

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Samoyed People

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks With
Derek and Marilyn Gitelson
SANSASKA
Concord, California

Part II

This interview was conducted at the home of Derek and Marilyn Gitelson on February 10, 1990 by Katie LeCour.

Did you always show your own dogs before you had your arthritis problems?

Marilyn: For the most part. Milka was a very good moving bitch, and I discovered I really couldn't keep up with her. Then I had Pat Morehouse get me Rich Clement to show her. We finished her fairly quickly once he took over. Then, when Rich got out of showing, we moved to Brian Phillips, who has been showing the dogs for eight or nine years now. I would love to do it myself. I get really frustrated not being able to go in the ring, but because of hip and knee damage, I run about three steps and fall on my face. You can only win so many out of sympathy. (laughter) It does get frustrating. I have been looking for another breed for me, where I can go and show something myself. Right now I'm very taken with the Petite Basset Griffon Vendeen. However, they run in that ring, too, and I have to decide whether I can handle that or not. I do have a reservation in for a puppy from one of the top PBGV bitches in the country. We'll see whether I actually go through with it, if I feel that I can handle it myself. That's a nice sound breed. They're wonderful dogs with great temperaments.

Do you think the puppy would fit right in with the Sammies?

Marilyn: Oh, yes. They're as crazy as the Sammies.

Derek: We had a Bernese Mountain Dog once, and she fit right in.

How do you train your puppies, and at what age do you begin?

Derek: (laughter) Brian asked us not to.

Marilyn: I start my puppies when I get around to putting a leash on them, which is usually around two and a half to three months. The house next door has a huge grass area out front which is like a ring. I have their permission to use it any time for training. They only live there on weekends, so I have my own private little ring. We work out there daily for five or ten minutes at a time. We do pretty good things. I can only do training until they're about four months old, because then I can't run with them. They're leash trained. Brian and I have this ongoing battle. I train them my way, then he has to undo it. (laughter) Or I just give them to



Derek teaching Gail Spieker to use her computer.

him and say, "Here, train them," and he can start from square one. So, depending on my mood, sometimes they're fully trained, and most of the time they're half trained.

Derek: They're not that hard to train as a rule, so it's not that much of a problem.

Marilyn: I'm currently working with our six-month-old puppy, Esse. She's going to make her debut at Nor Cal. Because she's Cassie's baby, she's extra special, and I really want her trained. Now that she's in full season, I can't even take her out for a couple of weeks. We go to some matches, but not as many as we used to. If you get a free day, it's so nice just to do something around the house. We have new mini blinds that have been sitting on the floor for three weeks that we haven't managed to find time to put up.

Derek: Tomorrow.

Marilyn: It's a big deal.

Have you done any obedience work?

Marilyn: No, we haven't. However, some of the dogs people have bought from us actually have obedience degrees, CD's and CDX's. There's a dog in Las Vegas now, Ch. Sansaska's Treasure Chest, who has a CDX. The woman who owns him, Barbara Bunner, is absolutely wonderful. She writes me these nice little notes that say, "Oh, Chester got his CDX and won the Dog

World award. He won Open A all the time. We went High in Trial and did this and that." I am so impressed. With the stories of Shalimar and the chicken and everything, the fact that they're the same line of dog with obedience degrees is almost a conflict in terms. (laughter) They are very decent obedience dogs. Our dogs are smart, the girls especially. It can be done, but we just don't have the time to do it, and I don't have a lot of interest in it. Chester is one of the happiest working dogs I've ever seen. I'm pretty proud of him. He has a shot at being SCA top obedience dog. I'm not into numbers and everything, but wow! He's good.

Tank, the one who opened the crate doors,

sounds very intelligent.

Marilyn: He probably would have been a good obedience dog. He was very intelligent. He never finished since he broke his canines off, and took too many reserves with the judge saying, "Too bad about the teeth."

