feet tall, plywood board. I put it across in front of the gate about two and a half feet. That way we could open the gate without letting the puppies run all over the yard and having to catch them every time. We had one beautiful male that was able to crawl over that barrier. Of course, there would only be one and we were able to catch him. He would get a little more attention and we thought he was cute doing that. Later on, as they got a little older, we found out that wasn't the best thing to have happen, because the dog only had one testicle and I feel sure that he disintegrated his testicle by sliding over that board.

Nelda: It certainly was an easy thing for us to do, at the time, because we could selectively pick out a puppy and take it out for socialization or just a little bit of training. That may have been our very first litter, so we learned from that experience and it never happened again.

*How do you pick your puppies? What do you look for?*

Nelda: We look, first, for temperament. We want to have a dog that's easily adaptable to any situation. Then we look for overall balance. Movement. We like a pretty head if that comes with the package. A medium sized dog has always been what we look for, with medium bone, not heavy boning. We like a nice earset that goes with the head style. We like dark eyes, dark pigmentation. We like a tail that's carried nicely over the back, a nice strong topline.

T.J.: Nice stifles. We like what the standard calls for, basically.

*At what age do you determine that you can see all that?*

T.J.: Different bloodlines do different things. We could tell a good deal about our puppies by nine weeks, especially after the first breeding. The only thing we couldn't really tell was how big they eventually would be, but we could pretty much tell what we were going to have as far as movement and type. We've had good ones go bad. We've never had a bad one go good. If we had a puppy that was faulty in movement, the chances of that dog getting over it were slim to none. I've had people tell me that their dog's rear was funny, but when it hit eighteen months old it was okay. I don't think that would be the case in our bloodlines. It might get a little more severe. I don't think it would get any better. If you had a problem as a puppy, it would stay with you. If you had a good moving puppy,



*Clean sweep under Ramona Van Court Jones. Left to right: Ch. Count Togwotee of Pinehill, Best of Breed; Ch. Silvertip's Nicholas O' Dixie, Best of Winners; Am/Can Ch. Silvertip's Dixie Fascination, Best of Opposite Sex.*

though, it would continue to move well. We went a whole lot on movement, because if a dog is put together right he can move right. If he's not put together right, he can't move right. So, movement tells you a whole lot about a dog. Of course, we went for expression and dark eyes, pigment and personalities.

Nelda: By nine weeks we could generally tell. We learned from personal experience. We acquired two good dogs and the bloodlines went well together, and we produced a lot of nice puppies from the litters. We were picking the best of a good lot for show puppies and that made it pretty easy. At that time, we thought that only the cream of the crop could be show quality. Primarily, it was just the size, type and movement.

*What do you think of Samoyed judging?*

T.J.: I've not been active lately and I couldn't give you an up-to-date answer. As a matter of fact, I was at a show about two weeks ago and that's the first one I've been to in about two years.

Nelda: I think that judging today is probably the same as it's always been. A lot of people prefer to show under all breed judges rather than breeder-judges, because breeder-judges are looking for a certain type or they know what problems they had to deal with and they are much more critical of the breed than all breed judges. If you had a breeder-judge, normally you would want to place your class entries in Bred-by-Exhibitor because, if you had one that you were proud of, you thought surely the judge would recognize the quality. Throughout all the years that we showed, we developed a nodding acquaintance with a few judges. We had a few favorites, but it was always good to show under an unknown. We felt like we got honest evaluations. We could tell by the way the judge judged the entire breed whether he was knowledgeable about the breed or looking for one particular characteristic. It was always more interesting to me to show to an unknown person and see what happened. Basically, I think, judging is honest. There are some judges who don't know the breed standard; therefore, when the classes are all finished, there's no rhyme or reason to what they did. They're just sorting out the dogs and nothing is alike. I like to see a judge who knows what he's looking for and judges quickly.

T.J.: And consistently puts that type up.

Nelda: Whether they're going for movement or whatever, when they get finished you know you had a judge who knows what he likes.

T.J.: You have an idea what he intends to put up and, if you have that type of dog, you know you have a pretty good chance of winning under him. What she's talking about is some judges might pick out a real showy dog that can't move and put second



*Silvertip's Dixie Treasure. Winners Bitch under judge Herman Cox for first major.*



*Silvertip's Tazmanian Devil, "Sunny" (Ch. Quicksilver's RazzMaTazz x Ch. Heritage Silvertip's Amulet). Winners Bitch and Best of Opposite Sex under judge Kathryn Tagliaferri.*

a dog that moves really well but doesn't show, so you really have no idea what he's looking for. It makes you wonder if he knows himself.

