

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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"Karma"

Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Barbara Heal
POLOBAR

Spencerville, Ontario, Canada

This interview was conducted at the home of Barbara Heal in October of 1997 by Diane Solman.

For what publications do you write?

I started writing for the *Dogs in Canada Breedlines* column about eight years ago. This is a monthly column relating to breed specific issues. I've enjoyed writing these articles; however, I am seriously thinking about handing over the responsibility to someone else now. There is only so much one can say month after month, year after year about a particular breed. It's time for some fresh new ideas and topics. I have dabbled a bit on other articles. One in particular which comes to mind was an interview I did for *Dogs in Canada* with judges and specifically their spouses, entitled "For Better or Worse." Being married to a judge, I could easily relate to situations surrounding this. An example is an exhibitor who will often approach the spouse bemoaning the fact that they lost at a particular show and would like to know if I could tell them why! Then there are others who think that spouses shouldn't be allowed to exhibit as they will always win because "he/she is married to a judge." I wish!

How long have you been in dogs/Samoyeds?

Well, apart from a couple of pets, specifically a Beagle and a Dalmatian when I was very young, I started in Samoyeds in 1969 while living in Truro, Nova Scotia. I, like so many others, went about it the wrong way. All I was looking for was a companion dog, so I searched the pet columns of the newspapers. Though my first two Samoyeds were registered, they were not by any means show dogs. I did, however, enter one at a sanction match. After taking Winners Male and receiving a few ribbons, I thought I was on top of the world. No one

could have told me then that he was just the best of a bad bunch of Samoyeds. Then came the point shows and reality set in. I couldn't quite understand why I was always placing last; after all, we won at a sanction match! It was at this point that I was taken under the wings of Flo and Cecil Beesley of Chakka Kennels in New Brunswick, whom I met at a dog show. I can always remember the hurt I felt when Flo gently advised me not to breed either of my two

Toronto Sportsman Show. This was a week-long benched show and probably the last of the benched shows. I learned more about Samoyeds and dogs in general during that one week than I did my two years in Nova Scotia. Dog shows can be such a learning tool if used correctly. Nowadays so many novices are too impatient and not willing to spend the time to watch and learn what goes on at shows. I'm not talking about the usual gossip that some may find more interesting than breed related issues. Many of today's newcomers simply arrive, show their dogs and leave shortly thereafter. Benched shows, though often tiring, did provide breed-

years but unfortunately has not been totally eradicated. I don't think breeders should ever become too confident that their lines are clear. As breeders, I'm sure we have all been in the position at one time or another when we find ourselves with a dysplastic dog. Sometimes the severity can be as such that it can set you into a tailspin. There is nothing more heart-breaking than discovering your new prospect was diagnosed grade three. All your hopes and dreams quickly crumble. There should be no shame if this should occur, as it can happen to anyone. However, it would be very unethical to perpetuate the problem by breeding it. I would like to take this opportunity to point out that in cases of a borderline or a grade one diagnosis, the situation should be reevaluated at a later date. There has been much written about conflicting diagnosis within the veterinarian profession. I know of instances where the results have proven less than favorable by the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) but cleared with the Orthopedic Foundation of America (OFA), or vice versa. There are other extenuating circumstances, too, which can affect the outcome of an X-ray, such as incorrect positioning or in the case of a bitch nearing her heat cycle. However, it is almost impossible to mistake severe cases, particularly where the dog is showing apparent signs of trouble such as limping.

What other problems do Samoyeds have?

Some breeders check for elbow dysplasia; however, the instances here are very low in comparison to hip problems. Other areas of concern can be eye problems such as PRA, cataracts or glaucoma. Fortunately, with today's advanced technology, these problems can be monitored. *The Samoyed Book*, which was written by a number of American and Canadian Samoyed breeders, has an excellent write-up and illustration describing a number of eye disorders.

How popular is the Samoyed?

When I first started in Samoyeds the breed was not very popular. In fact many people could not even pronounce the name properly. Over the years their popularity has grown, but fortunately not to the extent of Golden Retrievers



Samoyeds. To say I was shocked was an understatement!

However, she patiently explained their good and bad points with very little of the former. After this enlightenment, both became housepets with an incredible repertoire of tricks followed by obedience training. During this time I purchased my foundation bitch from the Beesley's, Chakka's Siberian Soul Sister. In 1971, I moved to Toronto, Ontario, where the Samoyed entries were almost overwhelming. There were many breeders in the area: Betty Dickson (Ziska Kennels), Pat Stonham (Khingan Kennels), Helga and Frank Gruber (Shebaska Kennels), Betty McHugh (Nepachee Kennels) just to name a few. The biggest show during that time was the

ers the opportunity to learn by sharing ideas, knowledge and pedigrees.

