

The Gangline

*Geoff and Brenda Abbott
Pine, Colorado*

AS the Aspen trees turn to gold in Colorado's high country at this time of year, the weekend sight-seers heading west out of Denver are joined by another, more pragmatic group. This group can be easily spotted by the three- or four-wheeled training rigs atop vans and pickup trucks, and their bumper stickers: "Save Gas, Run On Dog Food," and, "Let's All Pull Together!" The mushers are in search of training sites which are twenty degrees cooler than the lower elevations. While we have run in races where the temperature was 45 degrees above zero, we do put our upper training limit at 35 degrees.

When first getting into working your dogs for sled use, you will begin with each individual dog long before that morning you actually "hook up a team," and I use the term loosely! Assuming you have two or three dogs, not puppies, and you wish to get into sled work, first assemble your basic equipment. (See SQ Summer '81) To acquaint your dogs with their harnesses, work with one dog at a time, making sure each harness fits properly. Remain with the dog, praising him, running with him for a short distance and generally having fun. Do not put a harness on a dog and turn him loose in a pen or kennel unsupervised. The very least that can happen is that the dog will chew off the harness and you are out \$10! As your dogs become accustomed to wearing a harness, snap a lead onto the loop just above the tail and encourage the dog to stay out in front of you. After a short time, put a little drag pressure on the lead and continue to encourage him. Most Sams need very little encouragement to "pull," particularly with you still so close to him.

A dog with the inclination to lead for you will probably be a little harder to find. You are looking for a dog that will stay out in front of you at a considerable distance. One that is not afraid of being alone, but one that will

obey you even at that distance. Very often new drivers, and some of us "not-so-new" drivers, will feel more comfortable with a double lead. One dog may love to be out front but doesn't care for making trail decisions or taking directions from the driver. Another dog may prefer to run with a companion but will listen to and obey the driver.

Another thing to be considered long before that first real training run is the weight of both the dogs and the driver. A dog's good racing weight will probably seem too low to most of those of our fancy who do not work their dogs. My heart goes out to some of those overweight Samoyeds who would be half dead after running just a mile or two at speeds of twelve to fifteen mph. Needless to say, an overweight driver is a liability to any team.

When we use the word "training" around our house, we are speaking of the actual act of hooking the dogs to a gangline in front of a sled or cart. Actual training, of course, begins long before that, as I have indicated. When you begin training your team, as opposed to training your dogs for a team, if possible, do try the buddy system. We've found that a team trained with other teams is much more predictable on the trail. It passes and is passed with fewer incidents. Dogs on a team which consistently trains alone are often frightened by other teams in a race, or distracted and want to play. Using one-minute starts when training also teaches the dogs to wait when commanded to do so.

One of the hardest things to teach a team, and particularly your leaders, is to pass another team. (Darn near impossible, I should think, if you always train alone!) The command used here is "on by." The command itself can be taught by passing almost anything out of the ordinary: a person at the edge of the trail, or your own car or truck. Our dogs love "their" van and had to be taught not to stop every time they passed it. Practice this until you have complete confidence in your leaders and team that they know the command. Avoid the word "no" when teaching passing, as the dog may think you do not want him to pass.

When you have the command down pat, begin training runs with

other teams and work on passing and being passed. Start giving encouragement the moment the team begins to overtake the sled in front of you and continue until the pass is complete. The best place to begin a practice pass is on an uphill. The driver of the team being passed may have to slow his team a little if it is a larger or much faster team. If your team shows no inclination to pass even after learning the "on by" command, you will just have to get off the sled, run to your leaders and assist them on by. Praise the dog generously and encourage them to pick up speed and leave the other team behind. This extra burst of speed will probably best be accomplished if you stay off the runners and push the sled for ten to fifteen seconds. Remember what I said about overweight drivers!

PASSING should be practiced at every available opportunity, so that by the time your races begin your dogs and you show no hesitation when you come upon a slower team. Being passed is also something your dogs must learn to allow. If a faster team comes up behind you and the driver calls, "Trail," you must do everything in your power, as the driver being overtaken, to assist in a safe pass. If this means getting off your sled and holding your dogs because they refuse to be overtaken, then so be it!

The ideal pass for both drivers is two teams running at their top speeds and one slowly overtaking the other with never a missed beat. Have heart if you have the slower team; most dogs love to chase and you should get a great pull for a while.

When it comes to specifically training your leaders, I won't presume to give more than tips. I learned from an expert. Invest in the book "Training Lead Dogs My Way," by Lee Fishback. It is excellent and can be ordered from Zima, Box 57, Kila, Montana 59920.

Enjoy your fall training sessions. This is every bit as much fun for us as the races, although for different reasons. The pressure of competition, good in its own way, will come later.

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On Judging Judges

Jeanne Nonhof
Waldo, Wisconsin

DOES your basic dog show judge know that he/she is being judged each time he steps into the ring? Indeed, each time he sets foot even near a show, every move he makes is observed and commented upon. I'll not deal, here, with anything except what goes on in the ring.

Most judges are honest, hard-working people, whose greatest joy is to find a really good one in their entry. And when they have found that good one and put him up in the breed, they will want to know what the Group judge has done with it and will discuss later with that Group judge why he couldn't find a ribbon for his choice. Then, they will get to discussing the merits of various dogs present and, thus, one judge learns from another.

There are all kind of judges – some we love and some we wouldn't give an entry to if he were three miles down the road.

There is one judge we think of as an eagle; if not an eagle, then at the very least a keen-eyed hawk. He never misses a thing – from handlers' cover-up tricks to dirty tricks – and won't hesitate one minute to tell an exhibitor he/she has "gunk" in his/her dog's coat ... or withhold ribbons for lack of quality. If I had a young hopeful I wasn't sure of, I would drive many miles for this man's opinion. He is sure enough of himself, and of the standard, to put up a puppy, but it had better be a super puppy.

There are many judges who will award a puppy the points. They don't really like to do it, but in doing an honest job, that is what they must do on occasions. I have heard them comment, "I don't like to put up a puppy, but that's one hell of a puppy."

Then there are the judges who love to be the sensation makers and will put a puppy up whenever given a chance. Or, there is one judge I'm thinking of, who consistently puts up bitches, especially from the classes, if he can. Love to get under him with a pretty young bitch – avoid him like the plague with a male special.

There are judges who dump us

and we can understand it. Then there are the judges for whom we have no respect, even if they do put us up. One of the latter is the one with the applause meter in his head. Who cares how good/bad a dog is? If he is a local dog, with lots of ringside support, up he goes. Actually, that's probably why he was hired by the local club. Everybody figured they could win under him 'cause all of their friends would be at that local show. One of the area Collie fans has a facetious "Rent-A-Clap" for this kind of occasion. Nobody has more fun at a dog show than he does!

