

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks With
Don and Dot Hodges
KIPPERIC
Poynette, Wisconsin

Part II

This interview was conducted at the 1987 SCA National on September 9, 1987 by Lyn Snyder Hoffin.

Do you feel that evaluations are accurate?

Dot: Even for the Toy people who are very good with their hands, when all is said and done, I don't feel confident about what they accomplish in their evaluations - I often feel that they miss some things.

Don: Of course, Toy people generally don't place as much emphasis on how they move, for instance.

Dot: When we started out, we basically went with these two foundation bitches that were very different from each other and came from totally unrelated bloodlines.

Don: People could not understand how, if we had this one, we could also have that one.

Dot: And how we could appreciate both of them, because they were very different. It represents very well what we were trying to do, because we wanted everything. We wanted good type, and we wanted

great movement. We had gone all around the country looking at a lot of different dogs and bloodlines, and we didn't see any one kennel that we thought was consistent - and I mean consistent. That isn't to say that they wouldn't have some dogs that met our criteria, but they didn't seem to consistently produce both the structure and the type that we wanted. So we went with the two lines, figuring that one of them had been very strong for producing the kind of movement we wanted, particularly the fronts, which in those days were atrocious. The other line had a type we love that consistently came out of that line. By working with the two lines together, we thought we could eventually come up with exactly what we were looking for. It took a bit of fiddling around and working because, as you know, when you start working with outcrosses like that, you don't always come up with exactly what you think you're going to. They were very different lines.

To this day, I think that was a real blessing for us. It has given us greater diversity, to be sure, having started out with that kind of total outcross arrangement. But in the process, it gave us a selection to work with, so we could go back to one side or the other of the pedigree for the strengths that bloodline had in order to pick up the things we knew we needed in a particular individual. It has allowed us to constantly work toward that goal so that we now have greater consistency than we ever had before. We have been able to select for the type and

movement we wanted.

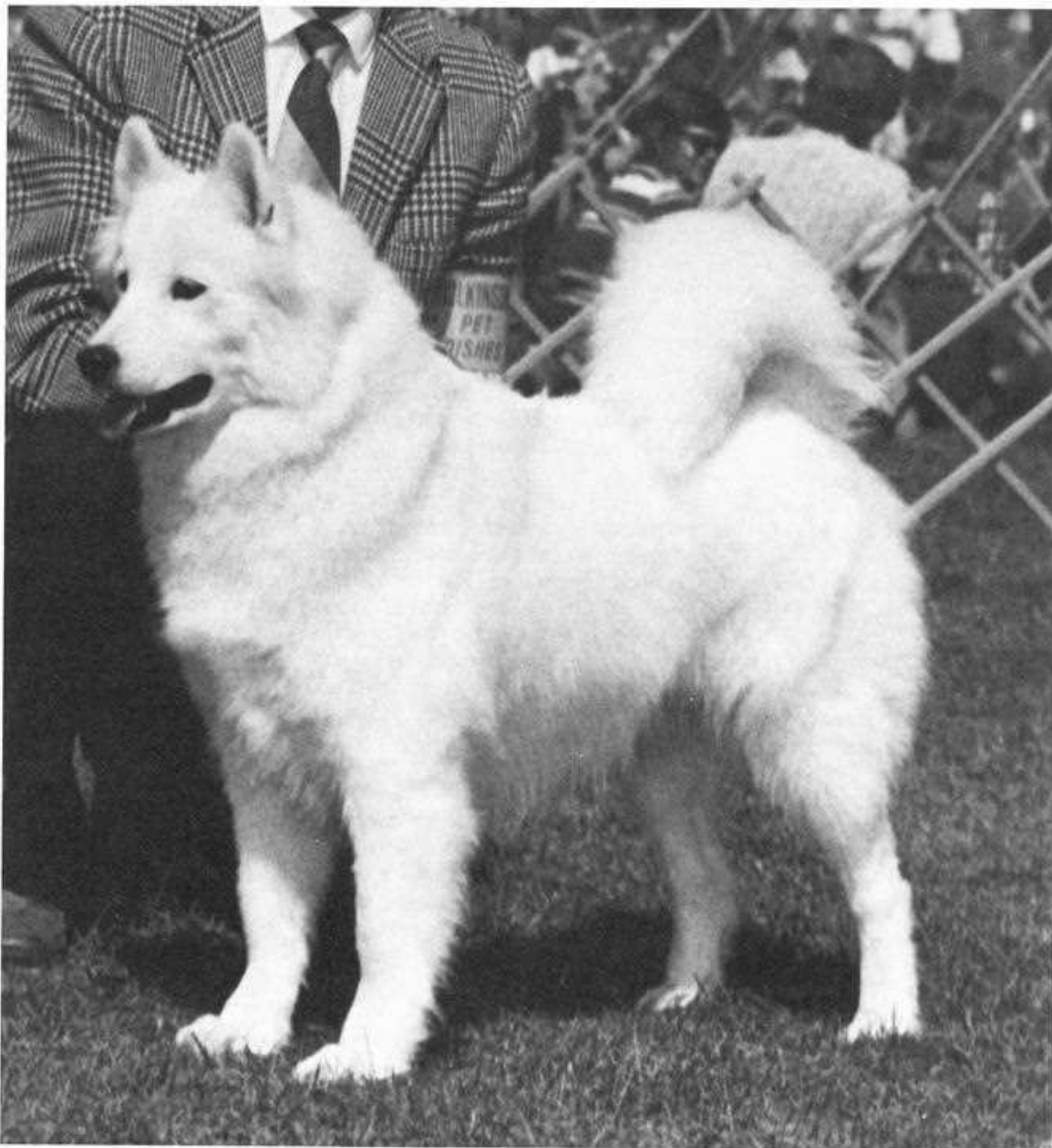
Do you use films or videos to evaluate puppies?

