

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

Spring 1988 • \$8

Samoyed People



The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks With
**Mr. Robin Lings
DELMONTE**

Burton-on-Trent, Great Britain

This interview was conducted at the home of Mr. Robin Lings on June 20, 1986 by O. W. Roemer-Horn.

How did you get started in dogs.

I first started showing and breeding dogs in the early 1940's. Later, in Italy, I was an instructor with the kennel of Custos, owned by Prince and Princess Carafa Di Roccella in Florence. I returned to England two years later and continued with my own kennels, Delmonte. I have owned and bred several world champions in Italy, Canada and America and have

won 40 awards at Crufts, including a Best Puppy in 1959 and a champion in 1972. Altogether, I have over 70 international titles with the dogs.

I was nineteen years of age when I first began. Our first dogs were Cocker Spaniels, and we have been in various breeds, Poodles, Cockers, Boxers, Pekingese, and so it was eighteen various breeds, to show them all, and win with them all, before I finally decided on the Samoyed. I went to a kennel where some old traveling gypsies had left two Samoyeds in the kennels from the old Iceflow breeding, which went back to the late 1800's. Mrs. Kilburn-Scott first introduced them into England. I called my first kennels the Goldcloud Kennels. My first bitches Goldcloud Queen Armanda and Goldcloud Leading Light, and these were

the two bitches that I bought from the kennel at that time. This goes back to 1956.

What did you pay 30 years ago for a Samoyed?

Eight pounds for the pair. (laughter) Four pounds each. Those were my first two breeding bitches and it was Queen Armanda which produced Goldcloud White Ace. I took him to Crufts and he won the Best Puppy at Crufts, in 1959. He was a puppy that was never beaten.

I was with a partner in the kennels, owning it jointly. He specialized in Poodles, Mr. John Woodroffe. We worked together until 1960, when he had an opportunity to move down south and I had the first opportunity to go over to Italy, where I went to the kennels, Canila Di Diavolo Neri, which was with Signora Crippa, Arcellasco, near Erba in the Lake Como district. She specialized in Giant Schnauzers and ran the most famous boarding kennels. I worked there maybe for nine months before she recommended me to the Princess Carafa Di Roccella in Florence, who wanted an English kennel person. I was successful in getting the job and went down to work for the Princess, in her home, and to manage her kennels of show Collies and Greyhounds.

I took a young puppy with me, a Samoyed, Delmonte Limoncheck Robin; he won two gold medals and a silver medal, in Ferrara, Belagio and Milan in Italy.

In England, when I went to the kennels I have spoken of previously, my friend actually went for Poodles, and it was while I was looking round that I saw the two Sammies in the kennels, and I fell in love immediately as soon as I saw them, saying "That's my dogs." They had just been left there; the gypsies obviously weren't going to collect. Fortunately, they had left the pedigree papers with them so I could check the pedigrees and so forth, for breeding purposes. That's how it started off, just falling in love with them at first sight.

That's a good start. I understand that it was Goldcloud.

Goldcloud was first, and then I took on Delmonte, which originated when my friend wanted to still carry on with the Goldcloud prefix, with the Poodles, so I wanted to have my own independent one. I was in a Gentleman's service when I first moved into the HRH Duke of Gloucester's residence. I was introduced to the Duke

and Duchess Delmonte Mariagliano of Italy. The name of Delmonte fascinated me so much that I thought it would be a nice name for my kennels.

In what year did you have your first litter?

Our first litter was produced almost after it was started, 1956. Samoyeds were in the early 1960's.

Could you mention some dogs which you had?

My foundation bitch for the whole line became Ch. Delmonte Bettina of Golway. She produced, more or less, all my line. Once I had established the breeding that I wanted, and got the correct line, I haven't moved from it, haven't gone out for anything, changing for different dogs, and this established a seventeen generation unbroken bitch champion line in my breeding pedigree. Apart from the stud dog line, which is a matchup with the pedigree, because that's the most important, not to just pick a dog that you fancy or like. You really must go by the correct dog in mating to bring it in. If your bitch has got really small plushy ears, you can't have a dog with the long tapering ears. Otherwise, you are going to bring the faults in, so you've got to match every identical thing to suit your bitch, with a typical stud dog, which is very difficult to find.

