

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
**Rafael García Parrondo and
Carmen Navarro Guisado**
DE VILLAODÓN KENNEL
Madrid, Spain

This interview, translated from Spanish, was conducted in Charlotte, North Carolina in October 2000 by Dan Fleitas.

How long have you been involved in the Samoyed breed?

Rafa: Approximately eighteen years.

Rafa, how did you get started?

Rafa: When I was twelve years old, my father had taken me on a trip to the mountains. While there I saw a beautiful white dog, which I was told was called a Samoyed. I told my father that someday I would buy a Samoyed. As a teenager, I dreamed of owning such a dog, and I read everything about the breed which I could get my hands on.

Carmen, how did you get involved with dogs?

Carmen: My start was different. Rafa's family always had dogs as housepets: living with them, sleeping on the sofa, etc. But in my family, the only dogs we had were dogs used for hunting. They were not housepets, so I was not particularly interested in dogs.

Then I had a bad experience, during my teen years, when some friends tried to scare me by making me believe that their dog was going to attack me. I began running and cut my foot pretty badly on a piece of glass, resulting in surgery. From that experience, I developed a fear of dogs. It was not until I met and married Rafa that I overcame this fear, and began to see the wonderful joy and the beauty of the Samoyed breed.

Rafa, how did you get Carmen interested in Samoyeds?

Rafa: When I married Carmen, I quickly began to teach her everything I had learned about the breed, and she became as enthusiastic as I was. Like most people, we eventually purchased a female Samoyed, unaware that she was only pet

quality. And, again like most newcomers, we decided to breed her. We found a stud dog, and from that litter we kept a puppy bitch, thinking we might eventually show her. In the meantime, we also began looking for a male, and visited various breeders of show dogs. It was at this time that we began to understand the difference between a pet and a show dog.

Did you keep and show any of those first dogs?

Rafa: No, they lived out their lives to about eleven years with us, but we finally realized that they were not show dogs, so they did not figure into our eventual breeding program. Our real involvement began with a stroke of good luck, thanks to some friends.

When did you finally get into showing?

Rafa: First we began attending various expositions (dog shows) in Spain, including the 1983 World Show, which was held in our hometown of Madrid. We tried to learn all we could about the sport, and how one can become successful in such competition.

Which was your foundation bitch?

Rafa: She was a British-bred Sammy, White-Ball of Swardle, originally owned by an American Marine stationed at the U.S. base in Torrejon, Spain. He gave her to some Spanish friends who, in turn, gave her to us. We bred her to a male who had become Sp. Ch. El-Al's Elegant Prince Charly, a dog sold by American breeder Elsie Buhaley to breeders in Spain, who finished him. We finished two champions from that breeding.

Approximately how many litters have you bred?

Rafa: Probably about 30 or so Samoyed litters.

Is there one litter which you consider your best?

Rafa: Our best litter was probably our second one, born around 1990. That was the breeding we just spoke of; the Swardle bitch to the American dog. From that litter, we finished two males: Multi BIS BISS Sp/Port/Int Ch. Bogart de

Villaodón and BISS Sp/Gibr/Int Ch. Blanco-Lobo de Villaodón. Since that time we have produced other litters from which four, even five, of the offspring finished their championships. But I consider the 1990 litter our best, because "Bogart" today is behind most of the pedigrees of the Villaodón show dogs, as well as many other champion Samoyeds in Spain, other parts of Europe, North and South America.

Carmen: I agree. Ch. Bogart lived to ten years of age; he died in December 1999. But he left a very positive legacy on the Villaodón Samoyeds to this day.

Rafa: Another successful early litter for us was from a bitch, Zinka de Garcibravo, whom we purchased from a breeder in Spain. She produced Sp. Ch. de Villaodón Jake-Matte and Sp. Ch. Oso-Blanco de Villaodón in the early 1990s.

Do you know how many champions you have bred?

Rafa: At this time, probably about 100, mostly in Spain, but also dogs who have gained their championships in Portugal, Peru, Venezuela, Canada, Uruguay, Brazil, France, Italy, and Gibraltar. A total of nineteen of our dogs have won Best in Show in different countries.

Which dog of your breeding do you consider your best thus far? Which has done the most winning?

Rafa: Easily, that was Ch. Bogart, a Best in Show and Best in Specialty Show winner and a top producer.

How did you select your kennel name, Villaodón, and what does it mean?

Rafa: The name "Villaodón" is taken from the name of the suburban city of Madrid where we reside. The actual name of the city is Villaviciosa de Odón. We shortened it to Villaodón which, in fact, was the name of this community in the eighteenth century.

Who or what has most influenced your breeding program?

Rafa: Two American breeders have been of tremendous help and influence: Lynette Hansen (Polar Mist) and Mardee Ward-Fanning (Hoof 'N Paws).

Carmen: And, of course, Mardee's parents, Robert and the late Dolly Ward. Their books and articles are the bible on Samoyeds as far as we are concerned. We have read and re-read their books many times.

How many dogs do you presently keep on your premises?

Rafa: Right now we have twenty dogs at home. These include fourteen Samoyeds, two Siberian Huskies, two Alaskan Malamutes, and two American Akitas (now officially known in FCI countries as Great Japanese Dogs). In addition, we co-own about ten or twelve other dogs with persons in other countries such as Venezuela, Portugal, and Peru.

