

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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IRISH

Samoyed People

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks With
Dave Richardson
KONDAKO
Long Beach, California

Part II

This interview was conducted at the Conejo Kennel Club show in Newbury Park, California on October 20, 1990 by Pamela Geer.

What dogs are over there now?

In the 1960's, the Russians shot a white sled-type dog up in a space capsule, her name was Laika. Laika looked a lot like my old Princess Natiya, a terrible Sammy but very like a Sammy. Laika, as I understand it, is the Russian word for sled dog.

So there are Sammies of some type in Russia?

I really don't know. You know, what with glasnost and all the openness of Russia today, I wonder if there is a possibility of finding and bringing back some new stock. Has anyone checked this out?

The Sammies as we have them now are supposedly the tribal dog, and yet there were multicolored Sammies in Siberia. It's just that the English happened to like the white ones and brought the white ones home, and for whatever reason, they happened to breed true. Although if you take any one of those three Sammies that are in the pen outside right now and go over them very carefully, you will find at least one black hair, possibly many. I won't say you'll find them on every Sammy. You will find them on virtually every Kondako dog.

To get into the anthropological and the archaeological and pre-history of the breed, of course nobody really has the answers. There are a couple of people who have done a lot of research. I know Bob and Dolly Ward have done a lot of work in that area. There's a guy in Northridge by the name of Jim Osborn who has done a phenomenal amount of work trying to track back on what the breed was and how it came to be. Gertrude Adams did a tremendous amount of work in

that area. I'm sure there are people out there whom I don't even know who are desperately working on building the history of the Samoyed people. I hate to tell them, but they aren't going to get it without a time machine. There's not enough written down.

How many dogs do you have right now?

I refuse to answer that on the grounds that it may tend to incriminate me.

What's the largest number of dogs you've ever kept?

The most adult Sammies we ever had was eleven, and that was barbaric. I think six or seven is probably a maxi-

mum to be able to devote the time to each dog that the dogs really need. They are desperate for human companionship. Right now, all four of those dogs outside, including my Akita client, want to be in here with us. They'll sit out there in those pens and be basically good, but they really want to be in here with us.

Would that work, would we be able to talk?

The tape recorder would probably get eaten.

[At this point in the interview, we took a break and tried to bring Slim and Cleo into the motor home. The



Ch. Kondako's Sundance Kid.

tape recorder got eaten and they were banished back to the exercise pens.]

Have you ever named your litters by any kind of scheme, such as the A litter, B litter, etc.?

I presume you read the Summer '90 Samoyed Quarterly, where I talked about this litter being whelped and how the puppies got named as they were whelped. We don't have a bunch of puppies that are all letter A, letter B, letter C, etc. The puppies get named pretty much by the characteristics of the puppy. This latest litter was a little unusual because I don't think I have ever named an entire litter at birth and had the names stick.

We had a puppy a long time ago that was named Bat. If you'd take a look at her head-on, there was absolutely no mistaking how she got her name. She was sold as a pet. Another one Koko whelped in a corner of the garage while she was being exercised. That one we named Garage! We had one who was born with a broken tailbone, a totally disconnected tailbone. We had to cut her tail off. It was very interesting, she developed a rolling gait like an Old English Sheepdog. The name was somehow associated with her being tailless, Bob or something like that. I can't come up with the name out of the back of my memory. What was fascinating about her was we finally figured out what a tail is good for in the Sammy breed. It keeps them on the ground. This bitch could fly. She went over eight-foot fences! That's what that tail is there for, it's an anchor.

Do you feel that you've established a distinguishable line?

People kept coming up to Sunny and me at the National. A quick little piece of business on relationships. Connie and I broke up in 1985 and the divorce went down. My community property joke is, she got the kennel, I got the kennel name. Sunny and I got together after that. Connie is in Fullerton and I'm in Long Beach. I have my dogs and Connie has hers. Now I can go out and do all my own handling and everything else. Sunny turns out to be another natural. She just takes the dogs, walks into the ring, and everything looks great. I tend to create my own monsters.

Anyway, Sunny and I were at the National and people kept saying, "Are you Dave Richardson? Are you Kondako? I have your stuff in my background. I admire your dogs." This is tremendously good for the ego! This is a good trip. And people say, "Oh, gee, I really like your puppies right now. They look so nice and they look like Kondako. Doesn't he have a pretty



Ch. Kondako's Sun Dancer.

head?" Definitely an ego trip. I think that we have put a mark on the breed. It's amazing, because we've been very low-key, really, about what we have done. We haven't bred multi-hundreds of puppies. We're not a Monadnock. We haven't campaigned to Top Working Dog or even Top Sammy. We were not breeders or owners of Razzmatazz. We just put puppies on the ground and went out and did our thing.

At the moment, I am continuing that. I have all good faith that Connie will be back in the game in the not too distant future. I don't think she can leave it alone, or at least I hope she can't. But at that point in time when Connie gets active, life's going to get very confusing. This is something else that Connie and I were talking about. She said somebody said to her, "If you breed a litter, what are you going to call the puppies? Are you going to call them Kondako?" She said, "Well, Kondako's not mine anymore." To which I responded, "Of course, Kondako is yours. You built it. We put

this thing together ourselves. Kondako is as much your work, your breeding, as it is my breeding." She said, "Oh, I don't know what I'll do." In print, I give her an open invitation to use the kennel name. Then the rest of the world can figure out which one's which. (laughter)

What do you think other people in the breed associate with a Kondako dog?

Pretty dogs. Nice dogs to live with. The Kondako heads are very distinctive in the breed. They are a great deal of the breed type we were known for. I like to think that we have contributed to the breed type. Whether positively or negatively is up to somebody else to say. I would like to say that with the work we've done in California for the last seventeen or eighteen years we have contributed to the dog's ability to move from here to there. I question whether you can ever get the pretty head on a dog that can move from point A to point B and keep it. I think you can have the heads. I think you can have the pretty, typey dogs. I think you can have the moving dogs.

