

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed People

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Dr. Maurice Waller
SUNNY STAR
Germantown, Tennessee

Part II

This interview was conducted in July, 1985 at the office of Dr. Waller by Brenda E. Abbott.

How do you feel about the Samoyed standard? Do you feel it is a good one?

It has served the breed well. There is very little difference between the English, Australian and American standards. In my opinion, all standards could be reduced; we could take out a lot of excess material. There seems to be a lot of "conversation" that goes on, but basically the meat is good. "Long, but not too long," "Short, but not too short." All of those sort of things could be removed from every standard that is used today. It is rare today that you see these long, droopy coats in Sammies because the standard has kept them out all this time. The only thing I really think is that all breeds should have height limits up and above.

Disqualifying heights?

Yes, because it is very easy for a breed to suddenly take off and get extremely tall and then drop in size just as suddenly. The Doberman and the German Shepherd have done this, it just depends on who happens to be in control at the time all of this is going on. If there would be something put in the standard that would keep them locked into a size, that would be good.

Would you disqualify at the present recommended heights today or would you make them larger or smaller?

When you pass 24 inches in a Sammy, you are getting too big. The Siberian Husky standard has a disqualification, and that is to keep them from getting larger and larger, or smaller and smaller.

Would you put a lower limit also?

Oh, yes. They should be locked in between two sizes, as most of the breeds do. They have upper and lower, and this is good. I'm sure there would be a lot of argument about this, but I would be in favor of picking a reasonable size



which was agreeable with everybody. I know in this country they do tend to be taller than in Australia and New Zealand, and as you go out toward the west you see larger dogs in all breeds. I can see how if you have two particularly good producers and they seem to be producing larger or smaller, it doesn't matter, the first thing you know is you could change the shape of the breed pretty drastically. I don't look for that to happen, but it very well could so that is why I would like to see both limits on the breed.

Over the thirty years of looking at this breed, has there been a time when this has happened?

We have seen several times when they got exceptionally large.

Are they as large today as you have ever seen them?

No, they were larger than this about ten years ago, particularly in this area. We saw a lot of large ones. Now, the breed is beginning to drift back because the four or five major dogs who are bred most in this country are breeding pretty consistent. They are coming back to the middle of the road again, but I don't ever recall seeing the Sams real small at any time in this country.

Are there any breeders today that you think are doing a particularly good job in the Samoyed breed?

Since I have been judging, I've nearly quit showing. I show about once a year just so I'll stay in the computer. I really have very little contact with the individuals. When you are judging this

is not good procedure, and so I know very few of them personally. However, there are several dogs that seem to be standing out over the country and I don't think there is any question that we all know them, and these people are doing a good job with them. You see the offspring of all these dogs scattered around. The dog out of Texas, the Dr. Pepper dog, Jack Feinberg's dog up in New York, the Ward's in California ... there is no question that their Painter produced many good dogs. These people follow the breed, keep up with all the breeders and are knowledgeable. There is a lady up in Idaho who has been at this for a long time, and Dr. Meyer, and Donna Yocum still breed. These people have all been at it for a long time; most people get into a breed and last three years or five at the maximum, but these people have experience. In the south here, we have Audrey Lycan in Huntsville, Alabama and there are enough scattered around the country like the Ice Way Kennels. These kennels are making their marks down the line and their dogs are producing good pups. There are good breeders up in Washington State, and some who are no longer living like Helene Spathold and Billie Tucker. You get back into the gene pool of the breed and these same names will keep showing up. All of these people produced well in their area and then they have shipped out of their area, so we have a good cross of them now. I don't think you could pull one person and say this is the "top" breeder other than in sheer numbers, maybe. For quality, all of these people have been assets to the breed.

Have you attended a National Specialty for the breed in the last ten years or so?

No.

They are getting very large now.

I read and check them all the time. It has finally gotten to the stage of needing two judges, I see. Now you are even looking at the possibility of three, whereas back when I was in the breed, they weren't that big.

We have a question before the membership right now on whether or not to change our standard regarding the trimming of whiskers. How do you feel about this, or do you have a preference?

They shouldn't trim them. They should be left alone because they do serve a purpose. The Sammy is a natural dog. The only thing you should do is brush him, bathe him and comb him. We kept them outside on concrete runs, dirt runs and grass runs and our Sammies kept themselves remarkably clean. There isn't a time you need to do too much messing with them. There is a lot of trimming and clipping in many breeds, ears, tails, etc., but this breed is a pure, natural breed. From all I've read from the past, this dog actually lived with the people, ate with them, slept with them ... and they still do all of this! (laughter) I personally like to leave the dog as is. I can't believe that anyone judging would look at a head and say, "Well, it does have one too many (or too few) whiskers," or notice that they are cut too short or too long. I can't believe a judge would take anything away from that particular dog.

