

LYON

LAIR O'LYON

Melinda L. Lyon

Growing up, my family always had dogs for pets, and they were an integral part of our family. However, my introduction to the sport of dogs did not occur until I got my first show Westie in 1973. I first fell in love with Westies the year before when I had returned to Louisville from Nurse Anesthesia school in North Carolina, and one of my friends had gotten a Westie. I fell head over heels for Tuffy, and wanted a dog just like him. I was smitten by their friendliness, spirit, determination, intelligence and absolute confidence.

My first Westie was purchased in September of 1972 from an ad in the newspaper, because that is just the way I thought it was done. Obviously, this was a semi-backyard breeder, although she had bred to a good dog. I later met Betty Williams at a Louisville Kennel Club training class, and she took me under her wing, became my mentor, teaching me how to groom, inviting me to go with her to my first dog show, and later allowing me to get my first real show dog from a litter she had in March of 1973. Even though I had lots of questions, it didn't take me long to figure out that you don't talk to Betty before she goes into the ring...she is focused and more than a little uptight, so I just watched and learned. One person that I liked to watch and study was Bergit Coady, and I tried to mimic everything she did, while thinking "I wanted to be just like her when I grew up". I quickly learned the ins and outs of the dog show world and have been an active participant ever since.

I have finished around 40 to 50 Westies, and I'm proud to say most from the Bred By class from my limited breeding program. Like any mother with her children, you love them all, but there are a few who stand out for various reasons. I'd have to say that Chip, Am., Can. Ch. Lair O'Lyon Killundine Chip, CD was my favorite dog:

- He was sired by my first champion.
- He won BOS at Montgomery Sweeps.
- I showed him as a special, and he won the Roving in 1982 in Denver under Neoma Eberhardt and in 1983 in Indianapolis under Lydia Coleman Hutchinson.
- He is the first dog I ever got a Canadian championship on.
- He was in the Top 5 rankings two years in a row.
- He sired over ten champions.
- Although my primary focus was the conformation ring, I did manage to put a CD on Chip, and believe me, it was harder to train me than Chip.

One of my most treasured pieces of jewelry is a pendant of Chip painted by Mimi Baker that was given to me when I judged a Sweeps back in the late 80s. The other is a gold signature pin made for me by Virginia Perry Gardner which is a recumbent lion with three Westies around him ...Lair O'Lyon Westies.

I have to say that one of the greatest experiences about being a Westie owner, breeder,

exhibitor in Louisville is the close knit “family” group we have here. We cheer for each other during the good times, help whelp litters together, all come together to evaluate the puppies, and cry together when we have a loss or tragedy. Betty Williams and Virginia Frederick were the matriarchs of our Westie family, and we all learned from them, plus other Westie friends we’ve made over the years and across the country. We all belong to the WHWTC of Indiana.

I have also had the honor of twice being voted to judge Sweeps for the WHWTCA National Specialties (1984 and 1993) as well as various Regional specialties. The greatest honor of all is to have the vote of the WHWTCA membership three times to judge the regular classes at Montgomery County in 1997, 2005 and 2014 (if I live that long). I currently am approved by the AKC to judge all of the Terriers and all but three of the Toys. Although I’ve served in varying capacities for the WHWTCA, one of the most rewarding is to have chaired Judges Education for the past ten years. I am passionate about educating prospective judges where our breed is concerned in order to preserve and protect the integrity of the West Highland White Terrier. I also have the privilege of working with the new Illustrated Standard committee, and it is my hope that all members, present and future, will really study the standard and what is set forth as the personification of the “perfect” Westie, then applying this knowledge in their breeding program rather than to breed according to whatever the current fad or trend is. If this is done, then hopefully in 10 or 20 years from now, the breed will be stronger, healthier and better than ever.