

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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TOP BREEDERS IN THE NATION

June 1990 SQ Awards

Jim & Sharon Hurst (Orion Samoyeds) With 8 Of Their Champions

Samoyed people



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

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

How did you get started in dogs?

Don: It was a little different than most people. She wanted a cat. That's what started it.

A big white Persian?

Don: Sure! We had just moved into an unfurnished apartment. We bought all new furniture, and she said, "Let's get a cat." I said, "What, and have it scratch up and ruin all this furniture?" She said right off, "Well, all right, a dog then." She had never had a dog before, but I grew up with one. They were no problem. They stayed outside. We lived in the country in New Mexico. Fine, a dog. So then it was a big project, as she always does it anyway.

Dot: We looked in books, talked to lots of people, read all kinds of dog descriptions and ended up visiting Samoyed breeders, Mel and Miriam Laskey, who referred us to litters in the area, and we soon got ourselves a Samoyed. We bought it as a pet. He was

going to be our great obedience dog. Of course, we ended up with a Samoyed who was totally hyperactive, off-the-wall and unsuitable for obedience.

Don: One we had to obedience train in order to live with, so we got started first doing obedience work.

Dot: And enjoyed it a lot.

Who was the breeder?

Don: It was a breeder who had only bred two or three litters.

Of course, we maintained a friendship with the Laskeys, who would invite us every once in a while to do to a dog show with them, and eventually we started showing the dog in obedience. About the time we were finishing his first obedience degree (that's all we ever got on that dog), they wanted us to enter conformation at a show to build an entry for someone else, who had one of their dogs that had eighteen points and still needed a major. For our first conformation experience, we went up to Duluth, Minnesota (eight or ten hours from anywhere) for a 600-dog show. There was an obedience show the day before, so we got his obedience degree the first day and then showed this dog in the American Bred class to build the entry for a major the second day. In the meantime, because of the temperament of our first dog, we had acquired two more Samoyeds. We were

looking for one as a companion to the first dog and ended up with two more, because that's the way they came - a pair of littermate adults that the owners didn't want to separate. They were like a husband and wife. One of them was already a champion. We entered him in Best of Breed in Duluth since he was along for the ride. Dorothy decided that she would like to show the class dog. He was, along with the other American Bred entry, pretty "spazzy."

Dot: Totally out of control is more like it.

Don: The dogs dragged those two women around the ring, lunging at each other and so forth. The judge had a hard time deciding what to do with either of them. He finally gave the win for the class to our dog. When Dorothy came out, she was so exasperated that she handed me the dog and said, "I'm not ever going back in there again!" I went back in, and since I had obedience trained him, he did just fine for me. We ended up taking Reserve to the major. The dog for which we built the major did not win. We took Best of Breed with the champion that we had brought along as an afterthought. Then we were so far from home that we debated what to do, and the Laskeys said we had to stay for the Group.

Dot: We didn't even know what "Group" was.

Don: The Laskeys, by the way, were

charter members of that club, so they had many friends, and of course we just had to stay. We sat around for a long time visiting with people, and suddenly someone said, "Hey, the Group is on; they're in the ring." I grabbed the dog, and we went running. As I approached the entrance to the ring, the judge had gone to the middle of the ring. When he saw me come up to the gate, he motioned me to come in, and he put me at the head of the line, right in front of the Great Dane. Our dog showed well as long as something was happening, but he got bored easily. I was getting a little frustrated as we went through the process because he was going flat. I asked Dorothy for some more bait, and the Great Dane handler behind me said he had some extra bait and gave me some. Well, we wound up winning the Group. (It was the first time, except for a Puppy class, that we had been in the conformation ring.) I still think the judge was playing games and was in a hurry to make a plane.

Dot: The Great Dane breeder was quite sure that if his bait worked that well for us, he had better learn how to use it better.

Don: So we went into the Best in Show ring, and it was between a Scotty and our Sammie for Best in Show.

Who was this Sammie?

Dot: His name was Ch. Astro of Rivido J, whom we bought just as a companion for our first dog. He had never been bought with the intention that we were going to show him.

Don: We came by him through the Laskeys, too, who had seen him shown, had liked him, and had used him for breeding.

They had heard that the owners were getting rid of their Sammies and told us about these adult dogs that were available. That's how we happened to buy them. The bitch was not finished, and Dorothy finished her. She was our second champion. The dog we showed at Duluth in American Bred became the first one we finished ourselves.

learned a lot by competing. In those days, we went to a show with a dog, a bitch and a special. We like to think back on those times now when the point scale was two, three, five, eight and eleven.

Dot: Five was a major. It was crazy.

When was this?

Don: It was about 1968. The show in Duluth was in October 1968.