Ch. Delmonte Bettina produced Agnese, and then she became a champion; she produced two world International sons. One of the sons, Int. Ch. Delmonte This Is It, produced another champion, Ch. Delmonte Hey Watch It. Int. Ch. Delmonte This Is It won Best of Breed at Crufts and was made a champion in 1972. He was sold immediately to America. Since he's been in America, he won, by the last notification that I had, over 60 international titles and was Top Stud Dog of all time.

That's enormous. So he made a great impact.

A very great impact. He became the leading stud dog in America. He's produced a son which is now, today, the world record-breaking stud dog for all time in America; nobody's ever accomplished his feat, and he's still a young dog and he's still going. It's Ima Bark Star.

The other son went to Italy; he's also produced many champions. Between them, there is a record that they have produced numerous champions ... International Ch. Delmonte This Is It, because he came from Ch. Agnese, and in that particular litter, he was the only dog, and the only puppy. So when he was born, I

just said, "This is it." And that name stuck, and he went on to become the international champion. Now from the records, it shows that they, the two brothers, have produced over 100 champions. It is enormous, quite a record. The other brother was aptly named Int. Ch. Delmonte Aisle Altar Hymn of Fairvilla.

Are there other dogs?

These are really my family, it's covered a period of almost fourteen years, right from when I bred to the times recently, most have now died, but they have had their lifespan and really made their name. Now what they've left behind in the offspring is what are producing and carrying on their names.

In your litters, how did you decide what would be your pick puppy?

I always choose a puppy after it's just born, in the palm of my hand, while it's still wet. I never wait until it matures a little bit or gets into the fourteen, fifteen week stage, because then puppies go off and you can't tell really what they will turn into. A puppy must be decided, especially the pick of the litter, as soon as it's born by the shape of its head, the skull, the bone, and the length of back. You can immediately see the conformation when a puppy is born.

From this point, what was your special practice in rearing the litter? When did you wean them?

We start at a bright and early age, at about three to four weeks for the first weaning stages, took them from the mother's milk and started them on the milk foods. At about five and six weeks, we started them with a little minced meat and a little of the solid foods. It was scraped raw meat, and you took it off very finely with a knife for them.

What did you feed the adult dogs?

The main basic food was what we commonly term in England as paunch, that is the sheep stomach. Apart from the raw meat and biscuit meal; it was all very substantial, vitamin foods we gave, also. We also add daily cod-liver oil for all their coats, for the glistening silver tips.

Have you done any special socializing of the dogs?

Yes, by all means. That is most essential, to get the right temperament with a dog, and to get the utmost confidence. The more people they meet, and especially from the young stage, to get as many judges or different people to completely handle them, go over the dogs, so they've got every confidence at a show when the judge does go over them to see that they don't be nervous, or back away from them. Or especially, go to bite a person, which is the most important thing in a temperament, that they are calm, and never aggressive.

When breeding, you use line-



Ch. Delmonte Bettina of Golway.

breeding the two pedigrees together. Do you think an outcrossing might be essential sometimes?

Personally, I don't like the idea of taking an outcross in at all. Should you come across any faults or bring any faults into your breeding, it's going to take a long time to eradicate them. When you have finally established a line that you like, and that you are winning with, you stick to it and keep that line. I wouldn't take in an outcross. I haven't personally gone away

to mate the dog with their bitch, but don't even study the pedigree, which is vital, very important; you must get the correct dog to match the correct bitch's PEDIGREE. I'm very adamant about that.

Breeding is the most essential part of finding the correct line. I don't do practice breeding at all. If others intend to practice, maybe that's where they bring a lot of faults in. This is where the well-established kennels, going back to the original ones, who have established all the main

entire career, I don't think I've used the same stud dog twice on the same bitch. It has always been in the line somewhere.

