



THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed people



Jim and Sharon Hurst with eight of their Orion champions, front cover of The Samoyed Quarterly, top breeders in the nation, June 1990 SQ awards.



Frost River's Omar of Orion on the beach, 1968.

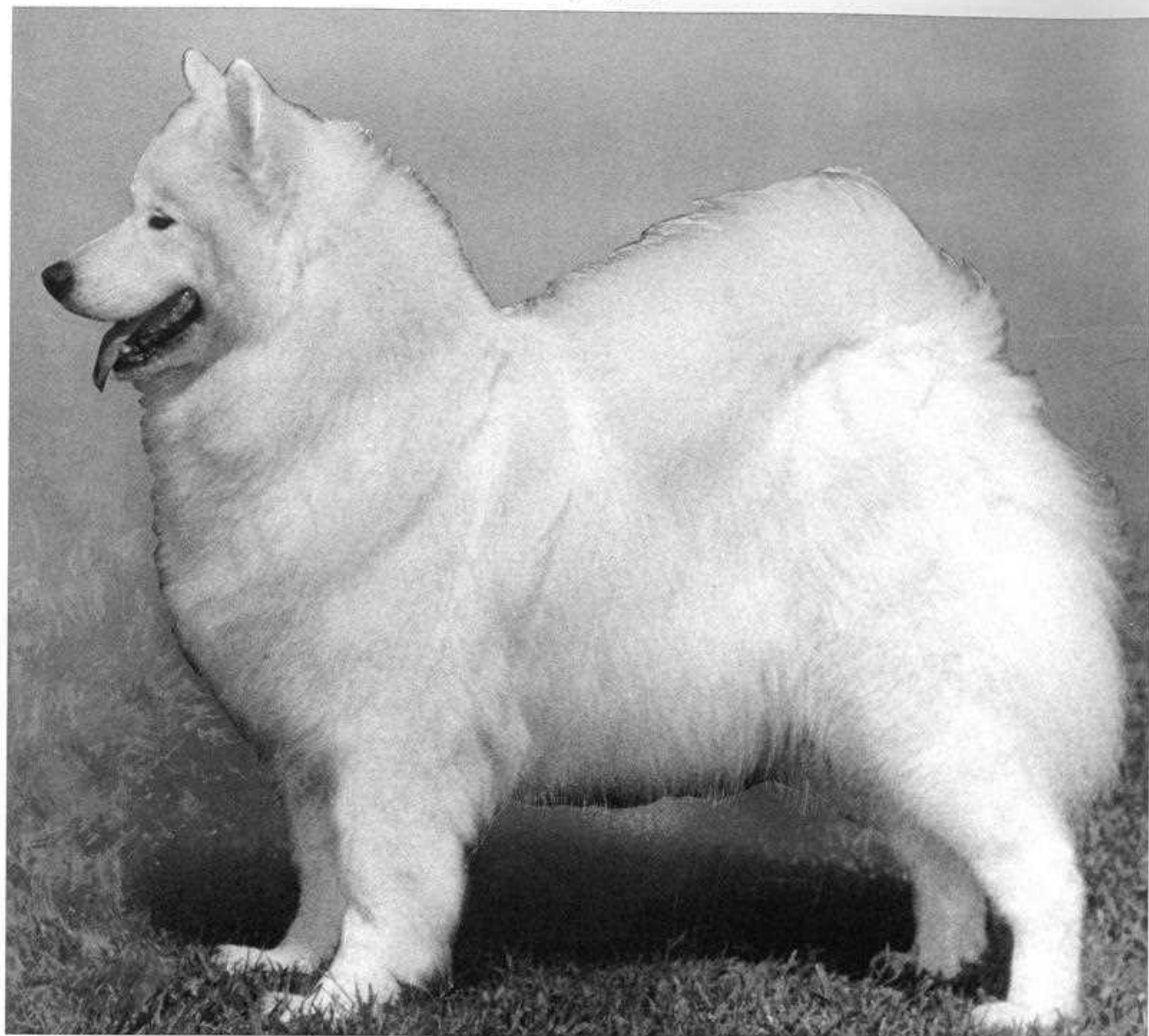
The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Jim and Sharon Hurst
ORION
Florence, Oregon

This interview was conducted in the motor home of Jim and Sharon Hurst in October 2006 by Alona Robison.

