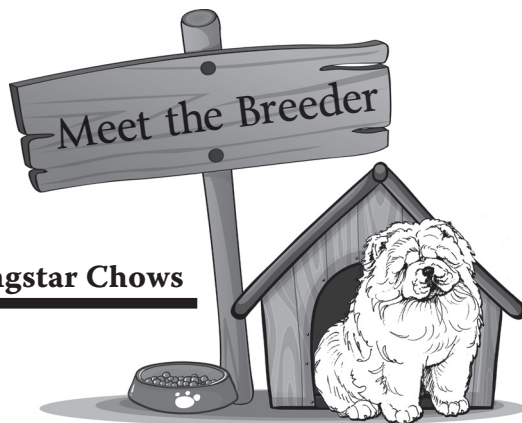


Meet the Breeder Cathy Clapp

Flamingstar Chows



Q. Tell us a little about yourself outside of dogs – i.e. family, work, other hobbies

I was born and grew up in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. I graduated from Hattiesburg High School and then went to college at the University of Southern Mississippi as a Music Education Major where I completed both my BMEd and MMEd. I was a band director for twelve years before I decided I wanted to do something else. I currently work for an Edward Jones Financial Advisor as the Branch Office Assistant.

My only immediate living family is my brother and his family. He and his wife have one son that will be one year old the end of January. While I grew up with both parents, they have both passed away, my father to Alzheimer's disease and my mother to Colon Cancer.

The dogs are my main hobby but I also enjoy reading and occasionally writing. But currently I have been spending so much time going to shows it hasn't left a lot of time for anything else.

Q. Tell us, briefly, why and when you got involved in purebred dogs, and with Chow Chows in particular. How did this progress into showing and eventually breeding?

I actually grew up with purebred dogs – though they were my dad's bird dogs. We had English Setters and then when I was in high school I was given a Brittany. I housebroke him, took him to obedience class and bathed him, etc. because he was supposed to be my dog. Then my dad took him hunting one time and that was it – he was my dad's dog and all of the time I'd spent with him meant nothing. So when I was in college and getting near graduation I knew I wanted a dog that would be good for protection since I would be moving out on my own and I wanted one that my dad couldn't take hunting and make his dog in a single day. At the time I worked for a professor in the Music Department that had a Chow. He would bring her with him to campus during breaks and

I thought she was the coolest dog ever. I started doing some research and decided that a Chow was the dog for me. It just so happened that I found an ad in the classifieds of the local paper right before Christmas of my senior year. A lady in my hometown had a litter so I went to see them and fell in love with a black bitch. I was actually kind of lucky – she didn't show but she subscribed to Chow Life and had the Book of the Chow Chow by Sam Draper. She gave me the information to subscribe and I ordered the book through a bookstore in New Orleans. She was honest and told me upfront that my Chow was going to look like the older styles pictured in the book – and she was right.

I really liked the breed and got the idea that I would like another and maybe breed them so I got a male. Somehow I met up with a girl through my phone calls that had chows in the northern part of the state and we arranged to meet. She convinced me that my male was show quality and we went to a match and he won. In fact I took him to several matches and he did well. I would ask the judge if they really thought he was show quality and the usual answer was, "I don't have chows but I know people that do and I believe you can show him."

So I found that there was going to be a dog show in Jackson, MS and entered. I don't remember



CH FlamingStar Simply The Best ROM

how many were at that first show but it there were quite a few males. When I walked up to the ring with my dog I took one look at the dogs there and knew he was NOT show quality but I showed him anyway. I got back home and started looking for a show puppy because I was already hooked. I had him neutered and my bitch spayed so no more thoughts about breeding them now that I had seen what show quality dogs actually looked like. I was fortunate to make friends with a breeder in Jackson that realized I was serious and really wanted to get a good dog. I continued going to shows that I could to get first hand practice since there were not any conformation classes where I lived. I did go to obedience classes with my male and my first title was actually an AKC Companion Dog (CD) rather than an AKC Championship.