Do you use any system in naming your dogs?

Rafa: From the first litter we began the practice of naming the dogs based on the letters of the alphabet, beginning with the letter "A." In Spain, there is no limit on the number of letters you use in the dog's registered name - the name can be as long as you want. Of course, when the dog's name appears in a catalog, a long name will be shortened!

With regard to pedigrees in Spain, can one have confidence that they are accurate?

Rafa: There may be some pedigrees which have been falsified, but I think the great majority of pedigrees in Spain are honest and can be trusted for accuracy in breeding.

When you began, how many Samoyeds were shown in the typical show in Spain? Today?

Rafa: When we started, there were very few Samoyeds entered in the shows, maybe five to six at some of the bigger shows. Today, especially at the specialties, it is not unusual to have as many as 100 Samoyeds

Facing page: Sp/Port/Int Ch. Bogart de Villaodón (Ch. El-Al's Elegant Prince Charly x White-Ball of Swardle), shown winning BIS under American specialist judge Robert Ward at the National Specialty in Madrid, 1996. Bogart is a Multi BIS, BISS winner and a top sire.





Sp/Int Ch. Oso-Blanco de Villadón (Ch. Skardu's Rolls Royce x Zinkade Garabravo), a Multi BIS, BISS winner, shown by Rafael García.

in the conformation ring.

Which do you consider more important: type, soundness, or temperament, and in what order?

Rafa: As a breeder, I look for type, but for the show ring I also want soundness and good

temperament.

Carmen: All three, type, soundness, and temperament are equally important. As a breeder, I would say that type is more important than soundness. If I had a dog of great sound-

ness but lacking in type, I would not want to consider the dog in our breeding program. On the other hand, if a dog has great type but is shy or faulty in temperament, there would be no point in trying for a show career

or using it in our breedings. All three must go together.

Do you think that it is possible to overcome aggressiveness or excessive timidity in Samoyeds?

Rafa: No, although proper training can help a somewhat shy dog.

Which faults are most commonly seen in Samoyeds in Spain these days?

Carmen: In Spain, there is a problem that probably traces back to the British influence. The problem is short legs and neck, even though the coats are profuse. This is a problem throughout most of Europe, because so much of the stock originally came from the British Isles.

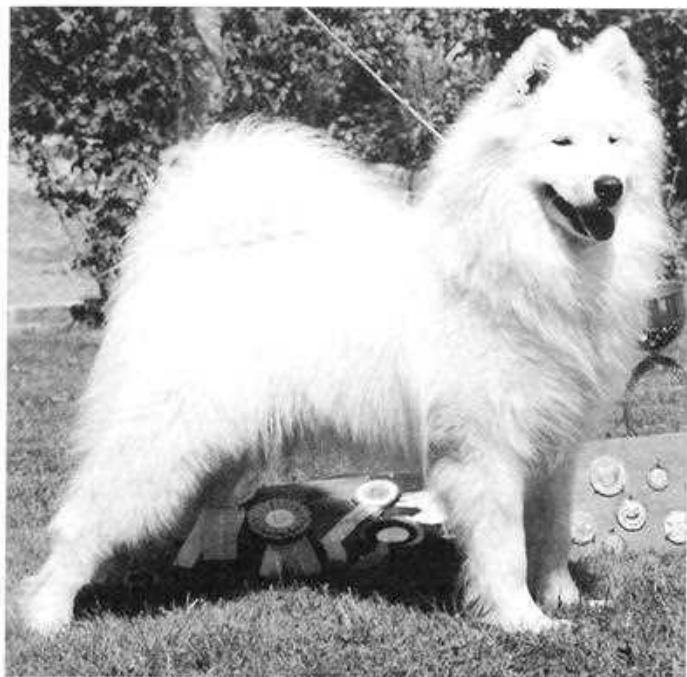
Is there a difference between the Samoyeds in Spain and those in Britain?

Rafa: In Europe today, there are two groups of Samoyed breeders. Some, like us, have tried to combine the best of the English and American dogs, while others have opted to go with the English type only: pretty heads and long coats, even though they can't move properly. They almost resemble long-coated white Chows! Much of the problem derives from the English standard, which now permits males to reach a maximum height of only 56 cm - which is below the height formerly permitted (or that permitted in the American and FCI standards for the Samoyed). When the standard was revised to call for this lower height, other parts of the body became imbalanced. The scapula became straighter, as did the rear angulation. The neck shortened, and the body became proportionately longer, all contributing to a dog with a rather stilted gait.

Tell me about the colors of Samoyeds you see in Europe.

Rafa: Most European judges are accustomed to seeing the all-white English dogs, although the standard clearly and equally also allows for white and biscuit, all biscuit, or cream colors. We feel that a little of the biscuit color is important for creating the correct texture of the harsh outer coat. In our experience, the pure white color sometimes seems to go hand in hand with a finer texture that is incorrect.

Do you have a preference for one color over others?



Sp/Int/Gibr Ch. Blanco-Lobo de Villadón (a Ch. Bogart brother), himself a BIS, BISS winner.

