



*CH. SNOPACK'S
SNEAK ATTACK*

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed people

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks with
Jo and Karl Geletich
SHALIMAR
Escalon, California

Part II

This interview was conducted in Modesto, California in March 2006 by Lynne Robertson.

By this time you have probably started over with your bloodlines?

Jo: Yes. We started off with Yurok of Whitecliff, which went on to be Whitecliff. It was primarily Sno-Ridge/Drayalene combinations. One breeder I would have loved to have talked to would have been Helene Spathold who founded Drayalene, but she was gone. We had

just missed her. We were so naive that we would have the audacity to call old-time breeders and ask if we could come visit. I would sit there and ask them about their dogs and what was wrong and what was good. It would take them back for a minute, but they were wonderful! Elva Libby was incredible, kind of a controversial, outspoken woman, but just incredible when it came to genetics.

Karl: And structure.

Jo: Structure and anatomy. You either absorbed it, or she would beat it into you. (laughter) We learned a lot from her. Walt and Jan Kauzlarich helped us with some of the research on the old lines. I don't know what triggered the fact that you had to know what was behind you;

maybe talking to Elva, that you couldn't go forward until you knew exactly what you were dealing with genetically. And we were lucky. And of course, Bob Ward. It's too bad his memory couldn't have been saved. What that man had in his head about the breed was just unbelievable! I don't care when you talked to him, you got more information each time, and we talked to him every chance we got for 40-some years. We are good friends with his daughter, Mardee. And had fun with Dolly. To talk to Bob about the breed was just unbelievable.

Karl: Vera Kroman has been great.

Jo: Yes. She was one of the first people we met.

The first breeding we did

was with Wilna Coulter. Her Sho-Off's Czar of Whitecliff and our Mala is what produced Snow. That was our first home-bred champion. Who we'd like to have today. Wilna and Don Coulter were wonderful.

Karl: Very supportive.

Jo: She would organize shows and groups. The highlight of the year was Santa Barbara. There would be a contention that would go to Santa Barbara, and it was a bench show then. We would probably have a wing of a hotel and everybody visited and helped everybody else.

Karl: It was a wonderful time.

Just talking to breeders in different breeds they say that the '60s and '70s were sort of a golden time for



Ch. Yeti of Whitecliff, owned by Janet Rollin, and Ch. White Star IV, owned by Jo and Karl Geletich and Wilna Coulter.



Ch. Kondako's Placido Domingo, "Mingo." Owned by David and Diane Richardson and Karl and Jo Geletich.

dog shows.

Jo: Oh, they were! EVERYBODY helped everybody. It was nice. I'm sure there were people who had their disagreements. But it was just an incredible, HAPPY atmosphere.

Karl: It was for us.

Jo: You really enjoyed your dogs. It was fun.

You were there with a lot of the old-time breeders.

Jo: Yes, we were lucky. They were all really good to us. I don't think we met anyone who didn't help us. It was a good time to come along.

Did Snow have a lot of achievements in the breed?

Jo: No, that was very sad. I got so much into genetics; I wanted to tightly linebred him to hold onto what we had. Mala was a Yurok daughter; Yurok was neutered (or retired), I think, when he was four years old. He didn't produce a lot of litters. So I tracked down the only other Yurok offspring I could find. Lena arranged the breeding between Czar and Mala, that was a half brother/sister breeding on Yurok. That was not done very often. It was only because Lena said, "I'd like to see you do this breeding," and everyone said okay. There were some beautiful puppies, and if we had been smart we would have kept the whole litter and finished them. But I wanted something to reinforce it again. We did find the Mala sister, who was Natasha Lassen View, "Jody." We found her in the country, backed up to an Indian reservation in Redding. We drove up there, bought her and brought her home. She was six years old. We cleaned her up, started showing her and finished her in five or six shows. She was awesome!

We tried to breed her to Snow, and at that time - we learned the hard way - they didn't do cultures and those kinds of things on bitches. To make a long story short, she was infected with pyometra, she infected Snow, he got kidney failure from it and we never got any puppies out of him. And that's how we lost him at a young age.

Karl: We did finish Jody. She was a beautiful bitch, but we had to have her spayed.

Jo: Anyway, we learned from that to culture the bitches.