Q. Which people, past or present, have been most influential in shaping your vision for breeding?

My first show chows came from Jean Greer, Tse Ho Kennel in Jackson, MS and then Don & Emma West who bred under the name Westchow near Pine Bluff, Arkansas. They both had dogs of substance and correct movement and were successful in the show ring. They were always available by phone and taught me what they could about grooming when I came to visit. But what I

learned best from them was how to treat people who call. They took me seriously and were willing to sell me a good dog, and then I could call them at any time with questions. I know many of you are thinking, "Well, that's what a good breeder does," but you would not believe how many I called that wouldn't talk to me and did not want to answer any of my questions. All they were interested in was did I want a puppy right now and how quickly I would mail them a check. When I said I was researching now because I wanted to find out how much I needed to save up and get on a waiting list for later litter I actually had some hang up on me. And these were breeders supposedly selling for show.

As far as my current vision for breeding I think I have been influenced most by Harvey & Penny Kent of the Sunburst Chows (sadly, now retired from breeding and showing). They bred for a style and soundness that I liked, and their dogs were active. I have seen so many chows that were typey but unsound, or sound but if you saw one walking down the street you'd wonder what breed it was. And then there are the ones that are such slugs you couldn't really tell much about them at all. I wanted a balanced Chow that not only has good movement but also has good breed type – whether rough or smooth, when you look at it there is no doubt in your mind that it is a Chow Chow.



CH FlamingStar Burning Sky



CH FlamingStar Sunburst Thunder.

And that leads to my other vision – one that was developed by what I did NOT want to have – smooths with little breed type. I was and still am amazed at how many people would willingly sell and even show a smooth with little bone, poor tail sets, long bodies and snipey headpieces. If the same dog had been a rough it would have been considered pet quality, but because it was a smooth it was perfectly acceptable to some that it looked like a coyote had hopped the fence. I have always bred for a smooth that when you looked at it there was no doubt in your mind that it is a Chow – it just has a short coat. I want a nice headpiece and a dog with good bone, square body, good tight tail set and nice movement. If it would not be acceptable as a rough then it is not acceptable as a smooth. In fact a smooth has to be even better because there is no creative grooming to hide any issues.

Q. In five words, describe your ideal Chow Chow

Sound, solid, square, stable, majestic

Q. What is your kennel name, and how did you come up with it?

FlamingStar – my foundation bitch was a granddaughter of “Elvis” (CH Sunburst’s Jailhouse Rock) and continuing the tradition, I named her with the King (Elvis Presley) in mind by selecting “Flaming Star” since it had not been used to name any dogs yet. Her registered name was CH Sunburst Flaming Star. When I bred her it just made sense at the time to use her name as my kennel name. I took the space out simply because it was already long enough and at the time AKC still had the strict limit on the number of characters in a dog’s registered name.

Q. What has been your biggest highlight? The biggest disappointment?

I’d have to say the 2015 Chow Chow Club, Inc. National Specialty has been my biggest highlight. Never in my wildest dreams did I believe that I would breed both the Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex Chows for the same National. Not only that, they were half brother and sister from the same dam. I still remember that feeling when Judge Roy Bailey pulled me out with Marilyn (GCH FlamingStar Some Like It Hot) and Vicki DeGruy with Neo (GCH FlamingStar The Lion King). I looked around, expecting him to pull some others in the cut and then that realization that we were it – there WAS no one else. At that moment I knew I couldn’t lose no matter

which of us received the nod for Best of Breed.

My biggest disappointment was probably a dog I had I called Brody (CH FlamingStar The Gambler). I finally had everything I had been trying to get in a smooth – excellent breed type, a good temperament, very square, beautiful headpiece, good side gait and rear – and the worst front I have ever had. His front assembly was set in front of his rib cage so that his front legs swung in circles instead of moving forward and back. I’ve never had a front like it before or since (and hope I never see another). I figured it would take me years to finish him but I didn’t have anything else to show so I showed him anyway – and up until that time he was the easiest to finish I’ve ever had in something like four weekends of shows. But I knew with that front I had just been lucky and didn’t really show him much as a special. I didn’t want to risk passing that front on so I eventually had him neutered and he was a great house dog. Still, it was a real disappointment to have such a beautiful dog with such a glaring fault.

Q. Is there a breeding that you wish you would have done and why?

Actually, thanks to frozen semen I was finally able to breed to a dog I always loved but didn’t feel I had the right bitch to take to him until ten years after he had died. While there may have been other breedings I considered, in the end I was always thankful to have what I’ve had.