I'm not sure they intermix in something that you can consistently bring down generation after generation. This may be what the geneticist was talking about when he gave up on breeding because he had come back to where he had started from.

It's a very frustrating breed from that point of view. You never have to worry about anybody breeding the perfect Sammy. There are people who have come very close. The Curtises, with Hoss. That is a magnificent dog, a spectacular dog. He's getting to be an old boy now. Then there was a ten-year-old veteran at the '90 National that came so close to taking Best of Breed it hurt. He's a beautiful dog. He went trucking on down the ring at ten years old and moved a lot of young dogs into the discard pile.

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

Temperament first, and then type and soundness are equal.

Let's change that and go at it from a different point. We're out there breeding Samoyeds. Fine. Samoyeds have to conform to a standard. They have to look like Samoyeds. That says then that the first thing you're breeding for is type. You are breeding for type because you have a typical dog that you have to produce or you're not doing anything. Now, you have to live with this dog. There's the temperament part of it right there. If you can't live with the dog, the dog is useless. You might just as well throw him down the well. It will make the water taste bad, but ... Soundness - if the dog can't do what it is he's supposed to do as a typey dog, the dog is useless again. So how do you put the priority? There is no priority. It's a triangle, you have to have all three or you don't have anything.

What is your long-range goal in breeding dogs?

To always have a house full of Sammies, Sammies that I personally can look at and say, "That's a good dog." I've been in this long enough so that I don't really care what the judges think of my dogs. I know what I have. I go out there and play this game because I like the game. I go out there because I like to work the dogs. I don't need the ribbons, the judges' accolades or any of that stuff. But I really like the game. So what I'm looking for is dogs that I personally think are quality animals. Luckily enough, this last litter, lo and behold, I came up with a couple. They'll be with me until whenever.

Really, I'm very selfish about this whole thing. I don't care what the other people want. I want to produce

what animals I do for my own benefit. If somebody else can pick up with what I'm doing, fine, but I'm not going to bend over backwards to give anybody what it is that they want. That really is very selfish, extremely self-centered, almost an egomaniac's point of view.

The other side of that is I also don't want to do anything detrimental to the breed. There are a lot of problems in this breed. I will not knowingly or willingly continue a problem. Unknowingly, God knows what I've done. One of my favorite lines about Dancing Bear was that as a stud dog he produced at least one of everything that has ever gone wrong in this breed.

What are some of the problems in Samoyeds that you don't want to perpetuate?

When we got started in the early 60's, it was HD. When we got into the 70's, it was PRA.

Are hips okay now?

Oh, no, there are still definitely hip problems out there. There will always be hip problems out there. People can very carefully select their animals and breed for depth in hips. That was the smart thing that Connie did when she picked Nachalnik of Drayalene for Silver Bunny. She picked a dog that had a known propensity to produce good hips. He threw good hips. The fact that he also threw some magnificent animals was almost secondary to the fact that we had had it with bad hips and wanted something solid. We had a grown bitch that we had bought, and we bred that grown bitch to a grown dog who had a good history. Silver Bunny would have been OFA SA-1, the first dog ever registered. Her X-rays got lost on the way to the University of Pennsylvania, so she turned up being 47 or something like that.

Aside from hips, what are the problems today?

The big problem we have now is thyroid. It is almost overpowering. Take a look in people's medicine cabinets and see how many of them have thyroid pills for the dogs. I happen to deal with a lady in Long Beach who runs a dog sitting business. We load up the motor home and take off and there are dogs at home. This gal comes in and covers the house for us. She commented to us when we came home from the National, "You would not believe the number of client dogs that I am giving thyroid pills to."

Other breeds as well?

Even to the point of mixed breeds. Now here's an interesting question, how do you have a genetic fault that shows up in mixed breeds? This is your outcross. There is a genetic recessive sitting in both sides which com-

bins in this outcross. This is getting heavy. Is it a dominant? Dominant would probably work better, but you can get rid of that. One of the points that has been made to me is that the stuff is being passed placentally. It's going from dam to puppy through the placenta. Where did all this thyroid trouble come from? We didn't have thyroid troubles when we began. Is this a genetic fault that all of a sudden popped up out of nowhere? It's a mutant? Not bloody likely.

How do they test for it?

There is a lot of stuff there that I really am not qualified to even begin to speak about. There are some interesting tests. There are some tests that are still in the research stage. With blood serum tests, they're looking for T-3 and T-4 autoantibodies. If you get T-3 or T-4 autoantibodies at any level, you get thyroid problems. You could go through this show ground of probably 2,000 dogs today, and I'm willing to bet you could take blood samples from these 2,000 dogs and probably come up with 60 percent thyroid problems in one form or another. How does it manifest itself? Infections that won't go away. Coat loss. Dogs you can't put weight on. Dogs you can't get weight off of. There are people who come in and say, "My dog's coat is very thin." The doctor says, "Put the dog on thyroid medicine." They don't check! Just put the dog on thyroid medication! "I can't put any weight on my dog." "Put the dog on thyroid medication." "My dog has this infection." "Okay, fine, put the dog on Cefatabs and at the same time put him on thyroid medication." It is terribly prevailing. Am I going to become one of those people who raises the thyroid flag and waves it and leads the charge? I don't know if I have the energy to do that, but somebody's going to have to do it.

The same manifestations were there years ago, but you weren't putting dogs on thyroid pills in 1967. I don't remember having seen or having lived through those kinds of situations. If you came up with a bitch that had a vaginal infection, you'd give her penicillin or something and the infection would clear up. Now you give them \$2 a pop tablets of high-level stuff, and you can't lick it.