Don: We have a very extensive super eight millimeter collection of puppies.

Dot: We did film each of our litters, and it not only gave us a way to evaluate the movement but a permanent record we could refer to when they were older and say, "Did we evaluate them correctly, or were there things we missed?" It sure did help us sharpen our skills at evaluating puppies, as well as picking up on things that we were not sharp enough to observe before or learning things we hadn't learned before. We could see in general how some of the bloodlines developed as compared to others. All of that has been very helpful to us.

When we first started traveling, we filmed a lot of dogs. (As I mentioned, we had been to a lot of specialties and just observed before we ever started showing.) We used to film the National Specialties in their entirety. We filmed the 1970, 1971, 1973, and 1975 Specialties entirely, and most of the 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979 and 1980 Specialties as well. We kept those films, and it proved to be a gold mine. Yet at the time, we thought, why bother to film 6-9 month Puppies or American Bred dogs? Ten years later, we can go back and see where today's Best in Show winner was (or something of that sort). It allowed us to go back and look at dogs that were in various pedigrees. Let's say you were considering using a certain sire, and his sire was some





Ch. Kipperic D'Lite of Frost River CD.

dog that many people knew nothing about. Sure enough, you discover he was in the 1971 Specialty in the American Bred Dog class. You can look up that film, check it out and see whether the dog is something you really want in your pedigree that is going to appropriately influence the breeding you do. In that sense, those films have been a valuable collection. Eventually, I hope we can get them transferred onto videotape, because we've had to give up the super eight. We've gone to video, because it took so long to get litter films developed that the puppies were sold and gone by the time we got the film back.

Don: Besides, it cost a fortune.

Dot: It was taking something like 20 or 25 rolls of film to do a National Specialty.

Don: We usually had a 50-foot roll, or the better part of one, per puppy, on a litter.

Dot: Yes, and a litter might be 5 rolls of film. When you get through with 5 rolls of film bought at \$4 or \$5 apiece and then develop them at another \$4 or \$5 apiece, you have \$50 tied up just doing one litter. The specialties were hundreds of dollars.

Don: Just to buy the film to do a specialty was running something like \$150 to \$200.

Dot: This was many years ago now,

back in the 1970s. We finally decided videotape was the way to go. We want to use the videotape to keep permanent records on the dogs that are out and about so that we know, in future breedings, what dogs might prove valuable to us.

Don: Now we're relying on the club to videotape the specialties.

Dot: It's great now that they do that. They didn't used to do anything like that.

Don: It was several years ago that they first started that, probably in 1981. It was in Madison.

How would you describe the ideal Sammy?

Dot: One that wins! A friend who years ago helped us a lot in our own breeding program said, "People always said to me, 'How can you possibly own these two very different Sammies? Surely you must have a preference for one over the other.'" She answered, "My ideal Sammie is the one that wins." Face it, when you look at our standard, it isn't so specific that we can't have some diversity, and that's very obvious when you look in the ring. There is tremendous diversity in our breed. I can appreciate a lot of different things in Samoyeds. I don't have to have a specific type of Samoyed. I appreciate a dog that moves well, even if it isn't, perhaps, the best type. I appreciate a dog that has a beautiful head, even if it is not a great mover. It isn't to say that's necessarily the dog I want to own, but I appreciate the strong points those dogs have. In terms of the ideal Samoyed, I would like to see a Sammie that is within the standard. That includes size.

Don: And we don't want to change that size.

Dot: So many people today assume, when it comes to the standard, that everything counts except the written description of how big a Samoyed could be. That's not our philosophy. We've always tried to breed them within the standard, and we sometimes get criticized for it. When you start to get Sammies that are too large, or Malamutes ...

Don: Which are very nice breeds, but they're not Sammies.

Dot: Right. What you tend to find is that when they go over standard (and again, I'm not going to make a blanket statement that applies to all Samoyeds that are over standard), often they begin to lose their grace. They're cloddy.

Don: Whatever problem they have is magnified.

Dot: Yes, particularly in movement. When they start getting large, any movement fault they have becomes very obvious. The other thing I emphasize is that I do like a sound dog, because it is a working breed, and that's important to us. I feel very uncomfortable if I have to go in the ring with a Sammie I don't think moves well. The only other thing that's really important to us is that the dog have a temperament we can be comfortable living with and yet have some showmanship. That's actually not as easy as it sounds, because a showy dog is often a hyper dog, one we have a difficult time living with. Our first Samoyed was not an easy dog to live with, and I'm certainly glad we didn't perpetuate that in the breed by using him for breeding. On the other hand, you couldn't beat that temperament in the

show ring. That's why he won. He was just so showy, and he'd stand there wagging his tail until the end of time. Unfortunately, there is now so much emphasis on showmanship in the ring on the part of judges that it's become the whole game. The sad thing is that when you put so much emphasis on showmanship, you end up emphasizing or selecting for dogs that have all kinds of problems (unwittingly, I'm sure): thyroid problems that create these hyper dogs, and problems with dogs that are aggressive and so wound up that they make difficult pets for the owners. That type of dog is not a good Samoyed, but in part, that's what gets selected in the ring because it's showy. That's most unfortunate. I'd rather have a dog that is reasonably showy but still comfortable to live with, a dog that's not bouncing off the walls. The ideal Samoyed has that temperament, together with a reasonable size and a nice, general appearance. The standard is so open. I'd like the dog to be a good working dog, one that moves reasonably well. When it comes to movement, I've always emphasized balance. I'd much rather have a dog that is balanced front to rear than one that is superangulated in the rear and can't handle it in front, which I'm seeing a lot of in the ring these days. Since so few Sammies have perfect shoulder layback, I'd rather show one with only moderate rear angulation to match the shoulder layback than one that has a perfect rear and a faulty front.

