

TOP DOG

• continued from A1

powerful dog, who gave me goose bumps. I had only seen pictures of them, and when I saw one in person, I was hooked.

"I educated myself about the breed and gathered information over the next few years and obtained my first one in 1984," Marsh continued. "He was a show puppy, and he was the start of it all, my first champion Rottweiler was named CH Tugboats River Sage. We learned a lot together, Sage and I. He is truly responsible for this great long-lived love affair between myself and the Rottweiler"

Marsh is quick to defend the breed, which she feels is often given a bad rap due to irresponsible owners not the dog itself.

"The Rottweiler is a wonderful dog, but it is not a dog for everyone," she suggested. "The Rottweiler takes a responsible, caring owner who has educated him or herself about the breed. The Rottweiler needs a structured and loving environment. Dogs are just like kids. You get out of them exactly what you put into them. Period."

Marsh considers showing dogs professional-

ly a rewarding, and fun, experience.

"You actually get paid for doing something you enjoy," she said. "There is something wonderful about the sport of purebred dogs. It's the dogs, first and foremost, naturally, but then there's also the network of people that you meet and form friendships with over the years. They're people you would never meet otherwise from all over the country.

"The traveling, that is involved from show to show is exciting as well. Then there's the competition itself," she added. "I have always been of a competitive nature, and it is very exciting to be on the end of the leash, of a great dog when the judge points at you. It is a great family sport where you see generations of dog people."

Opened Pet Spa

Marsh's focus on the canine world is evident, too, in an equally important part of her life, the Pet Spa, which relocated to Dakota City in 1992 after operating in South Sioux City for 11 years.

"I had always wanted to work with dogs, and this just seemed to be a dream come true," she said referring to the Spa. "When I was a child we took our family dog to a kennel while we went on vacation, and when we came home, he was deathly sick, and terribly thin. I cried and cried and said when I grew up, I was going to have a place where people could leave their pets, and come back home to a healthy happy dog. That dream never left me."

Marsh, who does behavior modification and conformation training on a one-on-one basis for dog owners, has yet another important interest, that of working with rescue group efforts for the Rottweiler and Doberman breeds, a project she has been involved in since 1981. "Saving a dog is one of the most rewarding things in life for me," she says. "There are so many in need."

"My whole life pretty much revolves around dogs," Marsh confessed, "In work and in play. They are truly an intricate part of my daily life. I can't imagine life without them."