Nelda: Generally, we found that the judges from Canada and the East Coast preferred a smaller, typier dog, those from the West Coast preferred more leg length and a bigger dog, and the all breed judges would go for an overall well-balanced, showy dog. Through the years, we developed a list of those that we'd give one or two shots to, that maybe, if they didn't like what we showed the first time, show a different type the next time. If we struck out several times with different dogs and still could see no rhyme or reason, we saved our money when

they judged.

*How long have you been judging, T.J.?*

T.J.: I got my judge's license in 1973.

*Have you ever had a desire to go for any other breeds?*

T.J.: Not really, no. I'm not really interested in too many other breeds.

*What made you decide to become a judge?*

T.J.: I like the breed a lot and it gives me an opportunity to see a lot of dogs from other areas and put my hands on them. It's very interesting. It's rewarding in a way. The only bad part about judging is you can only make a few people happy. That's one reason that I've not judged as much as I could be judging, because I would not take assignments in this immediate area. If I did



Silvertip's Snow-Mac Legacy, "T.J." (Am/Can Ch. Shaloon of Drayalene x Am/Can Ch. Silvertip's Dixie Fasnation), at two months.

New Orleans I wouldn't take an assignment in Baton Rouge or Lafayette, because I felt it would not only hurt me, it would hurt the entry in the given dog show because I didn't feel like the dogs that I put down would enter that show. I felt like maybe every three years was enough for me to judge in this particular area, because it's basically the same dogs.

*Are there a lot of Samoyed people in the South now?*

T.J.: There are quite a lot more than there were when we were active. There are more breeders, now, in the South.

Nelda: We used to have to depend on going to Birmingham, Alabama, Memphis, Tennessee, Houston, Texas or Pensacola, Florida, and beating bushes to try to work up majors. With all of the breeders now, the Mississippi-Alabama area usually has a lot of majors and Texas people have their own breeding programs going, so there are a lot of puppies out and majors are a lot easier to come by than they were at one time.

*Local breed clubs tend to help that; Atlanta has a local breed club now.*

Nelda: We had started a breed club in the Baton Rouge area many years ago, but we only had about five families and some of those moved away. We just did not have enough people to keep it active and it eventually dissolved. It's a shame, because it is rewarding if you can get enough and share ideas. Since we couldn't get a breed club going, we would just work with different breeders of all breeds and have little outings and gatherings at the parks and just set up rings and do training. We didn't get to go into as many specific programs as would have been available to us as a breed club. Of course, we were so far away from most of the specialties that we very rarely got to attend a specialty club showing. Now they're much more accessible.

T.J.: We couldn't really get it off the ground.

*You've been active in all breed clubs, though, haven't you?*

T.J.: I've been show chairman for Baton Rouge Kennel Club four times, and I think Nelda was show chairman twice.

Nelda: A couple of times. We held a lot of different offices in the club and T.J. did the show training for many years. I think one or both of us were on the Board of Directors consistently. It was a lot of fun. When we moved from the Baton Rouge area into this area - we're about 50 miles from Baton Rouge - it became an effort to go to the kennel club meetings so we quit attending the meetings at that time. We did maintain our membership, but last year or the year before we dropped out. We had been in the club for over 25 years.

*How much do advertising and handlers have to do with the dogs that are Top Ten dogs in the country?*

T.J.: I think it has to do a great deal.

Nelda: There are many dogs that are very fine dogs that are owner-handled sparingly and have no advertising, but do manage to get in a few Group wins here, there and yonder, but, let's face it, if you intend to campaign for a top winner, you have to put the money into advertising, because it certainly has been known to pay off.

T.J.: Personally, when I was judging more actively, I didn't read any publications, especially around the time when I had an assignment, because I didn't want it to sway me in any way. I wanted to judge the dog that was best that day and past performances didn't make a whole lot of difference to me.

Nelda: I don't think it is accurate to say you didn't want it to sway you, because, knowing the person that you are, I don't think you would have been swayed anyway, but he chose not to look at the publications at that time.

*There are a lot of professional handlers in the South, aren't there?*

T.J.: Quite a few, quite a few.