Where does it come from? There was an article that was done by a lady who is a long-time breeder of Standard Poodles. She has inbred generation after generation from the 60's forward. She had problems with failing puppies and this problem and that problem. She all of a sudden had a brainstorm and thought about the fact that she was

Rottweiler or two, they'd probably be able to fight their way to the top. You aren't going to find any Sammies. The Sammies, Siberians and Malamutes are going to revert back to what they were. What you'll really find is a bunch of coyotes, because they can survive anything.

How about Akitas?

The only reason the Akita is a distinct breed is because they were stuck out on this island off the coast of China, just down a little bit from Siberia. The Akita, as far as I can surmise, comes out of a very Mastiff-like type of dog that was prevalent in Japan for a long time and Chow and/or Sammy. You figure that one of the big Sammy kennels of all time was Kobe Samoyeds in England, and then over here was Kobe of Encino. Where is Kobe? Well, Kobe is a port area in Japan. Does Kobe relate to Kobe? I don't know, but I think Akitas are a neat breed to talk about relative to Sammies. I think there is a lot of correlation. A little overly macho, maybe, but a great breed.

What is your idea of the perfect Samoyed?

Once upon a time, a lady by the name of Gertrude Adams got together with a gentleman by the name of Bob Ward, and they went and made physical measurements. They measured hundreds of Sammies. Gertrude, who was an architect, sat down and made line drawings. This is the basis for the Samoyed illustrated standard. I think that illustrated standard is just about right on the numbers. I mean, I wouldn't have any problem standing in the ring with the illustrated standard in one hand and the dogs in front of me in the other hand and finding the dog that most closely approximates these pictures and coming up with the right dog for Best of Breed. This is the AKC standard which has been illustrated by the Samoyed Club of America. The Samoyed Club of America controls the AKC standard. AKC publishes the standard. We write it. We wrote it back in the 1920's.

AKC is going through a deal right now where they're trying to get the breeds to rewrite their standards to more normally conform to an outline structure. They came to the Sammy Club and said, "We want you to rewrite your standard like this, this, this and this." It didn't work. The Samoyed people, the Samoyed Club, the board of governors, everybody who got involved said, "But we like our standard the way it is. Just leave it alone. This describes the dogs. The right points are in the right places.

Don't mess with it." Interestingly enough, to this point in time, the AKC is putting up with this, and they're still speaking to us. At least they were last time John Ronald, the SCA rep to AKC, said anything about it.

This is absolutely the way I feel. I took the breed as it was. This is what the standard told me it was supposed to do. I'll do that. I'm an engineer. I never do anything creative on my own, I always copy somebody else's work. (laughter)

Are missing teeth a problem?

Not to my knowledge, not like in Dobies, Rotties and a couple other breeds out there that have teeth problems. If you find a missing tooth in a Sammy, the odds are he lost it trying to pull down a fence.

How about eye color?

I don't remember the exact phrasing, but it says eyes are supposed to be dark. I've had black eyes, dark brown eyes and gold eyes. I personally prefer the darker eyes. I think they're more in keeping with the white with black points.

Are gold eyes penalized?

The way the standard puts it, if I remember correctly, is that the dark eyes are preferred, so how does a judge handle that? It's almost a call. If you have a magnificent animal in front of you and his eyes glow in the dark, you're going to go with the magnificent animal. Again, there isn't any perfection out there. If you have a junk dog in front of you and the eyes are gold, that's just one more point. You find a number of judges, particularly people who are based in Sams, who judge on a point system. It's ten points for head, ten points for this, ten points for that and ten points for tail carriage. They then will build a summation value, and their top point dog is the dog that wins. I think that that's a very admirable system because there's a consistency to it. There is a rationale to it. I think that it's up to the judge in his viewpoint of the standard to set his own point scale.

The point is that each facet adds to a sum, and the sum is the whole animal. Again, you have a magnificent dog and he has a liver nose. Okay, he has a liver nose. If you give me an equally magnificent dog with a black nose, I'll go with the black nose. If you give me a not quite so magnificent dog with a black nose, how much does that lack of magnificence compare to what the liver-nosed dog has?

Let's look at it from the winning angle.

To hell with winning. Who cares? People spend thousands of dollars to make their dog the top dog in the country. Who does it matter to but them

and whoever it is who's trying to catch them? But let's talk about winning.

How important is coat to winning in the ring?

Carol Barnum-Cheesman has a young dog that's out right now. He was at the National and took an Award of Merit. The dog's name is Chance. He's a short-coated dog. This is a magnificent specimen. I mean, there is nothing wrong with this dog except he's short-coated. He's probably going to get over that because he's only two years old. That dog goes around the ring like nothing you ever saw. He has a head you would cry over. He is beautiful, just magnificent, and he has a short coat. He's probably going to get a longer coat with time.

What does making the Top Ten or Twenty mean?

It means a lot to the superintendents because they make a lot of money. It means a lot to The Samoyed Quarterly because they make a lot of money doing the advertising as the people try to get there. Obviously, it means a lot to the owners or they wouldn't spend the \$40,000 to \$60,000 that it takes to do it. It means the dog has a lot of money behind him. He is exquisitely presented. He is probably a very showy dog. And he doesn't necessarily have to be a particularly good specimen.

Do you think that greater popularization would help or harm the breed?

Right now they're hanging at about 35 in popularity. They were at about 35 when I got into the breed in 1960. Now, thirty years later, they are someplace near 33 to 37. I think that is the exact perfect place for the breed to be. If the breed became more popular, we would have even more backyard breeding going on than we do now. It's a glamour breed. They are pretty dogs. People say, "Oh, I want one of those beautiful white dogs with all the hair that gets in my coffee."

If the breed became like the Golden, they would suffer like the Golden. There are some awful Golden's out there right now. But if the breed became like the Cocker Spaniel ... Do you see the scar on my upper lip? That's from all of the overbreeding of Cocker Spaniels in the 1930's. We had a female when I was five years old that was a little sharp. I made the mistake of taking a bone away from her and she corrected me. Do you want that in Sammies? The Akitas right now are accused of being a little on the sharp side. I don't particularly need a 120-pound dog that's a little on the sharp side.

