



THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed People

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks With
**Eileen Danvers and
Angela Danvers-Smith**
**FAIRVILLA and
FAIRVILLA IMPERIAL**
Coalville, England

This interview was conducted at the home of Mrs. Eileen Danvers in August of 1993 by Ortrud Römer-Horn.

Eileen, tell us how you got started in dogs.

Eileen: I've always been interested in dogs, especially when I was a young girl at home. Then when I got married, I started off with a Welsh Corgi. He didn't have a very good temperament, so we found him a home, and then my youngest son found a picture of a Samoyed on a calendar. This was back in 1959. We looked in the doggy papers for an ad and we found some puppies at Knotfield. We went to have a look, and of course, that was it. We had to have a puppy. Her name was Ice Cap Varna with Mrs. Clay. I nearly had a nervous breakdown and I went to the doctor. He said to me, "You have a beautiful dog there, Eileen. Why don't you go and show it?" That was the start of showing. She really wasn't up to the standard of showing, but I did show her, had an awful lot of fun and enjoyed my time with her. That's how it all started. I started breeding and showing, and you couldn't keep me at home! (laughter) The first show I went to, I got a first prize. There were only two in the class.

Angela: It was Joe Braddon you went

under then.

Eileen: Yes. We didn't know an awful lot about the breed, but your first dog is your pride and joy. The judge said she was too fat.

Angela: We bred from her and kept her son, Fairvilla Alexis, "Ricky." That was the first Fairvilla litter.

Eileen: We went from strength to strength. I got one particular line that I liked, after studying pedigrees and so forth. I stuck with that and got good results.

How did your breeding program progress from Fairvilla Alexis?

Eileen: We showed him and he did quite a bit of winning, but he still wasn't up to the standard I wanted in my own mind, so we went further afield, to the Kobe's and the Sworddales and I finished with a Sworddale bitch puppy that was really my foundation bitch of my kennels.

Angela: That was Ch. Silver Imp of Sworddale.

Eileen: I bred her and got three champions out of the first litter. She definitely was my foundation bitch. I carried on from there and got a lot of champions.

Angela: I've got a list and there's been over 30.

Eileen: The highlights of my breeding days were at Crufts in 1969 when I took the bitch ticket and the dog ticket. I did the double that day. It was really nasty weather and we could only get down the motorway in one lane because there was so much snow. My husband said, "Oh, we'll keep going now," and it was well worth it.

Angela: Was that when you got

Reserve in the Working Group, too?

Eileen: Yes. That was the best the Samoyeds had ever done then. Since then we've had other Samoyeds who did marvelously, winning a lot of Groups. Then I judged at Crufts in 1979, and that was a great honor.

How many litters have you bred?

Angela: I've no idea.

Eileen: Not as many as you think. I haven't got the big kennel I used to have. I used to have big kennels at the other end of this village, until I lost my husband in 1980. He was secretary and everything else for the Samoyed Association.

Angela: And you were president of the association.

Eileen: Yes. I'm still vice president. That's more or less when Angela took over. I stayed there for three years, had a couple of litters, and then had to move into a smaller place. Angela has always been interested in dogs.

Angela: I used to be chief kennel maid when Mum went to shows, and I learned right from when I was young, really. The first dog I won with in Junior Handling was a Red Setter and not a Sammy. (laughter) I borrowed someone else's and won my first trophy with it. I've always been involved in dogs.

Eileen: You won't take the dew claws off, though, will you? (laughter) She brings puppies into the world and everything else, but she will not take the dew claws off.

Angela: I'll hold them.

Eileen: I've always done it. My old vet showed me how to do it. How many litters have you bred?

Angela: I don't remember.

Eileen: But you've bred a few champions.

