

GUILFOIL

KATYDID

Nancy Guilfoil

My first Westie was bought for all the wrong reasons – it was my birthday and my husband knew I wanted a dog. When Tom grew up, the “upscale” way to buy a dog was from a pet shop. Usually the dogs you had were the ones who followed you home. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I knew that this was not the correct way to buy a dog, but I had to strike while the iron was hot. And there was this cute little white dog in a crate at the shopping mall, full of “Westietude!” T.J. was bought on the spot and was a true terrible terror. He was full of love and mischief, and I have to say I have never regretted for a moment buying him.

After putting T.J. through obedience school and obtaining a CD on him, I realized that he didn’t look exactly like the other Westies I saw at the shows and I wanted to get in that show ring! I obtained a number of dog magazines, went to dog shows, talked to a number of breeders, and settled on a little bitch from Janet Lindgren, who became “Ch. Briarcliff Kiss Me Kate”. Katie did everything I asked – hence my kennel name “Katydid.

While I live in a city where there are no other active Westie breeders and no regional club, I was fortunate to have mentors outside of Westies. Three that come first to mind are Donna Brookman (Scottish Deerhounds), Carol Weidmer (Italian Greyhounds) and Maureen Thomann (Kerry Blues). They called me “Nancy Novice” and taught me to look at pedigrees and evaluate the dogs in those pedigrees to see where the desirable traits that I wanted in my breeding were coming from. They also taught me to “breed the best to the best,” and to be unrelenting in assessing my own dogs.

Mentoring within the breed, occurred while going to dog shows throughout the country and last minute grooming help by people like Janet Lindgren, Peggy Lewis, Georgia Harris, and last but not least, Dora Lee Wilson made a big difference to enhance my efforts. I cannot say enough about what a positive influence Dora Lee was. I feel so privileged to have known such a knowledgeable and honorable dog person. It was her husband, Wendell Wilson, who told me, “Dogs come and go, but people are around a long time.” In other words, no dog is worth getting into a disagreement about.

Putting together the first National Rescue Committee was one of my most rewarding experiences in Westies. Living in the middle of “Puppy Mill Land” we were getting so many Westies that were given up, and just plain abandoned. We raised a lot of money and had a network of caring and dedicated people all over the country who really worked together for the welfare of the dogs. One of the most surprising events occurring during this was a lawsuit filed by a puppy mill owner who wanted her dogs back. The NRC and I personally got sued for something like a hundred million dollars! Tom Ward skillfully got us both out of that, but I was just glad to know someone thought I had that kind of money!

We organized and held the first National Rescue Parade at Montgomery County and received the President's Award in October 2000. Being on the Board of the national club and First Vice President was indeed an honor.

I think that every dog I showed was my favorite at the time. And each was memorable in their own way. And winning is much more fun than losing and makes the trip home go a lot faster! I've had Group winners, Specialty winners, Veteran winners and Obedience title winners, but that elusive BIS win always managed to elude me.

Montgomery County is my favorite show. It's where you can see so many dogs in one place and see how you, as a breeder, are doing in comparison. And a placement at MC is like a major win at any other dog show! It's an opportunity to talk with other breeders and about what is important in the breed and just plain socializing! We had some great parties and great fun!

Ch. Pillerton Peterman was a great influence on the breed in his time and is still behind many of our winners today. One of the "old-time breeders" (it's hard to think of myself in this way now!), told me "always look to the grandparents" if you want to see the conformation of your new litter. Another truism – in your brand new litter, if there is one thing wrong in a puppy, be it the smallest thing, look to that same puppy for other problems. Many times all of the genetic problems are gathered in that one puppy. I've also heard that in repeat breedings, you never come out as good the second time.

One of the most important things to me in breeding is where those pet puppies will end up. You don't want one of your breeding ending up in a puppy mill. And if you have never been in a puppy mill or attended an auction, believe me you don't want either experience. Please be sure who you are breeding to, and not just the dog, but the owner too, who will determine where those puppies go. And if by chance something does go wrong and you find that a puppy out of your breeding has had to be rescued, PLEASE, PLEASE take responsibility. This may mean taking the dog back into your home for placement and/or providing much needed veterinary care -- whatever it takes to rehab and rehome that puppy. Even if your kennel name appears 3-4 generations back – it is still your responsibility!

And as it has been said, "those to whom much is given, much is expected." If you have enjoyed and learned from your dogs, please give back so that your children and grandchildren can buy a healthy Westie that looks like it is supposed to look and can do the job it was bred to do.