What effect do you think a decrease in

popularity would have?

Breeding would become a great deal tighter. How many Pointers are bred? If you go out and look at the Pointers in the Sporting Group, they are consistently at least one of the four placings. If not placed, they are consistently very typey, performing, moving dogs. There are not a lot of Pointers out, but the Pointers that are being bred are being bred well.

There are also people who are dedicated breeders for whatever reason who guarantee that the dog's quality remains up. There are a lot of very good breeders in this country right now. There are a lot of schlocks, but there are a lot of really good breeders, people who are putting their honest to God best effort forward. There are also a lot of people making a lot of money who are not necessarily good breeders.

What might be done to improve the fairness and quality of judging?

The Sammy Club, at this last National, did an education committee seminar for judges. We had maybe a half dozen judges, maybe more than that. I'm not really sure what the number was, but we had a number of judges who sat with breeder-consultants through the entire National. This may be one of the most important things that the SCA is doing. It's kind of going back towards the old apprentice system almost. It's putting judges or probable judges of the breed into an environment where they can ask questions and get reasonably intelligent, meaningful answers as to what the breed is and why they do this and what things mean. And questions like liver versus dark nose and the light eye versus the dark eye. What constitutes good reach? What does single-tracking look like relative to the Sammie? How good should the single-track be for real?

There was mentor judging going on in the ring today here at this show. I have no idea who the guy who was working with Mrs. Moore, but she had a judge who was sitting in the ring with her and who was observing her. I think it's called the observer program, if I recall correctly.

The Sammy Club is doing this education committee effort. It is definitely an attempt to improve the education of the judges. There are lots of seminars that go on for judges on judging. Sammies end up in there sometimes and sometimes not, and they get discussed and things like that. I know Bob Ward, rightfully or wrongfully, is very prone to speak his opinion of the breed and how the breed should look



Ch. Kondako's Busybody.

in the ring and what constitutes good and what constitutes bad. This is Bob presenting his opinion, and who am I to argue with a man who's been playing with the dogs for almost 50 years? Mostly he and I tend to agree. Interestingly enough, we judged on a tournament panel together and, lo and behold, Carol Barnum-Cheesman brought this dog Chance into the ring and there was no doubt as to who won.

In general, I think judging is relatively poor. That's kind of a very sad thing to say. I grew up in the dog game in the days of Alva Rosenberg and Louis Murr and people who were handlers who then changed over to judges who had spent their lifetime really being involved in it and were very expert, very knowledgeable. Percy Roberts was judging Siberian Huskies in Harrisburg. He was one of the old all-rounders. He had this Siberian in first, and we were watching the judging

and we couldn't figure out what he was doing. He has this Siberian up front that really wasn't the dog that the dog that he had in second place was, and the dog in third place. He had these dogs all lined up and we're staring across this ring trying to figure out what he's doing. Finally, he was standing there looking at them and he kind of threw up his hands. He went over to the Siberian in the front and set the dog up himself and stepped back. There was now an entirely different dog at the front of the line. He said, "That's right! One, two, three, four." (laughter) He'd seen it all along, but he had to show us! I'm sorry, there are a lot of judges out there who don't see it to begin with. I don't know what they're judging. They look at the dog and follow the lead maybe. I don't know. It's really too bad.

So the next obvious question is, "Why don't you go out and judge?" I

don't have an answer to that. I would like to judge the Futurity some day. I think that's probably one of my top goals, just simply to judge the Futurity. I love working with the young animals. It's the whole future of the breed. I'd like to do that sometime. Of course, unfortunately, the Futurity breeders don't seem to have the same opinion that I do, but what the heck. (laughter)

Betty Arnold did a spectacular job this year, regardless of the fact that my puppy boy took 6-9 Futurity and my puppy girl took 6-9 Futurity, and she beat him and then she lost in the next intersex judging. I thought Betty did a very nice, consistent job of judging through the whole thing.

Have you any thoughts on what could be done to improve judging?

I'd like to see them go back to the old apprentice system. The judge should have to be dragged around the ring by umpteen judges before he can get his first provisional. So he's been in a breed for 30 years, I don't care. Anybody who thinks that he knows it all doesn't deserve to judge. Anybody who can't learn something new today and something else new tomorrow doesn't deserve to be out there. And there are a lot of people out there who think they have it all down absolutely pat and they understand it all. I'm sorry, they don't.

Do you prefer to show under a breeder-judge or an all breed judge?

I like to show under breeder-judges because I figure that I'm coming from a place that is approximately the same place that they're coming from. Or, give me an old line judge, somebody who's been judging for a lot of years. Melbourne Downing, for instance. I've always wanted to know what those fly specks meant on his little card. John Connolly, whom I understand is not well, and that's too bad because he's a super judge. There are a lot of people out there who don't fall under the category of breeder-judge or all-arounder, because there aren't very many all-arounders. I don't know what the number is, six or seven or something like that. There are a lot of judges out there. There are a lot of judges who shouldn't be allowed in the ring. And there are a lot of people who fall in between those two categories - the majority.

Do you always show your own dogs?

No. One of the greatest disappointments that I ever had was when we sent Sundancer out to a show with Carol Barnum-Cheesman, who was Carol Barnum at that point in time, and she came back waving a great big blue ribbon, first place in Group. She

lost to the Lakeland Terrier for Best in Show. Anyway, she came back waving this big blue ribbon. Great, Sundancer took a first in Group, so what? The satisfaction I get is from showing the dogs. The satisfaction I'd get was from watching Connie show the dogs. Connie is probably one of the top handlers in the country, and nobody knows it because nobody ever sees her handling. That's the secret of the good handler, that there is really nobody out there on that dog. Carol is very good. There are a number of excellent handlers out there. Mostly, I would rather show my own dogs. But, I will turn any of my dogs over to Connie any time she wants to take them over.