Do you notice the whiskers one way or the other when you're judging?

Sometimes you do and sometimes you don't. If they are extremely short and have been cut a lot you can feel them when you touch the muzzle and check the teeth. There isn't any doubt that they've been cut many times because they feel like little toothpicks.

How much trimming do you think is acceptable on a Samoyed?

The only place that we ever trimmed, as I recall, was around the foot. Sometimes the hair on the foot sticks out in front and gives the foot an odd look. We would take a pair of scissors and trim around the foot where this hair was too long. Other than that, a pin brush was the most commonly used grooming tool and the dogs were kept well brushed out. That's about all we ever did to them. Of course, we bathed them!

Did you blow them dry or allow them to dry naturally?

We had a blow dryer which we used after drying them with big towels, but here again, we didn't show all that much ourselves. The handlers did most of this.

Have you noticed anything worth mentioning in the way of bites as you've been judging Samoyeds?

The bites are in pretty fair shape. You see a few level bites. I cannot ever remember seeing a bad undershot



Linda and Princess Shi-Mar of Mary Lake.

Sammy in the ring.

Have you ever seen a blue-eyed Samoyed?

No, this has been a disqualification for so long that if anyone had it they would do something with it very quickly, I would imagine. You just don't see them.

There are some other problems appearing in the breed today. Do you know anything about chondrodysplasia or dwarfism?

This seems to be cropping up in a lot of breeds. Perhaps "cropping up" isn't the right term; there are better diagnostic methods today than years ago. With the OFA being active and breeds becoming more conscious about these things, more of these sorts of things are being picked up. The dwarfism can usually be traced back if you know the pedigrees involved.

Was this a consideration or problem back when you were importing dogs?

It was not a problem when I imported simply because I took the English book and checked the pedigrees back to the early 1920's. Kobe Kennels were linebred and inbred for many years as were many other well-known kennels in England at that time. Of those breedings, they had eliminated

so many bad genes early on that by 25 years later people could almost buy without any problems of getting bad genes. There were only a few outstanding kennels that were exporting to America.

Then how do you think we come back to it now?

The Americans have different breeding crops than a lot of others. Land is not as precious here, and this is a relatively new country compared to England, France and Germany. In those countries things are very valuable and they try to breed only select animals in their limited space. They are long steeped in judging breeds of all varieties and they have established a more staunch system. Also, in England, if you wanted to breed it is a very short ride to anywhere from where ever you live. One of the Mastiff breeders and judges was over here and was with me for awhile, and she commented that this was the one problem she saw in this country: on the east coast you saw one type of Mastiff, and in mid-America you saw another, and on the west coast you see another. There certainly is a difference in breeding programs when they are 2000 miles apart. The other thing is that there are a few "bummers" bred, scattered around, and people have sold them as

pets. The pet person thinks because he paid \$100 for the dog, he should have a litter and sell \$600 worth of puppies; these people don't go any farther than they have to breed. Frequently, it can be a puppy of the same litter or breeding in the same neighborhood, and they will be bred together. This happens enough that eventually some of these "bum" genes begin turning up again. But you will notice that this does not affect a great number of dogs in the breed; it is a very small percentage. The parent club should be able to zero in on those pedigrees fairly easily and make everyone aware of the problem.

Do you feel that advertising influences judges?

The most ... (pause) I guess I should be careful what I say! (laughter) You hear all sorts of stories about what influences a judge. Fortunately, 95% of the judges are basically good and fair. The other 5% may be bad, and there are always some bad apples in the barrel. There is a paper, or magazine, or whatever you want to call it that shows up in the mailbox on a regular basis. It is an advertising newspaper the best I can figure. I never had a copy of this newspaper, never laid eyes on it until one day when I went to my mailbox. On

this particular day, I still didn't receive the entire paper, I only got one section of it. There was a dog on the front cover; two weeks later I saw that dog at a show in California. How that particular section of that particular newspaper ever got to me, I don't know! (laughter) That was my first introduction to this type of thing. When I got back home I laughed and told my wife about it. Now that I judge almost all the Working group, it seems like I get this thing two to three times a week in my mailbox. It is actually designed to influence judges; I don't think there is any question about that. I prefer the breed magazines because you get more of that particular breed to compare and you are seeing them together. This business of "...taking Winners Bitch under 'respected' judge..." (laughter) "...the honorable so-and-so," is a bit much and leaves a taste that I don't really care for. But these things do happen and I don't think there is any question that it is an advertising campaign.