Rafa: I don't have any preference on colors as long as the texture is also correct.

In your breedings, have you used inbreeding, linebreeding, or outcrossing? Explain when you use each one.

Rafa: We have used all three. For practical reasons, beginning years ago with a limited breeding stock, we used inbreeding of father to daughter, and sometimes of mother to son so as not to lose the good points we were trying to hold on to. In the subsequent generations, we would do a linebreeding or even an outcross to bring in new bloodlines that we felt would complement what we were trying to achieve.

Where did you go for your outcrosses?

Rafa: Sometimes to other dogs in Spain, but also to dogs we were familiar with, or had seen, at shows in France or Italy. These were not complete outcrosses, because in most cases there were common ancestors at the third or fourth generation. So, in reality, I guess we have not used complete outcrossing in our breedings; mostly linebreeding and some inbreeding.

Do you believe that you have established a distinctive Samoyed line? How would you describe this look?

Rafa: In Spain and in much of Europe, the majority of Samoyeds have English blood-

lines, with their characteristic profuse coats. We tried to develop a distinctive type that would keep the abundant coat, but would equally consider the proper texture. From Britain, we imported two bitches from the Novaskaya and Karazoe lines. And very importantly, we purchased American dogs for the moderately-long legs and gracefully arched neck called for in the standard. Thus, over the years we have developed a Samoyed that is basically 75 percent American and 25 percent English bloodlines, creating a look that is not all that common at most European shows, but which we consider correct and certainly our preference.

Carmen: When we began our serious pursuit, we had this type in mind. Whether we have achieved it, or are still working toward it, we hope that breeders, exhibitors, and judges will come to recognize the Villadón look as one worthy of the standard.

What is your long-term goal with the Villadón Samoyeds?

Rafa: Well, the only thing I want is to be able to maintain the type of Samoyed we have developed, with the kind of head which I think is ideal, and to continue to help advance our breed. We want to keep producing functional working dogs with the picture of beauty called



Sp/Int Ch. Risa-Polar de Villadón (Ch. Bogart de Villadón x Ch. Shardu's Xamanta), shown by Carmen Navarro.

for in the standard, and possessing an intelligent, adaptable, friendly temperament.

Carmen: We want to continue producing good dogs, hopefully better with each generation. Dogs with good ring aptitude, and dogs that will continue to win championship titles for their owners around the world.

Describe the ideal conformation of the Samoyed.

Rafa: The Samoyed is a medium-sized dog in all respects, with nothing extreme

in any of its parts. The head should be broad, forming an equilateral triangle from the base of the ears to the center of the stop. The dog has what can certainly be called a pretty head,

with the characteristic expression which is a combination of the eyes, erect triangular ears slightly rounded at the tips, and the slightly upward-curved corners of the mouth creating the well-known "Samoyed smile." While gaiting at a trot, it should exhibit good extension and reach in the forequarters with

the front feet hitting the ground at a point even with the nose. There should be strong drive in the hindquarters.

If you were to assign points from one to 100 for the importance of head conformation, how many would you assign?

Rafa: At one time, the standard had points for different aspects of the dog's conformation, but that is no longer true. I don't favor points; the dog should be evaluated in its totality, not as a combination of parts.

What about the eye color? Is the blue color a disqualification as in the United States?

Rafa: Yes, the blue color is a disqualification. There was a small problem with light-colored eyes for awhile, but most of the Samoyed breeders recognized the problem, so the light-colored eyes are no longer very common.

And the bite? Is there a problem with missing teeth?

No, this is not a breed with major problems in teeth or bite. The bite should be scissors.

How far should the chest drop?

Rafa: The chest should drop to the point of the elbows, if not a little below that. But in a dog with this much coat, depth of chest can be deceiving. A judge must actually feel the body. The ribs should be well-sprung, but flattened at the sides for proper movement.

How important is coat for winning? Can a dog lacking in coat win in the show ring?

Rafa: To win, or for general appearance a heavy coat is desirable, but a weather-resistant texture is more important than quantity. However, when a dog is badly out of coat, it may be best to refrain from entering shows until the dog grows back its coat. Of course, if the dog has such excellent conformation and showmanship that it will nonetheless deserve to win, by all means it should be shown.

What kind of front and rear angulation do you strive for?

Rafa: Although difficult to achieve, one wants a shoulder layback approaching 45-degrees, with a 90-degree angle where the humerus meets the scapula. At the rear, again one wants a 45-degree angulation of the stifles relative to the ground. It is very important that the legs be moderately long, because the

length of leg from the ground to the elbow should be approximately 55 percent of the height of the dog.

Carmen: Which is, again, why we do not want to see short-legged Samoyeds.

Rafa: In the show ring in Europe, the shoulder angulation is, at best 40 degrees, mostly less, and the length of the humerus is shorter than called for in the standard. Instead of the distance from the ground to the elbow being 55 percent of the dog's height at the withers, it's more like 50 percent and, quite often, only 45 percent!

What is the proper placement of the tail?

Carmen: The tail should be set at the end of the pelvis, not too high or too low. It should be moderately long; there's that word again - moderate - or medium in most respects. It should be carried over the back or to the side, but not tight against the back.

