

People In Poms Visit

May 2006

The Pom Reader

Her Majesty's Pomeranians



This is us Chuck Whittemore on the left and Randy Houston on the right with arms full of Poms.

First of all, let me start by thanking Benson, Sharon and the Pom Reader for allowing us this opportunity to tell our story. My name is Chuck Whittemore and my partner in crime is Randy Houston. We are Her Majesty's Pomeranians. Randy is a graphic designer and is the Purchasing manager at a local company. He also designed our website. I work in the physical therapy home health field. We are active in the Chattanooga Kennel Club. When we aren't showing and working with the Poms, we are at the University of Tennessee football games and Lady Vol basketball games. Randy is big into computers. He also has a gospel group that goes around and sings. If you come to the Chattanooga Kennel Club Fall show you will probably hear them sing. Randy has a son, Adam his wife Millie and a grandson Samuel. I on the other hand, enjoy physical activities, sports, and games.

We began our adventure almost 6 years ago when I decided I wanted a Pomeranian. We looked everywhere for the one that I wanted. We traveled miles and miles searching for that special puppy. We went to backyard breeders, professional breeders, and anyone we could find that said they had Pomeranians for sale. Each person claimed to have the perfect puppy. At this time we were not aware of the breed type, we just wanted the miniature of the breed.

As we looked around, we found 5 pound puppies that would definitely “be miniatures” according to the breeder. Randy fell in love with everyone and wanted that one. They could have brought out a Chow and Randy would have fallen for it. Heck, some of them were Chows I think. We finally found a breeder who had what she called a “Munchkin Pomeranian.” Not only was she a breeder but a show person. We had finally found our puppy. She wanted \$900 for her because of the “munchkin” status. That was fine because I knew she would be with us a long time and it was worth it to have the dog I really wanted. Heck if she lived 10 years that was only \$90 a year. We went to pick her up and the lady offered to give her the “lion cut” where she shaved her back end and left her with pom-poms on her feet. Hmm! We declined much to her dismay. The puppy’s name would be Her Majesty’s Littlest Angel, Maj for short. She was and is my pride and joy.

The idea I had for Maj was to eventually have puppies and as time for Maj to become a woman neared, I went to the vet to have her checked out to make sure everything was all right. I was and am the type to interview veterinarians, groomers and anyone else who would touch my dog. Randy had found a dog show in South Carolina that weekend where we might find Maj that special boyfriend. So I took Maj to the groomer at the vets office who I had interviewed who swore to me she had the ability to give Maj the professional cut she needed to look her best to find that special man. That evening, I showed up to get Maj only to find out that she had “jumped” off the groomer’s table and broken her hip. She had laid there all day in pain without a call. That night she went into surgery. We went on to the dog show the next day as planned, but Maj instead of being beautiful for her coming out party, was in bandages and unable to walk. At the dog show, we did find the Pom Reader, which opened, up a new world to us. It was through the Pom Reader that we began our journey into the world of dog shows.

Maj, as things became worse, had to have another surgery because her knee had also been broken in the fall from the table and she had to be fixed because of the complications. As it turns out, bad things often happen for good reasons. Maj’s hair never grew back and as I look back now, the lion cut that the breeder wanted to give her was an untold known problem that Maj would eventually have. Maj would become the queen of the house and the name of our “kennel”, would be named in her honor.



No Megan, like this! Give it more tongue



Bronya and Dash



Carlene and Joey

We began to look through the Pom Reader and found a breeder down the road from us in Chattanooga. We called and asked if they had any Poms for sale. We took the drive to meet David and Carlene Gilstrap of Mountain Crest Pomeranians. We spent the afternoon with them and bought Megan, our first show dog. David has become not only one of my best friends, but also my mentor. I cannot express how fortunate we were to find someone who could teach us the ropes. David is always there for advice and knowledge. Through David and Carlene, we have learned how to breed, show, groom, and take care of our dogs. David has fielded calls in the middle of the night, in the middle of the day, in-town and out-of-town, never acting like I was a bother. He has been there in tragedy and in good times. I can't stress how having a mentor makes it possible to grow and learn. David's first piece of advice to us was that "if you are wanting to start a breeding program, buy yourself a couple of good bitches with good bloodlines. You can always find a stud to improve your line and you won't become kennel blind."

Upon that advice we began to search for one more female and were lucky enough to find Benson and Sharon. It's hard when you are new to find people who are willing to sell you a female. We made the 7-hour jaunt to South Carolina and met with Benson. Benson was also willing to open up and share his knowledge with us. After finding out there was no such thing as "munchkin Pomeranians", we decided that we would be careful in whom we put our trust. Benson spent over 5 hours with us and provided much needed insight. (It was supposed to be a 30-minute meeting. I guess that's why we never got invited back.) He wasn't just a breeder, but someone who cared about the breed. Benson won our trust and he trusted us with Ben-Ray's Sherri Kay, who would become our foundation bitch. Thank you Benson and Sharon.

We found a veterinarian, Sally Poston, of the Animal Medical Clinic in Cleveland, TN. She has been willing to learn about the breed and listens and reads everything that Randy brings her. She is one of the most important parts to our breeding system. She is also willing to work with other physicians and has gone to seminars that were recommended by Randy, David and others in our club.