There is a dog (not a Sammy) who has been heavily advertised. I've judged this dog twice, both times in very large entries of over 100. I've examined the dog very carefully both times and ended up putting up another dog. The

reason I went back and examined the dog so very carefully was because this dog has such a winning record that it is unbelievable.

Did you want to make sure you hadn't missed something?

I wanted to make sure that what I thought I saw was there, and it was! I talked to several good breeders later and asked for their opinion, and they said exactly the same thing I saw. In this case, I was not influenced. I know of a situation where a woman was judging a particular breed and had not even read the standard. She had put it down as a "filler" and they gave it to her. In her case, if she had seen that particular dog in that magazine she probably would have gone with it. This is what a lot of judges depend on; if you're just starting out with a new breed, they (the advertisers) are hoping you will see the dog's picture a lot and put him up. It gets to be not the best dog, particularly, but the person with the most money. But then, there are two sides to every coin. The old story that the handlers win more I don't think is true today because there are so many, but the reason why the AKC licensed handlers, and there were "top-notch" handlers, won more was because the people they showed for had the money to buy the best dogs! A good handler wouldn't take a sorry dog. This is true again, and the ones that you see advertised are likely to be outstanding animals, with good handlers and unlimited resources behind them. A lot of dogs you see in the dog newspapers are top-notch dogs and people who can afford all the advertising can usually afford a good dog. Fortunately, the people who look at these ads are usually seeing pretty good specimens.

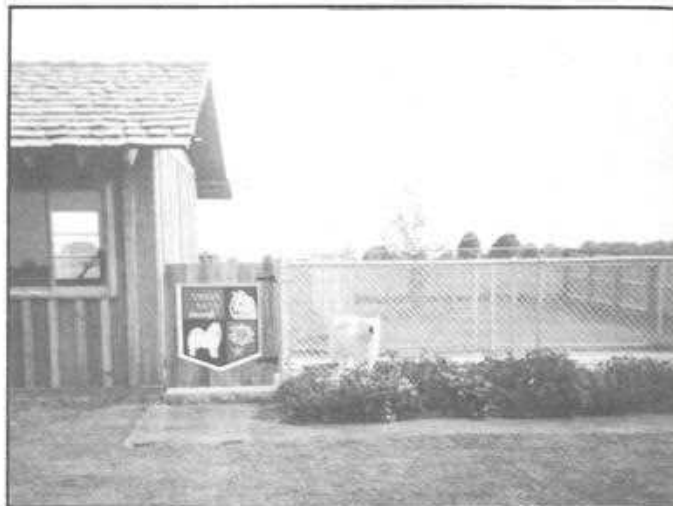
Do you think that having a professional handler helps?

Yes, without a question, and the reason I say this is because if you are sick you will come to me because I'm a doctor. I'm trained in medicine and I can take pretty good care of you. The pharmacist is trained in another area, but he has more knowledge about how to care for you than the guy who sweeps the streets. You have to realize that these old truly professional handlers (seems like lately everybody is a "handler") like the ones who handled my dogs and were AKC licensed, did this for a living. They worked with the dogs every day, they demanded perfection. A man who takes 20 dogs in the ring





Today's kennel.



The old kennel.

two, three or four times a week, year in and year out, has more know-how than the guy who goes in the ring twice a year. People who handle their own dogs on a regular basis and show a lot, certainly are good handlers, but the true professional handler is a whole different ball game.

What advice would you give a novice who wanted to breed and handle his own dogs?

I would say go and see as many shows as you can, talk to as many people as you can and discard 90% of what you hear. Be sure of which breed you want and be sure what you want to do with that breed. Are you going into the puppy business to sell puppies for a living or do you want to be someone who enjoys the sport because it is fun and you like your own dogs? Are you planning to be a sincere, sure-enough top breeder? Once you have decided just exactly what you want to do, get all the literature you can and read it. Nothing beats books. Then, after you have all the groundwork, pick the dog you want and go for that dog or that bitch. Get yourself a good brood bitch and try her out; if you can possibly do it, the more of your own breeding you keep, the better. Cull the bottom and keep the top, and then you can establish a pattern.