Dot: That's what got us hooked. We just went like crazy, finished a couple of champions, and then, finally, since all three of those were finished, it was a matter of having nothing else to show. So we started specializing, just because we enjoyed showing so much.

Don: She finished the bitch, and I finished the dog and showed the champion. We were doing well enough that when the Laskeys had a couple of dogs that still needed to be finished, they wanted me to take theirs out. I finished a couple for them. Since all of our original dogs were bought as pets without thought for breeding, we really did not have a good foundation bitch, so we decided to look for a female to use to begin a breeding program. Again, we did some investiga-



Am/Can Ch. Kipperic Kandu of Suruka Orr CD.

tion and a lot of traveling. In a way, in those days, traveling helped one to become known to other Sammie fanciers, because people didn't travel in those days the way they do now. I was originally from New Mexico. We came to Wisconsin from Oregon, and we had a lot of acquaintances in those parts of the country. Of course, we got to know people by name and reputation through shows and the club bulletin. When we went back to those places on vacations, we would visit these people and look at all the dogs.

taking several points and one major from the American Bred class. From that time, of course, there was no show within eight hours that we didn't make for the next four months, until we finished that first dog. We showed Astro a few times and took some Breeds with him, but we were competing as novices against a dog that was winning quite a lot, Ch. Maur Mik's Kim. He was a top Sammie in about 1969 or 1970. We did bump into him fairly regularly, and not with great success. He was a good dog, and we

Dot: We went to a lot of circuits, too - the Copper Circuit and some of the shows in California and Colorado. It was fun for us, because it allowed us to see dogs from different parts of the country and to get to know them well.

Don: When we came home, everyone came to us and wanted to know what these dogs were like, because they hadn't been out there to see them.

Dot: We often would take our movie camera along with us so we could just crank out some movies and show them. It was rather interesting for us. We made a point of attending all of the National Specialties. We didn't show anything at them - we just went. We had been to the 1967 National and the 1970 through 1972 Nationals, and we didn't show in any of them. We just sat and watched and enjoyed them. Finally, the first in which we showed was the 1973 National.

Don: In 1972 I was show chairman; that's the one that was held in Janesville.

Dot: It allowed us to see a lot of dogs and meet a lot of people. Once you start showing at those specialties, it's hard to see what else is going on. You're so involved in your own stock, trying to get them ready and so forth. Anyway, that's how we got started, to make a long story short.

Don: Or a short story long!

What's been your goal in breeding? I know it's not to breed pets.

Dot: No, obviously. We have gone at this in a way that reflects how we got started. The fact that we managed to win a Group at our first show has slanted us toward specializing in Group competition, so our goal hasn't been to produce bunches of champions, although we realize that comes along with it. Our main interest has been to get the flyer, the dog that will do well in Group competition. As a result, in our breeding program we put the emphasis on selecting a puppy out of the litter that we thought would be the flyer, not putting so much emphasis on seeing to it that the rest of the litter went to show homes. I'd much rather see the puppies end up in good homes, and good homes are often pet homes. The show home isn't always the best place for a puppy, even if it is good show quality.

Well, look at yourselves. You started off as a pet home.

Dot: Exactly, and often we find that's true. You can put a dog in a pet home, and if it's a good dog, you can interest the people later in having it shown. A couple of weeks ago when we were coming back from some shows in Michigan, we stopped to visit a fellow who bought a puppy from us that's now four years old, and the dog has turned out just as nicely as we thought it

would. At the time the fellow contacted us, we knew he was just basically interested in a pet. He wasn't interested in showing. Now that we've gone back and have seen the dog, who is very nice, we have tried to encourage him to consider showing it. I think he's not actually equipped and doesn't have the time to do it himself, because he's also into competition, very heavily, in a whole different arena. He's into racing motorcycles. But he seemed willing to have us show the dog, and he's looking forward to having the dog shown as soon as it comes back into coat.

You can encourage people to do that, and yet if you know the dog is in a lovely home, you don't feel badly about it. The business of finishing lots of dogs has not been our thing, although I will say we enjoy competing in the classes, in fact, maybe even more so now than we ever have in the past. It's getting to the point now where competition in the specials arena is perhaps more cutthroat than it was before, and I don't find it that pleasant.

Don: It takes a lot more work than it used to, and I don't have as much energy as I used to.

Dot: As we get older, our emphases change.

Don: In recent years, we may have been looking more at producing, although we still have an eye out for the flyer. We're probably going to try to get somebody else to take the flyer and do something with it.