And then there is the totally political judge – often synonymous with "handler's judge." He reads the canine press, religiously, and if you advertise in the right places, you have paid for your wins under this guy. You will notice him going around the Group ring looking at the dog and then at the other end of the lead – never fails. I remember one who had the audacity to stand up in front of the local kennel club's membership and say, "People criticize judges for putting up handlers, but the handlers have all the good dogs." And that is a direct quote. I nearly threw up. But, many exhibitors are on to this kind of thing. Recently, a Saturday show drew a four-point major entry, while the Sunday show (where this kind of judge was officiating) drew one or two, I'm not just sure which. So, while this kind of judge is still allowed to judge by the AKC and, while it does take some time, the withholding of entries is our only real defense – and a poor one at that. Yes, you can write to the AKC and they will listen, but this kind of things is so ambiguous it is hard to pin down.

If you read your Gazette's faithfully and know a few of the dogs around the country, you will note a few judges who consistently put up dogs out of left field. Nobody ever heard of the dogs before and you probably won't again. Apparently this judge is marching to a different drummer than the rest of the dog world, interpreting the standard differently, placing emphasis on points other judges, breeders and exhibitors consider to be unimportant. They are the reason for the oft heard

statement, "If you show long enough, you can finish anything." And it's true, you can. But when you've finished that dog, what do you have? The championship certificate doesn't change the dog from what he is or alter what he has to contribute to the breed. There are champions and champions ... but I digress ... back to judges.

There are judges who simply don't care for your dogs, but when you know what they are looking for, you can say to yourself, "Well, fourth in that class was just where we should have been."

Ah, yes, and then there is the all-rounder judge who is always looking for the best dog, doesn't care that a dog he has put up frequently is there if there is a better unknown around. And applause makes no difference to this guy. You can almost see him laughing when people try to sway his opinion. Love that kind of judge. He's gonna judge dogs and the devil take the rest. May they all live forever.

I haven't touched on specialist judges. I'm almost afraid to put pen to paper on this one because feelings run so high on it.

Personally, Wayne and I will go many miles for a breeder-judge, almost any breeder-judge. I suppose we're egotistical about all judges. We feel our dogs are good enough to win under all of them. This has to do with a positive mental attitude, which we will discuss in a later article. And, let's face it, a win under a breeder-judge is something a little more special. Sometimes almost as good as winning a specialty. Generally, breeder-judges attract major entries, unless they have been overused in an area.

NOW, to breeder-judges putting up dogs of their own breeding ... Well, let's go back a bit to illustrate the point I'd like to make. Once upon a time ... well, maybe not that long ago, but a few years back ... a local breeder-judge put a class bitch, which she had bred some two or three years prior, over a couple of good male specials and the top-winning local specials bitch. She was roundly criticized – BUT, in her opinion, the class bitch was the better Samoyed

present that day. The bitch did not place in the Group because it was quickly rumored about that she had put up her own breeding. When she asked the Group judge later how he liked her choice, he indicated he had expected to see the other bitch.

WELL, that did it. She told him exactly why the BOB winner was a good Samoyed, nailed him right to the wall about looking at the right end of the lead. That lady never minced any words. There were no politics involved, just a breeder-judge who knew what she liked and wasn't about to be influenced by winning records or anything else.

Breeder-judges tend to be harder on the faults they had trouble with in their own breeding programs. And pay a little more attention to type, I think. But, whether they know who is on the other end of the lead or not, they generally put up dogs of the type they have in their own breeding programs because that is what they like and believe to be correct.

Yes, there are some of them who play games, just as there are among other judges. But I like to think that a breeder-judge will do a more "in-depth" job of judging his or her own breed.

And while I'm on the subject of breeder-judges, let me say that they have a tougher row to hoe than any other kind of judge. Assignments are further apart and everybody and his brother tries to influence them. They get letters and phone calls which are unbelievable. Breeder-judges should be tough-minded people, with well formed and well thought out ideas, who can take a LOT of flak. Generally, they are in the position where, no matter what they do, somebody is going to be angry. So, they have to be confident that they know their standard well and are scrupulously honest.

Actually, it has been our experience that we do best under judges we have never heard of, who are from totally out of the area. They draw big entries because nobody has any idea what they're going to do and everybody feels he's got as good a chance as the next guy. We love to enter under this kind of judge and just hope he puts the same interpretation on the standard, type and soundness as we

do.

Yes, as surely as each of us is a judge, every time we grade a litter of our pups, we all judge judges every time we go to a show. We want to know if they're knowledgeable, honest, confident and experienced. We want to know if they're looking for a balanced dog, if they're head hunters, coat connoisseurs, or if they care for nothing so much as a good movin' dog.

We want to know if they are heavy-handed, rough on dogs (we won't show a puppy to this one), if they will take some extra time with a frightened novice. Really, it doesn't cost a judge anything at all to smile and be a little pleasant ... and most are. Some of them will go way out of their way for a frightened beginner, whether it is the handler or the dog.

And when observing judging, we must remember that judges can't see what is going on behind their backs. So, while a dog looked great when the judge was watching another dog gait, it doesn't make any difference. Simi-

larly, if a dog showed all of his faults when the judge had his back turned, but his handler had him pulled together at the right times, you cannot blame the judge for what he cannot see. And also, remember you cannot see from ringside that undershot bite or feel the slab sides under that abundant coat.

Call us naive, if you will, but we firmly believe 80 percent of all the judging is on the up-and-up. Oh, yes, you hear rumors of TV's being given and bottles of aged Scotch exchanged, etc., but in my book, that's just so much male bovine waste ... sour grapes invented by the loser of the day.

Yes, some judges are more knowledgeable than others and an ongoing education is important. Some place more emphasis on one thing, some another, but the vast majority of them are doing a good, honest job, and if you'll think about it, you'll realize that it is a tough job wherein you are able to please very few people. Try putting yourself in that judge's place at your very next show. •

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

Phoebe Faulmann

THERE are quite a few reasons why some dogs win in the breed ring and so many don't. But very few people stop to consider the real reasons and continue to be puzzled by a judge's placements of the entries. Too often they blame their losses on something quite unrelated to the real problem. Most often the judge unjustly receives most of the blame. It must be remembered that a judge can only evaluate what he can actually see. He has only two to three minutes to go over each dog in a class. This doesn't really give him time to consider what the dog would look like if he were groomed, what his expression would be if he weren't looking at the bait on the floor, or if he just weren't so scared, etc. Most all breed judges enter the ring with the idea of first finding a Samoyed. Not neces-

sarily one that excels in specific breed characteristics but rather one that is a combination of overall type, balance and soundness. A dog that on the whole most typifies the breed standard. He just might find a dog that is the result of specific breed characteristics and still possesses the soundness and virtues he desires, but it is not always so.