He was also allergic to gardenias. I don't know why that occurs to me now. I called a friend once and told her she could never take Tank to the prom because we used to have gardenias in the yard, and every spring when they'd bloom, he'd sneeze his little head off. It was really funny. We finally tracked it down to the gardenias.

How important is training to winning in conformation?

Marilyn: I do think it helps. A dog should be trained before it goes in the ring.

Derek: If it's impossible in the ring, the judge can't get a decent look at it.

Marilyn: Our dogs are leash trained and will bait before they go into the ring. I don't like to see dogs that are almost automatons, where they're so trained that there is no spark left. Some people get carried away.

Can you give any specific advice to owners who would like to handle their own dogs?

Marilyn: A good training class.

Derek: Someplace where the dog can get experience with other dogs being around, somebody going over the dog and handling it and touching it.

Marilyn: Go and watch the top handlers. They know what they're doing and know how to get the best from a dog. You can learn a lot by watching. Or even the top exhibitors. A lot of the Sammy exhibitors are excellent handlers. It's really fun to show your own dog.

Do you think the dress code of an exhibitor has any influence on a judge?

Marilyn: Probably. I went to a national a few years ago where there were people exhibiting in the ring in jeans and old shirts. I didn't find that appropriate. You don't need designer outfits, but you should look neat and clean. You're there to exhibit your dog, and the whole picture you present can't be enhanced if you look like a slob.

Derek: It really shouldn't, because the judge is supposed to be looking at the dog, but it's an overall picture that's presented. If part of it's scuzzy ...

Marilyn: That's like the exhibitor who goes in the ring in a white skirt and white shoes. You can't find the dog. I always look carefully at the dog's topline when it's white on white.

Derek: Or it looks gray against it.



Ch. Rickshaw's Subatai O'Sansaska (Ch. Sam OKhans Kubla Khan x Williwaws Byebei Sosulka). Breeder, Barbara Yamasaki. Owners, Derek and Marilyn Gitelson.

When you are breeding, are you there to help the mating along?

Derek: Oh, yes, to a point. We won't force the issue. If for some reason they really don't want to, then they don't do it.

Marilyn: We're pretty firm believers that nature knows what it's doing.

Derek: Yes. There's usually some reason if it doesn't go. We'll hold a bitch or support her if necessary and keep an eye on it. I find, though, that, especially if they're experienced, they know what they're doing and do it better without somebody messing around. I'm right there to watch in case there's a problem or something happens, but I prefer to let them do it themselves. If necessary, I'll step in. If the bitch gets snappy or something like that, I'll hold her so she can't take a chunk out of the male or

injure him.

Marilyn: I think one of the funniest breedings we ever did was a long time ago, when Shirley Mangini brought her old Smudge, who was almost seven, up to be bred to our old Tai, who was probably eight or nine at that point. They both had been bred a number of times. We had them out in this large yard before the pool had been put in. They would sort of truck around together. It was like two old folks thinking about sex. They would truck around and stop, and she'd say, "Well, I suppose you should." And he'd give it a halfhearted try and then they'd wander around again for a while. Finally, we got a couple of breedings. Unfortunately, Smudge developed an infection and had to be spayed. We don't do breeding in that yard anymore, not with the pool

there.

Derek: We don't want to fish them out of the pool when they're tied. (laughter)

Are your males available at stud to outside bitches?

Marilyn: Yes. We don't go out of our way to do a lot of advertising of our males. Actually, I put an ad in *The Quarterly* for the next issue with both of our boys that are available. We're getting a lot of phone calls from people looking for the old Silvermoon-Williwaw lines. I have mailed so many pedigrees out, of late, to people, and videotapes and things, that I finally decided to just take out an ad and publish the tow pedigrees. (laughter) The only two we have available here are Max and Charley. We don't do a lot of outside stud service, maybe one or two a year, at the most. That's enough. We're not into a lot of numbers.

Have you ever refused to service a bitch?