Angela: Oh, yes, five or six. I had three or four champions from Emerald. She was Ch. Fairvilla Emerald, out of Ch. Fairvilla Tarasar's first litter. He was a famous dog and a champion. He got twelve CC's. Mom didn't want the thirteenth CC, so I had to retire him. He really did do very well. He was outstanding, and studwise, he really left his mark on the breed. I can't tell you overall how many champions he sired, but there were a lot, and a lot of ticket winners. The bitch, Ch. Fairvilla Emerald, out of his first litter was just amazing. She won her first CC at nine months. She got Best Puppy in the breed, and she got the CC in the breed, and then she got Best of Breed, and went on to become Best Puppy in Show and Best in



Eileen Danvers, and right, her daughter, Angela Danvers-Smith, laughing.

Show at nine months of age. She won her second ticket at eleven months and Best of Breed again. She was a champion at twenty months. I lost her eighteen months ago at fourteen and a half years, but she left her mark on her progeny. She had four litters and she left her stamp on her progeny. I have her son out of her last litter, Ch. Fairvilla Imperial Aga Khan. He has been top stud dog for a couple of years and he has seven CC's and six Reserve CC's, so he's done very well. He's carried on with that gene pool with good heads and good temperament. Temperament has been our big thing, and comes before everything else, really. Showing dogs is one thing, but you have to live with them 365 days a year, so that has been our uppermost thing, and we are noted for temperament.

Eileen, would you say the first litter with the three champions was the best you bred?

Eileen: No, I wouldn't say that. Ch. Fairvilla Brenda's first litter, which produced Ch. Fairvilla Emerald. That was my outstanding litter. We've had champions after that litter, but not like that one. It left a mark in the breed.

Angela, which litter was your best one?

Angela: I suppose it would be the litter I got Aga Khan out of, and that was Emerald's last litter. There have been outstanding dogs out of all the litters I've bred, but he's just something special. He has a superb temperament and a head second to none. I suppose, overall, that litter would stand out. But with each litter, for various reasons, you move a step forward each time. The foundation and first litters are important, because they helped to get what you get in the future, so they are all important in their own way. Without the dogs in the early days, we wouldn't have this dog to carry on achieving what we have done. It isn't being carried on in a big way, but the lines are still carrying on.

Do you both agree about which was the best dog wearing the Fairvilla prefix?

Eileen: Ch. Fairvilla Emperor was the top stud dog for a number of years.

Angela: We've been lucky with stud dogs, and each of them have done well. Aga Khan has been top stud dog, and runner-up to top stud dog for three years, so it's still there. But Tarasar was six years on the trot, and runner-up for a long time, so he was the most outstanding stud dog. And we were top breeders for a couple of years in the '80's.

Was it hard losing it to your daughter?

Eileen: Well, I've not really lost it. The prefix is still mine.

Angela: I've got a "separate interest," it's called by the Kennel Club, but Mum is certainly still the owner of the Fairvilla prefix.

Eileen: I'm still the gaffer! Angela will have it in time. Not yet! I'm not ready to go yet! (laughter)



Ch. Fairvilla Imperial Aga Khan at four months.

Angela: I still refer to Mum with breeding and matching pedigrees. Mum will say, "I can't remember now," but as soon as you put pedigrees in front of her, everything starts to come back, so it's always worthwhile double-checking with Mum. I always look at something and say, "I think I'll just check with the oracle." (laughter)

Eileen: Yes, and I don't charge her for that, you know. (laughter)

Was the dog that you retired with his twelfth CC your biggest winner?

Angela: No, I don't think he was the biggest winner. It was the most CC's, but Int. Ch. Fairvilla Istvan of Airebis probably won more Groups at the championship shows, and he won Reserve in the Working Group at Crufts one year.

From this list it looks like you've had American, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, Irish and International champions.

In this country, the pedigrees are handwritten by the breeders. Can one trust them as to accuracy?

Eileen: I think those of the top breeders, you can, but, of course, as you sell puppies out and they are bred from, you can't keep track of them all, but the Kennel Club should. Of course, the commercial farms have a problem with pedigrees. They change around the prefixes.

What did you use, inbreeding, linebreeding or outcrossing?

Eileen: I've never inbred in my life. You lose temperament, type and everything when you do, and you double up on all the faults.

Angela: With linebreeding, you come very close anyway.

