

getting to know you... *Robbie Pattison*

How did you first become interested in salukis, and when did you finally get your first hound? I was very taken by the look of the sighthounds. When I was a child, I remember particularly a colour photo in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of a Greyhound lying like a sphinx. I also remember seeing a black-and-silver Saluki at the local dog show in the late '50s (maybe as late as 1960).

I liked the look, but it never occurred to me there might be Salukis available locally (too exotic was my rationale), so in the late '60s, when I started looking for a dog, I began by inquiring about Greyhounds and Whippets. By chance I ran into John Ross at the 1968 local spring horse show. We were old friends from Saskatoon Pony Club days, but he was by then living in Alberta. He'd been given two Salukis, had decided to breed a litter, and his bitch was in whelp. I asked him how much, he said \$100 (which was the going rate then), and my jaw dropped a foot, as I'd never bought a purebred dog before (even my horses hadn't cost much more than that). I asked if he had a runt or something, and the upshot was, when the puppies were born he wrote to say he had one with a very gay tail (like a double doughnut) he'd let me have for \$50. That was 'Jay,' or Ch. Counterpoint Abu Sahr, CDX, as he went on to be.

Jay was quite a dog. Since I had done no research into sighthounds beforehand, his personality came as an absolute shock. He was destructive, wouldn't come when called, was claustrophobic and would scream bloody murder when he was hurt, being punished or left alone. When he was about 10 months old, I took him to obedience class. In 1969, I was off to Ontario – accompanied by Jay – to pursue my M.A. in English at McMaster University in Hamilton. I got involved in the Hamilton Dog Obedience Club and went to a lot of dog shows, where I met people who belonged to the Saluki Club of Canada, notably Don and Isobel Grant (now Isobel Franklin), who as it turned out had 'Henry,' one of Jay's litter brothers. Isobel invited me to join the club.

Jay finished his CD and his championship while I was in Ontario. When I came back to Saskatchewan I found John had returned to live in Saskatoon. All of a sudden there was a quite

a little nucleus of local people interested in Salukis and things took off from there.

When did you start breeding? where did your foundation stock come from? John and I had both been corresponding with Carole Adley, who edited the club newsletter. John had sent 'Twiggy,' another Jay littermate, to Carole to be bred to her Burydown Omar Khayyam, although no puppies resulted. In 1971, Carole went to England for a year, and to make a long story short, she consented to find each of us a puppy. John got 'Marcus' (Ch. Almanza Gwasmayah, CD) and I got 'Jordan' (Ch. Springpould Truella, CDX). Jordan became the foundation for Iroki. Jay made me realize that the Saluki was the breed for me (though to this day I don't understand why), and Jordan gave me an idea of what I wanted my ideal Saluki to look like. In 1973 I bred my first litter (Jay ex Jordan), but didn't keep a puppy. Jordan's second litter, by Am. Ch. Yazid Abqari, was born in 1974, and the current Irokis all trace back to it.

Jordan was as weird in personality as she was gorgeous in appearance, but anyone who saw her move knew in an instant what the experts had been trying to describe when they talked or wrote about Saluki movement. She floated, and yet you could see there was power behind the seeming effortlessness. She had a spring to her step (or "lift," a term I've never liked) but somehow it didn't look like wasted energy. She was fun to watch.

I've since come to believe that any attempt to put a movement section into a Saluki breed standard is misguided, and the original standard writers in 1923 were right to leave it out. There is too much room for misinterpretation. The term "reach and drive" means one thing to sighthound people and something else altogether to trotting dog people, for example. When you see a Saluki moving well, you'll recognize it, so why not leave it at that?

How did you choose your kennel name? The kennel name goes back to when I was writing my master's thesis on Theodore Dreiser, an American writer of the first half of the



Jordan (Ch. Springpould Truella CDX)

20th century. He was very big in his day but no one reads him much anymore. (He had dogs too – Borzoi.) He built a studio in upstate New York, with all his artsy crafty friends giving him conflicting and generally inappropriate architectural advice, so apparently it turned out rather strangely. He called it “Iroki,” which he said was Japanese for “beauty,” though I suspect he might have been wrong about that.

Iroki as a kennel name has the advantage of having only five letters, which leaves lots of room for the other part of the dogs’ names. The main disadvantage is that it ends in a vowel, and in conjunction with some names, especially those that begin with a vowel; the flow is interrupted when you say the whole name out loud. That’s why I sometimes use Iroki’s rather than Iroki as my prefix.