Rafa: And on length, many judges fail to evaluate the length of the tail. Properly constructed, the last bone of the tail should reach to the hock joint of the hindleg. Short tails are a problem that many European judges do not check.

What is the correct height for dogs, and for bitches?

Rafa: I like a dog about 57 cm and a bitch about 54 cm, but correct proportion is more important than height alone. In this breed, the dogs should be just "off-square," that is, about five percent longer than tall, with bitches slightly longer than that. I would prefer a 55-cm male of correct proportion to a 57-cm dog of incorrect proportion. The actual FCI standard calls for dogs 57 plus or minus three cm, bitches 53 plus or minus three cm.

And the feet?

Rafa: I want to see well-arched toes on a hare-type foot that is spread, but not splayed. Currently, we are having a difference of opinion regarding the trimming of feet among Samoyed breeders in Spain. On the one hand are those who believe that the hair on the feet should not be trimmed, arguing (nonsensically in my opinion) that repeated trimming will alter the makeup of the feet, leading to more of a cat foot than a hare foot. My view is that leaving the hair



Sp. Ch. de Villadón USA New Girl (Ch. Bogart de Villadón x de Villadón Kalibra), shown by Rafael Garcia under American judge Ed Bivin.

untrimmed will hide incorrectly developed feet. Neatly trimmed feet will help retain the correctly shaped hare foot if judges see what's there.

Why the emphasis on a hare foot?

Rafa: Because these are dogs who travel on snow and icy terrain. They need the hare foot to move along the ground, in much the same way that skis help cross-country skiers maneuver the wintry countryside. Overall, feet are very important in judging this or any other breed. As one visiting foreign judge once remarked to us, much of what a judge sees and concentrates on when judging dogs are the feet and the way they move.

What kind of temperament are you looking for in Samoyeds?

Rafa: We want an alert, friendly but conservative dog

that is not distrustful or shy, and certainly not aggressive. We have not had temperament problems, probably because we would never breed to dogs that exhibited these traits. Much of a dog's temperament is inherited; therefore, one does not breed to a troubled temperament, no matter the dog's other fine points.

Many persons are attracted to the breed because of the beauty of its profuse white coat, which they may have first seen at a show or in a photo. But after they purchase their first puppy, and have lived with it for six to eight months, they realize that its color is not as important to their enjoyment of the dog as is the dog's temperament. They are happy clowns, always disposed to having fun.

Carmen: That's so true! They are darling, affectionate



Venezuelan, Puerto Rican Ch. de Villadón Native of Spain (Ch. Bogart de Villadón x de Villadón Kalibra), owned by Rafael de Santiago, taking a Group II at a show in Caracas, Venezuela.

dogs that win over everyone's hearts. Even people who have never liked dogs, once exposed to a Sammy, will always want to have at least one forevermore. Many persons who have purchased their first Samoyed from us have returned for another one.

Is the Samoyed standard a good one? Is there something you would change if you could?

Rafa: The FCI standard is a good one, and there is no need to change it. Granted, it could be a little more specific in some places, but that's true of almost all breed standards.

What are the disqualifications?

Rafa: Any color other than white, biscuit or cream in the coat, and blue eyes. The blue eyes ruin the soft, sweet expres-

sion characteristic of the breed.

If a dog becomes a champion, should it continue to be shown, or should a dog be left home after gaining its championship?

Rafa: We often special our champions, but there are some we have finished that we retired, because they did not enjoy the show scene, and would rather rest on the sofa.

Do you have ranking systems (as to wins) in Spain?

Rafa: Today there are no rankings of dogs on an all breed basis. Some years ago, Purina did sponsor a ranking system. In fact, the last dog to be ranked Number One All Breeds was our Ch. Bogart in 1993. What we have today is a ranking of the dogs in the Nordic breeds by our club, the CEPN (Club

Español de Perros Nordico), the Nordic Breed Club of Spain. The club includes Samoyeds, Siberian Huskies, Alaskan Malamutes, Akitas, and the Groenlandese.

Is it beneficial for a breed such as the Samoyed to become popular?

Rafa: There are some positives, but more negatives. On the plus side, it's nice for people to recognize the breed in which you take such pride. And it may mean that you might be able to produce another litter that you wanted to try, knowing that it should be possible to place the pets. But the negatives outweigh the positives. Popularity attracts the wrong kinds of people into the breed; people who produce many litters in the hopes of cashing in moneywise.

It ends up having a very detrimental effect on the conformation of the breed.

Luckily, right now the breed is only moderately popular in contrast to its overpopularity in the early to mid-1990s. People who want a Sammy now want it because they like the breed, not because it's the latest craze in fad dogs.

As judges, how do you and Carmen find most exhibitors? Are they knowledgeable and courteous?

Rafa: Well, it's like judges: there are some that are good, and some not so good. Some know how to present their dogs, and are familiar with the show routine, while others are new and need to be educated. Then, too, there are exhibitors who try every trick to hide the faults in

their dogs!

As exhibitors, do you prefer to show under specialist judges or all-rounders?