Q. Looking back at where you’ve been, if you were starting out again today, is there anything you would do differently?

Honestly, I can’t really compare today to when I started. There was no such thing as the internet then. You had to read magazines and get on the phone and call. Nowadays you have a world of research and breeders and pictures and health information available online before you ever talk to a breeder. Some correspond mostly by email (which is convenient when several time zones apart) and do not actually pick up the phone until making arrangements.

If I could do anything different though, I would go to more National Specialties. When I was teaching it was difficult because you couldn’t just take a vacation in the middle of the school year on your own terms – you had to work with your time off. But National Specialties offer the opportunity to see dogs and meet people that you probably wouldn’t otherwise. There are so many reasons to go other than to just show your own dog. In fact it is a lot less stressful to go with no dog at all and just watch – and hopefully learn.

2015 CCCI National Specialty



PUTTIN ON THE RITZ— 2015

**BEST OF
BREED**

The Chow Chow Club, Inc.
National Specialty
March 19 - 20, 2015



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CH Dreamland Liberty Tu-Sha



Stud Dog 2001 National



CH FlamingStar The Gambler



GCH FlamingStar Some Like It Hot



CH FlamingStar Unforgettable ROM



CH FlamingStar Tiawin Celebrate

Q. What qualities or philosophies do you employ when making breeding decisions?

First and foremost I have to like the dogs as a whole. I do look at pedigrees. I look at the dogs in the pedigree as well as for health clearances. I'll go to the OFA database and pull up descendants and siblings and half/siblings to look for some consistency and make sure that the dog I'm interested in isn't a fluke. I'll look at phenotype too. I used to try to line-breeding on dogs I really liked but at one point I decided to look at the health clearances and how similar the two I wanted to breed were so instead of worrying about the dogs in the pedigree I breed two that looked a lot like – and got two of the best litters I've ever had. And did the same thing again with the frozen breeding that produced Marilyn (GCH FlamingStar Some Like It Hot) and Meredith (CH FlamingStar Light My Fire).

I still look at pedigrees because there are a couple of dogs I just do not want in it if I can help it – they had faults I don't want to pop up and be stuck with but now I look more at consistency of type of the dogs in the pedigrees. I try to avoid two extremes bred together because that rarely works out. Usually you get one extreme or the other and not something in the middle as most who tried this hoped.

As far as health clearances they are a tool to use but not the final factor. I try not to double up on anything that I do not want, but I do not believe in



CH FlamingStar Light My Fire

tossing a dog out because of one test not obtained or passed. This again comes to looking at the dog as a whole and not just a sum of its parts.

Q. Do you think using frozen semen from dogs that have died is a positive or negative thing in purebred dogs?

I actually find it both. I have only done one frozen semen breeding and it was from a dog I knew and really liked when he was alive. I not only saw him but had my hands on him so I knew his strengths and his weaknesses. I never had what I felt was the right bitch to breed to him when he was alive and in fact did not until he'd been dead about 10 years. I was very grateful that when the right bitch did finally come along that there was frozen available on him. So I bred to the dog with full knowledge of what he was.

I find too many people that are using frozen semen are breeding to a show record and photograph. They know nothing about the dog other than his pedigree and winning record. They don't consider that dog may have had a lot of his wins by following a small handful of judges around that consistently put that dog up, and that in reality he was quite long or had bad hocks or big ears or no neck or any other number of problems that might not be readily apparent from a photograph taken at the right angle. If someone wants to use frozen from a dog they've never seen in person they



CH FlamingStar Amazing Grace

need to try and get an honest, unbiased opinion from those that have. You really need to do some serious research or you might end up with an expensive litter of puppies that should all be placed in companion homes and wasted a breeding on your bitch in the process.

Q. Are there any people currently involved in the breed who purchased their foundation stock from you?

I can only think of one offhand that purchased a male from me years ago. He finally used him for breeding about four years ago and has completed the championship on some of those puppies. Others that have had a dog from me had already been in the breed or were interested in showing but not breeding.

Q. In your opinion, what is the greatest thing a breeder can do to give back to the breed?

We have to be willing to talk to those that call us and if someone is really serious and be willing to let them have a good dog. I'm not saying sell your best into a novice home but at least be honest and give them a fighting chance. I see too many who sell dogs they wouldn't be caught dead with in the ring as show quality to someone else. For some reason it seems to escape them that their name is going to be in that catalog as the breeder.