How did you get started in dogs?

Sharon: Back in 1965 I purchased a Samoyed for \$100. He walked around with his tail down. Then I went to a dog show and saw what they were supposed to look like. In 1967, I saw an ad in the paper from Evelyn and Charles James, Frost River Samoyeds. I drove all the way down to Madera to see them and she told me she had a three-and-one-half-month-old puppy that was really fabulous. The minute I saw him, I thought, "What is this?" It didn't look like the dogs I had seen. He was all legs and ears, short coat, gangly as can be. If I hadn't driven more than three hours to get there, I would have turned around and gone home without him. (laughter) I didn't know at that time that's how most well-bred Sammies look at that three-and-one-half-month stage. But I bought him and brought him home and named him Omar.

There was a puppy match



Am/Can/Mex/Int Ch. Orion's Mishka of Marcomar.

coming up in Sacramento near where I lived then. I knew there were some handling classes in the back of a supermarket, so I went. Ray Brinlee was one of the handlers and Wayne Nelson was the other one. They had me go down and back like you're supposed to do in the show ring. I gaited Omar down and back and the handler said, "Lady, if I was the judge, I would have needed a pair of roller skates to follow you around the ring." So I started working really hard because the puppy match was in two weeks. In that time, I guess I learned a lot because he was runner-up for

Best in Match and he did get a Group One. Then I was on my way and made him a champion.

Where did you go from Omar?

Sharon: Jim and I got together in 1976. At that time Omar was twelve years old. I took Jim to a dog show and put Omar in Veterans. I gaited him around the ring and everybody outside the ring stood up and started applauding. They hadn't seen me in awhile and they always applaud for veterans anyway. Jim got hooked. We were then driving a 1973, 24-foot Apollo. The next thing I knew, he was wanting to go to dog shows. So I contacted Mari-

lyn Gitelson and bought two dogs from her. There was Sansaska's Omarsun which I named after my Omar, and Omar's Mishka II of Orion. We started showing them and Jim decided if we were going to all of these dog shows we needed a bigger motor home. We got a 33-foot Monaco, then a 40-foot Monaco, and in later years we got a 1993 40-foot Bravo. Last May was our silver anniversary and he bought me a 45-foot 2007 Country Coach Intrigue with quad slides in it, and that's where you're sitting right now.

This is a very nice anniversary

present!

Sharon: Yes! I'm not sure if he bought it for me or our little dog Bandit, who always sleeps with us, since this one has a king-size bed.

There's plenty of room for Bandit. (laughter)

Sharon: Bandit is a little Havanese that we bought. It's a fairly rare breed from Cuba.

Jim: Not rare anymore.

Sharon: Not rare anymore, but most people don't know what it is.

Jim, what did you think of that first dog show?

Jim: I thought it was terrific and I did get hooked on it. We



Am/Can/Mex/Int Ch. Sansaska's Omarsun of Orion, BIS, "Omi."

moved to a ranch in Auburn where we had 40 acres. We built quite a nice kennel and we raised some litters there and showed very heavily. According to one of the articles we have here, I think we traveled 20,000 miles one year in the motor home.

Sharon: We were written up in the local paper. It says, "Newcastle dog breeders Jim and Sharon Hurst journey up to 20,000 miles each year with their multiple award-winning Orion Samoyeds." This was on the front page.

Tell me more about the dogs.

Sharon: We have had many litters. I believe we have owned and/or bred something like 73 Samoyed champions. We were showing them in Canada and Mexico, and put multiple titles on four of our Samoyeds including American, Canadian, Mexican and International. That included Mishka, Omi, Bud and several others.

Jim: What year did we go to Westminster?