Don: While a Samoyed is a working dog, it is not a racing sled dog. It does not have to be 24 inches tall or so, with lots and lots of leg. It's an arctic utility dog. In all the arctic breeds, it's a middle type. It's not as big as a Malamute and it's heavier than a Siberian, but it's still an arctic breed. It can be used for sledding. It's not necessarily going to win a race, but it should be able to get you from here to there and do some other things for you. It's a good, medium, all-around kind of dog, not necessarily a big, long-legged, long-headed, crazy-in-the-head racer.

Dot: It's true that for years, Sammies got a rap for being incapable of being good working dogs, primarily because even though they were used in sled races, they really were not the ideal dog for racing. As people get involved in racing and want to race Samoyeds, if they're going to be successful, they do have to select for a type of Samoyed that actually is not the ideal according to our standard. (I have no qualms about that if that's their goal and they want to race successfully.) When you keep in mind that the standard wasn't intended for a racing Samoyed, you realize the dog that is successful in racing is not the ideal Samo-

yed.

Don: It's the one described by our standard, and the fact that you race it, or you have a dog that is successful racing, doesn't necessarily mean that it is the better Samoyed according to the standard.

Does either of you have any aspirations to judge?

Don: Eventually, but we always seem to have still more we want to do first in breeding and showing.

Dot: I do believe that once you get into judging, you should not remain active showing, except on a very occasional basis.

Don: Not in breeding very much either, eventually.

Dot: That's right. You don't want to get into a judging situation if you have a lot of your own puppies out. For that reason, as long as we continue to enjoy showing and breeding as much as we do, judging is just not the place to go. Our age is catching up with us though; perhaps we'll judge sooner rather than later.

Dot, you have referred to yourself as aging four times today. You can't be much older than I am, and I'm not in the grave.

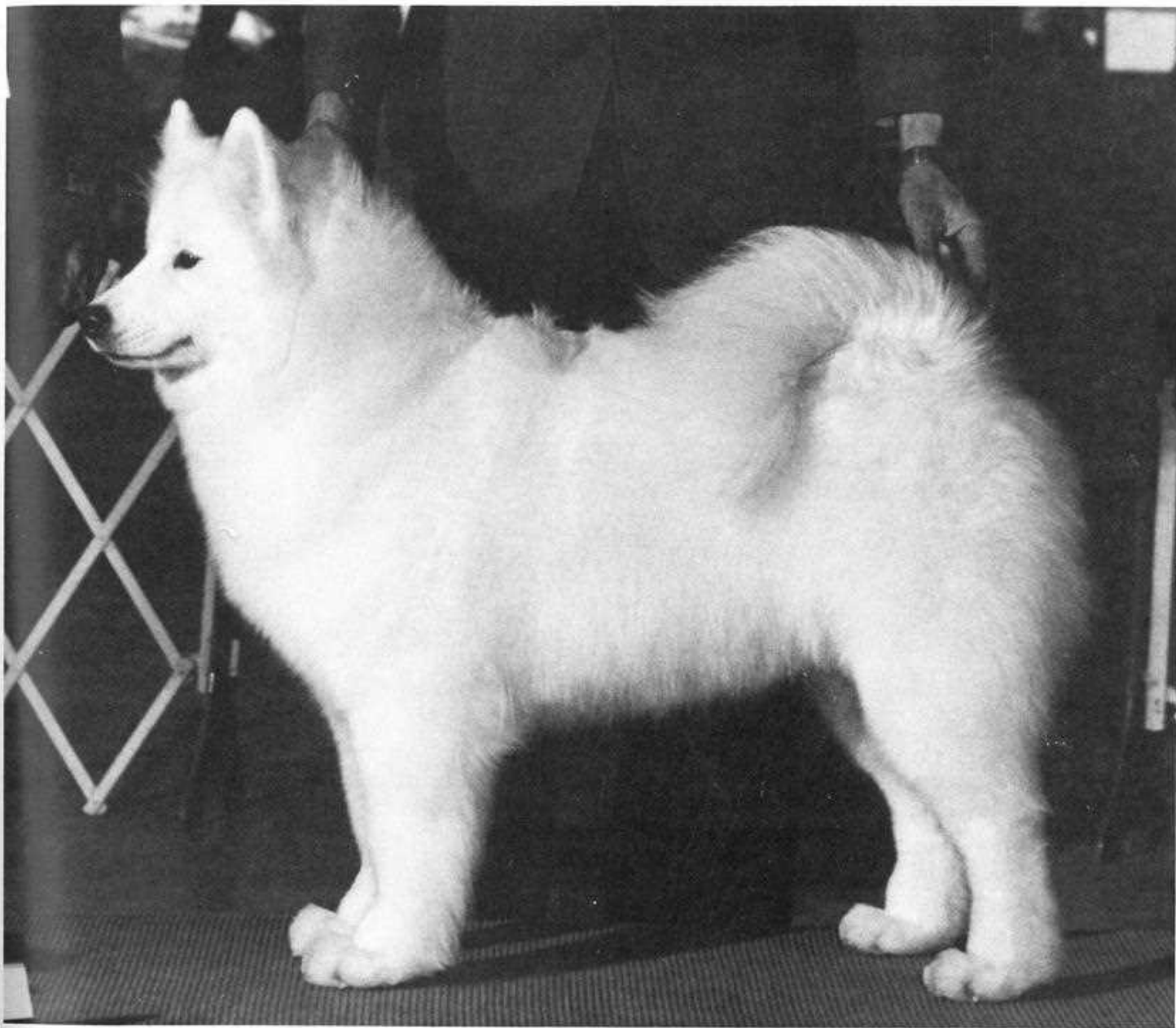
Don: It comes from pushing very hard to get to the dog shows. We are beginning to feel like we're getting old.