Rafa: We prefer to present our dogs to specialist judges, because they tend to be much more knowledgeable about the breed standard, and that's the type dogs we try to breed. On the other hand, we see the need for the generalists, because they are not so caught up in specific likes and dislikes of specialist judges. The breed clubs usually try to hire specialist judges for the specialty shows; the all breed clubs tend to hire the generalists. Unlike the United States, there are few judges in Europe who are considered specialists. For example, here in Spain there are only three Samoyed specialist judges: Carmen, myself, and one other gentleman. This is the reason why we often bring in American specialist judges for our specialty shows.

Do owners do much advertising of their wins in Spain? Do you think having photos of one's wins in the dog magazines influences judges?

Rafa: We do some advertising in the dog magazines, and we suspect that some judges may be influenced by seeing the ads. But many of our ads feature Villadón Samoyeds that have become champions in other countries around the world. Obviously, these are not dogs that will show up in the ring at shows in Spain.

Are professional handlers used in Spain?

Rafa: Up until about four years ago, we did not see professional handlers in Spain. But nowadays, more and more handlers are presenting dogs for their clients. When we sell show-potential dogs, we try to show the owners what to do to prepare the dog for showing. We also try to show them how to actually present the dog in the ring. But there are some persons who just cannot do a good job of showing dogs, and so we advise them to use a professional handler.

How do you train your puppies for the show ring?

Rafa: If we have a show-potential puppy, we begin its training at about two months of age; bringing it inside to live in the house, familiarizing it with the different rooms, and the members of the family. After it

becomes socialized to us, we began taking the puppy out to walk in the neighborhood, to walk in crowds, to learn to adapt to the noisy, busy world.

At home, we introduce the puppy to bathing, and we table train the puppy to be groomed. Outside, we train the puppy to gait on a lead.

Do you take the puppies to matches? Training classes?

Rafa: We don't have many matches. Some of the dogs we have placed are taken by their owners to show training classes, but we do almost all of our own training. Because we've been involved in showing dogs for so many years now, we pretty much know what works. I road train many of my dogs on the road near our home.

What advice would you give to new exhibitors who want to show their own dogs?

Rafa: We tell them to attend dog shows, observe how dogs are being groomed prior to going into the ring, and observe how the dogs are presented to the judge. We advise them to talk to breeders and exhibitors of the breed, visit more shows, and observe, observe, observe.

Do you do any sledding with your dogs?

Rafa: It has been a few years since we harnessed our dogs for sledding, but we did not do it on a competitive basis; just to get the experience of what it was like. However, some of the dogs we have bred and sold to other people are in competitive racing in Spain, Finland, and other countries.

When someone contacts you concerning purchasing one of your dogs, what do you look for in their background or intentions?

Rafa: When someone contacts us about purchasing one of our dogs, we try to learn as much about them as possible. We also try to provide them with as much information about the breed as we can, so they can decide whether they want to keep a Sammy. Over the next few days, we decide whether these prospects should be trusted with one of our dogs. For the most part, we have been lucky. And in a few instances, the individuals decided to go with another breed. We also always insist on the first right of refusal for taking a dog back, should the owners decide not to keep a dog we sold them.



Am/Sp Ch. Polar Mist Mover N-A Shaker (Am Ch. Winterfrost Gyrfalcon x Am/Int Ch. Polar Mist Crystal Keeshka), a Multi BIS, BISS top sire of champions in the U.S., Canada, and Spain.

Are your breedings natural or do you assist the stud dog or bitch? Any AIs?

Rafa: So far, all of our breedings have been natural. Sometimes, we have had to hold the bitch to let the stud dog mount her, but we have not had to use artificial insemination.

What do you consider a fair stud fee in Spain?

Rafa: About \$500 (U.S.).

Have you ever refused to service a bitch?

Rafa: A few times, yes. Maybe because a bitch seems dysplastic, or has some genetic eye condition. Or because the quality of the bitch is such that we cannot see any reason for her to produce less than pet-quality puppies. It depends on what we can tell about the bitch from her pedigree, general appearance and health status.

Of course, we would never breed a bitch that displays bad temperament. It's the same when we seek out a male to breed one of our bitches to. If we know of problems in his background - structural, genetic, or in temperament - we will not breed our bitch to him.

There are people who want to breed their bitches to one of our stud dogs (or someone else's stud dogs) who do not even consider whether the bitch's pedigree or type goes with that of the male. All they want to do is breed to a top-winning male. That doesn't make sense.

Have you bred to dogs outside Spain?

Rafa: Yes, we have used stud dogs in both Italy and France, as well as Canadian and American imports.



Can Ch. de Villadón Polar Express (Ch. Polar Mist Mover N-A Shaker x Ch. de Villadón Symphony White), owned by Sylvia Cotté of Quebec, shown taking a Group IV under American judge John Honig.

How many times do you breed a bitch? Up to what age?

Rafa: A good bitch we might breed a maximum of three or four times, up to about seven years of age.

What is an average-sized litter for you?

Rafa: About five puppies. Do you help the bitch in whelping?

Rafa: Yes, we are there for the whelping. We cut the cords if the bitch doesn't; we dry the puppies, place them on an electric blanket, and make sure they

begin to nurse from the dam. The whole family knows what to do: Carmen, myself, our oldest daughter, Barbara, and our youngest daughter, Mamen. In 1992, Carmen and I were at a show in Valencia, when one of our bitches decided to whelp

early. Our daughters were at home with my mother-in-law and the dogs. Barbara was only about twelve years old at the time, and Mamen was seven, but between the three of them, they handled the whelping very well.