Next, try to picture your dog as the judge actually sees him. A judge's-eye view of your dog contains much more than just the dog itself. There are many contributions to the whole picture. Whether he sees your dog as an attractive specimen of the breed depends a great deal on conditioning, grooming and presentation. You must remember to "present" your dog to the judge and to do it in a style that gives the impression you are proud of your dog. Many people don't stop to consider that they too are part

of the total picture. Do you project a neat and attractive appearance? Believe it or not, sometime during the judging the judge will notice you, consciously or unconsciously. How about grooming? What judge can properly evaluate a dog that is neither bathed nor combed out properly prior to the judging? Grooming can help to contribute greatly to the virtues and can minimize faults. A sparkling white dog will almost always catch the eye before a dingy yellow one. A particular Sam may possess many fine qualities, but if he doesn't "show" them to the judge, they are of little value in the breed ring. Good movement cannot be seen if the dog gallops around the ring. Correct structure cannot be felt if the dog refuses to let the judge examine him. Don't complain that the judge is political, stupid, or just plain senile if he fails to spot your dog in the crowd. Remember, he can only pass judgement on what he can see. It is your responsibility to present your dog to him in a manner that will help, not hinder his decision.

It is always helpful when presenting your dog to know exactly what your dog looks like, not what you wish he looked like. Wishing won't make him change for the better. So many times the mental picture we have of our dog is far too flattering. How many of us have had the opportunity to see our dog while the judge is examining him as an individual and then later as a member of the whole class as compared to the other entries? If we could, that mental picture might be quite a bit different. Possibly the dog who won was superior to yours, but as you were unable to watch, you missed something the judge didn't (here is where 8 mm movies are invaluable).

WHEN did you last look at your dog? Was it when he was chasing bluejays in the backyard? If so, you probably saw a very impressive picture. If bluejays were acceptable bait, you might duplicate the same picture for the judge, but since they aren't, you'd best try to imagine the same dog staring at a piece of liver and decide if the picture is similar. Next, watch him follow the jay from tree to tree with such a flowing, effortless gait it takes your breath away. Darn near perfect, huh? Well,

consider the same dog moving in the show ring. Here he will have the distractions of people running in the rings next to him, the disadvantage of you flapping on the end of the lead, upsetting his balance, unlevel terrain, just to name a few. That movement won't quite be what you saw in the backyard. Watch the beautiful way he stops in the yard, every foot in place, but they rarely do the same in the ring.

If you are consistently placing fifth out of five, and some of your friends suggest that you could make some changes in your style of presenting your dog, don't be too quick to assume that they are jealous or stupid

(especially if they have a different breed). Maybe, just maybe, you or your dog have been doing something wrong. Maybe your Super Sam failed to exhibit his superness and it could have been your fault. Are you really the handler you think you are? Maybe your dog doesn't move as well as you thought he did. Have you really watched him lately?

Since you can't use a magic mirror to answer these questions, maybe it's time to stop and take another look at your super dog or the way you have been presenting him. Maybe the two of you don't look like you thought you did. •

Why Go to a Specialty?

*Jeanne Nonhof
Waldo, Wisconsin*

A few years back, one of our local Sammy fans said to me, "You don't go to the National Specialty to win, you know." To which my competitive brain answered back in a flash, "Maybe you don't, honey, but I do!" Fortunately, I didn't say it out loud. It is true of myself and most of the successful dog people I know: We're always in there to win. Now that is not to say we are not pleased with a nice Reserve on a puppy but, deep down, we always feel it wasn't quite enough.

If we got Reserve, we wanted Winners. If we get Winners, we want Best of Winners, and then if we figure we have that safely tucked away, we start eyeing the Best of Breed ribbon. If we get that BOB, get into the Group ring, we don't want to be "pulled" or placed. We want to win it. Yes, we take that third place Group ribbon and run right home with it, grinning like idiots, but we really wanted #1, and why couldn't the judge see that the Samoyed was the best darn dog in that group of 30 or so working dogs?

And then, when lightning does strike and we get the blue ribbon, that gives us the "entree" to compete for

the red, white and blue BIS ribbon – well, you know what we want – the whole shooting match – the right to have our dog stand on that platform as the best darn dog there!

Well, there are perhaps 1,000 other people at that show with exactly the same aim. If they didn't all think they had a chance at just that kind of exciting action, participation in dog shows would take a spectacular nose dive and never recover. Yes, competitiveness is part of the game.

Do you remember the Ken-L Ration TV ad which used the jingle, "My dog's better than your dog"? That is exactly the attitude which keeps many people going to dog shows. And, within reason, generally the best dog will win and the cream will rise to the top.

But, wait! There is more to showing a particular breed than merely winning. There is planning the next generation, which should be better than the present one. You should never be upset to have one of your puppies come up and beat the "old man" or his mom. If that happens, you must be doing a good job as a breeder. And where can breeders go to look at dogs from all over the country who might be just the right ones for our bitches? Well, you can read the Samoyed Quarterly, The Samoyed Club of America

Bulletin, if you're a member, and the AKC Gazette to see who is winning. You can also read the breed books. These are all good sources of learning, but if you want firsthand knowledge, you go to a specialty show and, in particular, to your breed's National Specialty show.

LOCAL specialty shows will draw almost all of the good dogs from a particular area and a couple from outside the surrounding states as well. They are a wonderful place to see what the local studs and bitches are putting on the ground and meet their owners and, maybe, actually lay your hands on the dogs that interest you.

But if you're really interested what's going on in your breed, you go to your parent club's specialty show (Samoyed Club of America) no matter where it is held. Move mountains to get there if you must, but don't miss it. You don't have a dog to take? So much the better, if you really want to learn something. You can be there and compete and still learn a lot, but if you want to learn as much as possible, don't take a dog. You will be able to concentrate strictly on observing without having to groom, exercise and worry about your dog. Take photos and movies if you can. Which brings to mind (to disprove that point) some people I know who declared they weren't going to a specialty without a dog to show – even if it was in their state that year. SO, they took along a bitch they didn't think was really ready, only to walk off with WB and BOW for the thrill of a lifetime. Ah, the ups and downs of dog shows. You never know what is going to happen. You can make an educated "guestimate," but there are no sure things in dog shows.