Sunny is excellent. Here's this novice in the breed showing her first Sam and doing really very well. I pulled the dirtiest trick on her. I entered Baby and Cleo as a brace and turned them over to this basically novice handler. This gal's been showing dogs for a year and a little bit. "Here, here's a brace entered. Take these dogs out and do your thing." (laughter) Damned if she didn't do it, and she did a very good, representative job. I was tickled pink with her. She has Baby a major away from her championship. I don't think I put a point on Baby. I get a tremendous amount of satisfaction out of watching Sunny work the dogs, as much as I ever got out of watching Connie work the dogs. I end up back in the motor home making beef stew or something while they're out showing the dogs. That's okay, that's the way it turns out, if they're out there and doing a good job of presentation. What's funny is I'm showing client dogs and doing quite well.

I was showing a stupid puppy dog in the 6-9 Puppy Dog class at the National, and the dog was tap dancing out in the ring. His feet were going everywhere, his tail was going up and down, his head was up and down, and he was turning around. He was doing everything in the world. And I'm out there playing the one-armed paperhanger with St. Vitus Dance. Bob Ward commented to somebody, one of the judges in the seminar, "You know, it's funny, Dave's usually not that nervous with his client dogs." (laughter) I guess maybe the fact that the pup's my boy means something more to me, and the fact that he's a total idiot had me dancing on the walls myself.

How do you train your puppies?

We don't train them. All show training is done in the ring. People have laughed at us for years about that, and it's the truth. It's where the train-

ing actually occurs. I put a lead on the dog, take the dog down and back. Where does the dog need to show? The dog needs to show in the ring! If I get the dog to show in the backyard and he's absolutely flat in the ring because I have trained him to the nth degree in the backyard ... We let them be puppies and we train them in the ring.

If you could have seen what those dogs were doing a month ago compared to what they did today ... A month ago, the first of September, was the first time they were shown. He took a point, Winners Dog. She took a point, Winners Bitch. This was their first time ever in the show ring. This is phenomenal. I haven't done this in years. It's a good feeling. The judge, Mrs. Evers, was magnificent with these puppies. I mean, she was so sure and easy and did a great job. They were shown at a couple of shows after that where the judges didn't have the presence that Mrs. Evers had and blew the dogs away. The dogs didn't win. The dogs shied and did this and that. It was basically correctable in the ring. We lost, but we got the message across. We had the dogs at the National from Sunday until Friday, and they went through a saturation course in ring training. It was great for them. They were in the ring all the time. They were in the ring on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and it couldn't have been better. Today, they were reasonably steady. Not to the point where I'm going to stand out there three feet in front of the dog, bait the dog and expect him to stand like a rock. They're still just eight-month-old puppies. But they were reasonably steady and things are coming along. I will not pressure the puppies, and they're going to show forever. When they come out of whatever it is they're doing now and come out the other side, they will show forever. They'll never get bored.

That's what I do as a professional handler. I don't go out there trying to collect Breeds and Groups. I'm sorry, if you want to have a top winning dog, I'll turn the dog over to whomever you pick. My whole thing as a professional handler is to take somebody's pet out of their backyard who is a good specimen and make him love dog shows. I think I'm very good at it. It's a dirty job but somebody has to do it.

Do you go to fun matches or training classes at all?

We will occasionally sit in on training classes. We would do more training classes if we had them more reasonably accessible to us. Both Sunny and I tend to work very late. We usually



Ch. Kondako's Broadway Baby.



Ch. Kondako's Busybody.

don't get home until seven or maybe later than that in the evening. By that point in time, the classes are usually going on, and they're fifteen miles away. We have an unnamed number of dogs that have to be taken care of.

Specialty matches, such as Samoyed Club of Los Angeles, Samoyed Club of Orange County, Samoyed Club of Southern California and Samoyed Club of San Diego, I will do until I turn green. Fun matches in general, no, not very often at all. I know we haven't done a match in 1990. (I judged a couple - does that count?) I don't know if we did one in 1989, other than the specialty matches.

How intelligent is the Samoyed breed compared to others?

They are almost the brightest dogs in the world. They are so bright they can appear stupid. I would not want to do an intelligence rating of a Sammy against a Standard Poodle. I think the Standards are really the brightest dogs around. What falls into that same category? I can't think of another breed. The Golden Retrievers are different. Their minds are different. They think differently. I think the Sammys are probably the equal of Golden Retrievers in intelligence, but the intelligence is manifested differently. I don't think there's a breed smarter than those Standard Poodles, though. Those dogs are spooky.

What type of intelligence do Samoyeds

have?

They have the intelligence to survive in whatever environment they happen to be in. If that includes your living room, they're going to survive in your living room. They have the intelligence to be able to adapt to the pack structure. If that pack includes you, your husband and your daughter, then that's what they're going to adapt to. If they find they can get in the middle of that pack, you're alpha, then comes the Sammy and then your husband, they'll do it. I mean, they'll get you every time.

Is that the type of intelligence that your dog Spooky does not have?

Spooky does not have that. Spooky follows along. She absolutely adores Sunny. She thinks I'm okay. I mean, she thinks I'm really kind of neat, but she adores Sunny. Sunny is not here right now because she's moving from one office to another. They're moving all the equipment and everything else. Sunny took Spooky to work with her on Thursday because they had a completely empty building, just lots of equipment, and they're packing. This is where Sunny found Spooky, at this place of work. She was roaming around that area on her own for about eighteen months, we figure. So Sunny took Spooky back to work. Spooky never left Sunny by more than three feet the whole time she was at work. A

Sammy would be gone. He'd be out there exploring, seeing what's going on. Spooky had a very tough life. She has a good life now, and she's sure she's going to hold onto it. A Sammy would never think like that. A Sammy would think, "What's over the next hill?"