How did you derive your kennel name?

Polo was my first Samoyed. He was born on the day the first space shuttle, Apollo, landed on the moon. I therefore combined that with my first name, Barbara. As much as I dislike combining names (lacks originality), I felt that the name Polobar had a specific meaning as this was the beginning of a new adventure for me. Also, it was a play on words as so often Samoyed puppies are compared in appearance with little polar bear cubs.

What is the incidence of hip dysplasia?

Due to the conscientious efforts of breeders, the problem has certainly decreased over the

or German Shepherds. As a result there is never a problem in selling to pet homes. The Samoyed does make an excellent housepet and thoroughly enjoys its human companions.

The only concern I have is that many pet owners are of the opinion that the Samoyed is strictly an outdoor dog and unfortunately this myth has even been perpetuated by some in the veterinary profession. It is felt that the Samoyed could not endure the warm indoor temperatures as a result of its heavy coat. Nothing could be further from the truth. First it should be understood that the Samoyed's puppy coat will develop according to its environment. A young puppy who resides indoors will not develop the same heavy coat if left outside continuously, particularly in cold temperatures. It would be extremely uncomfortable for a heavy-coated dog to be brought inside after spending years outdoors, simply because his owner now wants to make a housepet out of him. I will not sell a puppy to a home where the intent is to turn him into a backyard fixture. I usually advise these people buy a shrub instead! I just can't understand why anyone would want to own a dog without sharing their domain.

How many litters do you breed?

Usually just one litter a year. I have occasionally had two in a year but that's rare. As my husband breeds Doberman Pinschers, he too likes to have a litter annually as well. I like to enjoy my puppies and this can only be done when the litters are kept to a minimum. There is a tremendous amount of work involved when raising a litter, if done properly. Our puppies are born and raised in the house. We have a small room in the back section of the house which is referred to as the nursery. As the puppies get older they become accustomed to household noises such as radio/TV, vacuum cleaner, dishwasher, etc. By the time they are ready to leave they have pretty well seen and heard it all.

Why are you involved with dogs?

Good question. I have often asked myself that. I guess we have to have some vices! Seriously though, I suppose it is for the love of dogs, if that doesn't sound too sappy, which has now turned into a 29-year hobby. As



Ch. Polobar's Mr. President (Ch. Polobar's Murphy's Law x Samovar's Grin 'N Bear II).

I child I always loved dogs but was never allowed to own one. So I did the next best thing and became a "dog walker," and it didn't matter whose dog. I would ring people's doorbells and ask, "Can I take Nipper for a walk?" Many times I was bitten but it never stopped me.

Which was your best litter?

If you are referring to the number of champions in a particular litter that would have to be my first litter. I bred my foundation bitch, Chakka's Siberian Soul Sister to English import Eng/Can/Am Ch. Fairville's Istvan of Airebis. There were five puppies in this litter, three of which became Canadian champions by a year of age. Polobar's Prince Albert was my very first champion, followed by his brother Polobar's White

Baron and then their sister, Polobar's Lady Samantha. There have been other litters that I have been pleased with, but as this was my first with champions to boot, it became my sentimental favorite.

Who was your biggest winning dog?

Probably Ch. Polobar's Prince Albert. He was a flashy puppy that loved the dog shows even as an adult. He picked up a five-point win his first time out at the tender age of six months, and then went on to take Best of Breed over nine Specials. He also won Best Canadian Bred at the Samoyed National Specialty in Montreal in 1973.

The competition during the early 70's was much tougher than it is today, particularly at Group level as the Herding

Group didn't exist. The Working Group was very large and extremely competitive. I have had many dogs over the years who have had their share of Group wins and placings as well as several Best Puppy in Show wins. But the Best in Show award has always eluded me. It's probably been my biggest disappointment. However, I am not done yet; one never knows!

How do you come up with your names?

I have had some litters with Russian names so as to be consistent with their origin but I was never very fond of that. I found many of those names rather harsh and so untypical of the soft and sweet nature of the breed. Not to mention the fact that I could never remember how to spell half of them!



Can/Am/Eng Ch. Fairvilla's Istivan of Aerebis (Eng/Can Ch. Demitrio of Kobe x Eng Ch. Snowfern of Garwood).