What can you learn at a specialty? You can meet the people who have been only names to you. You've seen their ads, read their letters or articles and agreed or disagreed with them. Think of the wonderful, interesting, stimulating conversations you can get into. You should get enough food for thought to last you for six months. You can closely observe the Stud Dog and Brood Bitch classes, see who is producing what: which stud dog is producing the things your bitch is lacking; which line is strong where

yours is weak; who are the best individuals in your particular line; who has a good dog for sale; who has an interesting breeding in the planning stages ... And, you can see some of the illustrious "names" behind your dog – in his pedigree and in the flesh. Perhaps in the Veteran classes; perhaps still in active competition. See if your dog is, indeed, an improvement over the last couple of generations. Maybe you can actually lay your hands on some of these dogs (after first introducing yourself and getting permission, of course). If someone should refuse to let you go over their dog, you have the right to wonder what they are trying to hide. Most people are flattered all to pieces at your interest in their dog, and will point out the dog's faults and virtues for your education.

If you are a member of the parent club (and you should be), you can attend the annual meeting and participate in the interesting discussions which go on there and may affect the future of your breed.

Many specialty clubs hold interesting programs in conjunction with their specialties. For instance, the SCA National will, this year, offer programs on: handling; spinning and weaving; sledding, skijoring, backpacking and weight pulling; judging; the law and your dog; and advertising and photography. Something for everyone. Now, who could ask for anything more?

Well, there will be more. The National is to be followed by the Greater Milwaukee Samoyed Fanciers Specialty. Both specialties offer Sweepstakes and obedience trials. Both offer the all-important non-regular classes. And, further, the SCA Futurity will be judged, which is open only to properly nominated dogs, from litters bred and nominated by SCA members. The very cream of the crop will be there and you can see it. Such a deal!

Another thing that specialties offer that I want to mention: "Things." Lovely Sammy things! Ceramics, candles, pedigrees, notepaper, leatherwork, purses – all kinds of Sammy-oriented paraphernalia. It's wonderful! And, who could go home without some kind of souvenir? Not me! My souvenir generally takes the shape of another book to add to my

collection. But maybe I'll get two or three this year ... forget inflation, we've got to keep the money circulating, right? (Unfortunately, that theory doesn't work on Wayne. He sees right through all my ploys.)

You should make it a point to watch or participate in the obedience trials. Some of the country's top-scoring Samoyeds will be there, working their little doggy hearts out and putting on stunning demonstrations of man/dog togetherness.

And, yes, it's going to be expensive, so start saving your shekels now for this great event in October – when your dogs will be wearing their new coats for fall and winter. One of my pet peeves is arctic breed specialties held in July and August, when most Samoyeds are virtually nude. Who wants to take their "pride and joy" to a show halfway across the nation for all the other fanciers to see when they are looking less than their best?

Okay, you've come to a specialty to learn your breed, in depth. You have carefully watched every dog you've seen move. You've talked to a number of breeders from all over the nation and maybe some from Canada and Mexico. You've collected a couple of pedigrees which may figure importantly in your future breeding plans. You've attended some very interesting symposiums. You've gone over some dogs you've only read about in the past. Sometimes you see a new dog who is just what you are looking for. Sometimes the one you were really looking forward to seeing disappoints you – but you are learning. And you cannot progress in this sport without that. If it's possible, you're almost getting tired of white dogs!

YOU have seen a huge ring full of Samoyed champions – some of them dogs you will never be able to see again. Imagine 50 or so smiling Samoyed champions in one ring. It is enough to make the hair on the back of your neck stand up! Only one judge's opinion is the one that counts on that day. Your opinion may differ from that of the judge – and that is not necessarily wrong. That is why there are "Awards of Merit," which may be awarded at the judge's discretion at the National Specialty. There are many exceptionally good dogs at such an event and the judge may

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choose only one for Best of Breed. The Award of Merit indicates that that particular dog was an extremely good dog who was definitely in the running. It just wasn't his day.

Now take all that information you have gathered back home, share it

with your friends (and even your enemies!), put it to good use. By next year at this time, your puppies could be cleaning up in the Sweeps and Futurity. You may produce the dog that will have a lasting influence for good upon the breed. •

Even here in Colorado, the percentage of Samoyeds at races is quite small, still, although improving. About 54 percent of the dogs at races here are mixed breeds, hounds, Setters and Alaskan racing huskies. Another 30 percent or so are purebred Siberian Huskies, and the remainder are purebred Samoyeds, Alaskan Malamutes, Norwegian Elkhounds, etc.

Rarely will the spectator find the purebred Samoyed team to be the fastest in a particular heat. Given the weather conditions, which make the most of our breed's assets of steadiness and endurance, however, it certainly is not impossible! But seldom will the well-trained Samoyed team finish last. It has been our experience that during a race Samoyeds present fewer discipline and temperament problems, overall, than do some of the more highly strung dogs bred for speed. •

Make Your Sledding Debut

*Brenda and Geoff Abbott
Pine, Colorado*

A warm, dry January day in the Colorado mountains seems to be a rather incongruous time to debut a coliseum on Samoyeds in sled dog racing, but we do have a lot of time on our hands lately! Due to a complete lack of snow, five of our scheduled Colorado races have actually been canceled and the other four are in serious doubt. We Colorado mushers must have become a bit spoiled, however, because the main ingredient for working your dog in harness is not snow, it is a desire on the part of both owner and dog to work together as a team.

Many one-dog Samoyed owners have started by harness training their dog to weight pull. As the weight pulls are held at the races, usually the afternoon of the first day, it is easy to get caught up in the excitement and competition of the entire sport. After a year or two of attending the races with a weight puller, it is a natural step for many to competition in the three-dog class, which requires a minimum of two dogs.

A new Samoyed owner who attends a race in his area as a spectator will probably be very surprised to find few, if any, Samoyeds in harness, much less an all-Sam team. We know of many people across the country who actually work their Samoyeds in harness, but who do not attend organized all breed races. These owners appreciate the side benefits of harness training – better conditioned, healthy pets and show dogs – but, for personal, financial or geographical reasons do not competitively race. We have

an almost 50-50 split on emphasis in our kennel. We attend an average of 25 shows a year, from March to December. From October through December, we train and we race in every scheduled race from January to mid-March within a 250-mile radius.

The Split – Who Gets Prince?

Phoebe Faulmann

FOR the most part, the sport of dog showing is usually undertaken by the young to middle-aged couple. At the onset of this undertaking, they may or may not be a happy, well-adjusted couple and, more times than not, one party is generally more “driven” to succeed at the sport than the other. This can lead some relationships down a hard and rocky road. Suddenly one party feels he/she is receiving less attention, the family savings account is rapidly dwindling, and there are far too many TV dinners being served (when anything is served at all).

Now comes the ultimatum: It's me or those damned dogs! Sometimes the sport is abandoned – there are dogs to place – and sometimes the spouse is abandoned – then there is a settlement (which includes the dogs) to be reckoned with. If the first choice is taken, the dogs are usually placed by the involved and concerned owner, with due respect and consideration to the

dogs. IF the second route is chosen, you may find yourself in a lengthy court battle over the custody and disposition of the dogs. Many times, this situation turns to less than amicable.