Even if his history had been eighteen months of hard living?

You'd have to talk to some of the people who have worked with the true rescue dogs. The Sammy personalities are different from dog to dog. I'm talking about my own family here, the set of dogs that I've been playing with for 25 years. An open car door is an invitation to see what's going on around the corner. The breed's known as runners. I mean, the humane people hate this breed.

But your dogs are secure?

Where they run to is home. If they find an open gate, they'll go cruise the block and see what's going on, but they are going to come home. With triple gates in place, they shouldn't ever find an open gate. (The latest escape was to pull the screen off the crawlspace entry in the backyard, push the screen out in the front yard, and cruise the block. They were basically waiting for Sunny when she got home from work.)

I'll tell you something spooky about this breed. I don't know if it's my breeding or if it's the breed in gen-

eral. Are you familiar with the term "empathic"? These dogs are empaths, they read minds. They literally read emotions. I have seen these dogs react to situations when there's no command or anything given. The dog gets from you what it is that's going on, be it from looking at you and seeing the body English or pulling the brain waves out of the air, I don't care. Connie and I were living in Frederick, Maryland at the end of a quarter-mile road. There were two little houses sitting down at the end of this quarter-mile road, so we were isolated. Somebody came and knocked on the front door. Nobody ever came to the front door. Dancing Bear (Ruffy) was in the house, and he and Connie went and answered the front door. Here's this guy out there, and for whatever reason, Ruff picked up from Connie that the guy frightened Connie. Ruff got between Connie and the guy and marched the guy backwards, off the front steps, and literally over the property line, and then stood there until the guy left. How do they do that?

Let's face it, the 1985-1986 time frame was a very unhappy time in my life. Divorces are not fun. Show Biz was down with Connie in Fullerton. I was living in an apartment in Hawthorne. I do not recommend this for anybody who has had Sammies for any period of time. It is complete withdrawal. So I would go borrow Show Biz and take him out and show him on the weekends. He was very special. That was tough. But he backed me up all the way. He was always right there for me. It wasn't, "Oh, what the heck, here comes David." It was, "All right, let's go! I'm going to go sleep through another dog show!"

Do you feel that dogs should do what they were bred for, even if it's something that's archaic?

Like having the Mastiffs go out with the army?

Yes, and having Akitas kill bears.

The Akitas went out and hunted bears, but they were the samurai's third sword. They were very deeply embedded in the samurai tradition. Do I want an Akita behind me if I have a kitana in my hand and I'm defending myself? You bet I do. That's where I want him, and I want him coming around all teeth, too.

You said that you wanted your dogs to be able to live in the wild if they had to. What do you do to see that they could still do the things that they used to do centuries ago?

The Sammy is a very primitive breed. I mean, they were very early on in the domestication of dogs, and they have a lot of very primitive characteris-



Ch. Kondako's Rising Sun.

tics. Baby, bless her little heart, can catch pigeons on the fly. A pigeon is cruising through the backyard and he doesn't make it, because she tracks his trajectory and has him. Now, should I breed dogs to pluck pigeons out of the air? Well, this is part of their inheritance. She didn't make this up on her own. I should breed dogs that will be able to perform the functions that they performed originally. But they performed every imaginable function that a dog is going to do in the environment of the Samoyed people. They're very primitive dogs, very all-around dogs. They're probably not very good at anything. I mean, they certainly are not world-class sled pullers. I don't think they're going to go out and win too many herding trials. But in a pinch, they're going to do it.

What is a fair stud fee these days?

I really don't know. I just sent off a letter to a gal who wants to do an AI on Show Biz, and I'm not particularly pushing the dog or offering him around. I'm more concerned with having him for my own use than anything

else. So I sent off a fee of \$600, plus the AI cost. Is that high or low? I don't know. Normally, in the old days we said the stud fee should match the price of a show puppy because you're doing it for a stud fee or pick of litter puppy. Is \$600 the current going show price for a puppy? I have no idea. It becomes an extremely geographically-oriented thing. There's a lot of supply and demand. I doubt that you could get the same price for a puppy in Wisconsin that you could get for a puppy in Florida, Washington, DC or Boston.

Should the puppies sell for the same price as the red dog out there? You know, those Akita puppies are selling for \$1,500 each! They're getting phenomenal prices. What's it doing? For one thing, it's driving the breeding of the Akita upwards, raising their position in the AKC rankings. Is that good for the breed? I don't think so. Do we get top premium prices for our beautiful little white dogs? No, they're just beautiful little white dogs and you get \$500 or \$600.

Do you ever refuse to service a bitch?

I have refused bitches for 25 years. You cannot breed to every bitch that is offered to you. If you have a dog who's winning, there are going to be people coming out of every place you can imagine who want to breed to your dog simply because he's winning. They want that name on the puppies. It has nothing to do with whether or not the breeding makes any sense. I have flat out made mistakes in breeding. I definitely have bred bitches that should not have been bred, or at least not bred to this or that particular stud dog. I have produced puppies probably the same way that were mistake litters. And, I have turned down lots of breedings.

Are you generally able to explain why you don't think it's an advisable thing to do?

No, you lie. You say, "I'm sorry, the dog has grade three hip dysplasia," or, "The last litter the dog sired had four PRA puppies." I take that back, I don't lie. But how are you going to tell Joe Blow, who has Flopsy, that she's not a quality animal, that you don't think the breeding makes good sense? I've done that, it does not work. Probably my saying that I lie could be taken wrong, but somehow or another you have to maintain the people's face, give them a way out and refuse to breed.

So they will leave you and go somewhere else?

