

## THE JOURNEY

by Lee Netzler

Several weeks earlier we had mailed our entry form and money. Soon afterward the entry slip was returned to confirm our acceptance at the first obedience trial we had ever entered. Now the great day had arrived and we were busily preparing for the journey to the trial grounds.

My wife, co-trainer and handler of our semi-obedient Scottish Terrier, began the loading operation by placing a large box on the kitchen counter. "I think that should be big enough," she said.

"It certainly should," I replied, observing that our whole dog, plus another of the same size, would fit inside of it comfortably. She began to collect the collars and leashes. Since the dog was already wearing his slip chain, she only packed his leather "every day" collar, and a spare training collar, in case he somehow lost the one he was wearing. We packed a spare leash, and placed his regular training leash conveniently adjacent to the box where we could find it when we were ready to leave. The "tie-out" stake went into the box next, along with 20 feet of rope. With this indispensable rig, we could drive the stake, fasten the tether rope, and allow the dog to range freely up to 20 feet in any direction. This, of course, required the packing of a hammer so that the stake could be driven and extracted. But, when everything was in the box, we felt confident that we were adequately prepared for all collar-leash-tether situations.

Now it was time to consider the physical welfare of our dog. First, his food and water dishes were packed. Then, in order to maintain feeding flexibility, we packed a can of dog food, a can opener, a cellophane-wrapped "beefy" dinner, and a plastic bag containing about a pound of dry kibble. Next we discussed the water. After a spirited debate about the amount, we agreed on two plastic gallon jugs full. These last items filled the box.

"I think we need a bigger box," my wife offered, phrasing what was already quite evident to both of us and the dog as well. So, after a little searching in the basement, I returned to the kitchen with an even bigger box, ready to help re-pack.

We reloaded everything into the bigger box. Then to insure our dog would be properly groomed, we packed his comb, brush, stripping knife, and trimming scissors. We left his electric clippers at home to save space. So that he could amuse himself, we added several carefully selected rubber toys. Next, we packed a few clean newspapers, and a few old towels, just in case. Finally, we put in a generous supply of dog treats. These filled the big box.

"Where are you going to put his rug?" my wife asked, referring to the scatter rug he normally used to take a nap. That wasn't much of a problem, since it fit nicely in the box after I had taken out the water jugs and transferred them to the trunk of the car next to my golf clubs.

"What about the collapsible metal crate?" I asked. Suppose we have to leave him somewhere and can't tie him to the stake. We would need the cage. My wife agreed. By leaning just right on the trunk door, the latch snapped, and the metal cage was safely packed with my golf clubs and the water jugs.

Certain that we had not forgotten anything, I loaded the big box onto the back seat of the car, and put the dog in beside it. We slid into the front seat and my wife placed the maps, our club jackets, the entry slip, and her purse between us. Our compact car was now snugly loaded and we were practically on our way. I started the engine and backed down the driveway.

"By the way, we have to pick up Judy," my wife casually announced. "She's riding with us."

"To the trial," I asked.

“Yes.”

“Do you mean Judy with the Samoyed?”

“Yes.”

“Oh.” And I wondered if Judy had done as good a job of packing as we had.