Do you have a lot of long days?

Dot: Yes.

Is judging fair?

Dot: Yes, with some qualifications. I think most judges sincerely try to be fair. I can hardly think of any who are in this game in a crooked way. That isn't to say that all of them are well qualified or knowledgeable. In general, as the sport has grown as much as it did during the late 1970s and early 1980s, Don and I have both felt that in order to keep up with the sport, many judges who are not well qualified have been inducted into the ranks. That isn't to say they don't have some qualifications, but they don't have broad enough experience to make them great judges. Overall, there's perhaps been some deterioration in the quality of the judging force. I'm delighted to see some of the experienced all-around handlers getting into judging now, because those people who have been in it year after year and have handled just about every breed in existence are bringing a great deal of experience to the game. It will pay off in judging of much better quality. There are a lot of people judging who never owned or bred more than one or two breeds in their lives, probably never bred more than six or eight litters in their lives, and finished their four champions or whatever. These people don't have a lot of experience. They could become



Ch. Kipperic Kandita, one of our top winners and a descendant of "Kandi."

very good judges, but it's going to take a lot of work on their part. I often sense that those are the people with sufficient insecurity about what they're doing to be influenced by others instead of being able to form a firm opinion of their own. That's unfortunate. This game is never improved by just having the crowd follow the leader. I see some of that among the ranks.

Don: Everyone is aware that the main weak point in the whole process is that, in order for people to get judging assignments, they have to get the breeds to make them attractive to clubs, and they need to get assignments in order to get more breeds.

So there is potential for distorting decisions in order to progress, especially when starting with a single breed. The professional handlers who have had experience with many breeds usually get more breeds to start with, so they start well ahead of the single-breed person, and they have less pressure to get additional breeds and assignments. They may have other weaknesses, perhaps, but generally I'd take my chances with them. Of course, the whole thing is ambiguous enough that it leaves open the potential for people to imagine a lot more than actually takes place. There's a lot less influence and crookedness than people

would like to believe. Most people are trying to judge dogs well.

Do you think advertising influences judges?

Don: To some degree. It's the same kind of situation. Some people follow advertising to see who's winning or to see who it's safe to put up.

Dot: If a judge is not confident in his or her own abilities, he or she may feel much more comfortable putting up a dog known to be a winner and feel safer about not getting criticism for doing so. In that sense, advertising may have an influence. The quality judges who recognize a good dog,

no matter where it is or what, won't be influenced by that kind of thing. They'll recognize the good dog, regardless of whether they know it has won anything.

Don: They may ask you whether your dog has won anything or what it has done after they have made their choice, but it's more to confirm their decision.

Dot: I don't think advertising has as much influence as a lot of people think. There's no way to ever know, is there? All you can do is surmise.

Don: There are a lot of reasons for advertising, and one of them is so you can brag a little about what you own.

Dot: Some of it's for consumption.

Don: Years ago, Vin Perry, who used to write for one of the magazines, wrote an article about the pride of ownership. That was one of the things he felt was a component of the sport of exhibiting dogs. Of course, advertising went along with that.

When you take it to your friends at work and say, "These are my dogs," they are impressed. Regardless of what it is, it's a page in a magazine.

Dot: If it's in a book, it must be important.

Don: Nowadays, most of my co-workers are more impressed with what we go through to get to the dog shows, how far we travel and what we take with us.

What do you two do, besides go to dog shows?

Dot: When we first got into this, we were both in graduate school.

Don: She was actually just finishing up. She was about to get her degree, so her mind was already on other things, and that's when "Let's get a cat" came up.

Dot: I got a PhD in economics and started teaching at the university in Madison. Don was still working on his degree in zoology. He got a master's in zoology. He had originally started out thinking he was going to go on and get a PhD and teach, but he decided that wasn't his cup of tea. He ended up getting into research doing laboratory work in zoology.

Don: Biochemistry. My degree was in zoology and reproductive physiology. Actually, I got to the point where I did not want to make that the overriding part of my life that it has to become if you're going to be successful at it, in an academic setting at least. That's when I backed off and decided to let somebody else make those decisions. I have worked since then as a research specialist in the medical school at the University of Wisconsin.

Dot: When I got out of graduate school, not only did I teach in Madison, but I also fell

into a very fortunate situation through my major professor. I discovered that there was an opening with a professional journal in my field. It was very prestigious. It's an international journal, and they were looking for an editor. Economists who can read and write are rare. My major professor had noticed that he could read my dissertation, and it was one of the few he had run across.