Get him girls!



Chuck and Hannah



Chuck and Jericho

Randy has gotten really involved in learning all he can about every aspect of Pomeranians. He has worked hard on the internet searching for anything he can to improve our breed. He is constantly reading and looking for help. His project right now is helping to find a cure for Alopecia X, or black skin disease, which troubles our breed. He is working closely with Dr. Frank at the University of Tennessee who is developing studies to help.



When we started in Poms, no one spoke of the problem and we had no idea that we needed to be concerned. For the longest, we thought Maj's hair didn't grow back because of the surgery. Thanks to people like Dana Coventry, Donna Machniak and ZsaZsa, who are willingly open to talk about the problem and search for answers, we may now finally be on the road to finding out what the cause is. Hiding our dogs is not only dishonest, but also shameful. Continuing to breed dogs that have the problem is even worse. We want to thank everyone who is now willing to speak out regarding Alopecia X. We may be new in the sport, but we want the Pomeranian breed to grow and flourish. Randy's always available to speak with anyone who knows anything new or just wants to be part of the learning process.

I'm especially thankful to Randy who has been willing to learn how to show and to take our dogs wherever they need to go. He has worked hard at developing our breeding system through knowledge and through contacts. Like I mentioned before, being new isn't easy, but he's developed trust and friendships in the Pom world that have improved our line and will continue to improve it. It has really worked well between the two of us. Randy does the jobs I don't like, and I do the jobs he doesn't like. Randy wakes the dogs every morning and lets them out. He then prepares the food. When I hear the Pom alarm, I come in and clean the pens and let the dogs back in. Randy baths and I groom. I'm not real sure but I think I may have gotten the bad end of the deal.

We have shown our Poms, but the problem with girls is that they don't keep their coat long enough to finish quickly. We have had to make the decision whether to show or breed. When you are new, missing a breeding means it will be that much longer getting to the point you want to be at. We do have a champion; thanks in part to Ann Berryman who helped us finish Hannah. Penelope is waiting for her coat to finish coming back in and then she will be back out there. Penelope is a black and tan who won the hearts of many while she was out, but as you know the black and tans are harder to finish. Dash is in Texas with Bronya Johnston who is doing a great job with him. Dash had an attitude while he was here, so we sent him to boarding and finishing school. Come to find out, Dash prefers being shown by good-looking English women. I can't say as I blame him. Hopefully we have finally gotten to the point where we can begin showing more regularly.



Victoria, Eliza Bleu and Dorothy Gayle



Penelope takes Breed



Randy also breed Persians

As I mentioned earlier, when you begin a breeding program instead of buying, it takes longer to have something to show, but the victory is much sweeter when you see your breeding win.. We have recently found a young couple to rent the small apartment downstairs who will help take care of the dogs while we are gone to shows as part of their rent.

We especially enjoy ringside where we love to talk to the kids, people wanting to learn about the breed and newbies. It not only takes some of the nerves out of your system, but they really appreciate it. One of the best stories that happened was an older black lady had befriended Penelope outside of the ring and she just happened to be the cook for the judges. Penelope, our black and tan girl, went in the ring and performed wonderfully but didn't win her class. Randy brought her out and the lady said, "Didn't she win?" "No," Randy replied, "I guess the judge didn't like her. Not everyone likes black and tans." The lady proceeded to walk into the ring and pointed her finger at the judge and said, "Remember that piece of apple pie I was saving you? Well your not getting it now. I think you're prejudice! I can't believe this goes into the dog world!" She politely turned and walked out of the ring. It was worth not winning that day. Those cheerleaders you get outside of the ring sometimes make you feel like you've won even when you didn't.

It has taken us 5 years to get to the point where we have been able to have a breeding program. We started small and have grown. We have 4 bitches that are able to breed, and 2 that will begin later this year. We currently have 6 new additions to the house. We bought a couple of pets that we shouldn't have, but learning is part of the process. They all live in the house and have a bedroom where they sleep at night and while no one is home. They live in the living room with us and have a large back yard to play in. They are quickly taking over the house, which means we will either have to build a new one or add on to the current house. Maj is pushing for a new house.

It has been a long, short, hard but enjoyable road. When you first get into showing, you think you will just jump in and start winning. The road is not as easy as following the yellow brick road. It has witches that want to see you fail. It has wizards who think they know it all. It even has poppy fields where you just want to lay down and give up. But, it also has Glenda's who will help you succeed and friends that you find along the way that are willing to help you fight and make it where you want to be.



Jonathan, Deeze & Quest



Grandson Sam, Randy and Penelope



Sherri Kaye and Randy

Most of all, it has a bunch of munchkins that are counting on you to make their lives safe and happy.

There are a lot of people who we would love to thank for helping us, but we wouldn't want anyone to be left out. If you call us a friend, you have made a difference. Thank you for embracing us and helping us down the road.

Please visit us at www.hermajestypoms.com. And once again, thank you Pom Reader for allowing us to share Her Majesty's Pomeranians with everyone.



Jericho and Cole



Victoria Rose