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Bergamasco

by Walter Fletcher

The Bergamese Shepherd, known in Italy as the Pastore Bergamasco, is named for the town of Bergamo, the region where years ago the breed was developed. Now the Bergamasco has crossed the ocean and its American base is in Middleburg, VA.

It all began as a belated Christmas gift. Ernie Byfield, a New Yorker, had married Contessa Diana Masieri, who previously had lived in Venice and at Lake Garda, in northern Italy.

"One day Ernie remarked he always had wanted a dog and hadn't had one since he was eight years old," recalled the Contessa. "He said he would like to have a dog from Italy of medium size and black. So I wrote to my sister and asked if she could find an animal meeting those requirements."

On Christmas, four years ago, the Contessa received a phone call from her sister saying she had found a suitable dog.

"I told Ernie that I had to fly to Italy immediately but I would be back on Dec. 30," said the Contessa. "Ernie was at Kennedy Airport to meet me on my return and I handed him an eight-week-old pup, saying, 'Here's a Christmas present and I went all the way to Italy to get him for you.'"

The pup, Marcopai Dei Lupercali, more familiarly known as Marco, was jet black. "As far as we could ascertain, he was the first Bergamasco to have arrived in the U.S.," added Ernie.

"He grew into such a super dog, with a wonderful temperament, I decided we needed another."

So two years ago Byfield flew to Italy and visited the kennel of Carla Mariani, who had bred Marco. She had a three-month-old gray

bitch, who caught Ernie's eye, but he was told the pup had already been promised. "I pleaded and begged, literally getting down on my knees, until I finally had Farnax Dei Lupercali della Sabrina," said Ernie.

(Continued on page 136)

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Bergamasco

(Continued from page 135)

Both Marco and Sabrina, three generations back, were descended from Alpino di Valle Imagna, considered by many fanciers in Italy as the greatest sire in the modern history of the breed.

The ancestors of the Bergamasco are believed to have come from Asia. For centuries the dogs were used by the shepherds in northern Italy to herd and protect their flocks of sheep. The long, harsh coats proved an excellent armor against attacks of predators. They also were protection from the cold and rain.

However, since many of the shepherds weren't particularly careful about breeding, few had pure-bred animals and the Bergamasco almost became extinct. In the late 19th Century, a breeder went from farm to farm rounding up the best dogs.

The Bergamasco, as we know it today, is a medium-sized animal. Ideal height for the male is 23½ in., with an inch above or below being acceptable. In weight he runs from 70 to 84 lb. The breed is often compared to the Briard.

In color, the Bergamasco runs from gray to black. White markings are permissible providing they are not more than 20% of the coat. Solid white is a disqualification.

"Once we had the two animals, we decided New York was no place for sheepdogs," said Ernie. "Not only were there no sheep on Park Avenue but the pooper-scooper gave me problems. My wife always has liked horses, so we turned to the horse country in Virginia, where we moved in with my mother. She owns Glen-Ora, a historic site said to have been surveyed by George Washington. When President Kennedy was in the White House, he leased Glen-Ora as a country home."

Now that the Byfields had plenty of room they decided to breed their dogs, and in April 1981 the first litter of Bergamascos in the U.S. was whelped. "Ernie was out of

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town that day and he was on the telephone every hour to find out how Sabrina was doing," said the Contessa. "Not only was our veterinarian on hand but also several of our doggy neighbors. Sabrina had six puppies—three solid blacks, two black with white markings, and one gray."

The transplanted Virginians decided to keep three puppies—the gray male and two blacks, a dog and bitch.

"We have found the Bergamasco to be a wonderful dog and extremely intelligent," said the Contessa. "He's patient, very gentle and wants to be part of the family. He will permit a visitor to enter our house but unless one of us is there, the visitor cannot leave."

Byfield is doing missionary work for the breed. He showed Marco to a dozen rare breed shows or matches, going as far west as St. Louis. "Every time I'd leave with a ribbon," he quipped, "for Marco was the only entry."

But at the Baltimore Area Rare Breeds Association show, in Cockeysville, MD, Ernie brought out the two black pups as well. "This time I had six ribbons," exalted Byfield "Marco was WD and BB, Altea was WB and BoS, and Alano took the puppy dog class and BW."

At the Raritan Valley KC match, Whitehouse, NJ, the three Bergamascos had a ring to themselves and drew quite a crowd. Judge Norman Shuman said, "It's the first time I've ever seen the breed and I was greatly impressed."

The Contessa is president of Creazzo Imports, one of the major importers of Italian wines in this country. Her husband is vice president in charge of marketing. She lectures on wines and is a well-

(Continued on page 138)

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Bergamasco

(Continued from page 137)

known writer on the subject. In the industry the Contessa is known as "The Woman of the Vine."

Now she and Ernie are using their expertise to promote the shaggy, herding dog, with profuse wavy

locks, about whose ancestors Marcus Terentius, in 27 BC., wrote, "The herding dog should be strong and agile to seize, fight and chase, for his role is to repel the attack of the wolf." The standard calls for the Bergamasco "to be of good character, courageous and yet not arrogant."

"We realize we have a long road ahead," said Byfield, "But we are heartened when we see what the Portuguese Water Dog breeders have accomplished. Twenty years ago there were only 50 of the dogs in the world. Now there are some 500 in the U.S. alone. We intend to keep showing our Bergamascos, so others in this country will have an opportunity to see and learn about these intelligent, loyal dogs."



... Ch. Quinberry Gatanya Fondue at Pepperland, Lowchen owned by Leslie B. Samuels.

Reserve Winners Bitch was the sable puppy, Ama-Kay's Good Christian, bred and owned by Ms. Tina Kuroczka of Wethersfield, CT.

Best Puppy in Sweepstakes was the bitch, Ambrier's China Doll, bred and owned by Ms. Cosby. Best Opposite Sex in Sweeps was litter brother, Bet R Ambrier's Samurai, owned by Mrs. Rosen. Best Puppy in Show was the BW, WB, Phylmarko Mei Li.

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Tibetan Spaniel specialty

by Phyllis Kohler

The 4th Annual Fall Regional Specialty of the Mid-Atlantic Tibetan Spaniel Club was held October 25th at the Senior High School in Cockeysville, MD. Mr. Thomas J. Whiting, Fairfax, VA, was show chairman for the event sanctioned by the Tibetan Spaniel Club of America. (Not AKC sanctioned).

Mrs. Anna Cowie, Phoenixville, PA, well-known Non-Sporting and Toy Group judge, officiated over the 35 entries present. Her Best of Breed was the gorgeous cream-colored bitch, TSCA Ch. Bim's Twin Socks Kamla, bred by Mr. Whiting and owned by Ms. Malory Cosby of Lynchburg, VA. Best Opposite Sex was the well-known sable, Bermuda/TSCA Ch. Fairstar Cho-Sun, bred by Mrs. F. McCartney of Berks, England, and owned by Betty and Herb Rosen of Lutherville, MD. Best of Winners was the Winners Bitch from the 6-9 Puppy Class, another cream sable, Phylmarko Mei Li, bred and owned by Mrs. Phyllis Kohler, Fredericksburg, VA. Winners Dog was a near-replica of his sire, Bet R Dai Foo, bred by Betty Rosen and owned by Ms. Maxine Bauman of Baltimore. The silver sable, Amroth Hayes-U of Phylmarko, was the Reserve Winners Dog, bred by Jay Child and Phyllis Kohler and owned by Brian and Ellen Pickard, Schenevus, NY.

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