Do you supplement-feed the puppies?

Carmen: Never had to, knock on wood. After fifteen to twenty days nursing on the dam's milk, we begin to introduce them to puppy food, soaked for about fifteen minutes in hot water. They also continue nursing on the dam until about one month of age, by which time they go to the puppy food almost entirely, although the dam usually spends some time with them morning and night.

What brand of puppy food do you use?

Carmen: We use Purina Pro Plan. It has worked very well for our dogs.

At what age do you begin to evaluate the puppies?

Rafa: At about two months. Carmen: Sometimes right away!

What is a typical price for one of your Sammy puppies?

Rafa: A pet is sold for \$500 (U.S.); a show prospect puppy goes for \$1,000.

At what age do you sell your puppies?

Rafa: Typically, at about two and one-half to three months of age.

Do you sell puppies with conditions?

Carmen: Sometimes we have bitches we would prefer not to sell, but because we may not have room to keep another bitch, we will place her with friends based on an agreement for a puppy back from a stud dog of our choice.

Have you ever had to cull any puppies?

Rafa: Never!

How much grooming is involved with your show Samoyeds?

Carmen: It probably takes about four hours of preparation per dog prior to a show. This includes bathing, using a special shampoo for white coats, called White on White, a product we purchase from the United States, because we cannot find it in Europe. Then, there is the blow drying and combing. We might need to trim the feet a little to keep them neat. We don't use chalk on the coat because the shampoo we use works beautifully. We may use a little chalk on the feet and maybe on the elbows. Our show dogs are bathed every two to three weeks while being shown. We also use products from Royal Crown

and other vendors.

What grooming tools or appliances do you use?

Carmen: We use a brush, comb, thinning shears and scissors for a little neatening, and toenail clippers, both the manual and the electric drill type. Of course, by way of appliances, we use a professional-strength blow-dryer.

Can you describe your kennel setup for us?

Rafa: We have individual kennels of about 10 square meters (a little over nine by nine feet) for each dog. These are covered with roofs, to protect the dogs from the weather. There is also a large yard of about 200 square meters (approximately 42x42 feet) in which they take turns exercising in groups. The dogs also take turns living in the house, especially new puppies who are being socialized.

Do you let males run together?

Carmen: Not if there is a female in season. But most of the time we have no trouble letting the Samoyed, Siberian Husky and Malamute males and bitches play in the yard together. We know who gets along with which others. Sometimes, it's the bitches who don't like each other. However, if we see them misbehaving, all we usually have to do is call out "No!" and that stops the arguing. But none of this applies to the Akitas! We don't let them out together, or with any of the other dogs.

Living out in the suburbs, do you have a vet nearby?

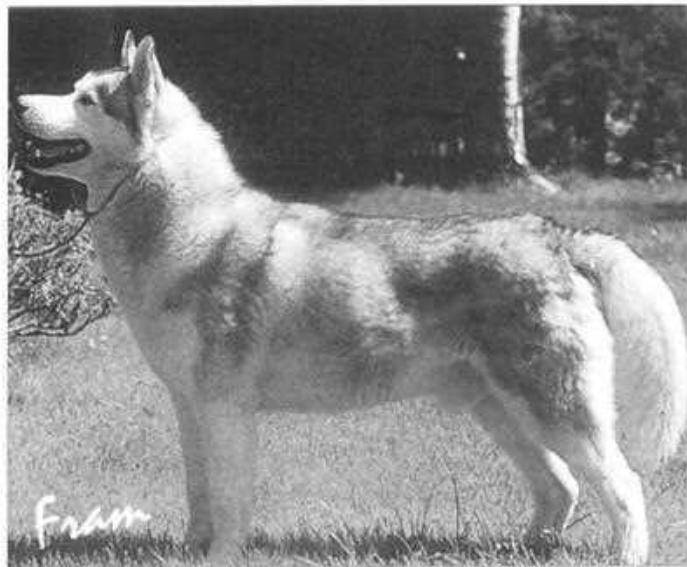
Carmen: Oh, yes; our vet is only a few minutes away. He's also one of the officers of the Nordic breed club.

Rafa, how long have you and Carmen been judging?

Rafa: A little over five years.

How does one become a judge in Spain?

Rafa: Well, you have to attend many shows, and observe under other judges; then apply to the Real Sociedad Canina de España - the Royal Kennel Club of Spain (RSCE). You have to take written tests on procedures and on the breeds you want to judge; and these tests and interviews are scheduled only every two years (sometimes a little sooner) for everyone wanting to apply, either for the first time or for



Innisfree's Fram O'Long Shadow (Ch. Innisfree Fire and Frost x Ch. Innisfree Lalique), one of the Siberian Huskies imported by Rafael Garcia and Carmen Navarro.

additional breeds. The written exam is closed-book, and you have to describe the standards for the breeds you are applying for. You also have to discuss your ideal dog of each breed in your application, and explain what you will be looking for.