Marilyn: Yes.

Why?

Marilyn: Not quality at one point, and I couldn't get hip and eye clearances from another one. When Mark was being run as a special, we had many stud inquiries. The things that I would ask for would be copies of the hip and eye clearances on the bitches. It was amazing on a number of them how Mark became too far away to breed to all of a sudden. That was fine.

Do you do preliminary X-rays before they're two years of age?

Marilyn: I do them on anyone I'm interested in maybe using early. Charley has had a number of stud inquiries, so I screened him at a year, and his hips and eyes are fine. I have not screened his littermate, Cricket. I will when I think about breeding her, or I will do her OFA at two. It's only proper to do that. As far as I'm concerned there's no excuse to breed anybody without hip and eye clearances.

Would you breed to a dog with a very serious fault if he had outstanding points?

Marilyn: It depends on what the serious fault is. There are serious faults and there are serious faults. If I thought I could gain something by doing it, maybe. It would have to be a real specific thing. If the serious fault was something where I'm really strong and I thought something I had was tight enough bred to overcome the fault, yes, but



*Ch. Sansaska's Beau Zeau
(Ch. Sansaska's Mark of Evenstar x Ch. Sansaska's Pandamonium).*

it would have to be very outstanding otherwise. We don't breed everybody. There's no reason for it.

How many litters should a bitch have?

Marilyn: We had them have anywhere from one to four. People have had five and six litters. I think that's pressing it a bit. I wouldn't want to do more than four, though. I may breed Abigail one last time before I spay her. Abby had a problem and has to have a C-section, so I talked to my vet about the possibility of breeding her and spaying her at the same time, sort of a catchall surgery. We did this with Mindy many years ago when she had a C-section. There were three puppies, we spayed her and everything was fine. My vet said that if we do attempt to do it, if there are only a couple of puppies, which I would suspect because she's almost seven, there would be no problem spaying her. But if she does happen

to have quite a few puppies, it might not be wise to keep her under that long to get the puppies out and spay her. We'd have to come back later and spay her. We've talked about it in quite a bit of detail now. Her last litter was only three puppies, so we might breed her to Charley. That would be a fifth litter for her, but she's a big, strapping, healthy girl. She's a mother extraordinaire. She's an absolutely marvelous show bitch, but I think she's even happier in the whelping box. She adores her puppies. That would be a fifth litter, but for us that's very unusual. It's usually two or three.

Are you there helping your bitches whelp?

Marilyn: They pretty much do it themselves, but yes, we're there.

Derek: We're not on the show grounds with them.

Do you supplement-feed very young

puppies?

Derek: Only if they need it.

Marilyn: If it's a large litter and I have a little one that looks like it needs help. Nature knows what it's doing. I tried to supplement a five-ouncer once, when all his littermates were fourteen and fifteen ounces. He was too strong to get a tube in, so I let him nurse normally, and he grew up just fine. If my bitch pushes puppies away for any particular reason, I wouldn't do it, because she knows what she's doing. When mama is there and has milk, we haven't had to supplement much. I'll do it if I have to, but I don't do it as a regular thing.

Do you let the bitch wean the puppies herself, or do you help?

Marilyn: (laughter) They'd be four years old before they were weaned. Some of our girls really enjoy their puppies. Usually around five weeks, I invite them out. The patio turns into the most marvelous puppy pen. We put them on sawdust in a big pen. By then they're eating on their own. One of the reasons we bought this property was for this patio. It can be pouring rain out, and I can have a litter of puppies out here. They never get wet. If it's cold in winter, I take the crate and totally cover it with towels and put big, heavy blankets in so they have their own little den to sleep in. It's wonderful. This is a great place for puppies. When we finish that yard, I'll have another puppy yard to expand the exercise yard.

Where is your whelping area?

Marilyn: It's in the back in the house. There's a little family room in the back. It's nice and warm, and there's a sofa there I sleep on.