Can/Am Ch. Moonlighter's Ina Bark Star (Can/Am Ch. Delmonte This is It x Am Ch. Moonlighter's Ice 'N' Spice).

I have always preferred something fun and on the lighter side, for example Ch. Polobar's Murphy's Law, Ch. Polobar's Johnny Be Good, Ch. Polobar's Bad News Bear or my most

recent puppy, Polobar's Lord of the Dance.

What has brought you more success: inbreeding, linebreeding or outcrossing?

From my point of view it

would have to be linebreeding. One has to keep an open mind when doing an outcross. The results can be a little of everything or a lot of nothing. I have done outcrosses for specific rea-

sons which have worked for me. However, the key to this is knowing how best to breed the offspring so as to set a specific type.

Inbreeding can be either





Ch. Polobar's Bad News Bear (Can/Am Ch. Moonlighter's Ima Bark Star x Ch. Polobar's Sultry Susie).

very successful or disastrous. A breeder should have a clear insight as to the pedigree and justifiable cause for doing this.

Can the pedigrees in your breed be trusted as to accuracy?

Most experienced breeders can pretty well trust their own pedigrees. However experience will always tell you that there is never any guarantee when it comes to genetics. I have always had a great respect for Mother Nature!

Facing page: Ch. Polobar's Prince Albert at ten years (Can/Am/Eng Ch. Fairvilla's Istivan of Airebis x Chakka's Siberian Soul Sister). Top left corner (facing page): "Albert" at three months.

Do you actually learn from experience or do people talk about it?

Everyone should learn from experience whether it be good or bad. It's those good moments that give us a natural high and the bad ones that bring us back down to earth. Sharing experiences, whether it be on breeding, grooming or showing, can serve to benefit one another.

What do you think is most important, temperament, type or soundness?

As Samoyed breeders we are very fortunate, for the most part, that poor temperaments are not a problem. Serious aggression is rarely seen nowadays, which was not the case about 20 years ago. Today's Samoyeds are usually very

happy and outgoing. It's a close call, but if I had to choose I would take type over soundness.

Soundness can be corrected more easily through careful breeding than type. As a breeder or as a judge, I have a particular image in my mind as to what I want to see in a Samoyed. This is where the interpretation can vary from breeder to breeder. One has only to skim through any number of Samoyed magazines to see the incredible variety. No doubt we all think ours is the "correct type," just like the standard reads. Just looking at the head alone can confuse any newcomer to the breed. There are long muzzles, short muzzles, snipey

muzzles, long ears, short ears, Malamute ears (pointing east and west), round eyes, squinty eyes, light eyes, etc. Then we move onto the rest of the body: too shortcoupled, too rangy, too heavy or not enough bone, too much coat or not enough. Saving the best for last is the overall poor movement we see in our breed. The most serious problem is the lack of reach that many of our Sams exhibit, as a result of straight shoulders. Eliminating these problems is much easier said than done due to a limited gene pool. However, the important thing is to remain aware of the problems and try our best to eliminate them.



Ch. Polobar's Johnny Be Good (Ch. Polobar's Murphy's Law x Samovar's Grin 'N Bear It).

How important is conditioning?

Very important. It can improve a dog's movement, topline and working endurance whether sledding or in the show ring. I used to be an avid sledder (now I follow the Iditarod on the Internet) and would often take two or three dogs out on a trail every day. One such dog who loved to sled was Ch. Polobar's Prince Albert. As a young

dog, his front was not his fortune, but the difference following a winter of sledding was phenomenal. Now I concentrate my efforts on running the dogs loose through the trails we have on our property or biking on some of the back roads.

What about coats?

I'm a bit of a fanatic about coats. I put a fair bit of emphasis on a good coat, not just in

quantity but more importantly, quality. I like to see a Sam with a good thick coat, but not to the point where it will hinder the dog's appearance by making its coat appear cobby. As far color, my personal preference would be cream or white. I'm not terribly keen on biscuit patches or freckles on the face, as I feel it takes away from the overall expression.

Many years ago, I remember the late Pat Stonham showing a solid biscuit Samoyed, Can/Am Ch. Clancy of the Williwaws. He was quite a nice looking dog but I remember Pat's frustration at losing so often because of his color.

How would you compare the Canadian and American standards?

With the new revision in July 1995, the Canadian written

standard is far more complex than its American counterpart. Some have stated that it may be too overdone and I tend to agree. In any event, I don't see any changes to the judging procedures here in Canada since the standard was implemented. In the early 60's and 70's, the size difference was probably the major factor between our two countries. Many of the Canadian dogs were from English stock, hence the smaller dogs. It was only a matter of time before the Canadian standard should follow suit with our American neighbors, particularly as our dogs frequent both countries.