Nelda: We have always had to compete with professional handlers; in fact, I believe that dog showing is the only sport where amateurs have to compete with professionals on a regular basis. In almost every other sport professionals are segregated, and sometimes I think it should be thus in dog showing. I can understand why some judges who are all breed judges now and were former handlers, if everything is equal, will tend to put up the handler, because they were in that position once and they know this is their livelihood. So if we were attending a show, we much preferred to have several handlers in the ring than to have to compete with one handler. There are a lot of large kennels in the South with the handlers having boarding kennels as a part of their livelihood, and they travel with their string of show dogs. Most of the handlers in this area have such a large volume of clients that they have one or two assistants who go into the ring with some of their clients' dogs, so it is a distinct disadvantage to have to compete with these professionals, especially at the Group level. In the Group ring, there are so many handlers that most of the Group placements go to handlers, and the owner-handlers who are winning Group placements are those who do a considerable amount of advertising.

*Is the Sammy an easy breed for the professional handler to take into the ring?*

T.J.: I would think so. I think they're an exceptionally easy dog to train. Most of them love to be shown, at least the dogs that I've been fortunate enough to take into the ring. I know that I have done favors for people and, before I was a judge, would take a dog in for them. They respond to whoever is on the end of the line at the time. I would say they are one of the easiest dogs to show.



*Ch. Heritage Silvertip's Amulet, "Effie Lee" (Ch. Silveracres Mac Heritage x Ch. Silvertip's Snow-Mac Heritage). Winners Bitch and Best of Opposite Sex under judge Hans Brunnot.*



*Ch. Silvertip's Dixie Debonaire, "Dinger" (Ch. Count Togwootee of Pinehill x Ch. Ka-Tag's Memory In Silver), shown getting Best of Breed over five specials under judge Michele Billings for a five-point major.*

Nelda: It takes a commitment on the part of the handler to be willing to do the grooming that is required, because most of the handlers who are familiar with coated breeds have the toys or the non-sporting dogs. Of course, the Sam is not one of those. A lot of the people who use professional handlers in the South travel to the shows with their dogs, do the grooming and hand the dog to the handler at ringside. The breeder-owner has done all of this work and the handler walks in and reaps the glory. I understand the position when they're going for ratings and the handler may not be able to commit to all of the grooming, or the owner may not trust the handler's judgment or ability to groom to their satisfaction. Then they still get to meet with the different breeders and enjoy the socializing at the shows, as well as see their dogs perform, so it works both ways.

*Who were some of the dogs 30 years ago that you remember that you liked?*

T.J.: I liked Ch. Tsuligkta's Kara Fang. I think Donna Yocom bred him. I don't know if it's 30 years ago. I liked Ch. Czar's Dorak of Whitecliff and Ch. Chu San's Mei Ling O'Yenesisk.

Nelda: At that time, we had to compete with Ch. Sam O'Khan's Kubla Khan, a magnificent dog traveling with his handler.

T.J.: Joan Scovin's special, Ch. Scandia's Kejsane, was very nice. They called him Chucky. He was very sound.

Nelda: When we first started showing, Jack Onofrio, who is now a superintendent, was a handler and he was traveling with Ch. Wintercloud of Silver Moon, owned by Bernice Helinski.

T.J.: We've seen a number of outstanding dogs in our time.

Nelda: Ch. Star Nikki Attai of Silver Moon was winning Bests in Show at that time.

T.J.: Ch. Moonlighter's I'ma Bark Star and Ch. Quicksilver's RazzMaTazz come to mind.

Nelda: Of course, Memory's dam, Ch. Chu San's Mei Ling O' Yenesisk, was a very lovely bitch. Very typey; classy.

T.J.: Needless to say, I definitely liked the bitch that I put up at the Chicago Specialty. She was a lovely bitch, Ch. Moonlighter's I'm A Spark of Bark. Another spectacular bitch was Ch. Nanank's Bathzarah, SCA Top Winning Bitch in 1978, if I recall correctly.

Nelda: Memory's sire, Ch. Silver Duke of the Rockies, was a Group winner. He was a nice dog, but we fell in love with Mei Ling. It seems like we always preferred the bitches, so we tend to look for a really nice bitch. When we went to the specialty in Atlanta in 1979, a Whitecliff bitch was stunning. I think she was over ten, in the Veterans class. She may have been thirteen.

*White Star?*

Nelda: Star, yes. It was amazing to see

her performing at that age.

T.J.: At that particular Specialty, Chuck was there and John Columa was showing that male that moved so great.

Nelda: Ch. Lynthea's Josh of Wakan, but I believe he was handled by Tony Chavez.

T.J.: Yes, Josh. He was a moving little rascal. He produced some nice dogs, too.

Nelda: Audrey Lycan had a lovely male, Ch. Winterway's Mr. Wonderful. He was an excellent dog.

