

# Charlee Byford

## PIEN JI SHIH TZU

by Charlee Byford

Should we start with a fairy tale? I love fairy tales! There was a lady who wanted to show Shih Tzu as she thought they are the most elegant, beautiful creatures in the world. She struggled and hung in there, and after YEARS of dragging one around, finished her first home-bred champion – a solid red- from the Bred-By-Exhibitor class. Then, his very first time in the ring as a Special, he went Best in Specialty Show shown by his owner, beating a lovely ring full of dogs shown by distinguished handlers and longtime breeder-owners, thereby becoming, as far as I have been able to find, the first black mask red Specialty Show winner (made possible only by the late addition of red as a registration option- a technicality, to be sure, but I'll take it if he is, indeed the first!). How's that for a fairy tale? Well, that was Red Fred – my dream come true dog.



BISS Ch Pien Ji's Red Fred CGC

I got my first Shih Tzu in 2000- he was actually a pet for my Rhodesian Ridgeback. I always found little dogs yappy and annoying, but as my Ridgeback got older, he would try to kidnap dogs that friends brought over. I saw a Shih Tzu and knew it was just the pet my Ridgie wanted.



Charlee with Ch Katmandu Lady Marmalade Of Pien Ji

They were, indeed, quite the pair. Solo (the Ridgie) would lie on his tummy and let Miagi pummel him without end. Miagi would jump on Solo's head, and Solo would obligingly fall on his side – killed by the little dog.

Sometimes Solo played back- pulling his lips over his teeth and chewing on Miagi – who would bark and wiggle with glee. People would come over and say, "Oh- you got a little dog?" "No -that's Solo's dog."

But a funny thing happened. I just fell in love with little Miagi. He wasn't yappy, annoying, or particularly fragile; in fact he was a vely sweet companion. I realized I REALLY liked this breed – enough to deal with the coat that came with it (another thing I had studiously avoided). I thought this was a breed I would like to get involved with and



Ch Ningsia's Chun Kee Bob (#5 ASTC producer for 2008)

breed, and I'm proud enough that I just did not want to bring ugly into the world. That meant that if I was going to breed them, I would have to bite the bullet and show them to be able to get into lines worth having. OK- so be it.

I went to a Toy Specialty and watched the Shih Tzu. I followed the owner of the one I liked out of the ring. I wanted to know more about her dogs and if there was a breed club. As it turned out- she was the president! That's how I met Carole Delaney (Katmandu Shih Tzu) and JoAnn Gustafson (Ningsia Shih Tzu) who was at the show with Carole. They remain two of my dearest friends, and we work closely together to this day. I often reflect on how profoundly lucky I was to have met the two of them – I have two friends for life. When people ask me



Ch Pien Ji's Lolli Doll

about getting into showing I tell them that their single most important tool is their mentor(s). Even your first dog isn't nearly as important as your mentors. I would hate to try to add up the hours JoAnn and Carole gave me. They are simply the best.

My first champions were Ningsia dogs, CH Ningsia's Chun Kee Bob that I bought from JoAnn, and AKC & Int'l CH Ningsia's I'm A Keeper that I co-own with her. They both finished with handlers- by the time my own kids started coming up, I wanted to show my own. In the meantime, I made a discovery- I like showing MUCH more than breeding.

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*Ch Pien Ji's Chun Kee Mun Kee (a blue)*

(I breed to get another show dog –it's over a year since I have had a litter here, though Carole has had pups from Lolli, who we co-own now.) Sophia – a pretty but shy bitch I bought from Carole, produced a litter of three darling boys when bred to my first champion, Bob. The nicest one was a gold and white blue, AKC Int'l CH Pien Ji's Chun Kee Mun Kee. I was shocked that so many well intentioned people told me to sell him and show one of the gold and white boys- though the blue was by far the nicest of the bunch. Why would I keep second best for my breeding program? That's when I learned that winning in a breeding program and winning in the ring aren't always the same thing. And isn't that a shame?

The next boy I kept (can you tell I like boys?) was a lovely black mask red-BISS AKC & Int'l CH Pien Ji's Red Fred, CGC that I co-own with JoAnn. (That's when people who had any doubt knew that I really do not mind making things hard on myself in the ring –I want the best dog even when it is harder to finish.) The next Pien Ji kid was AKC & Int'l CH Pien Ji's Lolli Doll- a very pretty gold and white with inky black eyes you could get lost in. I dragged these kids everywhere and got nowhere for a while. While doing a meet-the-breed for our breed club at an event that also hosted an International show, I found out that you could enter same day and that they give a written critique.