Eileen: Yes, like with half brother and half sister.

Angela: Or grandfather to granddaughter. I wouldn't come any closer than that. Having said that, I don't like to think



Fairvilla Imperial Demitra at eight months.

I would go out completely. With the line we have now, we know what's in it, and immediately when you start going out to bring new blood in, you are also bringing in new problems, which you are not aware of until you've bred from them. Over the years, you get to know what produces what, basically, if you stick to the specific line. It's getting more difficult, because we haven't got the number around now that we used to have to choose from. It gets very worrying. I know what's in my line, but people don't always come clean and tell you what's in their lines, so just looking at their stud dogs isn't enough. You've got to try to follow up behind that stud dog. I like to choose. If I can't choose a Fairvilla or one that is basically Fairvilla... One I've got in mind for a bitch I'll be mating later this year is three-quarters Fairvilla, although he does not have a Fairvilla prefix. I'm trying to keep within those lines as much as I can. My idea is if you've got what you want, why go elsewhere? At the very beginning, the dogs we bred were not outcrosses, but they were two separate lines, although they had similarities in their backgrounds. Mum put those two together and

that started the Fairvilla line. You've got to have a pool from somewhere to go to. We've worked around that quite closely.

In the early days, of course, you had to use other stud dogs, not just a specific stud dog.

Eileen: All my stock was x-rayed, and there was only HD free stock bred from.

Angela: Mum judges as well. I still haven't done a breed championship show, although I've given out five sets of CC's, but Mum has done quite a few. A breed championship show is the next honor to Crufts, especially to do the Samoyed Association, because that's the premier club, and it is still one ambition I've got, and to do Crufts, obviously. But Mum has done all that.

Eileen: Yes, and I enjoyed it.

Angela: I'm involved with the Samoyed Association and I am on the committee, editor of the newsletter and show manager, so, generally, my life has to do very much with dogs - and not a lot else! (laughter) But then Sammies are a way of life, aren't they? They are a hard breed to keep looking at their best.

Eileen: It's hard work with them.

Angela: All the bathing, grooming and

exercise. They are lovely to look at, and everybody loves them, but the work involved is not for everyone, but it is for me. There is not really another breed where I would say, "I'll have one of those." Many people have second breeds, but I've never found one that really does anything for me.

Eileen: We've traveled miles and miles and miles all over the country. Once, during some floods, we almost lost our lives because of flooding. The bridge was almost washed away, and we were coming back from a dog show. My husband insisted on coming back because it was my eldest son's 21st birthday. I'd already said, "The weather is so bad, let's stay where we are." He said, "No, we must get home for John's birthday," and it nearly took our lives.

Eileen, in looking back over the years you have been in dogs, who or what has influenced you most?

Eileen: I think Mrs. Ross of the Sworrdale Kennels, and also Mrs. Ashfield of Kobe Kennels, who helped me quite a lot. It was more difficult early on, because there weren't the numbers of people. Samoyeds were pretty rare, actually. There were only a handful of people. Now, we get so many youngsters coming into the breed, and they think they know it all before they start. I suppose that is true in every breed. I just wish they'd take their time with breeding, and study the pedigrees and what have you, instead of jumping into using the first dog down the road, which they think will do. You won't get anywhere like that.

Angela: Then we have people who have been in the breed under five years who are actually judging Open shows. Years ago, you had to go through the motions of everything.

Eileen: You'd have all the top breeders looking over what you were doing.

Angela: But now, the judges for Open shows are two a penny. In fact, I knew one person who had been in the breed only two years and had actually judged an Open show, and I don't think anyone can find out enough about a breed in that space of time. The same with the breeding. They have a bitch puppy, they show it, win a few firsts and think, "Oh, great." Usually, the closest dog is the best one in their minds, where they don't have to travel far, and possibly don't have to pay a stud fee, so they put their bitch to that dog and they've probably got no connection. In fact, one person called me and said, "The vet said it's fine putting these two pedigrees together because nothing matches." (laughter) That's what we are dealing with. Then people wonder why there is such a variance of type in the breed. It's because we've got small pockets of people now, instead of large kennels of specific types. There are a

lot of small, individuals, if you like, who are breeding from pet bitches, and then putting those into the ring. You are bound to get so many different types it's not true, where we used to be able to say, "That's a Sworddale," or "That's a Fairvilla," and people can still say, "That's a Fairvilla." People have seen Fairvilla dogs in paintings and seen someone walking down the street with a Fairvilla dog and recognized it. It's a specific type, but with a lot of them, you just can't do that anymore, because they are not linebred. Things have changed for the worse in that respect.