Yes. They're going to produce puppies that are not necessarily quality puppies. Fine, let them, but they're not going to have my dog's name on them. There are puppies out there (now) that are less than quality Sams that probably have my dog's name on them. (Which proves that I'm opinionated but not infallible!) The next generation down, you're totally out of control. "You can't breed that puppy to that dog?" "Watch me." We never put out dogs on co-ownerships. If you buy a dog from Kondako, it's your dog, you do with it whatever it is you want to do. Ask us for help, assistance or information, we'll help you all that we can, but you live with your decisions.

How many litters should a bitch have?

In this day and age, probably none. Do you know how many dogs they kill every year?

All other factors aside, what would be the number best for her well-being?

If we were going to do consistent breedings, we would breed a bitch the third season, eighteen months or thereabouts, and then breed the next year. Then we'd probably skip a year and breed the next year and the next year. Four to five litters at the outside.

Do you help your bitches whelp?

Yes. Silver Bunny was a lazy

whelp, and we were in there with both hands and feet. This last litter we did, Baby's, there were three pups born in Long Beach, two born in Huntington Beach, and the last one was a C-section in Laguna. You have to assist. Then, again, we have had bitches that were absolutely natural whelpers, pop, pop, pop, there they are, all lined up.

Do you supplement feed very young puppies?

Yes.

What do you feed them?

Gerber's protein baby cereal mixed up with goat's milk and maybe a little vitamin supplement thrown in. That's probably it, at the point of two and a half to three weeks until they're fully weaned over. Then, once they're weaned, we have them on a quality food of one form or another. The foods seem to keep changing, but the quality is the primary requirement. Our latest go-around was with Pedigree, and here Pedigree is a grocery store dog food. Fine. For whatever reason, we were having fairly decent success with the Pedigree. The puppies are very healthy puppies. They were on Pedigree puppy food. Bone meal. Theralin or Pervinal vitamins. I'd like

to see a little bit more weight on the boy, but he's just not that great of an eater. He'll come along.

Do you wean the puppies or do you let their dam do it?

It's a mutual consent sort of a thing. She starts saying, "Help me with this mess." Of course they're being supplementally fed. It used to be in the old days Connie would take the little, tiny puppies, two weeks old maybe, and make little, tiny rolls of hamburger and feed it to them. When the dam tells you, "Listen, I need some help over here," you get that message. If you pay attention, you get these things.

We weaned this latest litter and had them all handled. Baby was just sitting around watching them, so we moved Baby into the study with a fence between her and the puppies. I came home to five years of financial records destroyed, piled in the middle of the room, and I won't tell you what was piled on top of that. Did I get a message? You bet I did. From then on, we set up a whole new thing, a two-foot fence in place. Baby could go over and back. She could get in with the puppies or away from the puppies. Okay, Baby, you do it your way.



Kondako's Valley Girl.

Do you sell your puppies with any sort of spay/neuter agreement?

With the limited registration in place, I haven't done anything about that. At most, I will withhold registrations. Do I insist that this dog be neutered? No. All I do is make a recommendation that this dog be neutered or spayed. "Take this dog home and make a pet out of it." I don't get things written in blood about it.

At what age should puppies go to their new homes?

I tend to subscribe to the old Pfaffenberger book, that seven to twelve weeks is such a formative stage. Yet I don't want to let the puppies go until they're eight to nine weeks. So I play the game with the seven-to-eight-week range with the puppies and a tremendous amount of socialization. They're in our pockets. Then we turn the puppies over to the new owners at eight to nine weeks. The show puppies used to stay with us until twelve to sixteen weeks. People used to complain about trying to get a show puppy out of Kondako because they wouldn't have the puppy released to them. Our comment was, "We aren't sure yet."

We had a Navy commander who contracted for a puppy out of Dancing Bear and Koko Lossal. For whatever reason, he wasn't able to pick up the puppy at fourteen weeks, which was when the puppy was ready to go, so we held onto the puppy for an extra month. By the time eighteen weeks came around, this puppy had blossomed into something fairly special, so we kept him. That was Sundancer. He was sold! Of course, the Navy commander would have loved him.

Did that have the effect of making you hang onto puppies a little bit longer?

Oh, yes. I had three of this last litter up until they were six months of age because I was trying to figure out who was doing what to whom. Everybody was very willing to tell me this one was this and that one was that. What was really funny was hearing the comparisons of the puppies. There were two males in the litter, Magic and Slim. Everybody said, "Magic has so much style and this and that." Slim just slept. He sat in the corner and watched all this going on. Connie was over on the side saying, "Slim's going to grow up and look like Show Biz. Slim's going to move." Connie was right on the numbers. Does Connie still participate with Kondako? That's a good example. She made a recommendation. I took a long, hard look at her recommendation and found myself agreeing with her. We went with it. So she's as much responsible for me having Slim as I or

anybody else. She didn't choose the stud dog or the brood bitch, yet she is still as responsible for the litter as anybody else.

When you're evaluating the puppies, what do you look for?

That's tough. I tend to work on images. I see the whole of the animal instead of the little bits and pieces, so I really have to study the puppy to see how the puppy operates as a whole. Do the front and back legs work? Is the tail where it's supposed to be? Is the head where it's supposed to be? I can't say that there's an evaluation process other than through osmosis. I hold the puppies in my hand and I get it. Put that in a textbook sometime. That's how I do it.

Could I ever teach anybody else to do it? This is very interesting. Sunny was never associated with Sammies. She was a German Shepherd person, not even a show person. German Shepherds were the only breed that she knew. In the three-plus years she's been with me, she is absolutely getting it. She is developing the talent for being able to see. This is a lady who couldn't even tell the difference between Show Biz and Night Watch. Admittedly, they looked a lot alike, but they might just as well have been the same dog to her. All of the dogs in the ring were just white dogs. Over several years, Sunny has developed the capacity to see what's right and wrong. I keep saying over and over again, "Don't fault judge. Don't look for what's wrong, look for what's right," and she's getting it. She's developing a talent for seeing what's going on in the puppies. Now I have big trouble. Sunny loves the puppies. She wants more.