Sharon: I think it was 1989. One of our bitches we kept from the Omar and Mishka breeding was named Pascha. She finished her championship at nine months of age, which at that time was a record.

Wow!

Sharon: So we took her to Westminster. One thing that was kind of cute was when I was in the ring showing Pascha and Jim was sitting outside the ring coaching me on, he had a very nice-looking lady sitting next to him. She turned around, looked at Jim and said, "Do you see that lady out there in the teal-green outfit with that absolutely beautiful bitch?" Jim said, "Yes, I see her." She said, "That is the most beautiful bitch I've ever seen." Jim said, "Thank you, that's my wife and that's my bitch." The lady said, "That's my husband judging and if he doesn't put her up for Best of Breed he's going to have a hard time with me tonight." (laughter) He didn't, of course.

That was nice to have that unsolicited vote of confidence from the judge's wife, though.

Sharon: Too bad she hadn't been in the ring! (laughter)

When you got your next two, where did you go from there? Omi and Mishka?

Sharon: We were raising several litters and we kept a few



These four dogs collected seventeen medallions, two finished championships, two started, Dog Show Society show at Canada's World Fair at Expo in British Columbia, 1986.

here and there. We finally went to Lynette Hansen-Blue of Polar Mist kennel. She breeds incredible dogs and when I wanted another one, I wanted to be sure it was top-notch. She sold us a male and he turned out absolutely fabulous. In fact, he too finished his championship at nine months of age, the day after he took his third Best in Match. I continued to show him owner handled the whole time. I was showing him and he was winning Groups all over the place. He won a total of four Bests in Show, the largest one being over 1,792 entries at the Santa Cruz Kennel Club.

That was a nice entry! What has been your best litter that you have bred so far?

Sharon: It was a long time ago, but one of the very best was probably the one in our puzzle picture.

Jim: We call it our puzzle picture because we had it taken

by a professional photographer on the fireplace at our ranch. He later sold the picture to a company that made a puzzle out of it. You can buy that puzzle nationwide now.

Oh really? That is great!

Sharon: That was a litter of seven, and either four or five of them went on to become champions.

Did you ever repeat that breeding?

Sharon: Yes, the second litter was nice but not quite as consistent as the first one. Tom Weems bought a bitch out of that litter who ended up being THE best in the litter. Her name was Trina and he finished her in pretty short order. We finished another couple out of the litter, but it seemed like the first litter had overall quality. Even though Trina had the quality, her littermates didn't.

Jim: The dog that we purchased from Lynette Hansen-

Blue was named Bud Light. Like Sharon said, he did a lot of winning and Bests in Show. He was the number one dog in the United States in 1991.

Sharon: In 1993 he produced nine champions in that year. What Jim and I started doing was selling them to other people and teaching them how to show their own dogs. We'd have them come over or we'd do part of it at the shows. We helped quite a few people get into the shows.

That's a nice thing to do. You have to pass down the torch.

Sharon: We met Doug Haldeman and Bo Gloster at a show and they had a dog that was really not very good quality. We worked with them and sold them, on a co-ownership basis, two of our males. They went on to finish very quickly. Now Doug and Bo are both very big in Samoyeds. They've stayed in it.

Jim: Is Bo on the board of AKC?

Sharon: Yes.

Who has been the best dog you've owned or bred so far?

Sharon: As far as total overall winnings it was Bud Light. Robin Gowen lived near Walnut Creek, California. We became very close and began co-

breeding together. I remember at one of the shows she spotted a bitch that I really intended to keep and she fell in love with her. She started telling me before the show that she really wanted that bitch. I told her I wasn't sure. She kept after me and I said okay as long as she promised to keep showing her.

I let Robin handle her that day and she went in and won a four-point major. She walked back outside of the ring and I told her I had changed my mind and wouldn't sell her. Robin just about had a fit. Of course I was teasing. She did a lot of really great things and it was nice to have her in our fold.

Do you remember that bitch's name?

Sharon: Missy, Orion's Girl Tak.

Was Bud your biggest winning dog?