Now, I thought Mun Kee had a lot of merit, but hadn't gotten near a point with him. I put him in to see what the judges thought of him. He won Toy Group 1 and went on to win Best Bred-By Adult in Show! Ok – that means I AM THE WEAKEST LINK! I started taking handling lessons whenever I could and got to where I occasionally don't totally ruin their chances. Well, all three of them finished in 2008. The icing on the cake was that put their dad, my first champion CH Ningsia's Chun Kee Bob in a tie for the ASTC Number 5 Stud Dog for the year. And the fairy tale above, of course, is Red Fred's story.

Now their kids are coming up. This year I finished two more reds- AKC & Int'l CH Pien Ji's Cherchez La Rouge



*Pien Ji N Katmandu's Sweet Jane*

(half-sister to Red Fred by Carole's BISS CH Katmandu Easter Parade)- who took back to back four point majors at the Nor-Cal Toy Fanciers shows (capably handled by dear friend Vicki Cooper), and AKC & Int'l CH Katmandu's Lady Malmalade of Pien Ji, a lovely Red Fred daughter that I co-own with Carole Delaney. Pien Ji N Katmandu's Sweet Jane (a gold and white Lolli Doll daughter) took Best Bred-By-Exhibitor pup at an IABCA International Dog Show at three months old, and won Best in Sweeps at the Puget Sound Shih Fancier's Specialty and we hope she will continue to do well. And Pien Ji N Ningsia's Sienna (a copper-penny-red Red Fred daughter) took Group 1 at 3 months old at the IABCA show, and shows a lot of promise.

You know, I always thought that the prettiest Shih Tzu I could imagine would be black mask silver. I study color genetics- and could not see any reason they aren't out there, but they didn't seem to be. I put that question a little over a year ago on a list I am a member of, and here came a picture of a bitch finishing. I got hold of her owner, and ended up with a black mask silver boy of my own- CH Sha- Mar's Smoke Gets in Your Eyes of Pien Ji, thanks to the kindness of Sharon Moore. Smoke is a lovely boy and a real standout. He finishes with two 5 point majors, and I think he will bring a lot of positives to my breeding program. His first breeding will likely be to CH Marmalade- and I am really looking forward to seeing this litter.

The line I like to use as sort of a mission statement for Pien Ji Shih Tzu is "Pien Ji- where Type meets Temperament". I breed VERY heavy for temperament. My kids live in the house and I think that if you aren't producing Shih Tzu that are a joy to live with, you have failed miserably. My dogs are not penned- I would rather have stained feet than miserable dogs. They have a doggie door and play outside when they want, also. When you have them all with you, you get very picky about what kinds of personalities you will put up with. My kids are sweet and quiet and easy to live with. They are a little quieter in the show ring as they are very used to being with people. I wouldn't have it any other way.

That's about it for where and what. In the breed overall, I would like to see a lot more color. It's getting better- but the standard says 'all colors are to be considered equally', yet when I started, almost all you saw in the ring was gold and white. They are a lovely part of the breed, but not the whole breed. And we have to take the blame for that. Many breeders breed only for what will win in the ring and are, in effect, committing genocide on the lovely colors in this breed. I'd like to see the whole rainbow of Shih Tzu on display. The one other thing I just don't get is that the standard is very clear about Shih Tzu should never

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be raced or strung up- and it is a rare day in the ring that you don't see both in abundance. A Shih Tzu should be naturally arrogant- and a Shih Tzu in full sail- head up- lead hanging- is a beautiful sight that should be celebrated. There is truly nothing more beautiful.

Thank you for letting me share a little about my kids- I am so very proud of them.

Charlee Byford



*Pien Ji N Katmandu :- Sweet Jane shown going Best in Sweeps, Puget Sound Shih Tzu Fanciers Specialty.*

# Pien Ji Shih Tzu



## Ch Pien Ji's Cherchez La Rouge

BISS Ch Katmandu Easter Parade x Ningsia's Chiang of Pien Ji  
Finished with back-to-back 4-point Majors at  
The NorCal Toy Fancier's Specialty

## Ch Katmandu Lady Marmalade Of Pien Ji BISS

Ch Pien Ji's Red Fred, CGC x Katmandu Sweet Dreams  
Finished with two 5-point Majors



## Ch Sha-Mar's Smoke Gets In Your Eyes Of Pien Ji

Ch Sherden's Design By Cartier x  
Ch Sha-Mar's Awesome Ashley  
Smoke finished going BOB/BOW at the Willamette Valley Toy  
Specialty (Sharon Newcomb) & Clark Co. KC (Judy Webb).

*Pien Ji*

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