Dot: It's to the point now where the traveling takes its toll, and if you have a good dog, you feel guilty sitting home and not showing it when it should be out. It's true that we'll probably change our emphases as we go here. When we started out breeding, while it was a means to an end, I can't say that either of us looked at it as an end in itself. As we've gotten older, we've enjoyed more and more the process of having the litters, seeing the puppies develop, grading them and seeing whether our predictions are right. Everyone gets into the game for different aspects, and as you continue participating, your emphases change, depending upon your circumstances. Our goals in the past have been primarily aimed at the Group and Best in Show competition.

Do you have any idea how many litters you've bred?

Dot: We were just trying to figure that out. We were thinking you would ask us, and we knew we would have trouble answering it without checking our records. It's somewhere in the vicinity of a couple of dozen.

So you wouldn't consider yourselves prolific breeders?

Dot: No. We've been breeding for seventeen years.

Don: So it's really only one or two litters a year on the average. We've recently gone a couple of years without any litters, but this year we're breeding more heavily than we ever have in the past.

Which dogs do you consider to be your biggest winners?

Dot: There's no quarrelling about that. The first bitch we picked out as our foundation bitch was Ch. Kipperic Kandu of Suruka Orr.

Don: The first one we picked out was Ch. Kipperic D'Lite of Frost River. That is, we had a puppy on reservation from the Jameses of Frost River kennel in California. The Laskeys had their litter, and we were using it to practice grading puppies. That was the first chance we had to grade puppies. We went over to their house a couple of times a week just to grade their puppies so we could go through the process of watching them develop.

Dot: We took movies of them each week just to try to figure out what age was optimal and what we could learn at different ages. We never intended to buy a puppy from that litter at all.

Don: One caught her eye, of course, and she kept saying, "This one is a winner! This one is a winner!" I would say, "Yes, but we have one coming from California, and we can't have two. We don't need two." That's the way it's been for twenty years.

Dot: We ended up buying both. That one I had my eye on about which I kept saying "This one is a winner" became a winner. She still holds the record for the breed. She had two All Breed Bests in Show, Best of Breed at the National Specialty, and I can't tell you how many Groups.

Don: She was the top Samoyed in 1974.

Dot: Until Frances Powers' dog, she was the first and only bitch that had ever been top Samoyed in all the rating systems. We had a lot of fun showing Kandi, because when we started to special her, everybody told us we were crazy to try to special a bitch. Indeed, at something like the first thirteen shows in which we specialized her, she took thirteen Bests of Opposite Sex, and we were getting frustrated. But then things started clicking, and we got some breaks. She won the National Specialty, and it was just two or three weeks later that she took her first Best in Show. Things just seemed to fall into place. She had some lucky Group wins after that, and the word started getting out. We did very well with her. After we showed her ourselves for a year and collected her specialty win and



Sled race photo, taken circa 1969.

What did you think, Don?

Don: It was very interesting. I learned an awful lot.

Dot: It was a tremendous experience for him.

Don: I got to know a lot of people, even though I wasn't handling her all of the time, because I was with the handler.

Dot: He learned much about grooming and about other breeds. The handler we picked out was not out of the Working Group, and we did that deliberately. We picked a Terrier handler, because we wanted someone who (a) did not have conflicts with other clients' dogs in the Working Group and (b) had some handling skill. In those days, most of the professional handlers in the Working Group seemed to do nothing but accompany the dog in the ring. The Terrier people seemed to be the ones who had the skill with the coat conditioning and using a

leash to get the dog to do what they wanted it to do. They just seemed to be more equipped to handle this type of dog. We were looking for somebody who was not very large, because our bitch was not as big as the males. We didn't want her to go in with somebody who was six feet six inches tall and emphasize the fact that she was not big. She was 21 inches tall, but right around the time we started specializing her, a lot of the dogs being shown were pretty large, so 21 inches for a bitch was not considered big.

Don: A lot of people thought she was a little on the small side. Later we showed her sister, who was a bigger bitch, and they liked her better because she was bigger.

Dot: The arrangement that we had with this handler worked out marvelously, because he did teach Don a lot about handling dogs other than just Sammies and helped

us establish many friendships in the dog game.

Don: The Terrier handler was important mainly because of the temperament of this bitch. She was not a zip-around-the-ring kind of dog in temperament.

Dot: She was very placid.

Don: By this time, she also was about four years old and was pretty much in her prime. It was not wise to spend the next year training and conditioning her to the handler's liking. He realized this, to his credit.

Dot: He did give her priority. If he saw a judging lineup that looked good for her eight hours away, he would go to that show for her. It didn't matter if other clients didn't have dogs going there; he would leave them home. It wasn't as though he had to have a whole complement of dogs going to a show in order to feel motivated.

Who was the handler of this dog?