Sharon: Yes. We had two others that won quite a bit. One was Omi, who was from Marilyn Gitelson's line, Sansaska. The other one was Mintaka. We had bred Omi to another bitch who really wasn't very well known at all, and we came out with a gorgeous dog named Mintaka. He won Groups all over the place and a big specialty under breeder-judge Jeanne Nonhof. He ended up being misdiagnosed by a veterinary clinic and they overdosed him with prednisone, which just ruined him. We had to retire him at a very early age.

Were you able to use him at stud?

Jim: No, I don't think we ever used him. They wrecked him.

Such a shame. Do you have any favorite stories about any of your dogs?

Sharon: Bud was kind of tough to show. I was in the ring with all of the handlers and Bud would go in the ring and I could never tell if he was going to look at me or look around the ring for bitches. We were at one of the shows on the Turkey circuit and we were going to get together with a bunch of people in other breeds, like Sue and Tony DiGiorno. They were breeding Giant Schnauzers and now they're doing Bouviers. We had some other people who were into Bulldogs, and we all got together. We always had a big blowout at Thanksgiving. I remember I was helping Jim park the RV, and everyone was getting ready for the big party. They wanted me to come over and help them set up. Jim was in the middle of backing up and ran right into a telephone pole. We put a big dent in the back bumper of the motor home.

That gave you some points!

Sharon: Right! (laughter) The next morning when we were getting ready for the show, Jim told me, "You know, the problem with Bud is that he is just not a show dog." This was early on in Bud's career, but he just didn't project himself. I said, "Well, sometimes he does and sometimes he doesn't." Jim said, "I'm telling you, Sharon,



Omi "gone fishin'."



Jim handling Ch. Orion's Mishka of Marcomar to a Breed win, Contra Costa County KC, judge Edd Embry Bivin, fall 1984.

he is really not a show dog." I said, "Whatever you say." I went in the ring and I came out with a Group One ribbon that I handed to Jim. I said, "Now what would you like to say?" In fact, I handed the ribbon to him in front of all of our friends. (laughter)

Then there was Valarie Zimmerman, who early on I met at a fun match in Sacramento.

She was sitting up in the stands and I started talking to her. She asked who I was and I told her we were Jim and Sharon Hurst. She said she wanted to call us so many times but was afraid to because we were so well known. I told her that was crazy and that I would have set her up with a dog that she could really show. She said she would still let me. (laughter) I sold her a

bitch named Mariah. Valarie was another one I helped train to take Mariah into the ring. She finished her championship very quickly. Valarie is such a doll, she's really a sweet gal. We see Valarie and her husband Terry once in awhile when we go through Sacramento. They now have a couple of kids and they're just not into the dogs anymore.

That happens sometimes. Some people are able to stay in and others turn a corner.

Sharon: There is another story. When I had Omi, Jim and I were showing him at several shows. He wasn't doing really great. That was the weekend we met the DiGiornos at an RV park before we went to the show the next day. I went into the show ring and it was again



An Orion-bred litter of eight-week-old Samoyed puppies, 1990.

the Turkey circuit and I came out with a Reserve Winners Dog. I was so excited over this because it was the biggest win I'd had. Jim looked at me and said he wanted a point. Reserve doesn't give us any championship points and he wanted a point. Then Omi took the next five straight shows and we finished his championship.

Who was the biggest character you think you've had to date? The one that's always in trouble?

Jim: Do you mean a dog or a person? (laughter)

Either one.

Sharon: Probably Tony DiGiorno. The Bulldog people were neat people, too.

Jim: What about John Coloma?

Sharon: Yes, John was quite a character. He was a top professional handler. He was mainly into Samoyeds and he and his wife were at most of the shows. He always had something funny to say. At one of the shows on the Oregon circuit I was dressed in an outfit with a tie, vest and skirt. I went to go into the ladies room and accidentally went into the men's room. I turned around and darted out, but when I got back to the ring he had everybody teasing me, saying, "Just because you're wearing a tie doesn't mean you can go into the men's room." (laughter) He was uplifting to

everybody. Unfortunately, at a very young age, he was showing dogs under Sam Pizzino, who was one of our very favorite judges.

