

BELL

BELVAR

Vern & Mary Bell

Why Westies?

Growing up, Mary never had a dog and Vern grew up with mixed breeds. After we married and built a house when Vern got out of the Army, we decided it was time for a dog. We had just seen the movie, "Patton", and Vern thought a White Bull Terrier was the coolest dog. Mary thought not. Someone loaned us a book on different breeds. We stayed in the Terrier family and the color white, so we both agreed on a West Highland White Terrier.

From whom did you obtain your first Westie?

We checked with the local kennel club and discovered a litter of Westies nearby. They were three weeks old and we went to see them. The litter was champion sired and the breeder was looking for show homes. We had never even been to a dog show. She was asking \$350 and in 1973 that was a lot of money for a dog. A few days before, we had seen a five month old female Westie at a Doctor's Pet Center. We had heard not to buy a puppy from a pet shop but she looked okay and at \$225 was a lot cheaper and we could put her on Master Card. We named her Windermere of Rosewood. Needless to say, she changed our lives forever. She lived to be 16 years old and obtained both her CD and CDX obedience titles. She was also one of the first Westies in the US to obtain a tracking degree. She also got her Certificate of Gameness (pre-Earth Dog days). Windy was the second recipient of the WHWTCA's Versatile Dog Award.

Was this Westie purchased as a pet or show dog?

Windy was bought as a pet, but soon after purchasing her, we became intrigued with showing dogs. We took her to a fun match and she came in second behind one of those puppies we had looked at right before we bought her. At that fun match, we encountered a lady with a Scottie who asked if she could bring her car and dog over and park under our shade tree. We said she could. As we saw her driving over, we noted she was driving a Rolls-Royce. Mary said, "Vern, we have picked the wrong hobby!" This lady, Dame Catherine C. Carpenter, became a longtime friend and helped us that day to show for the first time.

Who was your most important mentor and why?

What do you remember most about this mentor?

After we got bitten by the "show bug", we searched for someone who could critique Windy for us. At a dog show, we found Bud and Margaret Samples who were handling the only Westie entered. Bud sat down and laughed at Windy, but Margaret took the time to point out her faults. Her advice, "She is a very nice pet, take her home and love her. She is not a show dog." We asked if she knew anyone who had a show quality Westie for sale. They just happened to have a six-month old puppy for sale. A couple of weeks later, we came home with our second Westie, Angel (Sparrowood's Angel O' The Morn). Angel was show quality but showed like a Sherman tank...head down, tail down, etc. We later gave up on showing her, bred her to a champion and kept a male puppy out of the litter. In 1976 our third Westie, Belvar's Theodore J. Bear became our first champion, and was also breeder/owner handled. Bud Samples taught us how to groom in the beginning.

Who were some of the other mentors that influenced you? How did they do so?

Other mentors through the years who were always there to offer advice and assistance were Bill Ferrara, John Price, Joanne Glodek, Kathleen Kurdziolek, Judy White and Janis Chapman. There was always a genuine sense of friendship and good sportsmanship among us all.

To date, what has been your most important/memorable moment in Westies?

This is a tough question, but we guess it was our first trip to the Crufts dog show in London in 1979.

What is your favorite dog show? Why?

Our favorite dog show is Montgomery County. We have gone every year except three since 1976. You see dogs from all over the country both Westies and other terriers. Some of the people you encounter there you only get to see once a year and at this show. It's just very special.

If you groom your own dogs, who taught you to do so?

Bud Samples was our first grooming teacher. Since then Bill Ferrara, John Price, Randall Dickerson and Vanessa Fleming have all helped teach us.

If you are or were a breeder, who taught you to evaluate litters and young stock?

Bill Ferrara, John Price, Joanne Glodek and Kathy Latz helped us in this important phase of breeding.

When you look back, which of your Westies would you consider your favorite or most influential? Why?

Windy was our favorite because she was our first and started it all for us.

Also, looking back, which sire, in your opinion, had a strong influence on the breed?

That would have to be Ch. Mac-Ken-Char's Irish Navigator.

What was your most memorable Montgomery County moment?

Our most memorable moment was winning the American Bred Class in 1978 under Judge Mrs. John Marvin with our Biljonblue's Quintessa.

If you attended the Centennial in 2009, what were your greatest experiences from it?

Just being there and sharing the weekend with a new friend who had adopted one of our retired champions and has since become a new member of the WHWTCA was a very special part of a very special event.

What Westie author/artist influenced you the most?

The author would have to be Ruth Faherty and artists would be Barbara Hands, Allison Platt and Tom Drexler.

Do you have a favorite Westie collectible(s)?

We purchased an oil painting of a Westie from Barbara Hands at Crufts in 1979. At the time, we did not know anything about her. Allison Platt did a charcoal drawing of our first Westie, Windy. It captured her perfectly and we cherish it. Also, Tom Drexler did a figurine for us of a Westie going over a jump with a dumbbell in its mouth and it is one of our most favorites.

Are you or were you active in any regional Westie Clubs? Which ones?

We belong to the Westie Club of Greater Atlanta. Since we live in North Carolina, we participate as much as we can in their activities.

What do you think the future holds for the breed? Where would you like to see Westies in 10/20 years?

We can't predict the future for Westies. We hope that health and genetic issues can be brought under control or eliminated through research and the education of those who breed Westies.

How best can WHWTCA members assure the future well-being of the breed?

More openness and discussion of health and genetic issues will, hopefully, help bring that transparency about.

What advice can you impart to present and future Westie enthusiasts?

Help new Westie owners and exhibitors when you encounter them. Exhibit good sportsmanship. Be just as happy for your competition when they win as you would have them be happy for you when you win. Enjoy what you are doing and make sure your Westie does, too.