Dot: Doug McClain. He's now out of handling.

Don: One of the old-timers.

Dot: Yes. He dates back mainly to the 1930s and 1940s.

Don: He handled up until just a few years ago, but his health now prevents him from doing much.

Dot: He's a contemporary of Dick Cooper, George Ward and Phil Marsh. Many of his contemporaries have retired and gone into judging. Doug could never bring himself to do that. His temperament did not suit him to judging.

Don: He was a Terrier himself, so to speak. He was a tremendous source of information for us.

Dot: He taught Don a lot about handling.

Don: We got by for very little money by doing it the way we did, too. Doug charged the way he had charged when he was up there with the best of them. He couldn't bring himself to acknowledge the changing times, I think.

Dot: He didn't take bonuses unless he had a Group One or a Best in Show, and his rates were not that high. I would have to say that by traveling with him, we didn't have the expenses we did when we traveled by ourselves.

Don: I helped him with his other dogs, which turned out to be mostly class dogs, Terriers. By that time, because he didn't have another big dog, he was able to give his attention to our bitch, so it worked out very well for us. People in our breed did not know who he was when we hired him and wanted to know where we got this little, short guy with all the change in his pocket.

Dot: Where we got this funny guy with the baggy pants.

Don: They changed their minds after he started winning very readily. After a few shows, he got her used to being handled like a Terrier, and they did beautifully.

Dot: We were thrilled to death when we saw him with her at Chicago International, which was only the third show he had her in. He took Breed with her and then won the Group. We sat there watching the two of them perform at that show, and it was a thrill for us. She finally performed for him in a way that we had always wanted her to perform. We had not been sure she ever would, because temperamentally she was almost a creature of her own comforts. She would do what she felt comfortable with, and if it wasn't what you had in mind, that was tough. He did have a way with her that paid off. We made a good choice there. We had just one specific goal, that he go for one year and do the best he could with her. He put another

Best in Show on her and many Group placements.

Don: Her made her the top Samoyed that year.

Dot: It was a good experience all the way around, not just for the dog and the record, but specifically because it taught us a great deal. Then our second big winner after Kandi was Sunniglo. I had spotted him when I was judging a match. He was a little puppy in the three-month age bracket somewhere. I fell in love with that puppy and put him up for Best Puppy in Match. The owner later brought him out when he was about six to eight months old and showed him, and I believe he got his American and Canadian championships before he was a year old. Sometime later when they were at a specialty, they had a whole bunch of dogs entered, and they couldn't possibly get all those dogs in the ring. They asked Don if he would go in with this one dog, Sunniglo, and help them show him at the specialty. He did, and he got lots of attention with the dog, making the final cut, in fact, and coming very close to taking the Breed the next day after the National. Sometime after that, they were going to enter him at a show in our own neck of the woods, and they asked Don again if he could help them out, because Mrs. Anderson, who kept the dog and showed him, was having health problems and couldn't easily show the dog herself. She was afraid to run. He said, "Fine." If she was coming up, he would help her show the dogs. He took the Breed that day and a Group III.

Don: He was bred by Gail Matthews of Nordic Samoyeds.

Dot: That hooked them. They saw how well he could do, but they were not in a situation that allowed them to special a dog, at least not on a regular basis.

Don: Gail's husband had been transferred, and they were living down in Tennessee and then Ohio. Her mother had the dog, so it was complicated to get him out. We just agreed to show him once in a while when her mother wanted to enter him.

Dot: One thing led to another, and soon we were co-owners on the dog and going out like gang busters showing this dog and having a good time with him. In 1978, we took him to the National. Actually, we had taken him to the National in 1977, and he took an Award of Merit. In 1978, we started hitting shows regularly with him. We went out to the SCA National Specialty in Portland, and he took Best of Breed. That one surprised us, because we had never been under that judge before and did not think the dog would be his type. In fact, the same thing had happened at the 1973 National

Specialty with Kandi. We had never shown her to that judge either and had no idea how she would be received on the West Coast, so we were just thrilled when she won. Two days after the 1978 Portland Specialty win, Sunni took his Best in Show in Vancouver, Washington.

Don: Unfortunately, neither Gail nor her mother was able to be out there.

Dot: After that, he had a hot streak going, and we picked up a lot of Group wins. He managed to end up number one in the U.S. in one of the rating systems.

Don: Number two in the other. It came down to the last shows of the year in December. It was just the luck of the draw.

Dot: Then we retired him, just as we had done with Kandi. With none of our dogs have we ever felt we wanted to keep going and going. I believe in showing them when they are in their prime and then retiring them. We retired Kandi in 1975, after Doug had her out a year. Sunni took the Specialty in 1978 and Best in Show in 1978, and we retired him in the spring of 1979. We've had others with whom we've done some nice Group winning or who have won Group placements, but nothing has quite matched those two records. We've had a number with multiple Group placements. Jaksun, and who else?