Don: Actually, that's a little unfair. There was a contrast, because her major professor had mostly foreign graduate students. She was one of the only natives that they had.

Dot: I made a trip down to Evanston to talk with the current editor.

Don: This editor was about to become the dean of the college and eventually became president of Northwestern University.

Dot: He introduced me to the job and it looked interesting, so I took that as a second job in addition to teaching. In those days, it was just a part-time operation. We were only publishing four issues a year, and it was quite manageable on the side. Then they decided to go to six issues a year, and the issues got fatter. Things kept going, and finally it became more than just a little part-time job. After working in Madison, I went up to the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point and taught there for a while on a half-time basis while I also edited the journal. I did that for better than ten years, but one day I decided that commuting back and forth to Stevens Point was not much fun in Wisconsin winters.

Don: After she cracked up two cars.

Dot: When you're commuting an hour and 45 minutes each way in good weather, and four to five hours each way in bad weather, you finally decide it isn't worth it. I quit. I still edit the journal as my other half-time job, but it's now half-time along with taking care of twenty dogs and doing other things.

Don: We're still trying to finish the house.

Dot: We said we were going to finish it when we had it built in 1976, and it's still not totally done.

Are you still in the first year of your five-year project?

Dot: We finally wised up to the point where we said, "If this is going to get done, we're going to have to hire somebody to do it."

Don: We're in our third five-year plan, I think.

Dot: In the last few years, we have started getting workers in to finish it up. Now we're discovering that one of the vagaries of rural living is that you don't easily get people

to come that distance to work on your house. Even if you wave money in their faces, they find there's enough work close by that they don't need to go out of their way. We had a little trouble getting contractors out there, but it's gradually getting done. We keep looking forward to retirement and hoping that one of these days we can start making all the dog show circuits.

Don: We haven't missed very many yet.

Dot: We haven't been to the Tar Heel circuit yet. We've only been to the Texas circuit a few times. We haven't been back to the Copper circuit in years, and we haven't made the Oregon circuit yet.

Do you have much trouble taking time off from work?

Don: The job doesn't pay a lot, but it has good fringe benefits. I have enough vacation time that I can take long weekends.

Dot: It has worked out quite well.

Don: Things have been a little tougher in the last couple of years.

Dot: Particularly at grant writing time. The rest of the time he's able to spread out his vacation time and take it a day at a time here and there, and he has plenty of vacation time. Right now he's giving me fits about all these plans I have to go here, there and everywhere. He keeps telling me that I'm going to have to do it by myself. Increasingly, I've been running off to some of these three- and four-show circuits, where I'll take in the first two days by myself, and then he'll join me on the weekend. That's worked all right.

Dot, did you do quite a bit of the handling also?

Dot: I didn't used to, but I've gotten so I do more and more.

Don: When we first started, we each had a dog and we each showed a dog. When we finished those first two (I had the dog, and she had the bitch), she decided that I handled better than she did, and so she started critiquing me from the sidelines.

Dot: It's interesting, but a lot of the success we had was that I could stand outside the ring and observe the contrast: what was working, what wasn't working, why the dog looked good or why the dog didn't look good, or what about the dog needed to be improved. It not only gave us better insight into our own dogs but also how to improve our own handling skills. He would come out of the ring and get mad at me as I proceeded to say, "Now, dear, you did this right, but you did this wrong."

It really did improve his skills a lot. The trouble was that he didn't do the same thing with me. When I came out of the ring, he

didn't say, "You did this wrong or that wrong." I didn't improve my skills as rapidly as he did. It's all because of me he's such a great handler, right?

Don: Sure. I think that was a left-handed compliment.

Dot: Recently, he's just not able to make all the shows, and so I have struck out on my own. The more handling you do, of course, the more comfortable you feel doing it. Different dogs have different attributes.

He does better with some dogs, and I do better with others. That's always been the case. When we had one bitch out in the early 1980s, he just simply could not handle her well, no matter what. She just didn't respond right to him. But I could go into the ring with her, and she would give me everything she needed to and work very well. A few others like that have come along from time to time.

Don: But then dogs like our first one

needed a strong hand.

Dot: That's right. He does better with those that do need to be tamed. I do better with those that need to be jacked up. We come to the game with whatever we have, and we do the best with it. He has a knack with dogs in general; they respond to him, with a few exceptions. In difficult cases, I've always felt he was the one who should go in the ring with the dog. He started to develop some physical problems and it's more diffi-



Ch. Kipperic K. C. Heritage (Silveracres Nachalnik x Am/Can Ch. Kipperic Kandu of Suruka Orr CD), whelped 1978, owned by Phoebe Faulmann and bred by Don and Dot Hodges, is a Group winner and sire of twenty champions.

cult for him to show than it used to be, so I'll probably end up doing more and more of it. He's developing a numbness in his hand. There was a famous case with Jaquita a year or two ago.

Don: I have a nerve problem of some kind in my left arm.

Dot: The left arm, of course, is where he hangs on to the leash.

Why can't you do it on the right side?

Dot: He had a female in the ring with this nice little leash all wrapped up in his hand in good, true, professional form, started to gait her around the ring and let the leash out. As he did, the leash slipped off his hand, and he didn't even realize it, because he doesn't have feeling there. The bitch was gaiting along very nicely, and he was afraid if he just grabbed for the leash, it would throw off her gait. Since the judge at that particular point was looking at how she was gaiting, he just let it go, and she just gaited right along in line like all the others did. He pulled a win out of it.

Was everyone impressed?