*That was Glen's first exposure to the ring, wasn't it?*

Nelda: I believe so. He's an excellent handler. We had fun competing with Glen. We still see him at the shows occasionally.

*Do you remember any kennels that you thought really contributed to the breed?*

T.J.: Drayalene and Whitecliff are two that stand out in my mind.

Nelda: Doris's Silver-Acres and John Scovin's Weathervane produced a lot of excellent dogs. Moonlighter and Kondako made quite a contribution, and later Phoebe's Heritage line. Phoebe bred more than 30 champions in her brief time span.

Her motto was "Love me, love my dogs," and together they made a wonderful package. There were kennels from the Texas area that produced fewer dogs, but excellent quality.

T.J.: The Peils and Middletons. Nelda: Still breeding, still active. Also the Winslows.

T.J.: When you cross the Sabine River, that's a whole new ball game.

Nelda: It always has been.

T.J.: They told me I needed a passport to get into Texas. (laughter)

*What have been the drawbacks to spending so much time with these dogs?*

T.J.: We just, basically, ran out of gas, I guess. We had grandchildren, bought this property and built a new home. Back when we were showing, we had a lot of energy. We could show then drive all the way home and I could go to work Monday and it didn't bother me too much, but, as we got older, it got to where it was becoming a drag. Now that I'm kind of semi-retired and have more time, if I can convince Nelda, we might quietly ease back into showing.

Nelda: I can't say that there were any



*Silvertip's Snow-Mac Fantasy, "Fanny" (Ch. Moonlighter's I'ma Bark Star x Ch. Nanank's Bathzarah). Owner-handler T.J. Dendinger. Winners Bitch and Best of Breed under judge Dennis Grivas.*

specific drawbacks. We enjoyed showing, traveling and socializing with the people. We certainly feel like we had somewhat of a success in the breed, because we could win down to our fifth, maybe sixth generation and still consistently see the type in our dogs and people would know it was a Silvertip dog or bitch. I think that's what we set out to accomplish. When you've run the gamut of exhibiting, breeding, working in the breed clubs and the all breed club, the next step is judging, which T.J. has done. Then you sit back and reflect on it. I don't think there's anything that we would have done very much differently. We were showing and operating on a shoestring, but I think it would have been nice to have the wherewithal to actively campaign what we thought was a really nice dog or bitch. We don't know if we would have taken that route or not. It was a lot of fun for the children. They competed in 4-H. We helped with their 4-H dog projects and they appeared on TV with the dogs and a couple made a commercial. We've just done a lot of different things with the dogs. We did not allow the dogs to consume our lives. We always had a separate social and personal life outside of the dogs. We did not let it interfere with the family life. We had our normal family activities and the children all had well-rounded lives in spite of our interest in the dogs, and they went on to develop other interests.

T.J.: They're all working and they don't have time for pets. Ted would like to have a dog, but he works so many hours. I advised him against it because he just doesn't have the time to give the animal the attention it deserves.

Nelda: He loves dogs. He always loved to take a dog out to the park. He said that was instant attention, all the girls would flock to this dog. (laughter)

If you had a really nice dog, T.J., would you handle it yourself?

T.J.: Definitely.

How about if you decide to special it?

T.J.: I would handle it. If I had a nice dog right now, I would campaign it and finish it as fast as I could. As a special, if you saw me walk into the ring with it, you could say, "He thinks he has a pretty good chance of winning." If I had another dog, that's how I would handle it. Oftentimes, before, we'd get anxious and we'd special a dog that really shouldn't have been entered. You can't adjust the coat to the show and we just were so anxious to win that, a lot of times, we'd show a dog that really shouldn't have been shown on a specific day.

Nelda: I don't think we would consider heavily campaigning a dog. I just don't think we would get the satisfaction out of it that would be required to invest so much in a dog.

T.J.: If I had a dog I would do just about like the Walkers in Texas who owned Dorak, Ch. Czar's Dorak of White-

cliff. He handled that dog himself and showed him only when he was in condition and did some fine winning with him.

Nelda: We might travel extensively with a dog if we had the proper dog. We're footloose and fancy free. We can get in the motor home and go wherever we want to and it would still be a vacation. It would be fun.

T.J.: We could make some pretty long trips, now. I don't have to be back to work on Monday.

Nelda: That would be an ideal situation. We could go to the regional specialties and larger shows.

T.J.: I actually had two dogs in mind. I think we could travel very comfortably with two dogs.

Nelda: You know what comes after two dogs. I just don't want to be a little gray haired lady, walking around with a cane leading a puppy. (laughter) If the opportunity presents itself, we might get another dog or two.