Shalimar's Denarie, WD, Northern California Samoyed Specialty, 1989.

It was always an argument with the vets. They would say, "Something is going to grow, inevitably." I would say, "I know, but I want to know what, and to what extent. Just humor me. Do it and I'll pay you for it." So when we did any stud services, which we didn't do very often, we would require the

people to culture their bitch. They would come back and tell us, "The vet doesn't understand what you want." I'd say, "Just tell him the crazy stud dog owner requires it in order to use her dog. That way he won't argue with you. And send me the results." So we did all right after that. It never came up

again. Now the vets do it all the time.

Karl: We kept Snow alive for awhile after he had the kidney failure on a no-protein diet, just rice, vegetables, of course he didn't have a coat then, but we finally lost him.

Jo: That was a heartbreak. He was really a neat dog, and a

tough act to follow. But we started over again. Kubi was bred to Ch. Whitecliff's New Year's Eve, who was an absolutely incredible bitch. She was out of Czar. So we were still trying to recoup what we had. We got some beautiful dogs out of that.

In the meantime, we got another Yurok son, Mex/Am Ch. White Tundra's Little Yurok, from Bob DiGivonanni. We brought him into our breeding program. We kept going back to the old Whitecliff, to Yurok, as often as we could. But those dogs were almost all gone.

Karl: What's interesting about this dog is that he was not as pretty as the other dogs, but he was sound. A lot of people didn't use him. I called him "the front end aligner," because if a dog had a bad front he would produce excellent shoulders, upper arm.

Jo: He was very dominant for his front.

Karl: That is so unheard of. But very few people used him because he didn't have a pretty face.

It seems like the fronts are the hardest to get and keep.

Jo: You can put a good rear on, but it is a lot harder to get a good front and hold onto it.

Karl: No matter who he was bred to they came out with good fronts.

Jo: Yurok's call name was "Rocky," and Little Yurok was called "Pebbles." We then got another nice bitch from the Kauzlarichs. She went back to Nachalnik of Drayalene. So Drayalene was what was behind Yurok, and we brought the line in again that way. She was a big girl, very big, bigger than most of the males. She had an incredible body and movement, but the worst headpiece you ever saw in your life! And ears that went on forever. Her mother was Silver Bunny, and I knew where the bunny came in! (laughter).

Karl: She had fantastic movement and attitude.

Jo: Yes, she was super. We had a basketball hoop out in back and when the kids were out there she went absolutely crazy to play basketball with them. She loved any ball, and if you didn't have a ball you could give her an orange and she'd sleep with that. She was a



Ch. Shalimar's Kori of Taliko, "Kori."

sweet, fun bitch. She lived a long time, too. So we were able to keep regrouping into that line.

Karl: We were busy doing things with our children so we didn't do a lot of breeding. We don't believe in just producing a lot of dogs.

Jo: The breedings were really when we wanted something for ourselves. But the pups that did go to people always went with a neuter/spay contract. If

for any reason the dog could not stay with the family, it would come back to us. We only lost one that we didn't know what happened to the dog. The people moved, or whatever, and we couldn't keep in touch, we lost track of them. We took back a number of dogs over the years, either through divorce or illness.

Wilna Coulter and I co-owned a couple of outstanding bitches. Bitches didn't place in the Group very often, or take

Breed. We had two that were Group-placing bitches. One, she and I got from Peggy McCarthy, Misty Way kennels in the Northwest, Misty Way's Peg of Whitecliff. But our absolute treasure was a bitch that we took from a man and his wife who both became ill at the same time. Wilna called me and said, "Jo, you have to come see this bitch." She was seven years old and her name was White Star IV. She had been their sweetie



Jo Geletich handling Am/Can Ch. Nuggetuk's Frostbite.

pet, beautiful pedigree, she was out of Snow Ridge.

Karl: She was heavy.

Jo: Yes, they definitely loved her with cookies. (laughter) If we tried to put her on a diet she'd steal food. She loved bread!

Karl: She was very intelligent; very bright.

Jo: Very smart. And just drop-dead pretty!

Karl: An interesting thing about her was if we went to a dog show and watched the Group she would be up in a chair and watching the dogs go back and forth, really intent. (laughter) She was like a human. Her previous owners treated her like a human, you see.