Is there anything in the Samoyed standard that you do not like?

Not particularly. I don't really understand what all of the fuss was about concerning the removal of whiskers. The rationale behind it was that the Samoyed is supposed to be shown in its natural state. Now, who are we kidding here when you see the amount of trimming done on some of the coats! The other minor detail concerns the wording regarding the tail that "a judge should see the tail over the back once when judging." I would have preferred it specified that the tail be seen over the back on its own. I do not like to see a Samoyed with its tail



Ch. Polobar's Prince Albert at ten years.



*Ch. Polobar's Proud Mary
(Ch. Polobar's Murphy's Law x Ch. Polobar's Bad News Bear).*

down, particularly while moving. If it needs that much assistance then there is something wrong with the temperament, usually nervousness. The tail is a barometer which tells you how a dog is reacting to a situation. If it is tucked down between its back legs, then it is obviously not happy and no doubt would probably have its ears pinned back as well. There may be any number of reasons for this attitude; however, holding a tail in place in this particular situation would seem pointless as it will not alter the temperament which, as the standard states, should be "alert and full of action."

How many Samoyeds do you have?

Presently only three. I have had as many as fifteen but I didn't enjoy it as much. I tend to be very fussy about the appearance and cleanliness of the dogs, so maintaining large numbers is a tremendous amount of work. I have seen many breeders bum out quickly simply because they cannot keep up with the grooming. I have

always considered breeding dogs as a hobby, one that should be enjoyed. Also, as I previously stated, we have Doberman Pinschers. When there are two breeds under one roof, it's easy for the numbers to increase. Presently we own six dogs and they all get along well. The Dobbies learn at a very early age about the comfort of curling up with a Sam and resting their heads on their warm, furry bodies.

What is your favorite grooming tool?

It depends on the time of year and the type of coat. During shedding season, a wide tooth comb is my preference. Throughout the rest of the season a pin brush (long pins) and a medium tooth comb. With neutered/spayed dogs, I will use primarily a wide-toothed comb and a rake comb to cut through the overly dense coat which is so typical on spayed or neutered dogs. The finishing touches are always done with a brush.

Do you chalk or scissor your dogs?

I have occasionally used



Ch. Polobar's Kris Kringle (Ch. Katimavik's Taz x Ch. Polobar's Bad News Bear).

chalk but prefer Ring 5 Whiten-er. After the first or second day at a dog show the hocks or legs can get a little gray as a result of dusty flooring. Normally I will just use a self-rinsing cleanser to attain the desired results. In fact, I use this same product throughout the year even when I am not showing.

I do a minimal amount of

scissoring, primarily to shape the hocks or trim to tidy up the feet. A number of years ago I had a bitch who grew an excessive amount of hair around her tuck-up following a litter. It made her appear very cobby and gave her the illusion of being straight in stifle, which she wasn't. With the use of thinning scissors, I was able to maintain her natural

look without going to extremes.

There are some purists who feel that the Samoyed is a natural breed that should not be trimmed at all. Conversely, there are others who will trim extensively. I tend to take the middle road. I do not like to see shaggy feet or hocks. It often makes the dog appear down in pastern or cowhocked.

Do you show your own dogs? Have you ever used a handler?

I always handle my own dogs unless I have a conflict in the ring with a client's dog. I always give my clients priority over my own dogs. It's a tough decision to have to make sometimes, particularly as I know my dogs will show better for me. But that's just part of the



Ch. Polobar's Murphy's Law (Ch. Polobar's Kris Kringle x Ch. Polobar's Risky Business).

game.

Do you think judging is fair?

As the wife of a judge, do you really think I am going to say "no"? Seriously though, judging is a profession and, as in all professions, there is good and bad. That will never change, no matter what the rules or regulations say. You cannot legislate honesty, but for every dishonest judge, there is a dishonest han-

dler or breeder. Unfortunately, though, these shady characters seem to tarnish the entire profession.

I think most people who have been around the show scene for awhile realize that these individuals are the minority.

Do you think that bad judging is the result of politics or a lack of knowledge on the part of the judge?

Both! There are some judges who do "play the game" and some have even been caught. Others get caught in their own ignorance as they have not done their homework, but neither would ever admit to this.

Judge bashing is a favorite sport among many exhibitors. Before I would jump on the bandwagon, I always consider

the source of the complaint. There are some people who always complain, except of course when they win. You have to realize that at a dog show, there are more losers than winners. So the old saying, "misery loves company" is very apropos at dog shows.