Since you're in that position, what advice would you give to someone who wanted a really nice dog and might want to do just what it is you're going to do. How would they start?

T.J.: They need to get a good dog to start with. I would suggest that they wait till the puppy was about six months old.

I mean, how would they go about finding that puppy?



Ch. Kendara's I Katch'R O'Silvertip (Ch. Czar's Dorak of Whitecliff x Ch. Silvertip's Dixie Fantasy) at four months with owner Mary Frederick.

Nelda: My advice, and what I would like to do, would be to attend local specialties or, if they're beginners, go to the local all breed shows or contact the kennel club members or the breed specialty clubs, if there are any in the vicinity, to get in touch



Ch. Silvertip's Kara Snow (Am/Can Ch. Shaloon Of Drayalene x Am/Can Ch. Silvertip's Dixie Fasionation).

with the breeders and talk to the breeders and learn all they can from them. See the different dogs, read the books, decide if this is what they really want and if they have the temperament to live with the dog with all this hair and constant grooming. If they've made that commitment, go to the shows, maybe to the specialties, and start at the Puppy class. Look at the puppies from six months on up. Check your catalog, see what the different lines are producing and see what they look like on up in age. Then look at all the specials, the veterans, and check everything out. When you see which lines are producing your ideal dog, there is a starting point. Just make sure you get into a line that's as free of genetic defects as possible and still maintains the qualities that you want in a dog.

*The National is a good place. You said that you might go to the National this year in Austin?*

Nelda: I've been trying to plan a trip in that direction.

T.J.: We were thinking that maybe you'd suggest something. What about that beautiful ten-month bitch that you were telling us about? What I am looking for is one that the breeder has that he doesn't want to sell.

*For you, she doesn't have to be seven or eight weeks. You want one that's up there.*

Nelda: Red hot and ready.

*That's something that people don't think about. They've got to have one, the younger the better, but you're buying a pig in a poke. What if it doesn't turn out?*

T.J.: If you got a puppy that's six or seven months old from a good breeder who spent time with it and trained it, it would adjust to you immediately.

Nelda: At one time we thought we had to have infants.

T.J.: When we purchased Effie Lee from Phoebe, we bought her on a Saturday and there was a sanctioned match in New Orleans on Sunday. Phoebe kept on, "This dog has never been handled by a man. It's going to take you months and months to get this dog ready. Nelda's going to have to show this dog." I said, "Oh, fiddlesticks. I'll have this dog working for me." I took her to New Orleans and won Best in Match the next day. The dog was just focused on me.

Nelda: But, some people used to tell T.J. that he could win with a dust mop. (laughter)

T.J.: When I show a dog, I try to show it naturally. I try to show it on a loose lead and I want to draw as little attention to myself as I possibly can. I want the judge looking at the dog, and I let the dog get away from me a lot. I run way to the right of the mat, if I have enough room. I try to get as far away from the dog as possible, on a very loose lead, where the dog looks like it's almost by itself in the ring. Of course, when I stop it, I try to also work on a loose lead. I think it's more impressive, rather

than having it all strung up and having the front feet off the ground half the time.

Nelda: Usually, our dogs were so well trained, and loved to show, that when the children took them into Junior Showmanship competition, it was hard for them to win with the dog, because they didn't have to work with it. We had one puppy that was a little bit unruly at the first few shows and my son, being the youngest and lowest on the totem pole, took her into Junior Showmanship, because the two girls had first dibs. There were about 21 in the class. He had just turned eight and it was his first show, so he walked into the ring with this bitch, who was a pretty good-sized puppy bitch. We seldom let them take a male in because there were too many other children in with Shepherds and Danes, and we just didn't feel like it was good judgment to let them take a male in. Ted took his unruly bitch in and she was fidgety. He would set one foot and then she would mess it up and he'd set another foot and the tail was down. He'd pull the tail up, he'd get the ears up. He just nearly worked his little self to death and he got first, much to our amazement. Anyway, he was thrilled. He thought he was a professional. The next day, the show was in Beaumont, Texas. He went into the ring with his unruly little bitch and she did pretty well that day. He didn't have to work nearly as hard and he didn't even place. He was so outdone. The judge who had judged the first day saw him coming out of the ring walking with the dog and she said, "How did you do today, son?" He said, "Didn't even get a ribbon." She said, "Well, chicken today, feathers tomorrow." That's the way it goes sometimes. We much prefer the chicken.