Jo: She absolutely understood everything you said to her. As I said, she loved bread, and this was before there were Ziploc bags, and I'd save bread bags to use. I'd roll them up and put them in a bottom drawer. She'd wait until we left the kitchen and she'd pull the drawer open thinking that amongst the plastic bags there had to be bread. She'd do things like that. She was cute. She finished just boom, boom, boom; she took her last Group placement at ten years of age, and she still looked like a puppy. People would come up and say, "She's darling, how old is she?" I'd say, "Ten."

They'd reply, "Ten months?" I'd say, "No, she's ten years." She was so pretty.

Karl: We called her "terminal cute." (laughter)

Jo: She stayed with Wilna the later part of her life. Wilna just adored her. They were a match made in heaven. Star and Wilna had the same personality.

Karl: We competed against Bob and Dolly Ward in northern California and Star beat them and took the Breed. They fell in love with her. Bob wrote about her in his book.

What did he write about her?

Jo: Something about what a lovely, outstanding, top-winning bitch she was.

Karl: And how sound she was, even in her old age.

Jo: We did try to breed her but she was past her time, so we just had fun showing her. She was a wonderful ambassador for the breed because everybody loved her and she did so many cute things. She endeared herself to everybody.

What are some of your other achievements in the show ring?

Jo: We got a wonderful Sammy from Dave Richardson, who was Kondako. I had actually seen this dog as a puppy when I judged a Sweepstakes at Potomac Valley. I fell in love with him then and it was quite a few years later - I think he was five or six when we got him.



Ch. Wildestar's Mairaid, handled by Jo Geletich.



Jo Geletich handling Am/Can Ch. Nuggetuk's Frostbite.

from Dave – we took him and finished his championship. That's been within the last ten years. He ended up in the Top 20 and was invited to the first Eukanuba competition. We didn't take him, but he was invited, which was nice. He got an Award of Merit at the National. We've had a lot of fun with him, and he's still alive. He's twelve or thirteen now.

When I judged a Sweepstakes for Nor-Cal Samoyed Fanciers I found a really beautiful bitch that I fell in love with. I gave her Best in Sweeps and it turned out she had already finished her championship – she was awesome! Connie Richardson was showing her and had finished her. She belonged to Joe and Mary Ellen Torrez, who were Statussams, and they were just getting started. There was also a lovely male, who was her brother, Ch. Statussam's Trouble Maker. He was number one for several years. He was just an incredible dog, and the foundation dog for the Torrezs. But I've always had a soft spot for good bitches, they are worth their weight in gold. When we were done judging and taking pictures, they were so high on Troubles and wanted me to see Troubles again. I said, "Okay, but let's talk about Lolli." It ended up that I asked if they would consider letting me lease her. Mary Ellen said, "All we've heard about is your reputation of having good bitches. You can use Lolli if I can breed Troubles to one of your good bitches." And that's what we did. The combination of those two litters – somebody called and said, "Congratulations, you're number two breeder of the year." I said, "How can that be?" We don't breed enough." It was based on those litters, the number that had finished. That was a very nice infusion of genes. We still have that in our pedigree, so that's nice. We got some nice top-winning dogs out of that.

In Siberians, we've had a top-winning dog that was also a racing dog, that ended up in the first Top 20 of the Siberian Husky Club of America.

Karl: We co-owned him with Mardee Ward.

Jo: He was out of Montana, a beautiful dog that we just lost last year. That was Am/Can Ch. Nudgetuk's Frostbite,



h. Misty Way's Peg of Whitecliff, "Peg" (Ch. Sho-Off's Dorok of Whitecliff x Ch. Silver Trinkets of Misty Way). Bred by Peggy McCarty. Owned by Wilna Coulter and Jo Geletich.

"Burt."

Karl: We have haven't accomplished a lot of accolades like a lot of people, because we've had diverse interests.

Jo: We've never won a National Specialty; we've gotten first Awards of Merit in both breeds, right behind the winner. So that's still a good place to be.

Karl: We've won a number

of specialties.

Jo: Yes, we do well at area specialties. We just did a couple of breedings recently with Carol Thompson, who started out with Whitecliff. The first litter was born on 9/11. That litter was so outstanding that we repeated it. In the second litter we have puppies that are minored out already.