What do you feed your grown dogs?

We have just switched off of Pedigree, which is available on the shelves at your supermarket. It's a fairly expensive premium dog food, but still it's out there in the Safeways and what have you. We have just switched over to Wysong. What is Wysong? You know the stuff you go into the health food store to buy? If you look on the back of this bag, they're all listed on the bag as ingredients. It's a really good-looking food. One of my Akitas is on Wysong and was put on it by a veterinarian whom I have a great deal of faith in. So okay, fine, we'll go ahead and use Wysong. Before that we were on Jeff Bennet's food, Nature's Recipe Lamb and Rice, a very good food. For a couple of different reasons, I got off of the food, but it is a food that I can recommend. Interestingly enough, there are a lot of Sammy people out

there making dog food.

How important is diet in raising this breed?

It's very important, but I think diet is extremely important in any breed.

Are there any particular food issues with Samoyeds, any special needs or intolerances?

I think that in general Sammies might have a slightly higher fat requirement than other breeds. You couldn't pin me down to giving you reasons why I say that. I think it's equivalent in other northern breeds.

Do you use supplements with the grown dogs?

Yes. They normally get some kind of a vitamin supplement. We feed dry food plus canned food. How's this for a supplement food? I just picked this up as a sample: rabbit and rice dog food. Nature's Recipe. Have you ever seen a rabbit get a penicillin shot?

You can get beef that hasn't had antibiotics or hormones.

Have you ever tried to buy Kobe beef? Heavy, \$130 a pound.

How much does this rabbit cost a pound?

I understand that they have a little bit of a problem with rabbit sourcing.

Do you condition your dogs?

I'm not as good about that as I should be. Luckily, Sunny is. Sunny is out there walking the dogs all the time. She has a goal for this month to at least walk every dog at least once a week. The puppies and competition dogs are going out every day. Fat Cinnabar, the alpha bitch, gets to lie around the run. What the heck, she's nine years old, but she still goes out. So Sunny, on that side of it, is doing a very good job.

Back in the days when I had the property in Fullerton, things were a lot easier because we had a back half acre that was totally fenced. We would take the dogs out of the runs, take them through the back gate and turn them loose on the half acre. They'd go over and talk to the horses on this side and the sheep on that side.

Does Sunny take them for walks through your neighborhood?

Yes. She's now taken to going out with three of the Sammies at once. I'm a little bit concerned about this because of the sightings made of the number of dogs that are out there. This is a form of paranoia that is peculiar to southern California. (It's referred to as ACO-phobia, ACO being Animal Control Officer.)

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

The first piece of advice, if you're going to breed a dog to a bitch, don't look at the dog and the bitch, go look at the grandparents. Go look at the parents of the dog and the bitch. Look

at the grandparents of the puppies you want. Next piece of advice, don't be afraid to take advice. Third piece of advice, have a reason for doing the breeding. Don't just be breeding to be breeding. Have a goal.

What have been the biggest benefits of being in dogs?

Having the dogs, being with the dogs. What possible benefit is there to my sitting here in this motor home in the middle of a field with the only electricity I have running off the gasoline in my port side gas tank? It's just being with the dogs. The dogs themselves are the benefit. That relationship.

Have there been any drawbacks to devoting so much to the dogs?

It cuts down on vacations. It's just like having kids. There's a commitment there.

Is there anything we haven't covered?

I'd like to talk a little bit about my twelve years with The Samoyed Quarterly and how much enjoyment I have gotten from writing the column for all of these years. People want to know where I come up with these ideas. It's not like sitting down at the keyboard and staring at a blank video screen and then just starting to put the stuff out. The things come up mostly out of happenings that go on around me. I'm a terrible observer of people. I did an article about Rudy Munos down in San Diego years ago that some people took as a slap at Rudy, and it wasn't. It was a fun article. Rudy now refers to me as the Rona Barrett of the Samoyed world. He is basically paranoid. He keeps saying, "Oh, there's Richardson, everybody shut up!" (laughter) But I have really enjoyed cranking those articles out and I have really enjoyed the comments that I have gotten back from people.

That's about it. There are soapboxes that I could go up one side and down the other. The people don't need to hear it. They get to make their own mistakes and judgements and come to whatever it is that they come to. I am quite satisfied with where I am right now.

One thing I did want to mention was bear heads and wolf heads. Don't ever say to Bob Ward that a Sammy has a bear head, he will be right down your throat. My theory about the whole head thing is that this is part of the business that there were only twelve stud dogs to begin with. If you look at the pictures of Antarctic Buck that were taken in the Melbourne or Sydney zoo, wherever, that's not a spectacular head. If you look at the pictures of Karasea, that's a very interesting head also, but a different head alto-



Ch. Kondako's Night Watch.

gether. A characteristic of the breed is that those heads are out there.

Interestingly enough, it appears that what people think of as the bear head, the typey head, goes with a smaller dog, a shorter-legged dog. The longer, narrower head goes with a rangier dog and possibly the better moving dog. Now, I'm probably getting in deep trouble saying this, but I think that the composite dog will only exist for, at most, two generations. You're then going to go back to the dog with the super head that doesn't move as well as the dog with the narrower head and the rangier body. Bob Ward says there is not a bear head and a wolf head. I say, "Bob, if there is not a bear head and a wolf head, there's some-

thing that looks an awful lot like it, and there are definitely distinctively different heads that wander through the breed." He just says there's a Samoyed head, and the standard is the definition of what the head should look like. I agree, the standard is the definition of what the head should look like.

Thank you very much. I enjoyed talking to you.

It was my pleasure. •

Next issue's interview will be with Bernice Helinski of Wynterkloud Samoyeds and we'll also spotlight upcoming stars in the breed. Don't miss out! The advertising deadline is May 1st . . .