As for handling, there are many good classes available now, although there weren't in the past. Years ago, the four Sundays prior to the Memphis show we had training classes and I used to help teach them. We would put you through just like the judge would do to examine the dog, help the handler, and

so forth. This is one way to learn. Now there are several people locally who hold classes for one on one, or a class of ten people. The obedience classes are fine as long as you realize you are going for conformation and you don't teach your dog to sit. I took one of mine through obedience years ago, but I never let the dog sit. Obedience classes, local group classes are both fine, but if you can't do this, get one of the good books that gives instruction on how to show your dog and follow it right down the line. You have to do it every day for ten minutes.

Have you ever conditioned your dogs for the show ring?

I live on 22 acres and our dogs have the run of the place. Immediately around the house is fenced, and the big runs out back are 50' x 100' and I have one that is 100' x 200'. They have plenty of room to run. Over the years we've had cows and horses and the dogs chase and run after them. Now they run rabbits and birds in the yard and our dogs stay fully active all the time. We lock them up only if we are leaving town or if one is in season. We like to keep them out running so they stay in good condition.

How many dogs do you have right now?

We are down to three. The most we ever had at one time was about 15 dogs of various breeds. At that time we had Sammies and Afghans combined, with older dogs and pups of each breed. Many times we have had around 10 or 12. Usually as an old dog died another young one took his place.

Is your daughter still active

in the world of dogs?

Yes, she was in the culinary school in New York and called me and wanted to give a friend a dog for Christmas and asked me to kindly send a check to the lady (laughter) which I did. In the meantime, she and the friend fell out and the dog came home; this was a Bull Mastiff. A new breed for us.

How long have you been in the Memphis area?

I came here after I got out of the service in 1945. I've been out on the present property for about 25 years.

Which breeds are you currently licensed to judge?

I have all but four of the Working group. I will be applying for those other four in the near future.

Do you enjoy judging more than breeding, or is it just the time in your life when judging is more practical?

As I was never a breeder in the sense of mass production or for showing ... we bred only when we wanted something, and we still do that now. I do not really like the idea of showing, breeding and judging. When I started judging ten years ago, I almost quit showing except for that one time a year so that I could say for the benefit of our club that I was an exhibitor. Other than that, you have to read so much, each time you judge you have to re-read the standards, you get all the magazines from all the breeds, and keeping up with all of this is a pretty good chore. I enjoy it. When you get to the bigger shows, you really see some outstanding specimens. I see dogs that otherwise I would never see in this area.

I've been in Washington, California, Maine and all points in between so I see dogs from everywhere by virtue of my judging. In this area I would say we have the same exhibitors and handlers year in and year out, and so we miss all the east and west dogs altogether here. I have to say I thoroughly enjoy the judging.

Have you ever judged out of the country?

No.

Tell us about your "non-doggy" self? You're a doctor, obviously.

I've practiced medicine for 31 years. I have slowed down and am in my office three days a week. But, for 14 days a month I pull 12-hour shifts in the emergency room, so basically I am shifting over to emergency medicine. By the first of next year I will be in full-time emergency medicine. I will drop this practice.

How do you feel the dogs have affected your life-style?

You are kept from going and doing things that you would like to do. Things like litters, dogs in heat, escaped dogs and so forth present problems if you have a trip planned. In 30 years I've never taken more than three days off at a time, so we never went on vacations and most of our trips were weekend dog shows. Our entire social life has been dogs, outside of medicine. We are active in a number of clubs locally and nationally; I participate on the show committees of two clubs locally. Most of our social functions are geared around dogs; some of the dearest and closest friends we have go back to our involvement in dogs.

How large is your family?

I have a girl and a boy. Both of them showed dogs as kids, and they both own dogs at the present time. The dogs that they own have been shown, and although they are not enthusiastic exhibitors, they do both like to go to shows occasionally and show. They both live in Memphis right now and do attend our local shows.

What have been some of the advantages of being in dogs?

Everybody has to have something to add to his life. People have to have other interests. Someone once said that if you have to have a critical illness or injury the best place to do it is at a dog show or a golf course because there is always a doctor there. (laughter) I'm not a golfer or a hunter so I have done



Dr. Waller with Shi as a puppy.

my bit by putting in time at the dog shows. We feel it gives us something to do, something to talk about ... our dogs are virtually like our kids. They got out yesterday and my wife called me at the emergency room to say the two dogs were out and she couldn't find them. She called back later to (sheepishly) say they had crawled under the fence like a couple of kids and really hadn't been gone. We feel that a full part of our life is dogs.

What about the disadvantages?