If you pass the exams, you then must observe under judges (specialists if possible) at three different shows, and pass a practical exam under their supervision. Prior to judging the breed, the judge will select three dogs from the Open class (no puppies), by armband number, and ask you to write a critique of each of these dogs, without that judge seeing your critique, because the judge will then proceed to judge the breed. He or she will then compare your written critique with how they evaluated those same dogs while actually judging! The judge then writes an evaluation of your critique to be sent to the judging committee of the Royal Society.

And you had better be right, right?

Carmen: Remember, you must go through this procedure three times for each breed, so it can take awhile before you get approved.

Rafa: If all goes well, you will be notified by the RSCE that you have been approved to judge in Spain, and your name will be published to let the show-giving clubs know that

fact. Each year, the RSCE publishes a booklet listing all judges and their approved breeds.

How do you get approved to judge in countries other than Spain?

Rafa: To be approved for international judging in other countries, a minimum of two years must have passed from the time of national approval, and you must have judged at least four national point shows. At that time, the RSCE will contact the FCI in Brussels to gain approval for your judging in other nations.

What breeds are you each approved to judge?

Rafa: I am approved for Samoyeds, Siberian Huskies, Alaskan Malamutes, Akitas, Great Japanese Dogs, Groenlandese, Shiba Inus, Canaan Dogs, Chow Chows, Finnish Spitz, Japanese Spitz, Karelian Bear Dogs, Eurasiers, and Basenjis.

Carmen: I also judge the Samoyeds, Siberian Huskies, Alaskan Malamutes, Akitas, Great Japanese Dogs and Teckels (Dachshunds), which have a Group of their own in the FCI system of judging.

In which countries have you judged?

Rafa: Of course, we've judged many different shows in Spain, but also in Portugal, Germany, Peru, and now in the United States. We have been to the United States previously, to attend the Samoyed National Specialty in California and



Ch. Regalia's Cordovan (Am Ch. Akiko's the Ringmaster x Am Ch. Regalia's After Darq Big Benz), an American Akita import co-owned by Rafael García and Manuel Cruz of Barcelona. Photo shows taking the Reserve BIS at the Spring 2000 International Madrid Show, and the trophy being presented by King Juan Carlos of Spain.

Westminster in New York. We've exhibited in Spain, France, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, and Italy plus a few smaller European countries. Also, we exhibited at the Samoyed National in Escondido, California in 1998.

Carmen: Rafa has an upcoming specialty assignment in Italy.

When you travel from country to country in Europe, how do you handle the matter of different monetary currencies? Are you able to use the Euro now?

Rafa: We either use credit cards or take along money for each of the countries we visit. The Euro will not be in use by the public until 2002.

Rafa, now that you have judged your first AKC show here in the U.S., what differences do you notice between this experience and judging in Europe?

Rafa: Overall, I like the AKC system better. I like the overall better presentation by the exhibitors. I like the fact that you can show three dogs of the same sex, from the same lit-

ter in three different classes, such as one in Bred-by-Exhibitor, another in American Bred, and the third in Open. In Europe, they would all have to compete against one another in the same Open class. We don't have a Bred-By class. I also think your point system, with majors and minors, is preferable to simply winning certificates. And I especially like that puppies can win points! In FCI countries, dogs cannot earn any points until they are fifteen months of age.

Carmen: But they can win ribbons, and sometimes prizes.

Rafa: Yes, but then we throw them away! They don't count toward championships.

What are the requirements for finishing a dog to a championship in Spain?

Rafa: A dog must win four CAC's (national championship certificates) from at least three different judges, and one of these CAC's must have been won at either of the two all breed shows in Madrid (one in the spring and one in the fall),

or at the breed's National Specialty (also in Madrid for all the breeds that have Nationals). If the dog does not win a CAC at the National Specialty, it must at least be rated "Excellent" by the judge at that show (judges rate dogs as "Excellent," "Very Good," or "Good").

What classes are offered at the shows in Spain?

Rafa: Of course, all classes are divided by sex. In the regular classes, we have the Muy Cachorros class (Young Puppies: three months but less than five months); Cachorros class (Puppies: five months but less than nine months); Jóvenes class (Youngsters: nine months but less than eighteen months); Abierta class (Open: at least fifteen months of age); and the Champions class. Notice that there is an option for dogs fifteen months to just under eighteen months to enter either in the Youngsters class or the Open class. But only dogs in the Open class can win the CACs. If your young dog seems mature enough to win the CAC, you enter in the Open class; otherwise, you enter the Youngster class.

What is the difference between winning CACs and CACIBs?

Rafa: All the shows in Spain award the CACs to the Winners Dog and Winners Bitch, which count toward a Spanish championship. Some shows are designated as International Shows, and the dog can also win a CACIB, which counts toward an International championship title. For the International title, a dog must win three CACIBs in three different countries under different judges.

I know you are both members and officers in the Nordic breed club, CEPN. Does the club offer any kinds of educational activities or show training?

Carmen: Rafa is the current president of the club. In recent years, the club has become very active in educating breeders, exhibitors, and the public. We have a lot of activities: match shows (usually with specialist judges or breeders), grooming clinics, training classes, conferences, seminars, etc.

Are there any breed videos available? Books?

Rafa: No videos. Those we have are from the AKC in the United States! On dog breed

books, very few. The best, again, are those from the USA.