At what age do you evaluate your puppies for pet or show quality, and what are you looking for?

Derek: Five to ten seconds. (laughter)

Marilyn: I have chosen a few at birth. Don't ask me how I know. The only thing I can say is they feel right. I chose PJ that way. Marzipan was having her puppies, and I forgot that Mark was in the house. He was sitting in the room while Marzipan was having her puppies. This is a very small room. He was about five feet away. When PJ was born, I picked her up to rub her down with a towel and said, "Oh, look, Mark, here she is, this is mine." (laughter) All of a sudden I realized Mark was sitting in the

room and Marzipan didn't care, so that was fine. I start looking at them right away. It's a general sense.

Derek: We have a pretty good feeling by the time they're seven weeks old.

Marilyn: What we have in our puppies from six and a half to eight weeks is what we'll have as an adult. That's with these dogs. Everybody is different, which is why you don't evaluate other lines. You can say

too. We've been really lucky in that we usually have a waiting list. Rarely do we have a litter that's not reserved. Right now we have four or five people waiting for show bitches, which is really nice. That means we'll have six males this year.

Do you sell your pet puppies on a spay/neuter agreement?

Marilyn: Some. It depends on the people and the puppies. I'll tell you why



Sansaska's Domino (Ch. Max x Ch. Abby).

what you see now, but whether that's what you'll have later is something else. On these guys, we're pretty consistent. Right around seven to seven and a half weeks, it's there. It's not going to come later.

At what age do you place the puppies in their new homes?

Marilyn: Ideally, between seven and a half and ten weeks. That's when they tend to bond best. Never before.

Derek: Maybe a couple of days before under some special circumstances, but very rarely.

Marilyn: It depends on the puppies,

I've not done it. There were two bitches in a particular litter. I kept the pick bitch on co-ownership with a friend. The other one went as a pet because her eye rim wasn't totally filled in at eight weeks. The pick bitch was let out by a neighborhood kid and was killed. Luckily, the people with the pet bitch, who turned out to be gorgeous, came back to us and wanted to breed her. We bred her, and that's where we got Mark. In our contracts, it says that if people with pets decide they want to breed, we want them to come back to us to decide whether it should be bred, to make sure hips and eyes are done and to



BISS Ch. Sansaska's Mark of Evenstar and handler Brian Phillips do a bit of celebrating after winning the Breed at the Samoyed Club of Los Angeles Specialty in 1984 over a total entry of 174.

choose a proper stud. Most of the people who buy males don't use them at stud. It's the bitches you have to be very careful of. People have been good about it. Very few really want to do any breeding. They usually spay the bitches. We haven't had that many bitches over the years. We have a waiting list for our girls if we get good ones, so that's nice. Had I put that bitch on a spay contract, we wouldn't have Mark. You just have to be careful with each individual.

Do you ever ask for puppies back when you sell a bitch?

Marilyn: I've only done one or two. I think all these strings people are placing are crazy. If people pay \$55 to \$800 for a puppy, that should be their puppy. I have sold two,

one to a friend on a co-ownership. I will get puppies back from her. This is an old friend. We've worked together for years, and that's fine. The other one, I sold for half price and get a puppy back later. This was because it was easier for the woman to do that. But for the most part, they're sold straight out and it's their dog. It's in the contract that they abide by the code of ethics. We're pretty careful when we screen. We don't always get perfect homes, but for the most part, we get real good homes.

What do you feed your dogs?

Marilyn: For the most part, we've raised our puppies on Wayne's Puppy-O's and Nutro Max Puppy. We like them both. Our adults are fed either Nutro Max or Ken-

L Biskit. We're currently using Ken-L Biskit and doing very well with it. I do use some canned meat, but not every day. I use hard-boiled eggs, but not every day.

Derek: Leftover stew.

Marilyn: Yes, or chicken soup or whatever is handy. This particular crew are not picky eaters.