Also, when we buy a dog from another breeder we need to honor that breeder by showing that dog. They trusted us with their dog and we said we would show. We have too many breeders that are more than willing to take one of the best puppies of another breeder's litter, say they will show it and



GCH FlamingStar Gloria ROM

then find a million excuses as to why they don't but have no problem breeding the dog. And as soon as those puppies are six months old they are in the ring. Well, if you thought enough of that dog to breed it then you owe it to the breeder to show it. It isn't fair nor is it right that you took that dog knowing full well you had no interest in showing it because you are not listed as breeder.

And last, we must be willing to help. It doesn't matter if it is a dog you bred or someone in your area that bought from another breeder – if we are going to get and keep people interested in our sport we have to be willing to help them. Get them started on how to groom, help them decipher which of the many, many products available in the way of combs, brushes, collars, leads, shampoos, conditioners, grooming sprays, etc. they actually need, and just answer their questions as best you can. If they are obviously new introduce yourself. Maybe you don't have time to help them groom before you show (because ringside might be the first time you see them) but offer to show them some things after you are done. They may or may not accept but at least make the effort. And if they come to you for assistance don't refuse just because the dog came from another breeder. Think about how you'd like your own puppy buyers treated if they didn't live close enough to you to ever meet up.

Q. How does the breed today compare to the Chows back when you first started out?

I started in the early 80's when a preponderance of the dogs had extremely heavy bone, long bodies and heavy heads. While we still have some long dogs out there has been a great deal of improvement in squaring them up. However some have gone too far to the other extreme and are breeding tall dogs without enough bone for their



CH FlamingStar Surfer Girl



CH FlamingStar Cannonball Express

size. But for the most part I think breeders are trying to get a shorter-coupled dog with leg and neck and a pleasing headpiece. There always have and always will be breeders to either extreme – those that still breed for the extremely heavy dogs and those that claim movement is everything and breed dogs that are difficult to recognize as a chow.

Q. Who is your favorite Chow (dog and bitch) that you personally bred?

My favorite dog was probably Archie (CH FlamingStar Tiawin Celebrate) owned by Kathy Reed. He was a red smooth that I bred and then showed and finished for Kathy. He had a beautiful head, good bone and good movement and was an excellent example of what a smooth chow could be.

On bitches it is so hard to choose as I've had

some really good ones. But I would have to say a tie between the bitch I am currently showing, Marilyn (GCH FlamingStar Some Like It Hot) and her mother, Gloria (GCH FlamingStar Gloria, ROM). Marilyn has just about everything I ever wanted in a chow – leg, neck, pretty headpiece, type, movement, balance and a good temperament. Gloria was also a very nice bitch and was just a joy to show. She walked into every show like she owned the building and the entire show was a party thrown in her honor. She loved everyone and never met a stranger.

Q. If you had one wish for the breed, what would it be?

That we as breeders be honest with each other when considering adding a dog or bitch to our breeding program as to what issues we are working with and trying to overcome. And we have to be honest with ourselves about our own dogs' shortcomings. There is no perfect dog – every single one has something you wish you could improve. So recognize that and work with it – don't double up on it. We have to be willing to go out of our own program to bring in qualities we feel we are lacking.

We all need to health test but recognize that it is just a tool to work with – it should not be the be all, end all determination in breeding a dog. For instance I do not care if a dog has every health clearance under the sun, if he has a proven record of aggression towards other dogs and is producing it then I don't want anything to do with that. I'd rather breed to the dog that has the majority of what I want, isn't doubling up on anything I don't want, and has a great temperament.

We need to stop being so judgmental. Every breeder needs to have a vision of what the breed should be to them, and breed towards that – rather than breeding willy nilly towards whatever they think will win under a specific judge at the next specialty. Your vision probably isn't the same as my vision but we all need to have that dream chow in our head that gives us a goal to breed towards. We need to respect that and recognize that our goals may be different. Just because they are different does not mean they are wrong – our standard is subjective and is going to be interpreted in many different ways.

My wish is that using all of this we will keep our breed alive and well as the majestic dogs they are in a world where Animal Rights activists want to stop us all. We MUST stand together against them, and that means a united front whether or not you agree with how the person standing next to you does things. If not, then one day we may not be able to breed at all.



GCH CH Flamingstar The Lion King