The deprived spouse relates to the attorney the years of hardships, both mental and financial, and seeks restitution. When the situation takes this turn, the well-being of the dogs is given the back seat. Most attorneys are very experienced at getting most couples to reach agreements of inanimate objects, with anything from drawing straws to a lottery. But this just isn't a reasonable solution for dividing a litter of pups or deciding ownership for several champions. For one thing, the deprived spouse is generally not in a position to knowledgeably market the dogs to the “right” people, nor do they care if someone coming to pick a pup has lost their last five pets to “automobile accidents.” Even the most concerned attorney finds this situation hard to contend with. After months of bickering back and forth between the two parties, he's

wishing for an outbreak of new distemper virus, starting at your house. Sometimes, no amount of tears or pleading can make him understand that your dogs (friends, as you tell him) cannot be liquidated as an asset, with the proceeds being divided between both parties. Just how does one go about liquidating a ten-year-old champion?

With all other proposals being totally out of the question, you find yourself agreeing to have the dogs appraised and paying 50 percent of the worth of each dog you feel that you can't part with. If there are two or more champions involved, this could turn into the megabuck range. You find yourself asking: Why are they doing this? After all, the damaged spouse never even knew the dogs from the bitches – and thought you showed Siberians.

Just dealing with a divorce is certainly a serious enough matter, but unfortunately, the laws in most states treat the family dog/dogs as part of the property settlement and judges (the other kind) and divorce lawyers hardly take time to consider the best interests of the dog. It's easy enough to tell

yourself, "This could never happen to me," but don't kid yourself. Some people happen to react very strangely to rejection. So a word to the wise, for your dog's sake. Consider the possibility of this situation and formulate "Plan A" and "Plan B" and have them ready to put into action if the need every should arise. And, for goodness' sake, if the dogs are for all practical purposes yours, register them in your name only. This might be a plus in your favor when trying to prove ownership.

If, after the settlement, you find you aren't financially or physically able to care for the dogs, at least you will be the one to place them, in your own sweet time, and not the judge or your ex.

Although this story is not my testimonial, I did suffer a similar situation some three years ago and was forced to lose some of my best four-footed friends (at this time, all are home with the exception of one), but I did learn a very good lesson.

I close with this thought from the time of Saint Bernard: "Qui me amat, amet et canem meum." (Who loves me will love my dog also.) •

The Gigantic Blind Spot

*Shirley Mangini
Oakland, California*

LATELY have you gathered around the show ring and commented on the quality of the dogs and bitches out there? There's not much out there that you'd consider buying, is there? As you shake your head sadly and wonder where is it all going to end, reflect for a moment, "Where did it all begin?"

The single greatest problem with breeders is EGO. This is true in all breeds, but Samoyeds seem to be gaining a special corner on the market. What with competition and, unfortunately, the "little cliques" that form, everyone is out to prove they are better. It is a race born in desperation to get as many dogs into the show ring as

possible, without much regard for the quality, or more commonly, the lack of quality of those dogs. It is essential that as a breeder you believe in your dogs, those you own and those that you have bred. Equally so, for the continued betterment of the breed, it is essential that you do not allow yourself to become blind to the faults and deficiencies of your dogs and the lines that they come from.

Looking at the dogs and bitches being shown in the rings, who bred them? If it's a beginner, then where did they get their dogs? What lines do they come from? Most important of all, how did they ever get sold as show dogs? Therein lies the heart of the problem, back to EGO. A breeder breeds a litter. Genetically (that is on paper), it looks great. Determined that

they will produce only show dogs, they convince themselves and the unsuspecting buyer that the pups are truly show quality. The result is mediocre dogs in the show ring and the propagation of more mediocre dogs.

A well-known breeder of truly great dogs in another breed once told me, "Even when using great dogs (meaning BIS dogs) for breeding stock, it takes literally hundreds of puppies to produce another great dog." Now this is a little out of line for your everyday breeder (who has the money and space for hundreds of puppies?), but give it some thought. The real message is that the large majority of pups born are mediocre or less. The show dog, or the superior specimen, is a minority.

What exactly constitutes a show dog? As anyone knows, any dog can finish. Given the right handler, connections, money and whatever, a white German Shepherd, or a white Chow Chow, could finish as a champion Samoyed. A sad commentary on some of our esteemed judges, but very true. In truth, a show dog is one that is sound and balanced. Their faults are minor and would not interfere with their function as a working dog. They appear, in accordance with the standard as set down by AKC, as a Samoyed should. The type and the look is unquestionably a Samoyed.

A breeder must be his own toughest critic. If a person breeding dogs doesn't know what is correct, then how can they possibly breed what is correct? When observing your seven-week-old puppies, trust your instincts and listen to your doubts. A weakness at that age rarely gets outgrown. Sometimes they appear to leave, most definitely they will change, but at maturity they will be back to haunt you. There it is, the weak pasterns you know you saw, the poor tailset, the narrow rear, etc. And now either you, or some poor person that you sold the dog as a show dog, are faced with either facing your failure or finding the dog a good home. Unfortunately, more often the blasted EGO steps in and the dog enters the show ring, another mediocre specimen. It is important to "cut" those pups that are suspect. If necessary, put them in a home where they will let you show at

a later date, if they turn out. Don't let a "pretty face" and gobs of coat sway you into keeping or selling an anatomical disaster as a show dog.

At this point, you are probably saying, "Well, who is she to draw such harsh conclusions? How many dogs do they have in show homes?" Well, not too many, but the ones there are are worth looking at. We are nearly fanatical when it comes to grading our puppies. If they seem nice, generally we try to grow them out until we are sure. If the people buying them are very anxious, we try to be very honest with any reservations we might have. I have no doubt that by today's standards we have several pups in pet homes that are readily finishable. But if we wouldn't keep them for ourselves, then why should it be acceptable to sell them to someone else as show?

Honesty with yourself and your prospective buyers has got to be the only solution to the deterioration that is occurring. Stop trying to get every dog in a litter into show homes. If you have something nice that you can't keep, hold out for that show home, but if it is questionable or mediocre, just

sell it as a very lovely pet.

JUST the other day at a show I witnessed a prime example of what I am talking about. I was observing a litter of puppies. There were six of them. On paper it was really a nice breeding. An interested person approached and asked the breeder about the puppies. The breeder told the person that all, with the possible exception of one, were show quality. I was astounded. From my point of view, there was one puppy that was definitely show quality, two that were probably, and three that definitely were not. Again the mighty ego struck.