*How do you feel about co-ownerships?*

T.J.: They serve a purpose, sometimes. They worked out okay for us. Several times when co-ownerships were intended to be ongoing, we relinquished our share. Phoebe wanted the rest of Jenny and we didn't actually want to give her up, but to keep Phoebe happy, we went ahead and did that. The same thing with Wayne. When everything was all said and done, in the end he wanted all of Sassy, and I can understand why. When we co-owned Memory, I ended up getting all of Memory, so you have to put yourself in the other party's shoes. After they've housed the dog so long they become attached, and after they've had a litter and sent us a puppy or two, whatever the arrangements were, they said, "Well, I've fulfilled that obligation. I'd like to own the dog now."

*Are you saying the friendship is more important than the co-ownership?*

Nelda: Definitely. There are advantages to co-ownership, but you need to know what the goals are. Set the goals in advance. Is it going to be a financial commitment, where several people want to cam-

paign a dog and each is contributing financially? That works very well. You have that specific goal in mind. Co-ownership with bitches is a good thing for breeders, especially when you're limited in the number of dogs that you, personally, want to maintain in your kennel and household. If you co-own your bitches with breeding arrangements, you're able to breed to several different outside lines to carry out your breeding program, yet you don't have to personally keep and take care of all the puppies. Not that you would want to do extensive breeding, but it is a way that you can continue your breeding program and not have constant litters of puppies, so that works out very well. You need to make these arrangements prior to the co-ownership so that everybody understands what each person's commitment is. It's a good way to manage a breeding program.

T.J.: In our case, with Wayne, we finished the American championship on a dog and then we sent it to him and he finished the Canadian championship and sent us a puppy, so that worked out pretty nice.

Nelda: It's important to keep the ages of the dogs in your kennel at, say, four- or five-year intervals, because that way you don't have all the dogs the same age, where you suddenly have all these old dogs that you can't show or breed and you don't want to place them. Consequently, you're limited because you can't start over with a new puppy, because you'd be way over your limit if you did that. Co-ownership is a way to keep partial control of a dog and see to its breeding and show career.

*Is there anything that we haven't covered that you want to be sure to get into this interview?*

T.J.: We've about touched base on everything.

Nelda: I can't think of anything in particular. Most breeders are doing a good job with their breeding programs. The most important thing is to be able to be able to evaluate your puppies accurately and see if you have improved your dogs through the years and if you are actually accomplishing your goals. Unless you're able to honestly evaluate your dogs, you're going nowhere.

T.J.: Some people can only see fault in other dogs. They don't see what's on the end of their own leash.

Nelda: Overall, we've enjoyed our association with dogs and it's been an interesting hobby. It is something we've been able to do as a family and, after the children were gone, to do together. It's often not the case that you're able to maintain a sport and a hobby with the same interest.

*That's certainly not the only hobby you two have had. You're pretty busy people. What else do you do?*

Nelda: I do watercolors and tole painting. I collect English ironstone, depression glass and other antiques and collectibles. I have a little Bed and Breakfast as a sideline.

I'm interested in gardening. I belong to several civic organizations. T.J., of course, has his own interests.

T.J.: My interests are vast. Over the years, Nelda tells me that I've taken her a lot of places, but we've never seen anything - to boat races, to the dog shows and home. We've been all over the country. I recently bought a new motor home and I told her she'd better buckle her seat belt because I was going to see things now.

Nelda: T.J. has fished, hunted and shrimped. We feel like, together, we can travel and take a dog or two with us, if we end up with one.

*Your home is stunning, sitting here on the river. Will you please describe for the readers how you acquired this beautiful place?*

T.J.: It belonged in my family for generations, and my daddy got the property in 1954. He built a camp out here in 1955.

Nelda: A camp is what the people in this area call their summer cottages.

T.J.: From the time that I got married, I tried to get him to sell it to me. It took 30 years for him to sell me this piece of property. It's 46 acres on the Tickfaw River. We fixed the camp up and worked on it for months and got everything the way we wanted it. We redid the whole thing, and it burned down. We decided to build a home here and we've been living here since 1988.

Nelda: We knew exactly what we wanted in a home. We wanted something that was 100 percent livable and spacious. I have a very large family and we have a lot of family gatherings here. People just seem to congregate on the river, so we wanted room to relax and to be able to entertain. We use everything that's in our house. If we have antiques or glassware or whatever, it's not for show. Everything is usable and we designed our house with the minimum of upkeep. We did not want a big house that owned us. We've done some of our own plantings, but we had the front yard landscaped. We love flowers and maintain all the beds. T.J. is the grass cutter, but he has a helper occasionally.