How many litters have you bred?
Approximately, about 30.

How many champions came out of these 30 litters?

There again, that depends; if I said my own, there were two internationals and three English champions. And then it's what they've produced, you see, which brings it to over a hundred champions, all from my breeding in the same line. And from other breeders who have brought up my dogs. The other breeders particularly wanted my dogs to show and produce, to give themselves a name to start in their own kennels, but it's all been traced back, the pedigrees will show they've originated from Delmonte dogs, which is very nice for me.

In your active days, how did you keep your dogs? In a special kennel building, or in individual runs?

Yes, all kennels were independent with their own individual runs. We very rarely kept two or more dogs together unless they were littersisters. We'd always keep the dogs apart because normally the dogs didn't agree like the bitches would. There was always a kennel jealousy amongst the dogs. There was sometimes with the bitches, too; they got a little bit jealous of each other, but this is only natural.

Did you have a big yard where the dogs could exercise?

Where my dogs have been are with other people, in other judges' kennels, where I have been employed, so they have been quite massive, several acres of land, and maybe 120 kennels. I was kennel manager, so it was my duty to look after all that. I had one or two kennel boys or girls to help me, but it depended on me for the organization and control of it in management.

What was an average number of dogs you had at one time?

That has been restricted owing to my working conditions. I was never allowed to keep more than seven. If I had my own kennels, financially, then I would have been interested in anything from seventeen to twenty dogs, and would have made a success of it, but I never had that opportunity because I've always been working for someone else.

When you were actively breeding, and had a big litter, ten or twelve puppies, would you bring all of them up or would you cull?



Int. Ch. Delmonte Aisle Altar Hymn of Fairvilla.

from my own breeding line at all, and I haven't used any other dogs. Just because they're champions doesn't mean you are going to produce champions or bring them in.

This would be maybe putting a champion dog and a champion bitch together to produce a champion.

RARELY does this actually meet with success! This is where, with the novices, and learners, all the faults are cropping up in the breed. They haven't the experience or the knowledge to know which dog to use. They like a dog and think they'd love

dogs in the linebreeding, and most of the top breeders, have kept that same principle and established their own and made themselves well known. Everybody wants to use their particular dogs because they've established a line and made it a success.

Also, when one goes back to the same dogs, then one can double up on faults?

I wouldn't say you go back identically to the same dogs. You may go back to a son or another dog out of the litter from the same dog, but not the same animal. In my

I refer to Samoyed only, not my other breeds. The largest litter I reared, or had, has been nine puppies. She has reared all nine, and they've all turned out top show specimens fortunately. I haven't had the misfortune to lose many puppies at all. Most of the litters have been sixes and sevens, and they have been good. I think a bitch is quite capable of managing six very comfortably. I don't like larger litters on the bitches actually. I may subsidize them a little by bottle feeding in between to bring them on a bit. Those that are doing exceptionally well, I retard a little bit to let the other ones get their fair share from the mother.

What about an old dog which is not so healthy, and you don't want it suffering on. Would you try to put him to sleep, or do you think they should go naturally?

I would only ever put a dog to sleep if I actually saw them in agony and pain, and I knew it was causing them total discomfort. But if they were quite happy and I had been reassured by my veterinarian that there was no pain whatsoever, I should just let them terminate their own lives.

What happens to your dogs that are not being used for breeding or show purposes?

If they've been retired for show or breeding, they've always been placed into a good home, solely as a pet for company to some person, but most have been retained in my own home and kept.

Do you think that they do well, and become attached to the people at six or seven years?