I tend not to use themes or common letters within a litter. People who research pedigrees get a bit upset with me over that, I know. But naming puppies is fun, and I hate to be restricted to one letter of the alphabet when I’m trying to come up with just the right name.

Who were/are your mentors? Carole Adley was my mentor. We corresponded for quite a long time before we ever met, and you know, we’ve never really seen a lot of one another, but she’s been a tremendous influence just the same. We eventually met in 1972; I drove east with my two Salukis and when she saw Jordan she gave her the best compliment Jordan ever

received when she told me she’d finish in England. I stayed with Carole for a few days at that time and was introduced to her huge library of Saluki pictures, books, magazines, you name it. Carole is an absolute mine of information. She has known all the post-war Saluki people in England, and has picked their brains. In 1982, when the SCOC asked me to judge sweepstakes at the eastern specialty, I was about to start my assignment when Carole came up to let me know she was there watching, and I was completely disconcerted. What if I picked the wrong dog? When it was over, my first thought was to check with Carole, and much to my relief it turned out we agreed. Don Wieden had been watching with her, and it seems his favourite was my second choice. As it was plain to all which two I was considering, I’ve often wondered whether they had any money on my decision.

Carole’s influence has been immense. She provided me with a lot of factual information for one thing – a mind-boggling amount. But she also shaped my vision of the breed in many subtle (or perhaps not so subtle) ways. Today, if we sat down together, we would probably disagree about a lot of things, but she did point me in a specific direction, and I’ve always followed that compass reading, at least in a general way. And who could forget – she found my foundation bitch for me. Had she done nothing else I would have been in her debt.

Others have had quite an influence. There’s John Ross, of course, though in the early days it was more the blind leading

the blind, since neither of us knew anything about the breed when we started out. We learned about Salukis together, learned to agree to disagree, and then we learned our views had more in common than we thought they did.

Leah Harrington was not only a dear friend but a confidante, an information source and a sounding board for all matters Saluki. Her interests were very broad, and that enabled her to see the big picture when the rest of us were focussing on the minutiae. Her death was a huge loss both for me and for the Saluki community generally. These days, Cathie Hays plays something of a similar role in my Saluki life, though it has to be by long distance since she lives the next province over.

Outside of the ring, what other activities do you enjoy with your hounds? I'm not doing much at the moment, either in the ring or out of it, except enjoying them. (I'm not sure if that's because I'm getting older or just lazier.) I've been involved with lure coursing for many years, as one of the founding members of the Saskatchewan Sighthound Association, but we haven't had trials in Saskatchewan for some time now (we are trying to get things going again, but the centre of activity will be moving – at least for now – to the southern part of the province). I'd like to have something to run in the trial at this summer's National, but that's more than a little iffy, since of my two possibilities one is a veteran who's not fit enough to go (for the moment at least) and the other a young dog who hasn't yet had a chance to chase a lure, so isn't certified.

What do you think is the most important quality in a Saluki? I'm not sure I know how to answer that. Any answer must depend on why one has them in the first place. In any

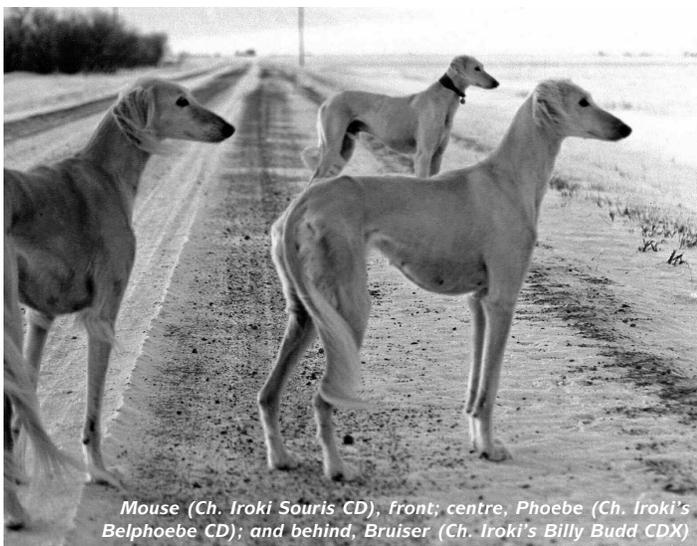
event, I'd have to say it's more of a package deal as opposed to one single quality. They are what they are.