Derek: They inhale it for the most part.

Marilyn: They're good eaters and have good coats. Everybody seems to stay in really good health. I'm not sure all the high, premium foods are any better than Ken-L Biskit, which our guys seem to really like. I like Nutro Max a lot, but feeding eleven dogs Nutro Max gets very costly and is prohibitive. Our guys run a lot, so they eat

a lot. It's not unusual for some of our guys to eat four or five cups of food a day.

How do you condition your dogs?

Marilyn: They do it themselves. We have a half acre here.

Would you describe your kennel setup?

Marilyn: We have an L-shaped piece of property. The house runs along the bottom half of the L. The long arm of the L is the kennels. At the top of the L, there are ten kennels that are each 4 feet by 20 feet. Across from that is a little kennel building with the crates and dog food and everything in it. In the winter the dogs sleep in their crates at night in the building in case it rains. In the summer, they sleep in the kennels, where they have doghouses. The kennels are fully covered and have benches.

Derek: And Lickits so they have water all the time.

Marilyn: Yes. They're fully self-contained out there that way. Then we have

three ex yards currently, and we're adding a fourth one. One yard is 25 feet square with a huge mulberry tree shading it, one is 10 feet by 30 feet, and the other one is about 10 feet by 20 feet. That's usually where the old dogs will play. They're all out in groups of twos and threes.

Derek: The neighborhood squirrels come by to exercise them for us. (laughter)

Marilyn: Between the squirrels and the two Golden retrievers next door, they do a lot of running, and they play. There are a lot of toys out there, bones and old socks. They are fully free to dig in those yards. They don't get in trouble if they dig. Nobody's ever dug out, they dig in. (laughter) They have logs to carry around. In the summer, we occasionally give them small swimming pools with water to play in. They're active and happy, so they stay in great condition.

Are the floors of the kennels concrete?

Marilyn: They're sloped concrete, so

they dry quickly. The yards are gravel. When we finish this little yard over here, there will be a grass area, too. I will have an area where, if we have a girl ready to whelp, she can go out and dig in peace. Since we put the pool yard in, we've taken away the whelping hole.

Derek: They used to dig on the side of the house.

Marilyn: Now I'll kill them. (laughter) So we need to put a new spot back in where they can dig.

How much grooming needs to be done on a Samoyed?

Derek: Enough to make them look good. (laughter)

Marilyn: Ideally, every dog should be thoroughly brushed out every week. To be honest, with eleven of them, everybody doesn't get done every week. However, at least twice a month everybody gets put out and I use the blower to take out excess fur, look to see if anything is wrong, and keep the feet trimmed up. Only when they're blowing severely do we really get them up for long periods of time to get it out. Most of the coats are nice coats, and when they come out, they fall out, as opposed to a couple we have that have to be taken out by comb. I guess everybody gets groomed a couple times a month. Of course, the guys we're showing, every time we turn around we're doing something to them. I must say these are dogs. I see absolutely no reason not to let them go out, dig holes, get muddy and have a wonderful time. They are happy as clams out here. They have a great time in the house and out. They're all house dogs, just not all at once. Our house isn't that big. I cannot see every time they get a little spot of dirt on them putting them on the table and brushing it out. Everybody is clean. They aren't show clean, but they're clean. We have vines along one yard. Over the years, the dogs have put a tunnel under the vines. Mark lives in his tunnel all day long. He hangs his feet into a little hole and watches through the fence for the Golden Retrievers.

What grooming products do you use?

Marilyn: If I need to work body into the coat, I use mousse. I believe it's L'Oreal that I use. I make my own grooming powder from cornstarch and baby powder, because I like that better than anything I can buy. We don't use a lot of powder or anything. I do



Sansaska's Chippindale (Ch. Snopaw's Sunrise x Ch. Cassie).

from the San Joaquin River. When it's dry, the bay water intrudes from the ocean, and the salt water goes out. Right now I think it's 200 parts per million or something like that. Unhealthy is anything over 20. So there's a very high salt content. Of course, the softener adds a little bit more in addition to it and makes it very difficult to deal with. The softener has helped with removing the "junk," but the only thing that will really soften it is a reverse osmosis unit. They're way too expensive.