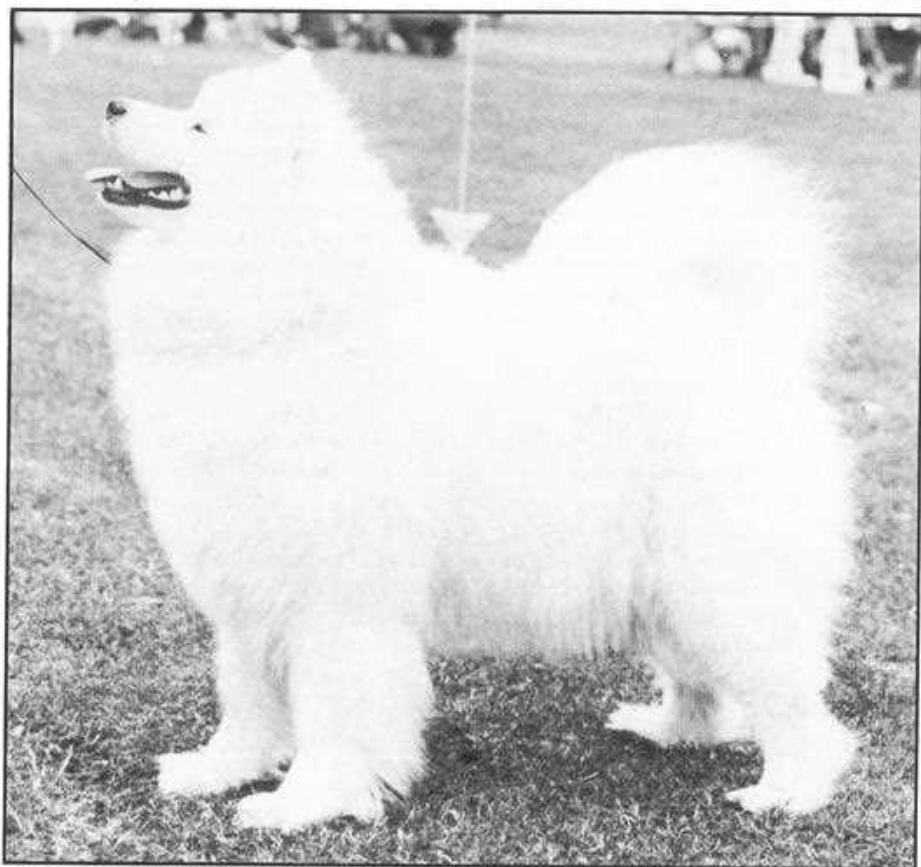
Well, a Samoyed is known to be very affectionate, is a very loving kind of dog, and it can settle with anybody, if they're given love and affection.

Looking back in your active breeding time, did you ever have someone come with a bitch and ask to breed to your stud? Did you ever refuse a stud service?

My highest priority, before we'd mate a bitch, is to be shown the pedigree to see whether it would suit my dog. I would not let my dog serve any bitch that I thought inferior for mating, had obvious faults, or didn't have the correct lines or temperament that I was looking for, so yes, I have refused many!

So it should be a mating you'd like to have done yourself?

Yes. Also, which is very important to me, in mating, I would refuse if I thought the person was not a suitable breeder, to bring up the puppies or have the right



Ch. Delmonte Agnese. Photo by F. E. Garwood.

home life. I like to know the background as well, BEHIND THE PERSON who is bringing the bitch. I wouldn't let anyone bring a bitch for mating, and book service, and do that just for a stud fee. I must know all about the person, and pedigree, and find out everything; I must have every satisfaction in my own mind before I'd let one of my own dogs be used, that is my most important issue in mind.

Did you ever breed to a bitch that had a fault, but was otherwise an outstanding specimen?

No. If a dog has got an outstanding fault, I would not breed from it at all. It might reproduce again. There's no guarantee that it would not. If there's a chance of it happening, I don't take chances. I must be sure for the good of the breed.

What would you mention as this kind of a fault?

Very light eyes, a blue eyed is definitely out. Mouths and teeth are important; it must have correct full pigmentation, no broken pigmentation. Referring to the adults, general presentation, of course. If it's too narrow a head or a snipey head, I should want to use a dog with a good masculine forehead to try and bring it into

line. I wouldn't use two dogs, a dog and a bitch, of the same type if there was a fault showing. It would exaggerate it in its reproduction rather than correcting it. Long pointed ears, round feet, bold round eyes, long back, short neck, etc.