Eileen: It's a shame, really, because it's such a beautiful breed.

Angela, who or what has influenced you most?

Angela: Well, I'd have to say Mother. She was someone that everybody else in the breed looked up to as being an expert and the best person to go to, so who else could I go to? (laughter) There were various other people I admired.

Eileen: You admired Bunty Ross an awful lot. She gave you a lot of knowledge as well as I.

Angela: Yes, and I liked her stock. I saw what I saw at home, which was careful breeding and well looked after dogs, and the right attitude towards other people as well, and helping everyone, which she's always done. That, I think, influences you more than anything, just to care for the breed. I think I was thirteen when I whelped my first litter. Mum and Dad had gone to Crufts or a meeting, and the vet had checked the bitch out and said, "There's no way she is in whelp, let alone going to have them within the next day or two." But Mum had this funny feeling.

Eileen: I knew she was in whelp.

Angela: I said, "Oh, don't worry. If anything happens, I'll ring the vet." But I didn't have time to ring the vet because I was whelping. Mum and Dad must have left about 5:00 in the morning, and I was whelping at 6:00. She just waited for Mum to go. (laughter) She had six puppies like shelling peas. That was Katie, wasn't it? I called the vet out, and he said, "This isn't the one I checked over yesterday." I said, "Oh, yes, it is." He said, "Oh, my goodness!" (laughter) So that was my first experience.

Eileen: That was throwing you in at the deep end, but you had watched before. She wouldn't go to bed and leave me downstairs whelping. Oh, no! She was too nosy! (laughter)

Angela: I had to see what was going on.

In England you have a breeder's license. Give us some background information for our readers abroad.

Angela: That is a license you have to hold if you have more than two breedable bitches. To get the license, you have to



Eileen Danvers, and right, her daughter, Angela Danvers-Smith in Eileen's beautiful, groomed garden.

have your kennels inspected for fire regulations and hygiene. The local health authorities do it. This is supposedly to stamp out puppy farms, but it hasn't actually done a lot in that way. The only thing it did was to make it more difficult for those people with fewer dogs, because the wording is very difficult. It says, "More than two breedable bitches," so some people who have seven or eight dogs can say that half of them are not breedable, and that they've only got two that are breedable, so they don't need a license.

Eileen: One day the inspector came and said, "You haven't got your fire extinguisher." I said, "Well, you haven't looked very far then, have you?" It was hanging up and I knew it was there. Is it that you are allowed to breed four litters? Things have changed since I was in it.

Angela: It's the Kennel Club code of ethics that has been introduced. You are not supposed to breed from a bitch before eighteen months or the third season, and they can only have a maximum of four litters before the bitch is eight years old, and they won't register puppies from a bitch that is over eight years, which I would never do anyway. The code of ethics is also aimed at the puppy farmers, because they actually breed from the bitches every six months, and they will not register puppies from a bitch that had a litter six months previously. It doesn't stop them from breeding them, unfortunately, but they just don't register them, and they sell them to people unregistered. If there wasn't a market for it, and if people wouldn't buy unregistered puppies, that would help. It

would certainly help to cut down breeding bitches later on in life. What happens is they breed a bitch every six months until she is about six years old and then they get rid of the bitch. Recently, we've had quite a few bitches of that age that have come onto the rescue scheme that need homes, which normally would have been kept by these people until they were eight, nine, and even ten years old and been bred from. So it has made more problems in one way. It's just one of those things, because they have to try everything to get at these people to stop them from breeding.