Karl: The second litter seems to be even better than the first.

Jo: And really healthy dogs, which makes us happy.

Karl: Pretty heads. They go back to "Mingo," Ch. Kondako's Placido Domingo.

Jo: They have to be good healthy pets first, and then they make great show dogs.



Shalimar's Dobra Sereca Yeva, "Yeva" (left) and Ch. Yeva's Arctic Jo of Shalimar CD, "Jo" (right) (Shalimar's Kubi O'Noatak x Ch. Whitecliff's New Year's Eve). Yeva was lost to cancer before obtaining her second major to finish.

Over time have you met or exceeded your breeding goals? Obviously, you're always going to be working toward something.

Jo: I would absolutely love to breed and show a Best in Show bitch! That's my dream.

Karl: Janice Hovelman sent a dog out here from New York named "Travis." He was already finished. We cam-

paigned him for a year and made him number one.

Jo: Yes, number one Sam in the country, "Travie." He's a sweet dog.

Talk a little bit about how you got into the handling. Did you start as breeder/handlers?

Jo: We did it for years for people for nothing because it was so much fun. We've fin-

ished more dogs than we can even remember.

Karl: John Coloma said, "Karl, what does it cost you to come to the show? You have to pay for parking; you have to eat; you have gas cost. You ought to start charging people."

Jo: We thought that would be a good way to pay for the dogs. We've always maintained

twenty-plus dogs.

Oh, really?

Jo: Yes, and that's a lot of dog food and vet bills. When you multiply everything by twenty or 25 it adds up very quickly. So we thought, "Gee, maybe we should start charging." And we did, and it didn't slow down, we still had plenty of people who wanted us to



Ch. Shalimar's Tiger By The Tail, "Tiger"



Ch. Statussam's Majestic Star, "Star"
(Tiger x Ch. Statussam's Lollipop), 1988.

show their dogs. That was really what prompted it.

Do you handle mostly Sammies and Siberians?

Karl: We show all large breeds: Bullmastiffs, Akitas, Rottweilers.

Jo: Bernese Mountain Dogs, some Sporting dogs, we've been on and off with Labs, and a few Pointers, Flat-Coats, Chessies, but mostly Working breeds.

Karl: In small dogs, we show Pugs, of course, Shibas. Jo keeps saying maybe we ought to get smaller dogs. Personally, I LOVE running full-out with large dogs.

Jo: Karl played football and he coached football. Showing is the way he keeps competing.

Karl: I had both my knees replaced and two months after I had surgery I was out running show dogs.

Jo: A lot of people have had their knees replaced after seeing Karl do that. But we are definitely not kids anymore! I'm 66 and Karl is 69.

Do you have any interesting stories from a handler's perspective?

Karl: I like to help people. You know, when you are at a show and you don't know anyone you feel like a fifth wheel.

So I'll go up to people and say, you here. That's a nice dog, "Hi, how are you? Nice to see where did you get it? Who's



Judy Bennett and Karl Geletich with Ch. Samkita's Hope Diamond, at the SCA National, 1995.

the breeder? Oh really? Well, if you ever need any help, let me know, I'll be glad to help you." Anyway, I saw a lady standing with a Sammy and went up to her and said, "Hi, how are you?" Same thing. We talked a bit and she left. Years later she told me that she'd been showing dogs for several months and NOBODY ever said hello to her. I was the very first person who ever came up and talked to her. She never forgot it. I'll see someone with a dog crate that falls over and I'll go over and help them pick it up. Or people have trouble getting through a door with their stuff, I'll help them.

Jo: We've had people tell us, "You helped me in the Group. I didn't know what I was doing and you told me what to do."

Karl: Those people now have the top Siberian in the country!

Jo: They said, "It was the first time we were in the Group and you turned around and said, 'The judge is really looking at your dog, do this, do this.'"

Karl: I believe in sportsmanship. When somebody beats me, I congratulate them; it's their day. When I win, it's my day.

Jo: And everybody has their day.

Karl: Yes. That's my philosophy. I also say, "This is my recreation; win, lose or draw, we're going to have fun." We do. We've met so many wonderful people who we would never have met.

Jo: Our paths would never have crossed in our lives. Incredible people from all over the world.