You got your first two dogs for 8 pounds. What are the average prices now, thirty years later? What does one have to pay for a show quality animal?

Go to the correct breeder or you might get the novices that are more interested in what they can get for their puppies, and they think somewhere around 50, 60, 70 pounds is quite substantial. But I don't think you would be getting the quality or the right kind. You've got to go to the top breeders and the well-established kennels and see them. To get an outstanding puppy, you would need 150 pounds, but even some novices have bred good puppies from the correct stock.

When you sold your puppies, did you have different prices for show and pet puppies?

Yes, there were different prices, if it was definitely show or pet. I don't know; this sounds a little bit like boasting because very rarely did I produce a pet.

(laughter) It's with the breeding; mine are so closely connected that everything shown won! Every puppy that I produced turned out to be a winner. I've never known one to say, "I've shown one of your dogs and it hasn't won a thing yet." Nobody has been able to say that. There had been one that was bought from me who had no intentions of ever showing. But when I saw him at six months old, I thought, what a pity. I said, "You've got a champion there." The owners said, "Well, if you think he's good enough to show him, Mr. Lings, you show him and prove it to us." I took him out and he was never unplaced in his career, was always in the first three, and was eventually one of my Crufts winners, and a big favourite of all.

What is a fair price for a stud fee?

Starting in the early days, you could get a stud fee for as cheap as 5 to 7 pounds, because you could buy the puppies for that. But today's prices, I should imagine, would be about 75 to 100.

So it looks like this is one of the rare breeds where the stud fee and the price for a puppy is nearly the same. Should it be like this? Or should there be a range between puppy prices and the stud fee prices?

Obviously it differs with various breeds, of course. A very popular breed, or the very rare breed - if you take the Japanese Akita, now, that is coming into the country, to get a really good puppy, you've got to think about 600 pounds. They are so rare, and are just beginning to make a name for themselves. Eventually, maybe in 5 or 6 years' time, when they have become more popular, then prices will begin to drop in line with other breeds. I wouldn't like to say, in fairness to other breeds, that all prices should be practically the same, obviously, because of the various breeds and types of dogs. If it was a very popular breed, they were doing very well, then the prices are going to be very high; they are going to be very high if they are a very rare breed also. If it's just an ordinary, in between, common breed, then you'd get quite a reasonable price, about 25 pounds, or maybe higher.

During your years in dogs, have there been any dogs that have impressed you?

Yes. I have particular dogs, not a line, that have fitted entirely into our standard. To me, the standard of the breed is very important, and it must be followed by all judges to get the correct type, the correct conformation, and all the various points in the correct context by following the stan-

ard. Go away from the standard, and a person is lost.

There are particular dog that I like and that I follow quite closely, but it doesn't mean that when I'm judging I always put those dogs up. I always judge fairly to even the novice or somebody showing a dog that I've not known before. If it is the right type dog, a correct dog, then it will win, as seen on the day!

Can you mention some dogs by name that you felt were worthy winners?

Too numerous to give credit in naming all that I knew, but my own personal outstanding favourites would include: Ch. Snowking of Carwood, Ch. Fairvilla Emperor, Ch. Fairvilla Tarus Bulba, Ch. Kamelia of Fairvilla, Ch. Fairvilla Katrina, Ch. Novaskaya Imry Lafay, Eng/Am Ch. Novaskaya Silva Khim, Ch. Novaskaya Channa Lafay of Golway, and the most famous, Ch. Fairvilla Anastasia, Ch. Golway Mr Chan, Ch. Beauty of Golway, Ch. Golway Antaries, Ch. Sworddale Silver Sabre, Ch. Silver Minstrel of Ancey, Ch. Nikara First Edition, Ch. Silversams Rose Marie, Ch. Snowcryst Fair Madonna, Int. Ch. Delmonte This is it (USA), Int. Ch. Delmonte Aisle Altar Hymn of Fairvilla (Italy), Ch. Delmonte Bettina of Golway, Ch. Delmonte Agnese. The kennels of Kobe and Arctic had the most famous dogs of all generations.

