

Big, Shaggy and Loving

By Rosemary Lopez

June 20, 1976

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HEADS turn when Bucky struts along the streets of Summit. Sometimes, passers-by blink twice for, although Bucky resembles a small pony, he is actually a dog known as a Bouvier des Flandres.

William and Marie Gregory got Bucky as a puppy nine years ago; before that, they had other Bouviers, although usually one at a time.

On the other hand, Ingrid Kornheiser is the proud owner of nine Bouviers. The former fashion model, one of only three Bouvier breeders in the state, first spotted the huge, shaggy creatures on a Manhattan street five years ago.

Mrs. Kornheiser bought her first Bouvier, Sir Jumbo du Clos des Ceheres, shortly afterward. However, living in Manhattan with Jumbo, an American - Canadian champion, and the two other Bouviers that she soon acquired proved somewhat trying; as a result, Mrs. Kornheiser and her husband, Robert, moved to more spacious quarters in Brewster, N.Y.

It wasn't long before the couple and their ever-expanding brood had outgrown their upstate New York home, and so last spring they all moved to larger quarters in Whitehouse Station. The Kornheisers live in the house, and the barn is presently being converted into kennels, although the dogs spend a good deal of time in the house, too.

“Bouviers love children and they can even teach them how to walk,” Mrs. Kornheiser said. “A toddler can go up and hang onto the Boar vier's shaggy coat. But, of course, not everyone can own a Bouvier.”

One reason is that the dogs require a good deal more care than the average pet. Bucky, for example, eats a pound of horsemeat or liver every day, in addition to a generous serving of dry dog food. He likes the meat to be lovingly cooked by one of his doting owners.

Eighteen-year-old Mary, one of the nine Gregory children, usually feeds Bucky and allows him to sleep in her room. The dog accompanies her when she goes horseback riding, and, according to Mary, can easily outrun the horses.

“I can take Bucky anywhere.” she said. “He's smart and slick. He knows he's not allowed out with no leash, and he can recognize the dog warden or the cops. He knows he's in for trouble if someone in a blue coat catches up with him.”

Bucky also has had several run-ins with the manager of the local supermarket, where he attempted several times to remove steaks from the meat compartment. But he loyally protects the Gregories, acting as a watchdog in the house or car.

“Bouviere are also instinctive herders,” said Mary's mother, Marie. “If you take them for a walk, they'll circle around you and protect you.”

Bucky is still regarded as something of a curiosity in the Summit neighborhood where he lives, but the breed is becoming much more popular.

“People are finally discovering these wonderful dogs,” Mrs. Kornheiser observed. “I get lots of inquiries from people wanting to buy them, but I'm not doing any breeding right now so I don't have any to sell.”

She and her husband, an executive for Atlantic Records, are presently busy grooming and training the dogs for the various shows in which they will be entered this year.

Mrs. Kornheiser participates in 50 shows annually, including the Westminster Kennel Club show in Madison Square Garden.

“Taking care of Bouviere is a full-time job,” she said. “You have to bathe and comb them, train them. But because you have to run around and exercise with them so much, they really keep you skinny.”

Since she began breeding Bouviere, Mrs. Kornheiser has stopped modeling. She had done assignments for leading fashion magazines, in addition to television spots.

“I used to show clothes, and now I show dogs,” she said. “I don't miss the modeling at all, as long as I'm not just sitting at home doing nothing at all.”

The Kornheisers used to travel extensively; now, except for an occasional weekend away, their European vacations have stopped. Mrs. Kornheiser does not like to go away without her pets, although last summer she took three of them to various shows, an undertaking that lasted two weeks.

“I drove a station wagon 1,000 miles,” she recalled. “The car was full of crates, dogs, grooming equipment, food and water. I always bring water for them: otherwise, they will get sick on strange water.”

The Bouvier des Flandres originated in Belgium, where it was used to pull carts, herd cattle and guard sheep. It is an expensive dog, with prices for puppies starting at about 8400.

The prices can skyrocket infinitely, according to Jack Van Vliet, the largest breeder of Bouviers in the state. At his Plateau Kennels in Frenchtown, he presently has 20 Bouviers, including the oldest champion in the country.

The Bouvier des Flandres, which literally means “Cowherd of Flanders,” originated in Belgium. where it was used to pull carts, herd cattle and guard sheep. During World War I, these coarse haired strong animals were used as ambulance dogs and messengers.

Like the Boxer, the Bouvier is a descendant of the Bull Mastiff, and the standard Schnauzer eventually descended from the Bouvier.

The Bouviers are known for their courage, alertness and intelligence. Occasionally line breeding, the procedure of mating descendants of the same family, is employed, although this is not common. Generally, the dogs are characterized by good temperament, aggressiveness and watchdog qualities.

Bouviers can range in color from gray to fawn to black. According to Mr. Van Vliet, they are bred more for temperament than anything else.

“Shyness is a bad trait in a Bouvier because their boldness is their style,” Mary Gregory commented. “Bucky is the king of this neighborhood. Everyone loves him, and the people who come to visit us swear that the next dog they get will be a Bouvier.” ■

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