

NON-SPORTING GROUP

Tibetan Terriers

THE RESOLUTE TT

It is notable that in 1934 The Kennel Club (U.K.) breed standard describes the Tibetan Terrier's *General Appearance* as "A medium sized Terrier ... not unlike a miniature Old English Sheepdog." By 1986, *General Appearance* evolved to "Sturdy, medium sized, long haired, generally square outline; resolute expression," with comparison to the OES altogether removed. By 2000, the mention of "resolute" in the standard was now the summary statement of the *Head and Skull* description, succinctly writ-

ten, "In all, giving a resolute expression." A new paragraph on *Temperament* adds "sparing of affection to strangers."

In the preamble to the breed's 1987 AKC standard there is similar deliberate wording to describe the TT: "The Tibetan Terrier served as a steadfast, devoted companion in all of his owner's endeavors," with further elaboration under *Temperament*: "[the Tibetan Terrier] ... is highly intelligent, sensitive, loyal, devoted and affectionate. The breed may be cautious or

reserved. Fault—Extreme shyness."

One begins to feel a sense of the spirited discussion among devoted Board members here and abroad that likely ensued to find accurate words to flesh out the enigmatic Tibetan Terrier.

"It isn't they are really shy! It's more they are very discerning."

"Yes, because look how they greet their families with over-the-top enthusiasm!"

"But this is not how they present to the world.

*Tibetan Terrier drawn
by Nataša Čok, of Sems
Kyi Bu Tibetan Terriers
in Lokev, Slovenia.
(Website:
<http://semskyibu.com/>)*



COURTESY NATAŠA ČOK

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They are reserved, some extremely careful in who they choose to befriend.”

“Oh, yes, they are very unlike many sporting or herding breeds in this way. Really, I find them to be very catlike in their often indifference to new people.”

“But once they know you, they are as openly affectionate as any breed out there!”

“Indeed! I think maybe few breeds have this capacity for depth of devotion, good humor, and engaging intellect as the TT.”

“Hear, hear!”

“But how can we best describe this complexity? There is risk we might create confusion or misunderstanding of typical TT character.”

Alas, owners of TTs also find themselves doing a lot of explaining when introducing their dogs.

“No, they are not really terriers, but were placed in this group in Britain when first introduced because of their size.”

“No, it isn’t that he is afraid, he just is initially aloof to strangers.”

“After she knows you a bit, you’ll find her warming up to you. She’ll likely want to investigate the contents of your suitcase and will discreetly scent everything you are wearing, though.”

“It’s best you don’t pet or handle him in the way a retriever enjoys. He will back off.”

“Just take an ambivalent attitude initially, and

let them make the first approach.”

Perhaps the adjective owners around the world embrace most as a proper descriptor of the TT is *resolute*. Google dictionary defines it as “admirably purposeful, determined, and unwavering.” The modifier “admirably” clarifies that “cautious or reserved” behavior in a resolute TT is in service of a higher duty rather than a symptom of shyness. And what is the overall purpose of a TT that it pursues with such unwavering determination? Here it is essential to ponder their origin.

An ancient breed, the TT evolved from harsh conditions to become a versatile, athletic, and sensitive companion to their people. A cautious disposition would be favored in such an environment. One could describe most wild animals as “resolute” in their overall demeanor and expression. An attitude of skepticism and discernment of new situations favors staying alive! The face the TT puts on to the world is born of a challenging, often adverse background that elevates a survival strategy as primary instinct. Thus, the resolute TT conveys in both mind and body their strong sense of connection and purpose to protect and serve hearth, home, and their beloved people.

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Tibetan Terrier Club of America

<http://www.ttca-online.org/>