Jim: And probably one of the biggest characters.

He definitely was.

Sharon: He was the biggest judge character we've met. John was showing under Sam at a show in southern California and he collapsed and died. I thought that at least he was doing what he loved to do when he died. It was strange because one day Jim and I were sitting at home and the phone rang. Jim picked it up and the guy on the other end says, "I'm sure you don't know who this is." Jim said, "Sam, of course I know who this is." He had never called us before.

Jim: He just had one of those voices. He was a character. When I would go to the ring and Sharon would be showing one of our dogs, he would come by and say, "That check you gave me for that last Breed bounced." (laughter)

Sharon: He always said this in front of a whole group of people.

Jim: He was always pulling our leg. He was quite a character.

Sharon: When we were at the Beverly Hills show one year, Bo and John Derek were there. This was when she was really

popular. I went up to Bo and said, pointing to Sam, "See that guy there? He's an AKC judge. It would be funny if you would go sit on his lap." She walked over and plopped herself down on his lap and he lit up like a Christmas tree. (laughter) His wife was there too, of course. I took a picture of her sitting on his lap and I sent him about 50 copies of it. (laughter)

So he could pass them out!

Sharon: Unfortunately he died of leukemia years ago.

Jim: We were at a show in Longview, Washington, where he was judging. He told me he had some form of leukemia and he was going to beat it. But it wasn't too long after that, he was gone.

Sharon: Joyce Keesling, who has Malamutes, was another in our group. I sent her in the ring with my bitch Pascha once and I showed Omi, who was Pascha's father. She beat me for the Breed. I took Best Opposite to my own bitch. Sam really didn't pay attention to who was on the end of the lead but he knew quality when he saw it. One of the things he did that I always thought was great was announce, "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome all, and please take them around the ring!" He did it with such enthusiasm.

When Jim started showing he took our bitch Mishka into

the ring and I, again, had Omi. I noticed Edd Bivin pulled Mishka out right away and started concentrating on her and he told Jim to take her down and back. He put Jim up for Best of Breed with Mishka. But the first thing he said to Jim was, "Whenever you go into the show ring again, I don't ever want to see you holding your hand out as you're gaiting the dog around the ring!" That's what Jim did to get Mishka's attention. He'd hold his hand out with the bait. Edd did not like that at all. So Jim promised he would never do it again. The next year when we watched Westminster on TV almost every handler was doing the same thing that Edd had told Jim he shouldn't do!

Jim: John Coloma never let me forget that. Every time I saw John, he'd hold his hand out because Bivin gave me such a bad time. We went to the World's Fair in Canada in '86.

Sharon: We brought Jim's mom, Nell, and our son Kelly with us. Kelly was pretty young but he was handling dogs. Nell was 85 at the time and she LOVED to go the dog shows so we took her to as many as we could. We brought her up there and Jim and I did so much winning. We were putting championships on one dog after another and we had them all competing against each other. There was one day we had four dogs that ended up winning all of the prizes. We needed a fourth person to handle and we gave Mishka to Nell. She took her into the ring at 85 years old and did really well. In fact, I think the judge gave her Best Opposite Sex and she thought that was so great.

An 85-year-old amateur!

Sharon: There was one other show we went to later in California, where I was standing behind Nell and we were watching some of the people moving around the ring. The Lunas had a beautiful bitch out in the ring, doing what the judge was telling her to do, and Nell all of a sudden said in a booming voice, "Boy, that is one good movin' bitch!" (laughter) She was about 86 years old or so. In fact, she just celebrated her 105th birthday two weeks ago.

Really!

Jim: Some of the Samoyed people knew her. So for those who remember her, she is now

105 years old.

Sharon: She lives in an assisted living home in Sacramento, a really nice place. She and Jim's dad were the first husband-and-wife broker team in Sacramento.

Jim: What happened to the picture of the front end of the bus where we had all the ribbons?

Sharon: The picture Jim is talking about won first or second place for the *Dogs in Canada*. We had won all of those ribbons up there.