Eileen: But I don't think they'll ever stop it completely.

Angela: No, I don't think so, either. The unscrupulous people seem to get round the law one way or the other.

Angela, how many Samoyeds do you have?

Angela: Five, the Aga Khan and four girls.

Eileen: He's henpecked. (laughter)

What was the largest number you ever kept?

Eileen: Sixteen. I had over twenty at one time, what I'd bred came back on Holiday.

Angela: We always stick by our puppies if someone has to part with one, and we always take them back. If we can't keep them ourselves, we find them a good home.

Eileen: I've always said, "If you can't cope, come back to me first."

Angela: We've been lucky in that few people have come back, but they normally keep in touch, which is why our phone is always so busy.

Eileen: Christmas cards cost a fortune. (laughter) Now, with me, they are all pass-



Fairvilla Imperial Cagney.

ing away.

Angela: Not the people, but the dogs, she means.

Eileen: They've given me a lot of pleasure as well as heartaches when you lose some of them. Then you go to shows and don't agree with the judge, and think, "That's a lot of rubbish. I'm not going again." But you still go back.

How did you come up with your kennel name Fairvilla?

Eileen: The house that I lived in was Fair Oak Villa, so we just left the Oak out.

Angela: You have to put a selection of about six names into the Kennel Club.

Eileen: We came up with Fairvilla, which suited me fine.

Do you name your litters by any sort of scheme?

Eileen: I did. I used the alphabet, but I don't think Angela does. All hers have the Imperial prefix. They are Fairvilla Imperial.

Angela: When I started, I wanted people to know that Fairvilla's were Mum's and something else would make people realize one was mine. It was for us, more than anything, because it gets very difficult trying to remember everyone and every dog, and I thought it would be easy if I put

something on mine for me to remember, so I've always put Fairvilla Imperial and then a name. All those that have Imperial are mine - and the ORDINARY Fairvillas are Mum's. (laughter)

Eileen: The TOP QUALITY Fairvillas! (laughter)

Angela: That was the joke. I said mine were the posh ones with the Imperial on them. I think everyone in the show ring knows now what it means. I name mine anything, basically, and don't use a theme or stick to letters in the alphabet. I'm very ad lib with mine. I try to find all the Russian names sometimes.

What are the distinguishing qualities of your line?

Eileen: Heads, I think, and a laughing expression.

Angela: Definitely heads.

Eileen: And temperaments. They are very handsome dogs and very pretty bitches that Fairvillas are noted for. Any child can go up to Fairvillas on the benches or wherever and just stroke away. There are some Samoyeds that are pretty snappy, but it could be they are not used to children. You just don't know. But mine have always been known for their good temperaments, and I hope Angela carries it on that

way.

Angela: Oh, yes.

Eileen: With a few threats here and there. (laughter) Wielding the whip.

So you rate temperament first, but where do you rate type and soundness?

Eileen: They are all very important. You've got to have soundness as well as type.

Angela: But without good temperament, you've lost the Samoyed characteristic anyway. That is a Samoyed, to love everything. If you start getting aggression into the breed, then that's not a true Samoyed at all. A true Samoyed will love everything and everyone, no matter if it is people or other animals. I certainly would not like to see a very aggressive strain of Samoyeds, because they are a very strong dog, and you wouldn't like to think of them as being really aggressive. They are very powerful, but they do not normally use their strength, and some less than others. (laughter)

Eileen: I used to show seven of them together as a team, and that takes some doing. There is one chap in particular who used to shout, "Cats!" to try to get them to go, but they wouldn't.

Angela: That was at the breed show. We don't get teams now, just brace. Or very rarely. Just the odd one now and then, and the teams that appear have only got three in them, so you don't get a spectacular entrance with three as you do with seven.

Eileen: That was the highlight of the show.

What has been your long-range goal in breeding Samoyeds?

Eileen: We'll never breed the perfect one, we know that, but I tried to stick to the standard as much as possible, and keep the good heads and the temperaments and the soundness.

Angela: My goal is the same as Mum's, to follow on, hopefully, where she left off.