T.J.: We keep about 27 acres up.

Nelda: We have four acres on the hill that's the lawn area.

T.J.: We keep up from the river to the road. It's over a half mile from the highway to the house.

Nelda: We call it Whispering Pines on the Tickfaw. There are a lot of huge pine trees and some big oaks. We have a pier down by the river where people like to fish. Killian is a quiet, peaceful village of about 600 residents.

*There's a beautiful, expansive lawn down to the river with the flowers and trees all around. It's just beautiful, and I highly recommend the Bed and Breakfast.*

Nelda: We got into that accidentally. We had a little building that was a workshop, and T.J. built a huge new workshop,



*Silvertip's Dixie Amulet, "Fifi" (Ch. Silvertip's Dixie Debonaire x Ch. Heritage-Silvertips Amulet). Winners Bitch.*



*Silvertip's Southern Comfort, "Harry" (Ch. Silvertip's Dixie Debonair x Ch. Heritage Silvertip's Amulet). Winners Dog and Best of Winners.*

so we had the little building sitting there. I said, "Well, we'll make a guest cottage out of it. When people come from out of town it will be a place for them to stay." So, we made the cottage and then someone from the department of tourism called. She came out about real estate, or T.J. did some work on her boat, I don't remember exactly. She saw the cottage and said, "Oh, you ought to make a Bed and Breakfast out of this." We had been toying with the idea, but hadn't really given it much thought. Lo and behold, a week later she called and said she was with a writer from the *Fodor's Tour and Travel Guide for the Bed and Breakfast in the South* and she wanted to bring her out here. She was about ten minutes from the house so I said, "Go ahead and bring her." I'd been out working in the yard. I was just a total wreck. They came and she was a delightful lady. We thought this publication was coming out after the first of the year, and this was in May. A week later she had an article in the *Sunday (New Orleans) Times Picayune* Travel Section and made a brief

mention of our place. We didn't even know it was in there and we were getting calls from people wanting to book our Bed and Breakfast, so since we'd had all this free publicity, we decided we might as well take advantage of it. We did some bookings and we have thoroughly enjoyed the people. They've just been lovely people. We have not done any other advertising, we just go by word of mouth. If we have plans, we just don't take a booking.

*Do you rent it by the week?*

Nelda: We would consider weekly rentals, but we've primarily done it by the weekend. We prefer two nights. Ponchatoula is a little town about ten miles from us called "America's Antique City," and it is filled with antique shops. The people come in on Friday afternoon and often go out to dinner or bring something that they want to barbecue. They have breakfast the next morning and go into Ponchatoula antiquing all day long. If they're from out of state, they might want to tour New Orleans or Baton Rouge. It's been great fun.

I'll have to include this. Our grandson, Benjamin, who is nine, was here the first weekend that we had a guest in the cottage. He said, "Maw-maw, what are they going to eat?" I said, "They can go out to dinner or they can barbecue something on the grill or bring sandwiches. I'll fix breakfast for them." He thought about it for a long time. A little later he said, "I'll tell you what you ought to do. Any time you have a guest in the cottage, you ought to cook up a huge bowl of red beans and rice and put it in the refrigerator and they can warm it up whenever they're hungry." Ben loves red beans, so that, to him, would have been the ultimate, to have red beans and rice at his disposal. (laughter) I said, "I don't think people would consider that a treat at a Bed and Breakfast."

T.J.: In Ponchatoula, all the old business places, the hardware stores, the grocery stores, the restaurants, the banks and a lot of those places just closed down because of the new shopping centers. Somehow or another, the tourist commission arranged for Sheriff Fotey, in New Orleans, to bring the convicts down here and they painted all these old buildings ...

Nelda: ... in the old, historical colors which they originally were.

T.J.: They turned all these buildings into antique shops. It's really quaint and looks nice, and they're really doing very well with it. It was almost a ghost town for a few years. Everything was closed and downtown Ponchatoula was deserted. Covington has done a very similar thing, and Denham Springs, recently.

Nelda: They bring in tour buses with people shopping for antiques. We see people from all over the world coming in. It's really an interesting little town and, being so close to New Orleans and Baton Rouge, people are coming to see the plantations. There are lots of good restaurants, from gourmet to just red beans and rice.

*Tell me about your family.*

Nelda: I'm from a family of nine children and T.J.'s from a family of three.

T.J.: I have an older sister, Barbara, and a younger brother, Ken.