Don: Quite a number of them have had several, but we've never shown any of the others as consistently as we did those. Kandita probably is the closest one now. She is the bitch we currently have out. She has been out in two stints, because she was shown a bit before she was bred a couple of years ago, and now we're just getting her out and going well again this year.

Dot: We have a new one out now, too, Heritage Heroine, "Phoebe," whom we got back from Phoebe Faulmann just before she died. We had sold her to Phoebe when she was a puppy. She's doing very nicely for us. She finished this spring and has three Group placements so far. We have some coming along all the time that can do some winning, and we enjoy getting them out and showing them. I don't know if we'll ever have any that will equal the records of those two that we had before, but if we don't, it's no big deal. I'm happy that we did that much. We'll keep looking for the flyer that we can show now and then. It's getting to the point now where our age is catching up with us, and we can't go a solid year campaigning a dog the way we would need to if we wanted to make the rating systems. We'll probably settle back and show more in the classes now and do less in terms of specializing, but we'll do some.

How many dogs do you have?

Dot: We had twelve until Phoebe's came along, and now we're at twenty.

Don: We took seven of Phoebe's dogs that were basically out of the dog she got from us, K.C., and the breedings she did with him.

How many dogs did she have?

Dot: She had just about as many as we do now, around ten or fifteen Sammies.

Don: Of course, she placed a number of those over a period of time.

Dot: After thinking about it, she had to have a good deal more than ten, because we got seven of them, quite a few went elsewhere, and her husband Erv kept some. She must have had closer to twenty, and then she had the Chihuahuas.

Don: We have more dogs than we want to have right now, but I don't know what we're going to do about it, because most of them are still dogs that we can and want to have around to show and breed. We don't want to just find another home for them.

Dot: They're good dogs. There are some old-timers among that crowd. How old is Neko? Eleven?

Don: Several of them are from nine to eleven years old. Another crop is about six or seven years old.

Dot: The population problem will eventually take care of itself.

Is this the greatest number of dogs you have ever had?

Dot: It certainly is, except for about five or six years ago, when there was a peak in our population that was close to this. That was through another set of strange circumstances in which we were suddenly getting dogs right and left. It ironed itself out, and we were able to get down to about a dozen. We feel comfortable with a dozen, and we're set up to handle that number pretty nicely. We're not set up for twenty. The amount of work involved with that number is a little much.

Don: If I could retire, it might be all right.

Dot: For sure.

What sort of setup do you have?

Dot: We have a house we built in 1976 on a hillside. It's actually on eight acres, up on a hill, which is sufficiently isolated and wooded that we don't have neighbor problems. Since the house is on a hillside, we set it up so the basement comes out on ground level on one side, and the dogs have indoor/outdoor runs from that level. There are enough kennel spaces there that we can comfortably handle twelve. We also have a large area fenced off in the woods that gives them a good exercise pen, to race around and stretch their legs. That is not totally dog-proof. I do have some trouble with dogs occasionally digging out of that, so I

have to be careful.

Don: They're not supposed to go out there and stay, anyway. We put several of them out at a time to play and exercise.

Dot: Then we bring them in. They have done such marvels with that outer area. It used to be heavily wooded with lots of undergrowth. My husband cleared out some of it, and I kept saying, "No, no, don't take any more." But what he didn't take, the dogs have. So now it's down to a few large oak trees, which they are tunneling under at a great rate. I keep worrying about this hundred-foot oak tree falling over someday. It looks rather like craters of the moon out there, but they have a grand time and really do get themselves in good physical condition. For those I can't feel comfortable putting out there because of their excavation activity, we've now begun to use a dog trotter to keep them in good condition. That works fine, but I'd much prefer that they be able to stretch their legs out there if they could.

Don: When we're campaigning some of them, we have to restrict their activity in order to salvage the coat. They're the ones for which we use the trotter more than anything else.

Have you done any sled work?

Dot: We have. In fact, we used to participate in it heavily for recreation when we first got started with our three Sammies. We had a sled that we built cooperatively with a fellow who had some Siberians in Madison, and we'd go out on the weekends and just enjoy sledding.

Don: Several of our friends had from one to three dogs, but nobody had any real numbers, so we got together and pooled them in order to sled.

Dot: Oh, we had a grand time with it. We would do it as a form of conditioning. When we had Kandi out, we used to use her as our lead dog, because she was not a self-exerciser; it was a tremendously good way to keep her in physical condition.