Jim: This frame has gold and silver medals.

Sharon: Jim won Best in Show Brace with Omi and Pascha, who looked so much alike. Pascha was Omi's daughter. He won Best in Show Brace seven of the eight days. In Canada, at that time, they gave you gold medallions and they actually gave you money for good placements and Best in Show. He won several hundred dollars. I was taking some Groups and won quite a bit too, but Jim ended up with all of the hardware and the gold.

I think it is nice when they do that because it pays for your entry or your gas.

Sharon: Yes, it is nice. Right now, I've got about fifteen boxes filled with silver that I've won over the years. I even gave away two boxes of it - one to Robin Gowen to use with the Samoyed club she belongs to.



Four of the Orion champions on the way to their morning "dog jog."

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

Sharon: As far as I know, yes. Everyone I know is very upright and would not falsify anything.

How have you used linebreeding, outcrossing and inbreeding in your program?

Sharon: Jim and I came across an article written by Lloyd Bracket, who is probably the top all-time German Shep-

herd breeder. He said that what you do is try to get what you think is the perfect dog through your breeding program. Once you get what you determined to be the perfect dog, start inbreeding father-daughter and such. Not breeding across the lines to brother and sister, but go down the line with father and daughter. Bud, the dog we did so much winning with, was a father-daughter breeding. His

sire, Ice Breaker, still is the top producing Samoyed of all time. I think that inbreeding, if you know what you're doing, is good. I'm looking more at the qualities of the dog than I am the pedigree. Although, I always have to have lots of champions up front, I look more at the dog.

To be continued ...

Skeptical ... continued from page 21.

accommodate this change.

- We need to recognize that the sports of agility and rally are the growth portion of our new industry, and begin to give them the recognition and representation they deserve.

- While the emphasis on the bottom line is important to our survival, we should not become overly dependent on the roller-coaster stock market for a major share of our income.

- We should initiate a study of the possibility of acquiring the UKC so there would be one strong body representing pure-bred dogs. Greater economies of scale would be possible with this concentration of resources.

- AKC should move out of New York, sublease the current facilities, and join with the Raleigh portion of the company. As our registration income

shrinks, it is folly to stay in New York with its ultra-high costs. Admit the division was a mistake and now rectify it.

- Let's admit that the delegate body has become unwieldy, as the number of clubs joining AKC increases. The new constitution and bylaws should address a new way of representation, making sure that its duties and responsibilities are more clearly spelled out.

- The archaic notion that the board of directors of AKC must come from the delegate body has to be reviewed. We should have the opportunity to bring in expertise from other arenas to give us wise counsel as needed. We need to open our eyes to the realities of the 21st century. Our flexibility is being limited by our own "inbreeding." We need what we extol in our dogs "hybrid vigor," which some

good outcrosses can give us.

- The board of directors should cease micromanaging the organization and delegate more authority to the president and staff.

- The CLASSIC show should be stabilized in one city so it can grow its identity. Someplace that can rival New York City as a destination city. Tampa and Long Beach do not meet those criteria, Las Vegas does. Good transportation, lots to do and see and excellent facilities. It's a natural.

- We need to change the direction and philosophy of how to combat animal rights legislation. AKC should take a leaf from union organizers and hire people to go to the hot spots, organize the campaign, help letter writers, and lobby the local/state legislators in place. They should spend at least a

month on-site to do this.

- AKC should retain a PR firm whose sole job is to poke fun and ridicule at some of the preposterous things that animal rights groups do. They need to point out that these people don't realize the consequences of their own actions and spell out the unintended consequences. Humor can be very effective, especially biting humor.

I leave you with the following guideline. Tactics knows what to do when there is something to do; strategy knows what to do when there is nothing to do. ••

Dr. Grossman, a longtime judge of Sporting Dogs, and publisher of Doral Publishing is now the president of winningsolutions.info, a website devoted to developing the Professional Mentor concept via vital information for the beginning breeder/exhibitor at <http://winningsolutions.info>.