Eileen: Who says I've left off? (laughter)

Looking back over the years you have been in Samoyeds, would you say they have changed?

Eileen: They have changed, because there is not enough careful breeding done. It's a shame, but that's what it boils down to. They don't study the dogs or the pedigrees. The breed has really gone downhill, in my opinion. I just hope someone will help the youngsters coming in to put them along the right lines. They've got to have guidance from somewhere, and they've got to have faith in somebody as well, that what they are told is true. You don't tell them one story and then do something else yourself.

Angela: That's why I'm looking to Mum. There used to be people you could refer to, just as Mum did, but now those

people are gone, their knowledge is gone and the people who are left haven't got the experience in the breed to be able to advise other people, and so it goes on.

Did the people change?

Angela: We see new faces at the shows more so than we used to do, so the number of people becoming involved in the breed is more, but in a year or two they've gone. In the meantime, they have probably bred a litter or two, so people have something out of them they can breed. Very few stick at it, because it is a tough breed to keep. Preparations for a show are horrendous, really, if you compare them to most breeds, and it takes a special sort of person to deal with that and come to terms with it, to say, "That is the breed I want," and to stick with it. Some of them decide it is too much like hard work, but they've bred stock in the meantime. There are so many breeding now where there wasn't before, was there? There were just a handful of people before.

So popularization went up?

Angela: Yes, definitely. There used to be just a handful of dogs in the ring when we first started, but they were good quality stock. You'd probably get four or five dogs in a class, and those five would look similar. Nowadays, you probably get 22 dogs in a class, and less than half would look similar. So, numerically they've gone up, and there is a wide variance in type, and if people followed the standard, that shouldn't be the case. People bring different strains in, or oddments, I would call it, really. People are not breeding to a type.

Eileen: Sometimes they forget the standard and the type.

Angela: Many people breed for their own reasons.

Eileen: They think there is money in it.

Angela: Yes, but there certainly isn't, is there? (laughter) Also, they think, "If this dog I just bought has won so many prizes, it must produce first prize winners." But that definitely doesn't follow. There are no guarantees with any puppy.

Eileen: I'll tell you what annoys me is when a lady or a gent takes a bitch to a vet and says, "She is highly strung," which Sammies sometimes are, you know. The vet says, "Oh, you want to breed her to calm her down," but it doesn't calm them down at all.

Angela: I always think what the bitch has never had she never misses, so to try to breed her to try to calm her down doesn't make any sense. And breeding from a bitch does not prevent false pregnancies, because the next season following the litter she will do just the same thing again. They are either prone to it or they are not. The only answer for false pregnancies is spaying to completely stop all the problems the bitch has got. That is not to say you spay bitches

across the board. I don't believe in spaying bitches full stop, but for a bitch that is suffering false pregnancies or the effects over a period of time, it isn't doing the bitch any good at all, and I would certainly have one spayed for that reason.

Eileen: But not for convenience.

Angela: No, but for the bitch's well-being, rather than thinking, "I'll keep her going and have a litter or two," and in the meantime the bitch is suffering, because false pregnancies can be very bad for bitches. I would draw the line and say she is not going to go through it again and have her spayed. That is the ultimate solution to that problem, and certainly not having litters from them.

Do you always keep your old dogs?

Angela: Yes. I would never part with an old one to make room for a new one, even if I had to wait several years.

Eileen: I had to part with some when I left at the old house, because I had so many. I couldn't bring them all here. They all went to good homes, mostly to people I knew.