Dot: Everyone was kidding him about his little "handling tricks." It is getting more difficult, because he tends to drop the leash a lot more often now, and he's having some problems with his stride, too. Eventually I suppose it will get to the point where I'll do more and more of the showing.

Don: I've been seeing a doctor. It just depends on whether they can do anything to correct it.

Dot: We all live with our handicaps. Mine may not be as obvious physically. We somehow manage.

What individuals do you most respect for what they have done with Samoyeds?

Don: There are many people who have done quite a few things we can appreciate, having tried or experienced a little of the same sorts of things ourselves. Some of these people have had pretty good luck in breeding. Others are good at showing, exhibiting, handling or grooming. There are a lot of old-timers (but many of them are not active now) who made significant contributions to a lot of people in one or more of those areas.

Dot: There is no way you can get me to answer that question. About the best we can do is talk about the people who may have made particular contributions to us, people from whom we specifically felt we learned a lot, and that's certainly not fair to all the other people in the breed who have probably done the same thing for a million other people. All of us look to the individuals from whom we got our start or who made

some important contribution to us. There are a lot of them. I can't even begin to name all of them either, but two who come to mind who taught us a lot about evaluating Samoyeds and handling well are Dick and Martha Beal. Both these people have a real eye for dogs, and by watching movies with us, they were able to point out things we would never have seen otherwise.

Don: We used to go out to Seattle, Washington on vacations and visit them. They would have everyone in the area bring their dogs, and they put on a little dog show in the yard.

Dot: It was great fun. On a pick-up basis, suddenly we'd have this match in front of us, all put on for our benefit. It was quite an educational experience. They did teach us a lot about handling and grooming and all kinds of things. I can't begin to say enough for all that they did for us. Of course, the Laskeys, who introduced us to the breed and who bred our first Best in Show dog, have to be mentioned also.

Don: We learned much from them about the breed in general and about how to conduct breedings and raise puppies.

Dot: And, of course, we can't say enough about Phoebe Faulmann, even though she's gone now. She contributed a lot to us. She not only had a tremendous sense of where she was going and a real love for the breed, but she was so helpful to us in so many different ways.

Don: Phoebe was a real breeder. She had a knack for deciding what good matings would be. She did breedings that we probably would never have done, but which we are able to appreciate in retrospect.

Dot: When we got started, Harold and Doris McLaughlin were a lot of help to us. We visited them on several occasions.

Don: Denver seems to be on the way to a lot of places, and there were always lots of people there visiting and looking at the Silveracres dogs.

Dot: They were very helpful to us.

Don: We used to try to stop in all kinds of places. We spent quite a bit of time filming dogs at Donna Yocum's Tsiulikagta Kennels. We saw a lot of dogs in California when we were on our tours there.

Dot: The Jameses, who sold us our other foundation bitch, were a lot of help to us. In fact, when we contacted those dear people for a bitch, they had a litter that had only two bitches at the time.

Don: They had some trouble and lost some of the litter, so they wound up with only two bitches and a dog.

Dot: They had intended to keep the pick bitch themselves, and when we got there, we said, "Which one is ours?" They

said, "Well, you pick."

Don: Evelyn and Charles disagreed on the two. They couldn't decide which one, so they let us decide which one to take.

Dot: They were just super people. We enjoyed our visits with them. They had quite a kennel at that time, but I can't remember how many dogs they had.

Don: They had quite a few. We visited Gretchen Raymond in those days, too, looking at a top male she had around at that time, the early 1970s. She talked to us and showed us a number of her dogs. Then she invited some other people over, and we looked at some of their dogs.

Dot: We had visited some kennels in Canada.

Don: In Canada, we discovered some of the relatives to Kandi, the Best in Show bitch we got from the Laskeys, as one part of her pedigree came from Canada (actually an English import to Canada). We were able to find some of those and see them before they disappeared.

Dot: We could go on naming. There are many people who have been wonderful.

Don: Many old-timers had articles in the bulletins. We learned a lot from those, too.

Dot: Billy Tucker was an inspiration for us. In fact, she wrote us after Kandi took her first win, the day after the 1972 Specialty, when she was entered in a huge Specials class.

Don: I was show chairman at that specialty, so we weren't able to show at the specialty. We did exhibit in the all breed show that followed it, and Kandi took Best of Opposite Sex. That was her first public win, in the sense that a lot of people and dogs were there.

Dot: That's when we first started specializing her, and Billy was there. She saw her and talked to us about how similar she thought she looked to some of her old English stock. She encouraged us to continue showing and later wrote us many nice letters, giving us encouragement about specializing the bitch.

Don: Billy was also present the next year when she won the National.

Dot: We even have a picture with her and with Jean Blank, the handler of Ch. Yurok of Whitecliff, and other old-timers.

Don: Jean was an exhibitor, not a breeder. She was very interesting, of course, because we weren't around at the time Yurok was out and winning his Bests in Show.

Dot: There are so many that it's hard to even begin to think of them all.

Don: We've talked to all kinds of people. Joe and Joyce Johnson of Aladdin Samo-

yeds are here at the Specialty. We've always talked a lot and shared some common dogs. Another good friend whom we've had over the years with whom we used to go to the shows a lot was Helen Pokora. She used Arokop for a kennel name.

Dot: She got started basically with the same two foundations that we started with, and it was strictly coincidental. We still laugh about the fact that two people would pick the same two bloodlines that are so totally different. To pick two foundation bitches from those lines and even have them named similarly is just almost beyond our imagination. When we met her and found out that she had a "Kandi" and we had a "Kandi," both from the same bloodline, and she had a "Mindy" and ours was "Dee," both out of the second bloodline, and that we were both doing almost identical breedings, it just blew our minds.