There are always disasters like the time a tornado came through and tore down the fence and dogs were missing. The show is the next day and you run yourself crazy trying to find them. We have not had the problem ourselves, but there is always the fear of some kid getting bitten. Living on 22 acres there isn't much chance of strangers coming up, but those things are a concern of dog people in general. There is a disadvantage if you need to go somewhere on the spur of the moment and you have to make arrangements for the dogs. You can't leave them unattended regardless of how good they are. They are mischievous when left alone for several days and will get into something. They have to be fed and watered. The dogs always have to be considered in any plans you make. You have to provide for their shelter, and

they are certainly expensive items. If anyone thinks showing dogs is a cheap hobby, they are in for a rude awakening! You also spend a lot of money just raising dogs on food, supplements, supplies, etc. Everything that goes into this sport is extremely expensive. We are fortunate that we have very little vet expense because I treat my own dogs, but for many people this is a consideration.

Do you have any feelings about the breed that we haven't discussed?

I really get disgusted with anyone who is in the puppy mill business, and I'm in disagreement with all of the contract business that goes on. People tell others they have to breed to this dog, and not sell to that person. I don't think you should put restrictions on these things. Also, the dog should stay in its natural state; try to keep this breed as near the true Samoyed as possible.

How do you feel about co-ownerships?

I've had few. I used them simply because I almost had to; it was one of those things that I didn't really want, but the fellow wanted me to co-own a dog with him. I ended up keeping the dog, feeding it and taking care of it most of the time. He kind of did, and didn't, want the dog; he was a very close friend or I would not have done it. I have never felt co-ownerships are a satisfactory system. If I'm going to have a dog, I want to do with it however I want to. I don't want to get into any hassles. There have been some extremely bitter things occurring in magazines of all breeds. The dog gets tangled in too many problems. Personally, I just don't want any part of co-ownerships. There was an outstanding dog several years ago in another breed and I had a chance to buy it; I called a man in the breed and offered to buy half of it just to get it into this country, but he wouldn't do it. There was too much money involved, but under these conditions ... an extremely outstanding dog and the price was such that it might take three people to share the expense ... I would really consider the option. That is probably the only way I would consider co-owning a dog.

Has all of the effort involved in "being in dogs" been worth it?

Oh, yes. It is the only outlet I have. I've been in my office for six days a week for all of these years. I would take

off early on a Saturday afternoon (when I first started, most dog shows were on Sunday) and I could fly out and judge a show and fly back. I still pretty well hold to that. I will fly out today and be back late tomorrow night after judging a show tomorrow. Dogs have never been anything but pleasure for me, even though it is a short-term thing. Being here for six days gets pretty monotonous. Yesterday I went in at five o'clock and don't even know how many people I saw (heart attacks, shootings, stabbings) and I got off at 7:30 last night. You need something to break this routine; this is a business you can't leave behind and the only break and outlet I have is the dogs. I thoroughly enjoy them.

How often do you judge?

I try not to judge more than twice a month. I'm here for 12 to 15 days a month and I'm in the emergency room for 14 days a month so there are very few days left over. I have to pull some odd schedules to get a weekend off. Occasionally I'll do three shows in a

month, but most of the time I hold to two.

Will you be able to increase your judging activities when you drop your private practice?

Yes. I've been made Associate Medical Director of Emergency Department starting this month. Fourteen twelve-hour shifts is a full time job, plus I'll have to do some extra office work, but it will give me more time and I may do as many as four or five a month after that. I do this for pleasure. I love to go to dog shows and whether I breed or show is immaterial, and I love to go even when I'm not judging. Several people have called me and brought their pups out to be graded; I like to go out and look at lots of different litters of different breeds because the more you see the more you learn. We have art collections centered around dogs all over the house, and we entertain the Memphis Kennel Club members at a barbecue once a year. However, being a judge, I don't really want to continue breeding myself. If I were going to be a

serious breeder, I would quit judging.

This is a bit aside, but you mentioned that you never had very large litters. Do your dogs take heartworm medication?

My dogs never have taken heartworm medication. I don't like it and will never use it. We have lost one dog over the years to heartworm, but he was quite old at the time. I just cannot bring myself to use this particular medicine; I've never liked it. When we were talking about the things that are occurring genetically, we also see this in humans and I'm not sure we aren't putting our animals through so many drugs that this isn't part of it. I don't use heartworm medication, and while my Sammy litters were never larger than four, the Afghans had litters of eight.

Is there anything else we haven't covered?

I have some pictures if you would like.

Yes, please. Thank you very much for the interview.

You're welcome. *

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