Don: She was a good lead dog only because she was a very controllable dog.

Dot: Yes, she was. She had a willingness to follow the commands and do what you asked her. It was a means to an end at that point. But sledding was just more than Don could keep up with, so gradually the sledding went by the wayside, as he complained he was doing more work than the lead dog.

Don: To train and work dogs in earnest takes a lot of time. There's a lot of work involved. If you breed or if you show in conformation or obedience, in addition to sledding and holding down a job or two besides, you run out of time after a while, not

to mention energy.

Dot: I was looking at the sled the other day and thinking we should sell it, because it's just sitting there and getting rusty now.

Could you take it to an antique store?

Don: Since that one was a home-built sled out of conduit (in fact, it was after one of Bob Ward's old designs that he described somewhere), most people would probably look askance at it today, although it worked for our purposes.

Dot: It's not one of those beautifully lashed-together sleds, but it worked. We got our share of fun from it, and we used to hook up anywhere from three to eight dogs on it. We made the newspapers with it.

Don: We got caught by a photographer in one of the parks, so we made the leisure section of the Sunday paper.

After that first dog, did you work any others in obedience?

Dot: Oh, yes.

Don: Yes, we have done a number, although not nearly the number we have had our hands on. Five or six.

Dot: We put CDs on both of our two foundation bitches that we used for breeding. There are some others, but I'm just trying to think of who.

Don: Sasha was our last. Of course, we had Kip originally, the first dog, and then two bitches we acquired. There was at least one more.

Dot: Neither of us has the talent to train a top obedience dog.

Don: Not talent, personality.

Dot: Okay, call it what you want. For us, it's been recreation, and we do it mainly to see that we have a well-trained and well-behaved dog. It's not really for the purpose of top competition. We're not in there to get scores of 199. We feel delighted if we make the 190s. We found when we started training our third one (I think), so much of the emphasis in the obedience club trials had become the keen competition for those placings. There were all these little tricks that people were using to try to get their dogs to be number one or top winner, and for us, it robbed the sport of some of the fun. It suddenly became just as keen personal competition as anything else.

Don: The judging had changed some, too, and the emphasis had shifted along the way. I didn't think the judging was what I wanted to see anymore.

Dot: We had always looked at obedience as creating a good family pet, and when we saw all these things going on, we said, "This doesn't look to us like a good family pet." These people are doing ear pinches and all that other stuff, and it just

didn't appeal to us. At that point, we dropped out of obedience for a while and didn't get back into it until about 1981 or 1982. When we got back into it, we found that perhaps our experiences on some of those prior occasions were a little unrepresentative of what was actually going on, and we enjoyed it again.

Don: We've trained several dogs that we just haven't taken into competition, because we haven't had time to do that.

Dot: When we have trained them, we have often gone beyond the CD, even though all we were competing for was the CD. You find that Sammies learn so quickly and get bored so rapidly that if you don't vary things and give them challenges along the way as you're working on refining what they already know, then you end up with a dog that's already either ringwise or so bored with the whole business he starts creating his own inventions. For example, we trained that first dog through all the CDX exercises before we ever started in CD competition, and it helped us. We had to use the drop on recall just to get him to slow down on the recall, because he was coming in so fast he was bumping into us. With the drop on recall, he'd know that he could possibly be stopped, and therefore, he'd slow down and wait instead of just racing right in. We used things like the dumbbell and the jumping over high jumps just to give him something in the way of variation so he wouldn't become bored with it all. It was enjoyable to see what a Sammie could do in obedience, because in those days, there weren't many people who were doing a lot of obedience work with Sammies. I really admired the few who were. I still marvel to this day at the people who get nice performances on Open and Utility dogs. That's a lot of work.

Where does the kennel name "Kipperic" come from?

Dot: Our first dog's call name was Kip, which often got perverted to Kipper. When we were looking for a kennel name, Don said, "You know, everyone associates us with that dog," because we were showing him and had not only put a championship on him but had specialied him a little bit. In fact, when we retired him, he had over 50 Bests of Breed, a couple of Group placements, and was one of the top ten Sammies (I think he was ninth). So people associated us with the dog. We thought it would be nice to somehow incorporate that into the kennel name, but I couldn't quite come up with anything that caught my fancy. When I suggested Kipperic to Don, he said, "Oh no, we don't want that." Then I started playing around with logos and trying to figure out what we could use as a symbol. When I

came up with the sled, the three dogs and the K as the rider on the sled, with the "ipperic" part of it on the sled, it caught his fancy. It not only incorporated Kipper and the sledding activity we were into pretty heavily at that point, but also the three dogs represented the three Sammies we had at the time. When he looked at it, he said, "You know, you're right. It really fits."