Don: We were starting at the same time in the same area, so we used to go to the shows together and find the good restaurants.

Dot: She's been an inspiration to us, too, because of her interests in the same bloodlines. We could compare notes and observations about dogs.

Don: She's not nearly as active anymore, but she's still there.

Dot: The other thing that has made the dog sport so valuable to us is that we've developed lifelong friendships, and even if the people don't remain active in the sport, we still have those friendships for years afterwards. It means more, perhaps, than any win you could have at a dog show, when all is said and done. It's been a lot of fun developing all the friends over the years with whom we socialize, have good dinners and find great restaurants.

Don: A lot of our contemporaries that we talk to a lot at shows and specialties, people with whom we've done breedings and exchanged dogs, are all important, but we can't list them all.

Do you let your dogs run together?

Dot: We have, although for the most part, I don't put the males together. Not that I think I couldn't. At least some I suspect I could, but I've just never wanted to risk it. The problem we run into is that when the bitches come in season, we're never sure they won't have a scrap. I have had very little trouble with my bitches, and I can run them all together. Once in a while, though, if we bring an adult into this kennel setting who was a queen bee somewhere else and is definitely a dominant, that can be a problem. Then I sometimes have to run two groups, with the queen bee in one and my

other queen bee in the other. When we've run into problems, it's been because of bringing in adults. I never have problems when I'm bringing up puppies in my kennel right from puppyhood. The only problem with running them all together is that when you have as many as we do, it's just more than we can physically run together. Even with a large area to run in, I don't feel that they are going to exercise effectively if I have more than five or six out at a time. I usually try to put that many out and let them run around, then switch them and bring another group out. I also rotate them upstairs so they get some socialization with us, and the same dogs are not always downstairs or upstairs.

Don: Generally speaking, males in this breed do not get along. You can let males live together, but there are some things you have to accept if you're going to do that. You have to let them establish the hierarchy. You had better start with an adult and a puppy. It gets much more traumatic if you try to introduce two adult males and let them decide who's top. Actually, males usually will not critically injure each other. They may be a little bloody, and they definitely will be noisy.

Dot: They could injure each other, but in our experience most of the altercations are not that serious.

Don: They will decide who is dominant and submissive. Usually one of them will give up, but it may take more attempts than just one. The problem that people have is they can't stand to let that happen without interfering with it, so then it just gets perpetuated. You have to let it take its course, if you're going to keep males together.

Dot: The other problem you can run into, which we have occasionally experienced with our bitches, is that the lowest dog on the totem pole may be so dominated by the others that you have trouble bringing out a good show attitude in that dog.

Don: That's true with the males, too. If you let the hierarchy establish itself completely, one male will totally dominate the other. That submissive male may not be a very good show dog, even though you may be able to show it.

Dot: He's more dogmatic than I am. Since we don't run our males together, the place we have seen it most often, though, is with the bitches. I've had two or three that were so submissive because of the hierarchy that we could see right away that if we wanted to show those dogs successfully, we were going to have lots of trouble. We immediately moved those bitches out into homes where we thought they would get lots of individual attention to bring them out

of it. It worked, and the dogs came around fine.

Don: What we're really talking about is a situation with large numbers of dogs in the pack, and one is on the bottom. If you have a couple of females, one is likely to be dominant to the other, but it isn't as extreme as when you have ten or twelve of them.

What dog food do you use?

Dot: We've experimented with a variety of diets over the years, and we've gone to a diet which is actually a mixture of Purina Hi Pro and Ken-L Biskit, both of which are dry foods. We moisten them and then add some canned food, Alpo Chunky Beef Dinner. The reason we settled on that is partly because of the research that was done at the University of Pennsylvania on arctic breeds. They found that a higher quality of meat-based protein seemed to be important to those dogs subjected to stress (working, showing, breeding). We also settled on it as a compromise, because we cannot afford to feed some of the very high-priced dry foods.

When we have experimented with those products, we found our dogs did not do as well as they do now. In fact, we talked to our vet about this just the other day. We had experimented about two months ago with one of the premium dog foods, and we started having tremendous problems with stool eating. The dogs also started developing bacterial infections in their mouths. When we talked with our vet, he said that this can happen in coincidence with eating stools. His observation was that the premium dog foods on the market today are often designed to be lowbulk, because they want to produce small, dense stools. As a result, the diets don't have a lot of roughage. He felt this contributed to problems in dogs similar to those that occur in people who have low roughage in their diets. The dog literally ends with almost a constipation problem. They feel hungry because there isn't much volume in such high calorie foods, and because they feel hungry, they eat their stools. It was his theory that this was the source of our problem, although there is no way of proving it. Switching back to our former diet has gotten rid of the problem with bacterial infections and has reduced the incidence of stool eating. I get stamina and good healthy coats with their current diet.

Don: That's using kibble and canned meat.

Dot: The meat seems to be an important component. We don't use a lot of vitamins or any other supplements, even with the bitches we breed. All we do is vary the proportion of meat and kibble. I have to

emphasize that I'm not talking about meat per se, but a balanced canned dog food. I don't like to fiddle around with homemade concoctions, because you just run too much risk unbalancing the diet. But as long as I'm adding a balanced canned product, I'll use a higher percentage of meat when I'm dealing with a bitch that's in whelp or is stressed. I also use that same basic diet when I'm raising puppies. I use a much higher proportion of meat to kibble.