Does that affect the dogs' drinking water?

Derek: All of the water back in the kennels is softened so that when we hose the kennels out daily it doesn't leave a mineral residue for them to pick up. Just doing that has helped quite a bit. They're drinking the softened water back there. I don't think they're drinking anything that's causing a problem as far as that goes. They have shade, of course, in the summer so they don't get sunburned. It's probably out of the water. We used to live down in San Ramon on a different water system and didn't have the problem we have here. We do the best we can.

Marilyn: We do wash with #1 All Systems, and it cuts a lot of it.

Derek: We may change. Who knows?

Marilyn: It's frustrating.

Derek: We still haven't had a real good shampoo that does 100 percent with this water.

Marilyn: Wilna Colter of Whitecliff even sent us some of her special shampoo and it didn't do a thing. With the water softeners and all, it does tend to help, but there are times of the year that we will have more water stain than others.

Derek: This time of year is about the worst because snows haven't melted and diluted the salt water yet.

Marilyn: At least we're getting snow in the mountains.

Derek: Yes. If we don't get much more rain, it's going to be bad this summer, too.



Ch. Sansaska's Panjandrum at three months.

What advice might you give to other breeders who are just starting out?

Marilyn: Read everything you can get your hands on. Read pedigrees, talk to old breeders and learn as much as you possibly can. Don't just jump in and start breeding. Find out what you're doing before you start.

Derek: Get some idea of what genetics are. If you don't fully understand it, at least be aware of it.

Should they go to big kennels with big winners to purchase a puppy?

Marilyn: Not necessarily.

Derek: Consistency is probably more

important.

Marilyn: There are a lot of kennels in this country that produce consistently nice dogs and don't necessarily advertise. You can learn about them by reading catalogs to see where the consistency is in winning, producing and that kind of thing. It's unfortunate that people don't advertise more to let people know what they have. We're not very good at it. We had a young male out once. An old friend of mine said, "Why didn't you tell me to use this dog?" I said, "It's not my place to tell you to use my dog at stud." (laughter) She said, "He's gorgeous!" She came and used the dog and got some nice puppies. It's a fine line to offer nice dogs, have nice dogs available and be forever harping at people to use your dog. It's tiresome. Look around and see what's available.

Would you recommend joining a local breed club, the national breed club and/or an all breed club?

Marilyn: Yes, all three. You gain different things from all three of them.

Do you feel the parent club is doing enough to educate judges and new members?

Marilyn: They're making a big step in that direction with the education

committee and the seminar they held. Currently before the board is a ballot to continue the seminars. Not much is in yet, but the vote is coming in "yes." They're getting there.

Do you think the AKC video in the Samoyed breed is a good one?

Marilyn: For the most part, yes. There are a couple of things I would change in it, but for an overall view, it's pretty decent.

Derek: It's a good place to start.

Is there adequate literature available in the breed?

Marilyn: That's coming, too, with the



After the fire.



Our "after-fire rig."



Ch. Sansaska's Moonshadow Max TT.



*Sansaska's Torch Bearer at six weeks
(Ch. Torch x Ch. Cassie).*

pamphlets the education committee is doing. Those are good. There are a number of books. There's a new Samoyed book out, the Anna K. Nicholas book, which adds to all the other books. It has lots of good photos. If you get hold of everything you can and go through them, there's a lot avail-

able.

Is there anything else you would like to mention that we have neglected?

Marilyn: One thing I want to talk about, because I have never been able to write the article I want because I can't get it on paper, is motor home fires. Our motor home caught

fire going to Oregon in 1984. It was a transmission fire and we were lucky enough to get out with all the dogs in one piece and went on to have a great circuit. It never occurred to us not to continue on circuit.