I don't think there is any magic number to how many pups in a litter will or won't be show quality. No matter what the genetics involved, each litter has its own individual strong and weak points. In some cases, none of the pups will truly be show quality. That is particularly tough on a breeder. Not to be discouraged, though, a repeat of that exact same breeding, with the genetic traits falling in a different pattern, could

produce a majority of show quality pups. Each time you breed, it is a gamble. Does that egg and that sperm have the genetic traits that you want? But if you are persistent and don't propagate the mediocre dogs, the overall quality of all produced will improve.

NO dog yet bred is perfect. Even if they were, the perfection is subject to the whim, opinions and fancy of the judge and of other breeders. AKC has set down quite a thorough standard for the Samoyed. In many other breeds, the standards are vague, to say the least, but in our case, it is pretty darn specific. So why not follow it, why not attempt to breed to it? Are your own ideas so great that they have produced great dogs? Multiple BIS dogs? Soundness and type should be considered equally important. Grading your puppies, selling them or keeping them for breeding and showing must become an honest enterprise. Put your EGO in a brown bag and throw it in the trash. If you can't dump your ego, then you have no one but yourself to blame for the continued deterioration of Samoyeds. *

Some Thoughts on Stud Service Logistics

*Sarah Anne Sly
N. Quincy, Massachusetts*

WAIT 'til you've been to pick up those bitches in the middle of the night a few times. I thought it would be easy. Can we ship her on the seventh day? Our males are going crazy!

Are these some of the comments you've heard since offering your first stud at public service? Well, we speak from the very limited experience of one stud, but we've learned a lot the hard way, which is not in books. Perhaps many of you have a successful male of valuable lineage whom people wish to use at stud. Before you know it, YOU and he are "for hire" — each of you having specific services. Here are some logistics procedures for your

responsibilities to follow from the first contact with a client until sale of the pups, which might help you:

Prearrangements: You have just received a letter of inquiry, hopefully including a pedigree and picture(s) of the bitch in question, well before her heat. This should be answered promptly, include your stud's pedigree, a picture or two (especially a head study for clients who have not seen your dog) and the terms you expect. OFA certifications or hip X-rays should be exchanged, and each party should know what is hoped for from this breeding. Only with all information in hand can you decide whether this bitch should be "accepted."

In setting a stud fee, one guideline is it should equal the price of a show prospect at eight weeks. Once proven, the payment can be either upon receipt

of the bitch, upon whelping, but in no case after the registration of the litter. The first unproven studding should be one-half that value and not payable until whelping, in most cases.

If a breeding is unsuccessful, most stud owners offer a return service or a refund, less service fee, for their efforts and boarding charges. Many include lost litters (miscarriages, dead pups, death within X number of days) in this category and some even offer a reduced fee if the litter contains only one or two pups. (However, it should be noted that the number of pups is determined by the number of ovum from the bitch, not the amount of sperm from the male.° It is a good idea, however, when a stud is being used the first time, to have your vet run a sperm count AFTER the first ejaculation (which would not be viable), and

you may even wish to ask him to stand by for an artificial insemination (with permission of the bitch's owner) in case he is a "slow learner."

AT this time, too, the requirements for health tests should be stated. It is wise to devise these terms in writing, in a form to be signed by both parties beforehand, and returned to you for your records.

At first sign of heat cycle: Once heat cycle begins, stud owner should be notified within 24 hours, to allow time to arrange schedules and coordinate shipping dates. Next comes a veterinarian exam for the bitch, and we suggest the following tests. You should be able to certify the first three, as well, for the bitch, within a reasonable amount of time.

Brucellosis: Stud should be tested twice yearly. Bitch should be tested when heat cycle begins. This is a blood sample, which is usually tested within 24 hours, in-house, at your vet's, but which may require three to four days if sent out.

PARASITES: If found at the beginning of a heat cycle, there is time to treat them before breeding occurs. In most cases, once bred, a bitch should NOT be treated. Since worms can be passed directly to fetuses and may weaken their development, this is a must. As a stud owner, you have a responsibility to certify that your kennel is also clear, so as not to reinfect the bitch while there.

Up-to-Date Shots: DHLPP, Rabies and Parvo. In our opinion, the latter is now a must, as this disease can wipe out entire litters any time from pre-birth until sale age and beyond. However, an inoculated bitch will pass on a certain immunity to her pups to protect them.

Vaginal Culture: There is increasing evidence that certain common vaginal bacteria can invade the uterus during heat cycles and during breeding while the cervix is open, which may lead to pyometra, miscarriage, or even invade the fetuses and may be linked to a fading puppy syndrome. Some studs may even refuse to breed a bitch with even a mild case of vaginitis, and this is more common than one would think! Again, early detection allows time to run a culture for sensitivity and a course on the proper antibiotic before the cervix opens or breeding occurs.

This also assures that a busy stud will not be passing a vaginitis from one bitch to another.

Certification: All tests should be confirmed in writing by the vet on the health certificate, and an added statement that the bitch may be shipped in ground temperatures below 45°F or over 80°F, will prevent delays or problems, shipping either early in the morning or noontime shipments with all points of the country covered.

Arrival by air: Advise owners to use direct flights, if possible. Then, even though the bitch is coming via cargo, deal with the passenger terminal first. The two main reasons for this are that the plane is physically closer and you have a better chance of raising a fuss if something should go wrong and (in our experience) airline personnel, who regularly deal with passengers, tend to be more concerned with public relations and, therefore, are more willing to help. Report first to the gate where the plane arrives, and in most cases you can watch unloading through the window and confirm for yourself that the crate is taken off the plane and is safely aboard the cargo truck. If this is not possible, because of security or a viewing problem, see the gate manager or operations manager for that airline (at the ticket counter) and ask them to confirm, by radio with the ramp, that the dog is off-loaded. Suggest that they also check unloading this way when you return her. (Recently we returned a bitch whose owners were waiting at the cargo office but who weren't told for two hours after landing time that the airline couldn't find the dog – and she "must have been left on board and would 'probably' show up in Tucson!") It was a total of twelve hours before they saw their girl!

If a connection flight must be made, try to contact another breeder in that city and see if they can (for a fee) confirm transfer at that airport. Airlines are always impressed by a caring effort. Have this person report to the manager of operations for the arriving flight and have him confirm with ramp personnel that the transfer is completed. If a problem should arise, you have an agent there who can intercede and see that the bitch is not lost or delayed unnecessarily. His or her name should be listed on the flight papers (in case there is a delay) so that they can act as your agent.