Angela: I just recently lost one, a bitch that was fourteen and a half. Then I had one that was diagnosed at eight with diabetes, and I kept her for four and a half years with diabetes. That was the first experience I'd had with it, and I was determined to come to terms with it, and she led a normal life. She had her injections every morning, and Mum would do them if I had to go to a show or something. Diabetes seems to be an increasing problem in the breed. I wrote an article about it, because I don't believe in keeping things covered up and not saying anything about them, and whether that has made people come to the fore, I don't know, but it seems it is one of the biggest health problems in the breed. They are not a breed with a lot of problems as such, and if you see a Kennel Club list, it does not list umpteen diseases that Samoyeds have got, but now they are listing diabetes as one. As a breed, they are not prone to anything, really. Cancer is the other big thing, but that's in every breed. With the diabetes, I don't know if it is because I am taking more notice of it, or if people come to me because I wrote that article, but I get a lot of phone calls asking advice on diabetics, whereas before we'd never had any dealings with it. With her, that was a shock, because it was a virus that caused the diabetes to start up. All the dogs got the virus, but she didn't pick up from it afterward. The vet thought that was what had triggered the diabetes off, so whether it is hereditary or not I don't know. I think there are different causes for diabetes. Hopefully, I won't get another one, but you never know, do you?

Please describe for us your ideal Samoyed, going from the tip of the nose to the end of its tail.

Eileen: As long as its got four legs to

stand on, that's the main thing! (laughter) A nice, wedge shaped head with dark points, thick ear, well arched neck, nice shoulders and a good tail carriage. I've got one that doesn't carry her tail up.

Angela: She used to do it more when she was younger.

Eileen: She's forgotten how to put it up now. The ideal Samoyed should be sound and have a laughing expression.

What is the ideal movement?

Eileen: It should be parallel and not cow hocked. They are a working dog and you want nice, strong action.

Angela: It should be a powerful but elegant movement that almost looks effortless.

Eileen: And they should have plenty of drive with strong hindquarters, parallel front and rear. It's difficult to explain what I really mean, though I can see it all in my eye.

Why do you think it is that a dog can look good when it is standing, but when it moves everything falls apart?

Angela: Usually, a bad mover is not constructed properly.

Eileen: I always used to say, "It's not put together." Of course, it's the upbringing of the dogs, as well, with maybe too much exercise or not enough.

Angela: Sometimes it just boils down to bad handling, especially with Sammies, because they are a very willful breed. We used to see it more years ago where the owners were dragged out of the ring. (laughter) When they decide to go, they go. There is a picture in our Samoyed book and it says, "Above all else, don't let go!" and it's dragging this child along. But we saw more of that years ago. The standard of handling has improved overall, but you still have the odd one where you'd like to take the lead out of the handler's hand and do something with the dog because it is all over the place. Unless the dog is moving, you can't assess gait or anything. I had to withhold a first once, and I really loved this puppy out of quite a big Puppy class, but he just wouldn't behave and was an absolute demon. His owner was sweating buckets, because I gave him so many chances to settle, but you can't give a prize to something that you can't see if it moves properly. There is quite a bit that is handler related, and the biggest thing then is construction. If they are not constructed right, there is no way they are going to move properly no matter who handles them.

Did you say all you wanted to about the head?

Angela: There is no specific measurements that we have for the relationship between the various parts of the head.

Eileen: You can hold it in your hand and it is a wedge shape, but there are no measurements or anything like that at all.

How important is eye color and shape?

Angela: Very important, really. You don't want a light eye. There was a time when there were quite a few light eyes, almost yellow, but they should be mid-brown, and almond-shaped. If you get the correct eye, that is where you get the Sammy expression from, that smiling expression. The lips should actually turn slightly upward. The correct lipline will make them look as if they are always laughing, always full of the joys of spring, which they are, usually. You can't put a measurement to the head as a whole, but the dogs' heads are much bigger, broader, and the bitch should be more feminine, more daintiness, but in proportion to the rest of the dog.

Let's open the dog's mouth. What about bite and missing teeth?

Eileen: It is a scissors bite, but not too much of a scissors bite. I don't think I'd throw one out if it didn't have a full set of teeth.

Angela: A friend of mine recently was just starting to do well with her dog in the show ring. He's only five. One of his teeth shot out with a bone. I said, "I would just explain what had happened, because it is not a hereditary fault, or a fault at all, but an accident, really." She thought he would lose it, because he fell through a plate glass window the week before. She didn't think he damaged himself, but he landed face down and he probably loosened it then and finished it off with a bone. Those sort of things, accidents, I wouldn't penalize a dog for.