Is the Samoyed Standard a good one, when following it for breeding and when judging?

The committees have brought up the standard that we'd like to follow, and have submitted it to the kennel club, who have passed the standard and set their standard. Once the standard is set, that is what we must solely adhere to. We get quite a lot of novices and other people, bringing in their own standards, or saying what they think is correct and not correct, but it doesn't conform with the standard that is set by the kennel club. I wouldn't accept anything our kennel club hadn't put in their ruling.

Could one assume it would be to follow the standard and not make the standard after what the dogs are like?

Yes. The standard does say it, it is a rule that must be obeyed.

How would you describe your ideal Samoyed?

The correct and ideal Samoyed must appeal to you immediately when you first see it, and it must win your affection, it must have the right temperament, have all the essentials that you are looking for in a

Samoyed, have no obvious faults. Movement must be very correct when you see the dog move, must have the right and correct gait. The correct weight, although this can differ through various standards as you are going through. Above all, it must once again fit the standard required in all respects.

Head obviously is very important; it must have the correct features. The muzzle, the skull, everything in conformation which goes to make the nearest perfect Samoyed. There isn't a perfect dog yet. It's next year, and who then, can justifiably have the right to say any certain dog is perfect?

You told me you'll be an all-rounder when you are judging all breeds. What gave you the idea that you wanted to go into the judging?

Starting with my own original dogs in the first place, and having had so much success with them. And when I went into kennel work, it was with one purpose in mind, of becoming a judge. That was my aim, to become a judge of all breeds. That's why I got such a wide experience, in almost all our top kennels in the country. I explained this to all my employers so they knew that I wasn't sort of leaving for any other purpose than furthering my career, and I spent over 40 years accumulating this knowledge and still learning.

We often hear of somebody who has an eye for a dog. Is this true? Can a judge learn everything?

No. I don't agree with the people that read books and books and books, and know everything merely from reading. That doesn't mean a thing to me. The experience comes in actually having the dog, working with dogs, knowing your dogs, and having a good eye for a dog. If you haven't a good eye for a dog, you can't learn anything. It can't be taught to you. I don't think anything can be taught, except handling or obedience.

Most judges try to make it fair. On the other hand, what would you like to mention as unfair judging?

The obvious point is favouritism, liking a particular dog and not having the courage to put it down. You must judge a dog AS SEEN ON THE DAY, and NOT what you have known the dog to have won. What it's won before, or what it's likely to win after should not be taken into consideration. Fairness must be judged, in our particular breed, because they vary so much from one week to another, coat-wise, so they must be judged as seen on the day. This often arises where people

come up to you afterwards and say, "My dog won the ticket last week. And you put it down today. Why?" I would just say, "It just wasn't right to me on the day." Maybe another judge saw, last week, something that isn't in the dog today.

The handlers - if it is a particular friend, someone you know. It takes a lot of courage to put one's best friend down, even if they are in the final line in a large class; it takes a lot of courage to do it, but it has to be done. People will accept that if they know that you are judging fairly, but I don't think one likes to win if they think that they are being given a favour. That is totally wrong in any case, in my eyes. I only see the dog!

Have you ever withheld ribbons?

Yes, if it's been a very small class, there's only been two or three entries, and if I don't think the dog or bitch is worthy of the first prize, with the quality necessary, I would not give it, not award the first prize, large or small class! They must come up to the standard in my eyesight of worthiness. Most important, with awarding the CC's, if the dog isn't worthy of carrying the title of champion, then you must not award that CC.

Does advertising help in winning?

Obviously publicity is a great help to some people because it does advertise the dogs and it gives people an insight into what that particular dog has done. The majority of people would rather go to a winning dog or a winning kennel than probably just an unknown kennel or person. They do have an advantage in advertising a dog.

