



It's a Dog's World

Pamela Levy crisscrosses the country with her Australian terriers, racking up show wins and giving back to the breed.

Aspen Sojourner: *You got Emme, your first Australian terrier, in 2001. How did you pick that breed?*

Pamela Levy: I was looking for the best dog for our Aspen lifestyle. I wanted a sturdy hiking dog but one on the smaller side with a big personality—a dog that could hike and jump over logs and still fit under the seat of an airplane. After much research, I found the rare Australian terrier. Only 145 were bred in the United States last year.

A.S.: *Did Emme live up to your expectations?*

P.L.: Yes and more so! She achieved her American Kennel Club Championship and had one litter of puppies. But she made it clear she preferred the trails to the ring. Over the past decade, she has climbed seventeen “fourteeners” with my husband. I’m sure that’s a record for a dog under eleven inches tall.

A.S.: *Many people have dogs, but they don't automatically move to breeding and showing them. Why did you?*

P.L.: It was never my intent. Emme’s breeder asked to borrow her for a show in Denver. She came home with blue ribbons, and I started going to shows to get her championship. Other breeders encouraged me as well, because the pool of Aussies was so small.

A.S.: *Your dogs have been very successful in competition. Tucker was the first Australian terrier in the country to win the big three: Westminster, Eukanuba, and National Specialty. Alfie was the second to win the trifecta, also winning Best of Breed at the 2007 World Show in Mexico City. And Ralfie was ranked the number one Australian terrier in America in 2014. How do you account for your success?*

P.L.: A lot of hard work and a good eye. I was also very lucky in 2004 to meet Gabriel Rangel, one of the most respected trainer-handlers in the dog world. He and his wife, Ivonne, became mentors to me, and he agreed to show my dogs.

A.S.: *Do you ever show your dogs yourself?*

P.L.: Yes. Gabriel and Ivonne worked hard to teach me how to handle, so I could show my own dogs in the group ring. The AKC now has an owner-handler ranking. Ralfie and I were ranked number one in the breed in 2014, and we are currently number one in 2015.

A.S.: *You have beautiful homes in Starwood and Vancouver, Washington. Yet, you spend a great deal of time on the road.*

P.L.: Last year, I drove over 50,000 miles, showing about three weeks a month. We usually stay at the show site or a nice campground. I bring homemade food for the dogs and food from Whole Foods for me. It is challenging to find healthy food at the shows. We also look for nice places to hike along the way.

A.S.: *In 2007, you imported Ringo from Finland. Why Finland?*

P.L.: When I attended the 2006 World Show in Sweden, I was impressed with the good-natured temperaments of the European Aussies. I decided if I was going to stay in the breed, I wanted that personality. Finland and Australia currently have the largest gene

pool. Ringo was my third dog to win the National Specialty. He has produced seven outstanding litters across the country. His progeny have excellent personalities, win in the show ring, and, most importantly, play well with others.

A.S.: *In 2008, you decided to show Aussies without a docked tail. Was that significant?*

P.L.: I had a puppy going to Europe, where the law prohibits docking. I decided not to dock

the litter, and everyone loved the natural tails. Ringo’s son Rocky was the first AKC Grand Champion with a natural tail. Research shows that the tail acts like a rudder and gives a dog more agility and balance.

A.S.: *In 2010, you founded Australian Terrier International, linking breeders globally. What was your goal?*

P.L.: It was my way of giving back to the breed. As breeders, we learn from each other, which helps keep our gene pool healthier. With almost 1,000 members, there is someone available almost twenty-four seven from thirty different countries to help, if someone posts a problem on our Facebook page. In five years, we have donated over \$50,000 to AKC’s Canine Health Foundation and are very proud of the grants we sponsor for ongoing studies of hemangiosarcomas, a major killer of dogs in all breeds. ●

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