Don: It was the result of a process, because we were trying different things to come up with some sort of name.

Dot: He and I never agree on names anyway. Every litter is such a struggle. When we have to name a puppy, I'll throw 35,000 names at him, and he won't like any of them. However, he won't even throw three names at me. Finally he'll agree that one of those that I've hammered away on for 35 or 40 times is perhaps adequate, and we'll come up with a name. We've never had a lot of talent when it comes to naming Sammies. It's been a tough process for us.

Do you have any idea how many champions you've bred?

Don: We were going to try to look at that in our ad in the catalog.

Dot: I did look at it. It's around two dozen.

Don: We've always advertised those we've owned as well as those we've bred, and so we haven't separated those out.

Dot: Yes, those we've owned and shown ourselves. Altogether, there are 38 Samoyeds we have either bred and/or owned and shown to championships. But, of the ones we've exclusively bred, the number is around two dozen.

Don: Our two top Sammies, of course, were not ones we bred, but we had a number to start with that we bought from other people, all of which we showed.

Have you ever refused to service a bitch?

Dot: Yes.

Don: Sure.

Dot: We actually have two criteria we use when we're approached for services. One, of course, is the quality of the bitch herself, but the other is whether we think the owners will be responsible in raising the litter, placing the puppies and caring for the bitch herself. That's often as much or more of a concern than the quality of the bitch. I do not mean to say the quality of the bitch isn't important, but the quality of the bitch is often quite adequate. The problem is whether the owner is willing to do the things that should be done to make sure the litter is raised and sold well.

Don: But we actually have had a lot of success that way. If you talk to people and explain the reasons for the things you're

suggesting and questioning, they understand and will cooperate. If they're willing to take these steps to assure the breeding is a decent breeding, it will produce healthy, typical dogs, and they will understand the importance of screening the buyers. No breed is right for every person.

Dot: I don't base my criteria on whether the people themselves show, and I know that's provoked the ire of some individuals. However, I am perfectly willing to breed to a good show quality bitch that isn't in a show home. In fact, that's how we've gotten some of our stock. Ch. Kipperic Jaquita, for example, came out of a perfectly good quality bitch in a pet home. The owners came to us and wanted to do the breeding. Pedigree-wise it was beautiful, and the bitch was an excellent bitch. We were just delighted with it, and we took the bitch's pick-of-the-litter puppy as a stud fee. We couldn't have asked for anything nicer. Many people who have seen the bitch feel she's probably one of the better quality bitches we've had. I do like to make sure the people understand what's going to be involved in placing those puppies.

A number of these people who have come to us for a breeding without an initial interest in showing have become interested in showing. They see our interest in the litter, and we often try to help them place puppies we think are show quality in show homes. They'll follow up on them, become interested in the success of those puppies, and start getting interested in showing themselves. It's worked well. We've felt quite satisfied with almost every one of the stud services that we've done.

The stud business is not something we enjoy. We're not promoters, and I don't feel comfortable with a lot of what I see going on in the stud dog business. I'm perfectly happy and comfortable with the stud business at the level we have engaged in it, which is not all that often. We have not done a lot of stud business, and that's fine with me.

Don: We use them mostly for ourselves, which is also why we have never had that many males. We have mostly bitches, because we can't use males that much ourselves. We still use other males, too. They just don't pay to keep unless you have a really exceptional dog.

What is a fair stud fee?

Dot: That varies so much from area to area. In our area (and our stud fees aren't that different from others in our area), we've been charging around \$250. Some people are charging around \$300. I don't think anyone in our area is charging over \$300. Maybe some are, but in other parts of the

country, charging less than \$300 would be unheard of.

Don: It's generally been considered the price of a puppy. Whether you call it a show or a pet puppy may be where the variation comes in.

Dot: In our area, puppies generally don't sell for as much as they do on either the East or West Coast. Perhaps it reflects the activity in our own area. There are quite a few breeders in our area.

Don: The significant, long-term breeders.

Dot: When you start looking at entries at shows and majors in Wisconsin and Minnesota, for example, or northern Illinois, there's hardly a weekend there isn't a major. It's extremely easy to find majors up in our area, and it reflects the level of activity of the breeders up there. As a result, there are usually puppies available just about anytime somewhere around there.

When I went out to buy a dog, I had to realize there was considerable risk that it might not turn out to be as good show quality as I thought, or it might have some disastrous thing happen to it. Face it, animals have a propensity for getting themselves into trouble in various ways. For all the care and effort we all put into dogs, things do happen. I have never felt that I could justify mortgaging my house and car to buy a good dog, and for that reason, I would feel just as guilty asking other people to pay very high prices for a puppy from us, no matter how good I thought that puppy was. I just couldn't bring myself to do that. We have always been in the middle of the range of what people charge for puppies. I certainly know that we're not at the top end of the scale.