What can you say about this breed in other countries? You saw the dogs in Italy. Have you judged abroad in other countries?

I had the opportunity to judge abroad in Sweden, Hong Kong, and Italy, but owing to the amount of Samoyeds shown over there, it did not warrant getting me over to go and judge just the one breed. You must have given CC's in other breeds, or whatever you're judging over there, in England before they will accept you to do the other breeds abroad. I've only actually given the Challenge Certificates in Samoyeds, which has been very disappointing, really. I've known of several other judges that haven't the experience or the knowledge that I personally have myself, who, through FINANCIAL ASSETS, have been able to get various judging engagements in other breeds, and award CC's. This is unfair, as they can afford to go abroad!



World and Int. Ch. Delmonte This is it.

So these others have done things that are a little political?

Yes.

Has the breed changed in the 30 years you've been in it?

In the old days, it was very well established; we had our kennels that we respected, that we knew, and competition was of the highest. The old dogs and the older type, to me, is the correct Samoyed. We have all endeavored to build our lines and build around those dogs. What has spoiled it today in the breed is the number and the increasing number all the time of novices and newcomers that are coming into the breed without the knowledge, without the experience, without seeking the advice and help of the well-established breeders, doing it all on their own, to try to outclass their competitors. This is where it's gone sadly astray because they haven't been able to produce the stock. This is where all the faults have come in. We still must stick to the original breeders and those well-established kennels and follow the lines on the correct breeding, to get faults OUT takes a long time!

We have some beautiful dogs in the country today, some very well-known and well-liked Samoyeds which are correct. We also have a lot of rubbish.

So are there more better dogs now or in the old days?

In general, I'll give preference to saying that the older dogs were better quality than the present dogs. I would also like to add that we have some outstanding dogs of today, in all fairness to the many new up-and-coming kennels producing the right stock and doing a lot of good for the breed.

Do these kennels help the tradition?

Definitely, they have upheld the tradition of the old Samoyeds and what they have produced themselves, they have added. The top dogs of today I would say are slightly better than the top dogs in the old days, but in general, the quantity was greater of good dogs in the old days than what it is today.

Looking back, what was the highlight of your dog years?

Obviously, winning Crufts; that is the general aim of every doggy person or breeder, to sort of one day be able to get the winning dog at Crufts. This is classed as the shop window of the world, the greatest dog show in the world; everybody's dream is to win there. That has been my highlight.

The breeding of my champions, has given me a very great satisfaction; I'm very proud of the fact of what I've been able to do with them, and from what they in turn have produced to my credit.

The situation at Crufts is a special one. You can't just enter your dog, you have to be qualified. Is that what makes the name of this show so great, or the long tradition it has?

Oh, quite. If people are coming to England, and they are coming from all over the world, to see the dogs at Crufts, and they know that by coming to Crufts, they are not going to see the inferior or the lesser known dogs. They know that they are really coming to see the cream of the country that Britain produces. Every dog must have won and qualified to even enter there. They really know that every dog they see they can classify as a top class winning dog.

That's why Crufts is the shop window of the world.

What was an upsetting moment in your doggy years?

Personally, I can't reflect and say I've had any unhappy moments apart from just one particular breeding experience, a Cesarean birth, and the vet did it, and to me, didn't put sufficient stitches into the wound. I only counted nine, practically an inch apart, and I was very dissatisfied and distressed because as one started to bleed, by about the time I got to the vet, and he came to the kennels to examine, she'd opened, and everything, the intestines and everything, had all come out. That's my most vivid and shocking experience I've ever witnessed in my career. I never want to see it again. The bitch didn't survive; he couldn't do anything for her at all, just had to put her to sleep immediately. That is the one and only bad experience in my career.

Was it all worth it? Would you like to do it the same way?

If you could turn the clock back, I would certainly start all over again, and I'd do exactly the same again as I've done; I don't think I'd alter it. The happy moments, the unhappy, very few, the laughter, the joy and the tears - they all make up your doggy life.