Where were each of you born?

Rafa: I was born in Madrid.

Carmen: And I was born in a town near Córdoba, in the Andalusian region of southern Spain. We have been married 22 years, and we built our present home about four years ago.

What do you do for a living?

Rafa: I own a pet products business.

Carmen: And I am in fashion clothing sales.

You mentioned your two daughters earlier. Are they involved with the dogs?

Carmen: Yes, they both are very much involved, although Barbara is now becoming more interested in dating and has a steady boyfriend. But Mamen, our younger daughter, shows our dogs and goes to many shows with us. She has showed in Juniors since she was a little girl, and had the honor of being the Junior Showmanship representative from Spain at the Crufts Show in March 2000. Mamen has put points and finished championships on many dogs over the years. Barbara still helps, especially by taking some days of vacation from her job, whenever we have to be gone to shows at some distance from home, like right now when Rafa is here judging your AKC show for the Piedmont Kennel Club in Charlotte.

Rafa: Mamen became the Spanish representative at Crufts first by winning the Junior Showmanship class at the large Madrid show in May 1999. She then had to compete against about 40 other Juniors from other parts of Spain at the fall Junior Championship Finals competition, also in Madrid. Actually, she came to that show as the Junior winner from shows in Barcelona, Albacete, and Granada. But she competed as the Madrid Junior representative because that's where she lived.

How old is she now?

Carmen: Mamen (a nickname, because her real name is Carmen, just like me) is now fifteen. Barbara turned twenty this year.

What about your other breeds; what lines do you have?

Rafa: Our Siberian Huskies are imported from Kathleen Kanzler's Innisfree kennels or are from her line; the Mala-

mites are Nancy Russell's Storm Kloud line, and our most recent dogs, the American Akitas (Great Japanese Dogs) are from Regalia's and from Jeanne Galindo Hayes' Daitan Ni Akitas, imported from the United States.

Do breeders in Spain have eye exams or hip dysplasia checks on their dogs?

Rafa: These exams are not required, and few breeders and exhibitors bother with them, either because they don't want to be embarrassed by having these conditions noted, or because they do not understand the importance of these checks for breeding programs. We began having all of the dogs in our breeding program checked for both eyes and hips many years ago. The Nordic breed club, CEPN, is trying to stress to its members the value of these exams, and to publicize that their dogs have passed these checks. But only a few have bothered to do so thus far. At our most recent National Specialties, we have even had a certified veterinary ophthalmologist available to do the eye checks, at a much reduced fee from normal, but still the majority refuse to have these exams!

What have been some of the advantages and disadvantages of your lives in dogs?

Carmen: Both of our daughters used to travel to shows with us around Europe; that was a great education for them. Over the years we have met many people, and made many friends in the dog world. But on the negative side is the need to find someone to take care of the dogs who stay at home if we are all on a trip. That's not so easy, even though we have many friends in Madrid. The dogs are used to eating and exercising at certain times, going through their daily routines, and a stranger just can't do it the same way we do it. You worry about the dogs when you are away. That's why I made an international call to my daughter, Barbara, the day of the show here, to check on the dogs and also on my mother who has not been well.

Still, I wouldn't change the path we took when we decided on a serious journey into show dogs. Sure, we might live much more comfortably with all the money we have spent traveling

to shows, entry fees, purchasing dogs, grooming supplies, medicines, vet bills, and all, but it's been fun so far. We would have had home dogs in any case.

Do you have a website?

Rafa: Yes, my website can be found at www.ctv.es/USERS/villaodon. On my pages can be found periodically updated information about shows in Spain, information about some of our dogs, including photos, litters, and links to related websites.

I have seen your pages, and they are something else! You must put a lot of time into organizing all the materials. What about your email address?

Rafa: I can be contacted at Villaodon@ctv.es.

Anything else you would like to discuss?

Rafa: No, that's about it.

Postscript by interviewer: Subsequent to the above interview in October 2000, Rafa and Carmen returned to Spain where their dogs continued to win at end-of-the-year shows. At the Madrid International all breed show, their young bitch, De Villaodón Makarena, finished her Spanish championship, earlier having won her other CACs at specialty shows in Granada, Barcelona, and Albacete. She took an International CACIB at the Lisbon (Portugal) International, and completed the requirements for the International title, with a BOB and a BOS at the two back-to-back shows in Gibraltar. At the Combined National Specialties of the Samoyeds, Siberian Huskies, Alaskan Malamutes and Akitas, sponsored by the Nordic Breeds Club (CEPN) held in Madrid on December 16, 2000, the Villaodón Samoyeds had a spectacular day. Am/Sp Ch. Polar Mist Mover N-A Shaker (Ch. Winterfrost Gyrfalcon x Ch. Polar Mist Crystal Keesha), went overall Best in Show. One of their Joven class dogs, Gibraltar Ch. De Villaodón Iditarod (Ch. HNP in the Wink of a Knight x Ch. De Villaodón Makarena, a "Shaker" daughter) went BIS Joven, and their Muy Cachorro, puppy bitch, De Villaodón Monalissa (Ch. HNP in the Wink of a Knight x De Villaodón Briska) took the BIS Muy Cachorro honors. •