Derek: We were 50 miles from the first show. If we were 50 miles from home, it

might have been a different story.

Marilyn: Yes, but we ended up picking up five majors, finishing two dogs, taking some Breeds and having a great time. However, there are some things that we learned from the fire that I've wanted to put into writing for a long time, but I can't do it. It's never right when I write it down. I've tried a couple of times. Dave Richardson even offered to ghostwrite it with me, but you just lose the terror of the fire. Always travel in a motor home with a choke collar on every dog when they're in their crates. Be sure it has a big loop on it so you can grab it quickly in case of fire or other emergency. Be sure there is a leash attached to every crate so you don't have to go looking for leads. As far as people go, always wear shoes. I'm notorious for running around barefoot. I had to put on my shoes before I could get out of the motor home. I think we made a mistake in that when we were throwing the dogs out (there was a car following us, so we had people to catch them), we didn't start at the back and move toward the door. We started closest to the door. I think it would have been smarter to start in the back and keep going closer to the door.

How many dogs did you have with you at the time?

Marilyn: We had seven, but only three of them were ours. Three of them belonged to the people behind us, two to one woman and one to another. We were carrying them to keep them cool with the air-conditioning! We were carrying a Whitecliff dog for Gail Spieker that was going up to be shown. We had a special and a puppy of our own. Then we took one along for socialization - PJ. Tinker actually slipped out of her collar and ran up the hill, luckily not onto the highway, because this was on Interstate 5. If she had not stopped at the top of the hill, she would have been gone, because it was open ground on the other side. Derek caught her. Always be prepared for anything.

Derek: Fire extinguisher.

Marilyn: Everything. You never think it can happen to you. We got out with all the dogs in one piece. They smelled kind of funny. I can't say enough about dog show people, because a number of rigs stopped to take dogs to the show grounds. They said, "Where should we take them?" I knew poor Brian was there early, so I said, "Just give



Looking from kennels toward house.

them to Brian Phillips and tell him we'll be along." By the time we got there, all but one of the dogs had arrived at Brian's. He somehow managed to keep them in his motor home. We had them all over the place during the circuit and got all the dogs shown. People were spectacular.

Three days later we were finally able to get a "rig." (laughter) We had a U-Haul truck with our stuff in it and the dogs all over the show grounds. There were some pretty wonderful people who helped us. I still get nervous in a motor home, and it's been about five years.

Did you have to replace that motor home, or were you able to repair it?

Marilyn: I thought it was just a minor little fire. I said to Derek, "Have it towed to the show grounds and they can fix it while we show," and he said, "No, dear." The entire front burned.

Derek: Six months later we got it back.

Marilyn: Then it had some other problems and we traded it in.

Derek: We put up with problems for about a year and traded it.

Marilyn: Never think it can't happen to you. We're very good about keeping things serviced and up to date.

Derek: If you can afford it, put a Halon

fire extinguisher system on the engine.

Marilyn: We made it through. Shirley Mangini ran into me the first morning in the bathroom at the show grounds and said, "We had a flat tire on the way up, and I said to my friend, 'Bad luck on the road, good luck in the ring.' Dam it, Marilyn, you outdid me again." (laughter) We did win, and it wasn't because of the fire dogs. Nobody knew about it. What was really nice, and one of the nicest things I ever remember is that Mark took the Breed that first day. In Group, by then everybody knew he was the fire dog, the applause and whistling for him was absolutely wonderful. He didn't place, but it didn't matter.