DEPARTURES: Be at the cargo area two hours before and insist on staying with the crate until it goes out to ramp. It is much harder for the cargo men to ignore or forget a crate with someone sitting on it! Again, rush on up to the passenger loading gate and confirm and/or watch loading – and stay until the flight is airborne. Two examples illustrate these two suggestions: We returned a bitch who was a Barker (with a capital B!), who was extremely upset and who probably would have really annoyed the ramp men who dealt with her. Instead, one noticed me watching out the window and came up to speak with me. When he learned she was "pregnant and nervous," he spent a great deal of time speaking with her until she was loaded, and by then she had settled down nicely. Another flight, I had loaded a bitch on board but, before the plane took off, she was "bumped off" in favor of some dry ice. Had I left the airport before take-off time, she would have had to sit at baggage for a few hours more until I was notified she had not flown out!

Because of some of these shipping problems, I have always requested and returned "signal calls" to and from the owner of the bitch, at each end of the trip, to confirm that (1), she is in the air, and (2) safely down and in my van.

After breeding: If a breeding is successful, you are now on your way. You should be in touch with your "client" about four to five weeks after the mating to confirm pregnancy, and they should notify you within a day of whelping, the number, sex and general health of the pups and bitch. We also request pictures of each pup "set up" and front-on head studies at eight weeks and insist on the names and addresses of each person who takes a pup and the pups' registered names, so we can follow their show career. If possible, it is great to travel out to take the pictures yourself and see the litter – and it is a great way to make friends!

In closing, I would say the most important keys are caring and communication. These will, hopefully, prevent many problems, both logistically and in misinterpretations. With this extra care given to a visiting bitch, she will be healthier and the owners will appreciate your efforts. Good luck! •

The Grandparent Theory

*Don and Dot Hodges
Poynette, Wisconsin*

SHOULD Aladdin's magic lantern fall into the hands of a dog breeder, he would no doubt put that genie right to work figuring out how to recombine those genes to produce a better dog, maybe even a great one! Unfortunately, it is likely to be a long time before the new technology of recombinant genetics, or "gene splicing" as it is called in press reports, is applied to anything as complex as a dog. Sorry, there just aren't any magic formulas.

There are, however, any number of breeding theories based on linebreeding, inbreeding, or outcrossing; you are probably somewhat familiar with most of them. There is one simple little observation that we have found particularly successful that seems to be shared by a number of longtime breeders within and outside of this breed. We call it the grandparent theory, although "theory" may dignify it unnecessarily. It is not a "secret formula" to success, but objectively applied (as nearly as that is possible), it can be useful in planning breedings and predicting results in a general way. I say in a general way because you are making predictions about the appearance of particular characteristics in the litter, not an individual.

Basically, the observation notes that the grandparents to the litter are at least as important in evaluating a proposed breeding as are the parents to the litter. We apply this information by taking each individual characteristic we are concerned about and, treating the proposed parents and grandparents (six dogs) as equally important, we assess each for the presence of the characteristics of interest to determine the likelihood that it will appear in the litter. To provide a simple example, we did one breeding some time ago that paired a relatively small bitch with a relatively small dog. What would you have predicted - a litter of relatively small dogs? After examining the grandparents to the litter, we found that three of the four approximated the top of the standard,

so we guessed the litter would contain only a few relatively small dogs, the rest coming close to the top of the standard. In that litter, we ended up with 60 percent reaching or exceeding the top of the standard.

Clearly, to use this information, one must be familiar with the four grandparents as well as the parents to

a litter. In our experience, confirmed by others, going to lengths to get this information is well worthwhile - the influence of the grandparents is stronger than one might expect, and you can improve your predictions (and perhaps save yourself some disappointment) by evaluating them carefully in any breeding you do. •

Sledding Equipment

*Brenda and Geoff Abbott
Pine, Colorado*

REMEMBER, in a sport where seconds can mean the difference between first and fifth place, equipment plays a very important part. Improper equipment can not only cost you valuable time, it can cause severe injury to a dog or driver. Over the years, we have learned the hard way and have found some things that really work for us.

Probably the greatest single source of injury to a dog or driver is the training cart. A good cart can be built if you have the necessary tools and skills, but I would strongly recommend that you purchase a cart from one of the many professional outfitters. You will save money in the long run and a lot of aggravation. I speak from experience, as I built my first two "suicide rigs" before I finally got smart and purchased one. The cart pictured is the one we use and have found to be a strong, safe cart. There are several features a rig should have to provide the safety needed.

Brakes are the most important feature of a good training rig. Many dogs have been seriously hurt because the driver was not able to stop or slow the team in time. It should have a brake pedal that is easy to find without taking one's eyes off the team. A good locking emergency brake is also a real must. This is primarily for the safety of the driver, but it makes it

possible to leave the cart and go up the gangline to attend to a dog. A swift kick of the braking bar in the right spot applies the brakes and sets the emergency brake. This system has proven to be invaluable; it allows me to set the emergency brake, which locks the rear wheels, and run up alongside the team to talk to a particular dog without completely stopping. As the cart comes dragging by, I swing on and kick the emergency brake off. This maneuver takes several practices to perfect, but has proven to be a good method for getting to a dog in a very few seconds. Note: Don't get hit by the rig as it comes by and don't miss the cart!

The weight of a training cart is something to consider. You do not want it so heavy that your dogs have trouble moving it; we are training for speed, not weight pull. But neither do you want it so light as to offer no real drag when the brake is applied or locked. A rig that weighs between 75 and 125 pounds works well for a three- or five-dog team. A heavier cart would be needed to train a larger team. Some people work one or even three dogs by riding a bicycle and letting the dogs pull them. I feel this is one of the fastest routes to your veterinarian's office for a dog or the emergency room for the driver!

Snaps are the smallest pieces of equipment you will need, but the wrong ones can cause some of your worst headaches. Good snaps cost about \$1.35 each, and when consider-

ing how many are needed for a five-dog gangline, you might be tempted to try to get by for a lot less money. You will pay for it later. The type of snap most suitable, and for good reason, is a brass clip snap with a SOLID pivot post. The hollow post is more common, but will break easily. It should have a large opening when the clip is pulled, as this makes the snapping procedure much easier with gloves on. The reason for using brass is simple: brass will function at temperatures well below freezing when a steel snap will not budge. Imagine it is fifteen degrees and you are moving along with no problems. Suddenly you encounter two teams in a tangle blocking the trail, so you stop. One of your dogs becomes tangled in your gangline and you must unsnap his harness to undo the tangle. Your steel snap has frozen. The trail is now clear and there you sit with your glove off trying to thaw the frozen snap. Be sure also to avoid any snap with sharp, knifelike edges, as these can cut a dog's leg.

Never, under any racing or training circumstances, use a choke collar; they are not only dangerous, their use is forbidden by the International Sled Dog Racing Association Inc. Most drivers use a semi-slip collar. This collar is designed so that when pulled snug there is still a two-inch play, but it can never choke the dog. We make our collars of tubular nylon (mountaineering strap) and two one-and-a-half-inch steel rings. The dog should not be able to pull back out of his collar.