When someone comes to you to ask advice on starting out, what would you tell them?

I'd sit down, first of all, and talk to them to see if they had sufficient interest, the care and attention that's needed, and that they are not just doing it purposely with a view to commercializing or making money out of them. I'd strongly object to or strongly advise them against anything like that. It's got to be done from the joy and the love of the dog. You've got to be able to cope with the responsibility of a dog and

your responsibility, too, to that dog.

I would explain and give them all the help and advice from my own experience, so as to put them in good stead for what they have in mind themselves.

When one looks around here and sees all your certificates showing your great winning with your dogs, there is another dog here close by, a Pekingese, and two birds. Tell us about the non-doggy Robln Lings.

Well, dogs are my life; I live, talk and enjoy dogs; they ARE my life. When you look at all this, medals and rosettes, etc., this is just a small proportion of what my walls will take; if I was asked how many, it would probably go to 2500 awards. I've won 40 awards at Crufts alone over the years since 1955 to the last award with my last bitch in 1976. I'm going into the decline of my age, and am now doing more judging than what I am breeding or showing. If I had the opportunity, if my health would stand it, I would start off again right now, yes. I wouldn't hesitate if I knew my health could cope with it, going till I was 90 or so.

When I was a young boy, more or less, just after I left school, I began working with the Royal Family. My father asked what I had in mind for my career, because he was a well-known painter and decorator. I didn't want to follow father's profession. It was a very well-known calling in those days to go into gentleman's service. I expected just to go to some ordinary

gentleman, but my first opportunity came with Sir Howard Kerr, who was the Duke of Gloucester's Equerry, and through an invitation, I was invited to go to London, and there I started with the Duke and Duchess Delmonte Mariagliano of the Italian Embassy, and I was able to start as first footman-valet. The war started in 1939, and in 1940, the Duke had to leave to go back to Italy because of the war conditions. I was invited to go to Italy to carry on my employment with them, but the necessary forms had to be filled in, and I was only 21 years at the time; father objected to me going because of the war conditions, Italy and Germany were fighting against us at that particular time. I was transferred then to HRH the Duke of Gloucester as his first footman-valet, and I remained with him. I resigned my post and came back home where I started off in the dogs.

Is there anything else you'd like to add, some advice?

The soundest advice I can give is to stick to the standard, follow the standard and breed to the standard. I don't think anyone would go far wrong, but if they experiment and try little things on their own, then they will all come with many problems. That's my soundest advice, and my motto is: "A dog is the only instance where money can buy true love" (with courtesy of Princess Sobilia Carafa).

Thank you very much. •

Who Will Love Crow?

*Tama Talkington
Council Bluffs, Iowa*

Nobody likes dog shows better than I do. Nor can I imagine anyone loving their dogs with the intensity that I do.

I haven't been to a doctor for five or six years (with the exception of the eye-doc, when a dog stepped in my eye and scraped the covering from my cornea - ouch!). These were my complaints when I recently went to my doctor. I was feeling much discomfort on my left side. Naturally, my first thought was my heart. The discomfort went clear through the front to the back. I was short of breath and the tiniest bit wheezy. If I overdid - which I started to avoid - I could hardly breathe. I woke up mornings feeling tight in the chest and my appendages would be swollen and puffy. I was sure the big 4-0 was trying

to get me. After he listened to my heart, he listened to my right side, then back to my left. He had me breathing in and out and coughing. All the while not saying anything. Then he told his nurse to prepare me for a "picture." My adrenalin started to race. A picture? Wow! My lungs. I had avoided ever having an X-ray ... for fear something might be found. My motto was "what you don't know won't hurt you." For years I had tippy-toed by all the free lung X-ray vans that are periodically stationed around town. Wow, my lungs!

Me, a three-pack-a-day smoker (five packs at dog shows!)

I was sitting in the X-ray room waiting for the doctor to tell whatever he did or didn't see. Then his nurse came in and told me not to dress yet as the doctor wanted another picture, this time a side view. My blood ran cold from fear. I knew