What do you love most about living with Salukis? Just having them around. Since I live and work on a farm, I get to spend more time with them than most people are able to do. I like watching them run; I am half thrilled, half repelled when they chase and kill things. I like watching puppies grow up and turn into their own unique and appealing beings. I like the feeling of sharing my life with several generations of

Salukis I have bred and raised myself. Zara, my youngest, is seventh-generation homebred, and I can see in her many things I recognize from each of those generations, going right back to the beginning.

You've been a member of the club for a number of decades. What are your thoughts on the overall quality of Canadian Salukis (then and now) and the development of the Saluki Club of Canada? I've come to think that any assessment of "quality" is purely subjective. The word is most often used in a show ring context, and in that case it just means fashion. The current North American show ring fashion happens to be closer to what I tend to like than it was 40 years ago when I got started, but that's as far as I'm willing to commit myself. I might add that from a show point of view, I consider Canadian Salukis today to be among the best in the world, which is saying something, because our Saluki population is relatively small, our breeders few in number.

The great thing about Salukis and the show ring is that while fashions have come and gone, so far the breed has survived, relatively intact. Our short and admirably vague standard has



Mouse (Ch. Iroki Souris CD), front; centre, Phoebe (Ch. Iroki's Belpheobe CD); and behind, Bruiser (Ch. Iroki's Billy Budd CDX)



Millie (Ch. Iroki Camille) at 11

played a significant role in keeping it safe. One thing that does concern me a little is that in this day of instant communication we are easily able to see what Salukis are like around the world and that, it seems to me (along with things like relaxed quarantine laws enabling easier importation of dogs from other countries), is having a kind of homogenizing effect. I can't think that's entirely a good thing. Most Saluki fanciers still like to point out that our breed is unlike the others in that it comes in a wide variety of diverse types, no single one more correct than any of the others, but we must do more than pay lip service to that sentiment. If the types begin to merge and we all start to agree with one another, as a group we run the risk of uniting behind a single, bland, cookie cutter image we somehow see as "correct." We haven't reached that point yet, thank goodness, as the current controversy about brindle indicates – no consensus there, and none in sight, even though the anti-brindle position has been enshrined (unwisely to my mind) in the British and FCI standards. There also seems to be an increasing interest in, and acceptance of, country of origin Salukis, which is good. The more the merrier and vive la différence.

The SCOC has changed a lot since I first joined in 1969. Back then, the club had a small but surprisingly far flung membership, though its executive was still southern Ontario based. In the early '70s, the executive moved west for the first time and we also held our first specialty. Not surprisingly, those events prompted huge changes in the club's dynamics.

Putting on at least two and sometimes three specialties in Canada every year, as we do now, is something of an undertaking for a breed club with a small working membership, but I'm pleased that the specialties, while important, haven't become the club's entire focus. One look at the newsletter (which has

itself evolved almost beyond recognition) tells you that – the results and critiques are in there, but so is a lot more. The club still includes more than just dog show people among its members.

Moving the executive around the country has also had a big effect. It's created a few tensions (this is Canada after all, and where would we be without some east/west conflict?), but it's given club members from across Canada a new perspective. I think the conference call AGM has played an important role in this; it was instituted by Leah Harrington, then club president, at a time when western members were feeling rather bitter and misunderstood, and it has served to give people from the various regions a voice in proceedings no matter where the executive is based. It has democratized things. These days we can communicate via the Internet, but in the early '90s that wasn't yet an option for most of us. Now we've got a president in BC and a secretary in Ontario and the club is able to function very efficiently and well.

We can be very proud of both our newsletter and now our web site for spreading the news about Canadian Salukis. Gone are the days when the Saluki Club of Canada wasn't even given a mention in such a significant reference book as Ken and Diana Allan's *The Complete Saluki*, or when Saluki magazines would list a SCOC secretary's address which was at least three executive changes out of date.

The club's tradition of producing a first-rate newsletter is a long one, however, and goes right back to the beginning in the '60s, when Carole Adley turned out a newsletter packed with news every month, if you can imagine. Sure, it was only a few gestetnered pages stapled together – all that was possible at that time – but it was wonderful. Carole set the bar very high, and her successors have all had to work hard to live up to her example.



Dancer (Ch. Iroki Dancethruthedawn)