Nelda: We have three children. Our oldest daughter, Theresa, is 38. She lives in the San Francisco area. She's a nurse at Stanford University Hospital. Our second daughter, Elise, and her husband, Lenny, live in Denham Springs, Louisiana. She teaches English at Denham Springs High School. They have two children. Those are our only grandchildren, Carrie Lee, who will be thirteen soon, and Benjamin, who is nine. They are both very active in sports, basketball, soccer, you name it.

T.J.: We go to Denham about three times a week to watch the baseball games, basketball games and soccer games.

Nelda: Our son, Ted, lives in Livingston, which is about fifteen miles from



Silvertip's Gentle Ben (Ch. Count Togwotee of Pinehill) at ten months. (Never shown.)

here. He's a computer technician and he works in Baton Rouge. He builds computers and programs and whatever. I don't speak computer language that well. He keeps telling me I need a computer, but we have a lot of problems with electricity going off back here in the country, so I know that everything I do would be wiped out. T.J.'s parents live in Baton Rouge. They've moved to a retirement home, but are still very active.

T.J.: They come to visit often and spend most of the holidays here with us. They've been married longer than anybody in the Baton Rouge Archdiocese. They've been married 62 years.

*How many years have you spent with the same woman?*

T.J.: In October, it will have been 39 years. She ought to get a gold star.

Nelda: I almost have him house-trained. T.J. has learned how to make Cajun jambalaya. We have a big pot. We serve 50 people from that pot. He boils seafood and grills wonderful steaks. That's about the extent of his culinary activities.

T.J.: I make good salad, too.

Nelda: He can toss a wonderful salad. *And fix a boat motor.*

T.J.: Oh, yeah, I can do that. I raced boats for many years and I was doing my own work back when I was in high school.

Nelda: That's how he got into the marine business. He learned to work on his own motors. Then he had some technical training and went into that field, which he still does today. He has his own shop, but he also manages the timberlands and looks

after the family's other interests.

*I have thoroughly enjoyed this interview.*

T.J.: We enjoyed having you.

Nelda: It was our pleasure. It brings back memories.

*Thank you.* •

## What's New at AKC

Connie Bissonnette  
Houlton, Wisconsin

The AKC is now on the Internet for Website users. Web address <http://www.akc.org/akc/> Available are the news releases and information from the AKC Update page in the *Gazette*.

Also available are all the department phone numbers, such as customer relations, publications, Canine Good Citizen information, public education and registration, information on companion animal recovery and update on the legislation department. It is also possible to order AKC videos, the *Gazette* and other publications by the AKC. There is also a listing of all breed clubs and

a breeder reference from the *Gazette*. The Web page also has all Best in Show wins each week, the events calendar and Canine Health Foundation information. Contact person at AKC is Lisa Mattson, (919) 233-3665 or FAX (919) 233-3618. Email address for any type of customer service question is [info@akc.org](mailto:info@akc.org).

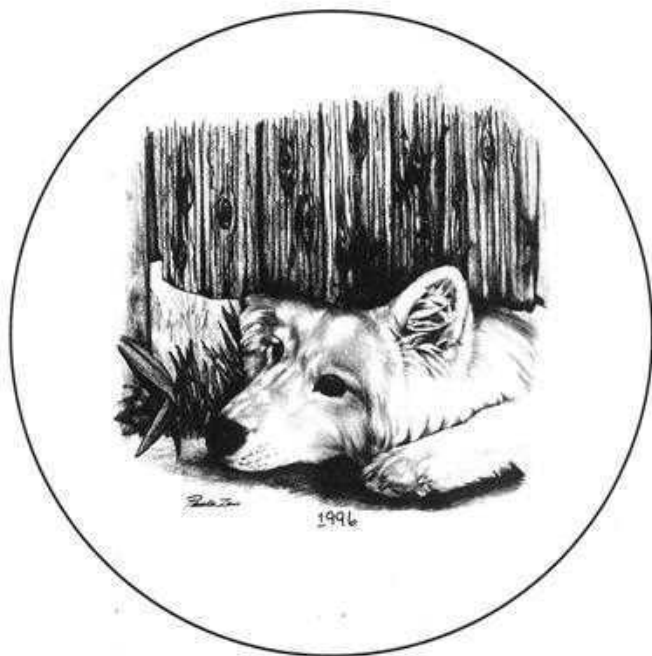
Other good news is that handlers' names are back in our show catalogs.

The Board adopted a policy in regard to authorization of the use of DNA testing in registration matters.

The AKC has plans to move their whole operation to North Carolina. Construction is expected to be completed in 1998. ••

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