Eileen: I wouldn't, either, but I have been penalized, because I had one. Half of the tooth was there, but it was broken off, and they penalized me for it. She took the top off it. It was still there, but she was penalized for it.

Angela: It was mentioned, wasn't it?

Eileen: Yes. You get one that mentions it and then every judge looks for it.

Angela: But, really, you can't say that's a fault, because the tooth is there.

Eileen: The root and everything was there. Half the tooth was there. They will eat anything, you know, and you are ashamed sometimes, because people will think you have not fed them. (laughter) People must think that, mustn't they?

Angela: That's just their character. They are so nosy and into everything. We don't have a lot of problem with missing teeth. No missing premolars.

If you had 100 points to give, how many points would you give to the head?

Eileen: Over half, but it would have to have everything else to go with it.

Angela: I would say twenty points for presentation, because the difference between a well presented Sammy and a badly presented Sammy can be great. In a coated breed, it is very important to present them properly. I would put the head very

high up.

Eileen: Everything else has to go with that head, and that includes temperament. To handle the dog well, it must have a good temperament.

How important is pigmentation?

Eileen: Quite important.

Angela: But it's not the be all end all.

Eileen: If a dog or bitch has everything else but is lacking in pigment, I would never withhold a prize. Actually, in the standard, they are allowed to have a brown or a flesh-colored nose. They have it sometimes in the wintertime.

Angela: Or with old age sometimes. I prefer a black nose, I must admit.

Eileen: They look better. You get a better expression with a black nose.

Angela: I wouldn't penalize one specifically on the nose color.

Eileen: I don't like broken liplines.

Would you breed to a dog with missing pigmentation?

Eileen: If it wasn't too bad, yes, and if there was everything else I wanted in that dog, I'd take a chance.

Angela: Depending what is behind the dog, as well. If it is from a line that has shown bad pigment throughout, I don't think I'd use it.

Eileen: Yes, and that's where the pedigrees come in again. You have to follow a thing up.

What do you think causes the winter nose in the Samoyed?

Angela: Perhaps lack of sunshine, although they do say that Arctic breeds need more zinc, but whether that has to do with it, I don't know. I'm trying to look into that at the moment.

Eileen: Zinc? That's my problem. (laughter)

Angela: I think they need more zinc than most breeds. The pigment has improved in this country. I would say it was a lot paler in the earlier dogs, and perhaps if we kept these dogs in the snow most of the time they would be pale all the time. It seems to go along with older age, also, but I don't know why, though it could be something to do with zinc.

What about the brisket and depth of chest in the Samoyed?

Angela: They have to have a deep chest.

Eileen: They've got to have that, because they are a working dog.

Angela: They should have a nice tuck up there as well. It should be defined.

Eileen: The bitches are a little bit longer in the back for breeding purposes.

Should the depth of chest reach the elbow?

Eileen: Nearly, but not quite as deep as that. It depends upon the length of leg, and it all goes together, really.

Angela: The males would normally be deeper, wouldn't they? But, then again, it's related to size. Some dogs are longer

legged, what I call rangier dogs. They shouldn't be too rangy at all, but well in proportion.

Has it been your experience that coat is extremely important to winning in the ring?

Angela: Yes. I think coats were better quality years ago than they are now, but I think the presentation is much better now on the whole. People realize that with their white coat in a Working Group, a very well presented Sammy will stand out. Of course, we didn't used to have the big hair dryers that we have now, so it is easier to get them to look the part. To get noticed in a class of 22 Sammies, and having paid a large entry fee, you can't take a grubby dog in. It's just a waste of money.

Eileen: It's not fair to the dogs, is it?

Angela: We have never taken a dirty dog into the ring.

Eileen: You must also keep color, the biscuit shading, because you get the harsh coats then. The white ones just fall in the rain. I remember a judge years ago who said, "We'll soon see who is a good Sammy," and he made me step out into the rain. It's funny how a colored coat is a harsher coat and stands up in the rain. Everybody else looked bedraggled.

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