

SERVIN

ELSNORE

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The year 1972 brought forth my graduation from Boston College, the first of thirty-five years of teaching middle school English, and the beginning of a 40 year love affair with West Highland White terriers. I entered the world of Westies through the back door by purchasing my first Westie and first dog through a newspaper ad and choosing him because his mother had pretty eyes. Eventually he would be known as Am., Can. Ch Ajax of Elsinore and became a Top Ten Westie. I chose Westies because I wanted the white version of a Cairn stuffed animal that I owned. The stuffed animal and the new puppy were presents from my then fiancé. This puppy would introduce me to a novel, all consuming passion to which I would dedicate many years.

Ajax travelled everywhere with me whether I was visiting family, friends, or shopping. On one such shopping trip, a father with his young daughter approached me about my dog, and told me that Patty Storey was the contact for a newly formed West Highland White Terrier club. Without any hesitation, I attended the next meeting at Dorinda Dew's home and discovered that this was a group of people who showed dogs. Christine Swingle attempted to show me how "to set up" my dog when I just hoped that he would walk beside me. Since I wasn't taking her tutelage very seriously, she eventually decided that I was the problem and not the dog. Nevertheless it was Christine who was the first to call me years later when she heard I was having trouble with a litter. Katharine Heyward next examined Ajax. Since I knew he was perfect at nine months, I was sure that she would be dazzled by his appearance. She commented that he was in his "underwear." After telling me to gait him for which I requested clarification, Katharine watched as Ajax bunny hopped to and fro. She tactfully asked whether I planned to show this dog and suggested that I enjoy him as a pet. Fortunately I met Shirley Nichols who mused that Ajax's back coat had been stripped but he had no hair removed from his rear or chest. She suggested that I contact Edla Cummings to groom my dog.

Not only did Edla Cummings finish Ajax's championship in the USA and Canada, but she also introduced me to the ins and outs of the dog show world as it was in 1973. Edla never thought twice about setting an extra plate at the dinner table, and we spent many late hours where she dispensed a plethora of knowledge and advice. She taught me how to trim, prepare a dog for show, how to gait a dog in the show ring, and how to examine a dog. It was not until I specialed Ajax that I did my own show grooming combining the skills Edla taught me with that of others and also by examining the photos of dogs in *Terrier Type* magazine. Also at this time I began trimming Westies for other breeders.

Edla found my foundation bitch, Can. Ch. Elsinore Tara. Since Ajax had some Dreamland breeding in his background, she suggested that I breed Tara to Watts the Big Deal, a son of Am., Can. Ch. Dreamland's Swinging Kilt. Eventually I would breed the progeny from that to Ajax. My first breeding produced Am., Can. Ch Elsinore Havoc, a Canadian Best in Show winner, and Am., Can. Ch. Elsinore Robin Goodfellow (whom Edla thought I should sell), a Montgomery Best of Winners, - all breeder-owner

handled. Ajax and Havoc produced three champion offspring. In fact, all my dogs, including a current litter go back to this combination.

Janice Carkin was particularly influential when I started to show Westies. Her handling skills and training demonstrated an incomparable expertise and understanding of our breed. It was Janice who piloted Ajax at his first showing to a New England Terrier Club Match Best in Show under future judge Charles Foley as Edla had an obligation to another client.

Of equal importance to my development was the camaraderie I shared early in my breeding and show career. These “Westie friendships” allowed us to bandy about ideas on breeding, puppy evaluation, grooming, handling, and training. We didn’t always agree, but our discussions and constant communications fostered invaluable knowledge. Patty Storey and I frequently travelled together attending many Rovings and regional specialties. From these sojourns, we learned more about our breed because we saw different show dogs and met breeders outside New England.

I remain indebted to Kathy Norris (Kompore). When I bred Ch. Elsinore Pavlova to Ch. Kilkerran Imagemaker and she lost all her puppies but one, unsolicited, Kathy offered me a return service. I opted to breed to Ch. Whitebriar Jollimont who produced Am., Can. Ch. Elsinore Opus One, a Top Ten Westie all systems for many years, a regional and National Specialty winner, and with limited breeding the sire of 29 champion offspring.

Some of my fondest memories concern Dorinda Dew. A day didn’t pass that I didn’t talk to Dorinda, and a day doesn’t pass that I don’t miss her friendship. Dorinda embodied the idea behind the slogan, “May I always be the kind of person my dog thinks I am.”

Others with whom I shared many Westie experiences are Vilma Amato, Carolyn Gardner, Daphne Gentry, and Sharon Haley.

My most memorable moment in Westies has to be the 1999 Montgomery weekend where I finished Ch. Elsinore Veuve Clicquot from the Bred by Exhibitor class. Clicquot was shown three times during that Montgomery weekend scoring RWB at the first Hatboro show; BOW at the second Hatboro, and WB at Montgomery County to finish under breeder judge Peggy Haas. Since Peggy Haas had given Elsinore Future Purrfect Best of Winners at a Montgomery Specialty she judged previously, I was skeptical that one of my dogs could win again. Clicquot’s sire, Ch. Donnybrook’s George won the breed to cap off the day. Sunday’s weather that year proved to be dismal, and Tom Ward and I borrowed gallons of water to remove the mud from the dogs before pictures were taken. Tom, Billye, and I, happy but exhausted, celebrated at dinner that night with Dorinda.

The most influential dog of my own breeding was Opus One. “Obie” stamped his puppies. Generations later I still see his expression, body type, and movement. He was a wonderful companion who thought everyone who entered the house was visiting him. On his daily walk, he acted like the mayor of our town, acknowledging all passers by and

encouraging others to pet him.

I've had many "favorites." When I would tell Clicquot that she was my favorite, Carolyn Gardner would say, "Don't believe her, Clicquot. She said the same thing to Obie." After almost losing Clicquot at age three because she ate a stephanotis plant, however, she and I developed a special bond which continues as she passes fourteen years.

Other dogs that strongly influenced the breed, in my opinion, are Ch. Cruben Dextor, Ch Pillerton Peterman, Ch. Whitebriar Jeronimo, Ch. Mac-Ken-Char's Irish Navigator, Ch. Liberty's Chairman of the Board, and Ch. Sweetsound's King o' Rock n' Roll. I always regretted not using Peterman.

My favorite collectible is a yarn portrait of "Obie" which was on display at the Centennial Art Show. Another favorite is a miniature glass enclosed scene depicting Clicquot's career. A vase of white roses is included because they represent the dozen white roses Jim McGarr sent when Cliquot finished her show career. Jim said she always reminded him of white roses. Of course, that would have to be on her good days. When she came into season, showing her was an adventure. Would she or wouldn't she walk?

My club responsibilities included the WHWTC of NE where I served as Corresponding Secretary, board member, match chairperson, and dinner chairperson when the club sponsored the Roving Specialty. I served the WHWTCA for more than 10 years as a board member and president. I think my most significant contribution to the club was organizing and initiating the *Westie Imprint*. It took a year to organize and prepare for the first issue which appeared in December 1985. I continued to be the sole editor until I became president in 1991.

Regarding health issues, breeders need to acknowledge that Westies are prone to auto-immune disorders. I would suggest that breeders have an annual blood screening done of their dogs.

For anyone who wishes to breed Westies, I feel it is imperative to start with the very best bitch you can find. Make sure she has a good front assembly. If you start with a bad front, it will take years to improve - if it can even be done.

Enjoy your Westies. Winning is fun but ephemeral. The loving bond between owner and man's best friend lasts a lifetime.

[LS: No editor queries. Hmmm, but I was editing an English teacher, so no surprise. Well done. ~ SW