A gangline is constructed from small diameter nylon rope that is hollow in the center. When connecting the necklines and tuglines to the gangline, the old "Chinese finger handcuff" method is used. The material is threaded back through itself and several stitches are taken for strength.

WHEN fitting a Samoyed for either a racing or weight pull harness, please measure the dog and not the hair! The harness must fit properly or your dog cannot work to his full potential. Professional harnesses (under \$10 each) are more expensive than homemade ones, but they do look nicer and should last longer. The strongest are those with leather reinforcements at the stress points.

A good sharp knife is very handy;

not for protection, although I have run into elk on the trail, but for cutting gangline. Don't hesitate to cut if a dog is being choked to death by line!

There are many good sleds on the market ranging in price from \$200 to \$500. They come in all shapes and sizes – light ones, heavy ones, sleds with flex and sleds as rigid as iron. Find one with the driving bow at a comfortable height for you. Most families with two drivers have two sleds. It is a good idea to try several types of sleds if you are lucky enough to have people who will allow you to borrow theirs. (My only experience on a borrowed sled was not a happy one; however, I was able to get it repaired!

I never thought much about a snow hook until I began using one;

now I won't even go on a training run without it. The snow hook is a double pronged "anchor" with a bar across the top to enable you to kick it solidly into the snow and a short piece of line is attached with which to pull it back out. It is connected at the point where the gangline joins the sled with about five feet of nylon rope. The hook should be easily accessible to the driver and should be well secured to the basket when in motion. You don't want to hit a series of bumps and end up with a bloody nose. Make it large enough to hold a team in most snow conditions, but not big enough to anchor the Queen Mary!

Now is the time to begin getting your equipment together so you will be ready for those first cool, crisp October mornings. •

Choosing Your Breeder

Phoebe Faulmann

HAVING had some really fun Sams in my life, with many stories and memories to attest to that fact. They have been a source of great pride and strengthening companionship. When I think how the Sams have contributed to my life, I seem to always wander back to the breeders who helped me along the way and made this crazy life with the dogs possible. Without them, I may never have realized the joys of kennel work, the chewed furniture, CREDIT CARDS, and the ever so distinctive smell of puppy poop!

I guess you could say that I just sort of "fell" into my Sams, with not prior planning. I didn't spend weeks writing letters all over the country for just the "right" pup, nor did I travel miles and miles to different kennels in search of one. I had no idea about HD, PRA, SCA or reputable breeders. I didn't even think I would ever have a litter. And, of course, I didn't intend to show the pup. I was fortunate because I did happen to purchase my puppy bitch from an SCA member; the

pup's sire and dam were champions (dam was a SCA Top Winner) and both were cleared for HD. The pup went on to finish easily, received an OFA number and has produced a number of champions herself. Not bad for an afternoon of shopping. I shudder to think how different the outcome could have been had the breeder not been reputable.

Everyone with experience knows the importance of researching the sire and dam of a prospective pup. There is OFA and CERF to aid the process. There is also AKC to hand out championship certificates that are indicative of individual merit. Many novices have little or no knowledge in the use of these tools. In this case, or most likely all cases, a pup is only as good as the breeder representing him. What good is an HD guarantee if the breeder fails to honor it; or an OFA number if a body chooses to substitute dogs posing for the films. And how about the practice of allowing pups in different litters of the same age to run together. How the heck do you decide, if you got a pup from pedigree X or pedigree Y, if the breeder (and I use the term loosely) did not properly mark or tag

the pups prior to running them together?

The size of the kennel or the number of dogs housed at the same location is absolutely no indication of a breeder's motives. To some folks, the mere thought of large numbers of dogs housed in one location is indicative of a puppy mill. Not necessarily so; it would be very difficult to develop a dominant line of quality Samoyeds without a large number of dogs and an active, progressive breeding program which would include more than one litter per year. A large kennel would have more room to properly house several studs and bitches possessing different qualities from different bloodlines. Using sound genetic principles, coupled with this excellent breeding stock, the large kennel is able to improve the breed and, at the same time, produce a high percentage of top show prospects. Many of our top producers of today were from larger breeding establishments or were produced by dogs from the larger kennels. These larger establishments do not enjoy their popularity from advertising claims. They reap the benefits by being honest and forthright in their dealings with others in the fancy. You should not judge a kennel by the quantity of the pups whelped each year, but rather by the quality; hence, by the same token, do not let the "small" kennel put you off. If there is doubt about the integrity of a particular breeder, you could always request references. Most will be happy to supply them.

Another point to consider is the availability of advertising media pre-

sent today. An ad in a magazine touting champion upon champion along with top this and top that should not be mistaken for the reliability or reputation of the advertiser. Anyone can advertise if they can pay the price and claims can be made that are not necessarily false but are, then again, somewhat removed from the truth.

Breeders belonging to national breed club are usually governed by a "Breeders' Code of Ethics," in conjunction with the rules and bylaws of their constitution. This puts the breed club member under the scrutinizing eye of every club member and makes possible the lodging of complaints against any member by anyone who feels that the breeder has acted in some way as to violate the rules set forth in the code and constitution, or by any action that might be deemed detrimental to the Samoyed breed. Some action, or at least an explanation, usually follows the complaint. This is not to say that anyone NOT belonging to the national breed club would be any less reputable, but with so much to offer every member of the fancy, I would wonder why anyone serious enough to call themselves a breeder WOULD NOT be a member in good standing.

Buying from a reputable breeder allows you so much more than just starting with a promising pup. The reputable and well-meaning breeder will share with you every aspect of showing they have learned over the years. They will teach you the proper way to groom and present your Sam in the ring. They will share with you the

knowledge that can only come from years of breeding and showing, which will give you an even better "handle" on the situation. If you are a wise one, you will take note of their mistakes and learn from them. They will cheer you on when you are winning with dogs far removed from the original stock they sold you. You will have made friends that will be yours for years to come.

Even the most reputable and reliable breeders cannot, 100 percent, assure you that the pup sold to you from their kennel WILL become a champion, nor can it absolutely guarantee you a dog free from PRA and HD. But it should make you more secure knowing that your pup is from a litter that was skillfully planned and calculated and then reared with lots of "TLC" in hopes of turning out a Sam that would make both you and the breeder very proud. If for some reason the pup did not live up to its expectations, you know that "your breeder" will share your concern over the outcome offering a reasonable and sound solution to the problem.

We, in the Samoyed breed, are a fortunate group of folks. There is a genuine camaraderie among the fancy, with very few horror stories being passed about concerning dishonest and misrepresentative practices.

But each day our ranks are growing and more and more folks are adding their names to the "breeders' list." So, before you buy your next pup, take the time to insure that the person representing him is someone who deserves the title "breeder." •

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