Do you think critiquing will be implemented?

I don't think so or at least I



Can/Am Ch. Moonlighter's Ima Bark Star.

hope not. Critiquing could be very constructive at a specialty, provided that the judge does so efficiently. Some judges are very good at doing this while others are not. I was reading one such critique awhile ago and it was hard to separate the winners from the losers. Just about every dog received a gushing compliment described in superlatives: a gorgeous head, a

stunning coat, a fantastic mover, etc.; and then I saw the pictures! Other critiques that I have read are often very vague or too general: good front, good rear, nice movement, etc. It could just as easily have read: four legs, two ears, two eyes, one nose and one tail!

Written critiques do take time, which means our shows would have to be restructured to

accommodate this time frame.

Do you advertise much?

Not as much as I used to. I will occasionally in a breed magazine simply more as support for the Club.

Advertising nowadays is much different than it used to be. It is geared more towards judges rather than breeders. Many breeders will advertise only in magazines that send free

copies to judges. Quite possibly if that policy were to be discontinued, so too might the advertising. Years ago ads always included at least a three-generation pedigree. There was more emphasis put on health guarantees of the offspring of the said dog. Now the emphasis is put on the number of Best in Show, Specialty or Group wins, but rarely a pedigree.



Ch. Polobar's Risky Business, female (Can/Am/Bda Ch. Samovar's Shogon x Polobar's Bad News Bear).

Do you think advertising influences judges?

It might influence some but not all. Many judges are tired of seeing the same dogs pictured over and over.

I have had many judges tell me that they don't even bother opening the magazine when it arrives in the mail. Not all

judges were born yesterday; most are well aware of the games that people play. After all, some of them invented a few games of their own!

Who were or are some of your favourite dogs?

That's a tough one as there are a number of Samoyeds that I have liked over the years. In

the U.S., they would have to be Ch. Belaya Sergeant Pepper and Ch. Belaya Peppermint Patti, as well as Ch. Kondako's Sun Dancer and his daughter Ch. Kondako's Anybody's Girl. I would be remiss in leaving out Ch. Lulhaven's Snomist Ensign as I was fortunate enough to own his son, Ch. Jac-Lins Deb-

signs Legend.

Another American dog to whom I can attribute much of my success was Ch. Moonlighter's Ima Bark Star.

Here in Canada some of my favorites would be Ch. Bobmardon Quasar O'er Ladakha, Ch. Takenak's Make My Day, Ch. Polar Mist Viva La Dasha and



Ch. Samovar's Chinook Winds. I would have been proud to own any one of these dogs.

Who was your mentor?

I have been fortunate to have had three such people who have assisted me along the way. Flo Beesley gave me my start and the late Pat Stonham, who spent many hours with me at dog shows patiently answering my endless questions. Last but not the least my husband, Fred, who has shared his knowledge and has given me the encouragement to do more than I thought I could have possibly done.

What other dog related activities have you or are you involved with?

I have been involved with a number of dog clubs over the years starting with the Cobequid Kennel Club in Truro, Nova Scotia. As one of their founding members, it gave me a lot of insight as to the many facets of this sport of dogs. From there I later became President of the Samoyed Association of Canada in 1975. Until recently I was the

Club's Vice President. Following my move to the Ottawa area in 1980, I became very active with The Ottawa Kennel Club. I have served on the Executive Board for the past five years and am presently serving as Vice President as well as Chairperson for the Invitational Show of Shows.

How would you like to be remembered?

I feel as though I am writing my own epitaph! Well, I cannot go down in history as one who had bred the greatest Samoyeds in history. However, I still enjoy breeding and showing my dogs and will continue to do so for a little while longer. At this point in time I derive much pleasure in helping others, particularly new-comers. I remember all too clearly the many mistakes I made in the beginning. So let me be remembered as one who gave back in appreciation for all that I have learned. •



WILLAMETTE VALLEY SAMOYED FANCIERS

FRIDAY JUNE 4th, 1999 (Pending AKC Approval)
CLARK COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, VANCOUVER, WA

1st Annual Specialty

Conformation Judge
Mrs. Terry Carter
(Alberta Canada)

Junior Showmanship Judge
Mrs. Lisa L. Cruanas
(Vancouver, WA)

Sweepstakes Judge
Mrs. Barbara Winslow
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SHOW CHAIRMAN: MR JASON LOPER (360) 446-3325

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