Karl: I'll give you an example. We went back to New York - we go every year.

Jo: That's our week off.

Karl: We don't show dogs, we just go back to party and visit with everyone and watch all the dogs. We got in late and we went to a restaurant downstairs in the hotel. We were having chowder. There were two ladies sitting across the aisleway talking to a man whose back was to us and they were looking toward us.

Jo: It was late, the restaurant was pretty well empty.

Karl: Jo and I were talking, and we looked up to see these two ladies standing at our table.



Ch. Statussam's Kalabi Tigerloli, "Lolli" (Tiger x Ch. Statussam's Lollipop), 1989.

They said, "We just had to come over and say hello. We sat at your table last year and had so much fun, we had to come over and say hello."

Jo: When they left I said, "I don't know them." (laughter) But that's okay, they had fun.

Karl: If we're known for that, that's success.

Jo: That's definitely Karl's reputation. He's been known to be late when he's at the ring

chatting and visiting. (laughter) We have a good time.

Do have any really memorable moments in the ring, perhaps with handling or winning, anything that really surprised you?

Karl: Judy Bennett. The Samoyed Quarterly did an interview with her and she mentioned this very thing. She's a breeder/judge. She was judging and the dog touched her hand. She said something like, "Oh,

isn't that cute? A little kiss on the hand." I said, "Please, I'm a married man!" (laughter)

Jo: He's a tease!

Karl: She never forgot it. The next time I saw her she said, "I got some kisses for a married man." And it was a box of Hershey kisses. (laughter)

Jo: At one of the specialties you were sitting on a bale of hay talking with Judy and the pho-

tographer came over and put a sign in front of you that said Parade of Champions and snapped the picture. That was so cute.

We've come close to winning Best in Show, a Group 1, and a lot of specialties.

Do you go to the National Specialty every year?

Jo: Oh, yes, almost every year. We don't miss very many, we've missed a few over the years. [looking at pictures] Here's Ch. Yeti of Whitecliff.

He belonged to a young veterinarian. I walked into the Coliseum one day and Wilna grabbed me and said, "Do you have an Open Dog?" I said, "No, why?"



Ch. Shalimar's Sterling Silver, "Silver," BOS, Redwood Empire KC, 1991, judge Shirley Mangini.

She said, "Here ... he needs to go in the ring." I said, "What's his name?" She said, "Yeti." We went in and he won. We finished him just boom, boom. He was a nice, nice dog. He produced some nice puppies.

How has the show scene changed over the years?

Jo: People don't seem to be having much fun with their

dogs. They really take it seriously. It shows on the dogs, too.

Karl: We try to be helpful and friendly with everybody, but not everybody is that way.

Jo: It used to be. When we started out it really was. I don't think we met anyone who was grumpy.

Karl: So many people

helped us on our way up.

Jo: It was so much fun! It really was.

Karl: I don't mind getting beat by a good dog. I don't mind helping someone. Here's an example. I was having trouble with a compartment on my motor home and this fellow came over to help me. He had Rottweilers. We got to talking,

and later on at a show we were parked next to him and became good friends. Not too long ago he wanted me to show his Rottweiler, which I did. I said, "I can remember meeting you when we were at the Cow Palace and you were helping me with my motor home." He said, "We met before that." I said, "Really?" He said, "Yes, we



Ch. Samkita's Hope Diamond, 1992.



had just bought our Rottweiler and didn't know what to do and you stopped and told us how to stack the dog, how to move the dog, and some tips you had learned. You were the ONLY one who did that." That's what I'm saying ... if I see somebody who needs help, I'll help them. And if they beat me in the ring,

so be it. I don't mind.

I think that's a little unusual.

Karl: It is.

Jo: It wasn't when we started. That's the way it was.

How are your dogs different today than when you started in the '60s?

Karl: Structurally, they are a little better.

Jo: I think so, too, for the most part.

Karl: More substance, a lot more coat, prettier heads.

Jo: We went through a period where it was difficult. You would walk up to the ring and you'd have to really look to see if they were dogs or bitches. We went through a time where

so many of the males looked really bitchy. I don't care for that at all. I don't mind a good-sized bitch who might be a tad doggy, but I sure don't want a bitchy male.

To be continued ...