Also, I have never felt that prices were a good screening device. People sometimes say that by charging higher prices you'll weed out those who aren't serious or aren't really interested. But I don't find that works. There are many people with lots of money and unsuitable homes and others who can provide a great home but may not be the wealthiest people on earth. As a result, we would rather charge a moderate price and make sure the puppy is going to a good home by asking questions than charge a high price to weed out people. In addition, when you start talking big prices for pets, you set up an expectation for these people which may not be realistic. If they expect that dog to live to be eighteen years old, be the family pet forevermore, never have problems of any kind and be the perfect dog because they paid a big price for it, sooner or later they will find a vet bill along the way or an accident will happen. It's a

little more realistic to charge a fair price, and God only knows what a fair price is. We try to be reasonable about it.

Do you x-ray your dogs?

Dot: We sure do. We've been doing that right from the start. Of course, when we got started, OFA had just come into existence, somewhere in the middle 1960s. There was much controversy in those days about whether you should go to OFA or to Dr. So-and-So here or Dr. So-and-So there. We've been certifying through OFA all along.

Don: There was concern about the proper use of an OFA number.

Dot: In those days there was controversy about whether they should even be published.

Don: And also about what having a number on your dog implied for its suitability for breeding.

Dot: When we first started breeding, we bought our foundation stock from kennels and bloodlines where we knew the hip dysplasia record had been very good. We naively assumed that meant we were going to continue without ever having any problems, and of course, we did encounter some dysplasia. At first, it really demoralized us, and then we realized that, with conscientious selection, we could work our way around such problems, which we did. In recent years, I have had a feeling we're probably doing better than most breeders in terms of coming up with a lot of OFA excellents and very few dysplastics. I feel we've made some real progress in that area. It's just like everything else. You learn your bloodlines, and you learn where the weaknesses are and how to work around them to eliminate them. Every bloodline has problems. It may not be dysplasia. It may be eyes or heart or who knows what? There will always be something, and you gradually learn what those problems are.

When we started out, we tried to figure out what those problems were, what we had to deal with and where the weaknesses were. Once we had that figured out and knew what dogs we could use to help eliminate various problems, we had a pretty good handle on all our dogs. For each one, we knew what the worst problems and greatest assets were likely to be, where to go for the strengths and how to avoid the weaknesses we were trying to deal with. In recent years, I've been a little more reluctant than many people to use stock that's completely unrelated to mine because of concern that I would introduce for the first time, or reintroduce, problems that I didn't currently have. Often, when you're dealing with other bloodlines, you aren't familiar enough with them to know exactly what you may be getting into.

In that sense, I have felt more comfortable dealing with dogs that we've already had some experience with so we know, in general, where their strengths and weaknesses are and can deal with them. In the last five to ten years, we've gotten it down to the point where I can predict fairly accurately what I'm going to get.

At what point do you evaluate puppies?

Dot: Boy, that's one that varies a great deal with bloodlines. With the first bitch we had (the one we picked out from her littermates with our practice sessions with the movie camera), we felt comfortable making a decision at eight weeks with those bloodlines. If we waited until ten or twelve weeks, they had gone into ganglies, and it was very deceiving to look at them at that age. If we looked at them at six weeks, the muscling was not strong enough yet for us to be confident we knew the movement would be what we were seeing. With litters from that bitch, as well as the other foundation bitch that we had, eight weeks was a great time to evaluate them. In various breedings where we've gotten away from those two bloodlines or brought in others, we have sometimes found that the eight-week mark is not always a reliable time. When I started getting involved with some of the Sunniglo relatives and some of the Nordic dogs that Gail had, I found that the movement I saw at eight weeks was not always indicative of what I got later on. That made it even more difficult for us, in a way, to evaluate litters. In fact, when I talk to other breeders who have been at it a long time, they all agree with us that the longer you're in this game, the more you realize how little you really know. I can't say that I know exactly what I have at eight weeks. It just doesn't work that way. When I'm working within a bloodline that I feel I know quite well - strictly a linebreeding of that type - then I can feel a little more confident in knowing whether eight weeks is a good time to evaluate or whether it may fail to give me a proper indication.

Don: It varies from eight to twelve weeks, with most of them probably being eight or nine weeks old. At that time, we find the puppies most resemble their adult appearance, and they are old enough to accurately evaluate their movement and structure. Now, there are people who are very good at evaluating puppies with their hands at very early ages, but for most people, it helps to see the puppies perform. They have to be old enough to have some strength and agility.

To be continued...