Don: We'll start them off on the canned meat dinner.

Dot: Not totally. What I do is start out with Esbilac, eventually mix canned meat dinner with it, and then gradually add some dry kibble. It is perhaps 50 percent canned and 50 percent dry by the time they're several weeks past weaning, and they've done very well. I got very different results with Puppy Chow and another similar product. With Puppy Chow, there were problems with digestibility. With some of the other products, stools were not all that good. When we went to our current mixture with the puppies, it seemed to cause a better growth rate for the puppies. I say better, although I don't know that faster growth is always better, and I don't mean to equate those two. In our bloodlines, puppies tend to grow particularly slowly, and this diet did seem to improve that.

Our dogs have never matured early. You rarely see us in the ring with puppies, because they can't compete as puppies. Even Kandi, whom we showed briefly as a puppy, was only able to pick up one or two points from the Puppy class. We didn't bring her out again until she was two years old, and then all those little puppies that had done so marvelously against her couldn't compete with her. It's just one of those things. Our dogs come on strong when they're about two or three, and they hold it. We can keep showing them easily when they're still six or seven and not feel at all like they're over the hill or even past their prime. Kandita was five last April, and she's had two litters, so it's not like she's a youngster. And she's capable of continuing a good deal longer. That's been true of many of our dogs. They just reach their maturity slower and last longer. I don't have any problems with that, although people who buy puppies from us can have lots of problems with it if they get their puppies out and find they can't compete well in the Puppy class.

Would you two do it all over again?

Don: Yes, we would, but I would try harder to do it at a lesser rate.

Dot: He's always been the one who wanted to get into it in moderation, and I've

always been the one who says, "This is great fun. Let's go whole hog."

Don: Those are our natures. Whatever she's doing ...

Dot: I do it completely. It's partly how competitive we view ourselves to be. Don, by nature, is not a competitive person. I have always been, as he said. If I'm going to put any effort into something, I want to do the best job possible. It became evident early on that to show successfully, you had to work at it. You could never be successful doing it on an occasional basis simply because, if nothing else, you get out of practice. You do have to keep at it to keep the skills sharp. Getting out there weekend after weekend, you learn the dog well, and you get the dog to perform well. If you're in and out of the ring from time to time, the dog forgets the skills just as you do.

To some extent, that has shaped our philosophy of how we show a dog, too. When I have a dog I want to show, I wait until it is actually ready. I don't show the dog just to have it out. The dog may be two or two and a half years old when it's finally ready. When I decide it's competitive, I'll take it out, and then we'll go every weekend with it. It may take me four or five weekends to finish the dog, but that way the dog won't forget everything that it's been taught between shows and it won't have to be retrained after a summer off. This way I know the dog will be finished without worrying about an interruption by a shed. It just seems to work better for us. With as many dogs and as much activity as we have, we don't have time to go to training classes and do all the training with the dog that a lot of people would who have just one or two dogs. We have to train them in the ring, and that's a real handicap. However, if you show every weekend, after a few days on a circuit, the dog will know what you want, and from then on it's easy by comparison. On the other hand, if you show on a more casual basis, you better not have the number of dogs we have, because you won't be able to do it successfully.

The number of dogs has been an asset for us from the breeding standpoint. When you're dealing with only two to five dogs, or even a kennel of seven or eight, you're much more reluctant to place in a pet home a dog that is not panning out as a good breeder or show dog. It's your pet, and you love it. Of course, we love our dogs, too, but when you have twelve or fourteen, you realize that you can't remain competitive if you keep every dog you love. So you find a good home for it and you go on. When you have only a few dogs, you can get bogged down with those dogs you really love, you're unwilling to

move on, and you become a big kennel with a lot of dead wood. Our solution has been to constantly evaluate our dogs critically. We're constantly weeding. We only have the best dogs there. That has helped us a great deal in our breeding program. We're getting where we want to go much faster.

Don: It's made life more difficult for us, though.

Is there anything important that we haven't covered?

Don: Competition is harder all the time. Showing is much more competitive.

Dot: I have to give credit to the people who are showing in the Sammy ring these days for the quality job they're doing in grooming. When we started, grooming a Sammy was almost unheard of. They hardly did more than bathe the dogs.

Don: They just sort of brushed them off and took them into the ring.

Dot: Combing or pin brushing and the rest of it was totally unheard of. You never saw hock hair or feet trimmed. You would see hair every which way. Now the dogs are going in the ring white and groomed out beautifully. The hocks are trimmed up so at least they avoid giving a cowhocked look. The feet are neater. Whatever you want to say about the controversy of trimming whiskers, I don't know. The rest of it presents a much nicer picture than what used to be seen in the ring. It's a credit to the breed. The reason they're doing so well in the Groups now and getting so much attention is that they are well presented, not just in terms of the grooming but also the handling. I can remember a time when judges used to cringe when they would judge Samoyeds. One judge made a comment to us some time back in the late 1960s. "Oh, the Samoyeds. I always close my eyes when they walk into the ring, because if you can find one that isn't crippled, it is a miracle." The fronts were awful, the rears were awful, everything was awful. The breed was not competitive in Group, and most breeders in those days didn't even stay around to watch the Group. They hardly knew what the Group was. It's a tremendous tribute to the hard work of a lot of breeders that the breed is in the great shape that it is now.

Don: It must be right. It's harder to win.

Thank you two kind people for your time. •