We traveled from the first show site to the second in our U-Haul truck. The only place we could get a reservation was at the Eugene Hilton, so we pulled the U-Haul truck up behind the limos and Derek went in to register. It was a cold day, and the only warm clothing we had was all filled with smoke, so we had on smoke-filled sweatshirts and things. The bellboy came out with Derek and very quickly unrolled the back of the U-Haul and unloaded paper bags full of clothing with things sticking out. The few clothes we had on hangers, he hung on his little cart. He looked at us somewhat

strangely and then took out a cooler someone had given us with a few things in it like cold drinks and all. It was leaking, and he lifted it carefully onto the cart. We locked the U-Haul up. Then we got to walk through the lobby of the Eugene Hilton.

Derek: Fortunately it was not very crowded. (laughter)

Marilyn: We had our little cart with our paper bags with clothes hanging out of them. I had a hooded sweatshirt on. I pulled the hood up over my head and just followed the footprints to the elevator. When we got up to the room, I asked the bellboy, "Where can we go to eat looking like this?" He said, "Lady, this is Eugene. You can go anywhere looking like that." (laughter)

Shirley only entered the first shows. So she took Gail's dog home - he had finished - and PJ. At the end of the circuit, the gals in the car behind us each took their dogs. We sent Tinker back to northern California to a Tervuren kennel, where we picked her up a few days later. And Mark sat between us in the "rig." People were great. I doubt we could have made it without the help of Brian, Homer and Jeanne Zuver, Shirley and many, many others. Dog people are special.

You are the SCA recording secretary this year, aren't you?

Marilyn: Yes. I get an award for lunacy. It's all Gail Spieker's fault. (laughter)

It's keeping you very busy, I assume.

Marilyn: Actually, it's a very up and down job. When I get a mailing out, I actually get a breather for maybe a day or two. I never know what might come in the mail. It's a good board. I can't say enough good things about the people on this board. They're a highly intelligent, easygoing group for the most part. There are no personal vendettas or anything going on at this point. They think things through. The comment rounds are well thought out. Of course, we've only been doing this for four months, but at this point, they're an easy board to work with. Merrill's been great as president. He does have a military background, so the organization is wonderful. So far we've worked very well together. It keeps me busy.

How long have you lived at your present location?



Looking into kennels.

Derek: Fourteen years.

Marilyn: We bought the property for this patio.

You lived in San Ramon before that?

Derek: Yes.

Have you always lived in California?

Marilyn: I'm a native San Franciscan.

Derek: Third generation.

Marilyn: Derek's from Chicago.

What do you do for a living, Derek?

Derek: I'm a computer programmer with Unisys. I also have my own computer business - Sansaska Systems - and furnish both hardware and software. Many doggy people around here have my pedigree program.

Marilyn, did you say you were a teacher?

Marilyn: Yes, I have a master's in math curriculum, but I don't do that anymore. After I had trouble with arthritis and all the physical therapy, tests and all that stuff, I went back to teaching part time. In working with all the dogs and teaching, I got very ill and ended up at the doctor one day. He told me that people with my level of arthritis cannot do that much and that something

would have to go. I said good-bye to teaching. I wasn't going to give up the dogs. We're fortunate enough that while it would be nice to have my income, it's not necessary. So I don't teach anymore. I'm not sure I'd want to go back to it, anyway.

How have dogs affected your life-style?

Derek: Not a bit. (laughter)

Marilyn: I never used to own as many pairs of jeans as I do now. Don't all normal people ask for chain link fencing for Christmas? When I was teaching, I used to dress like a normal person. (laughter)

Do you mean in nice suits and skirts?

Marilyn: Yes, like Nordstrom's. I mean, they didn't have that then, but I always dressed very well.

Derek: She even had a dressmaker.

Marilyn: Yes! I had a dressmaker and we did all sorts of interesting things. We used to go to ACT in the city, to the theater, every month. When we moved out here, we had to stop that because Derek would fall asleep in the theater and his snoring would bother other people. We didn't work weekends. When you go to dog shows, you're

truly at work weekends. Most of our friends are dog friends. We have a few old friends we see occasionally, but they do these silly things like have dinner parties on Saturday nights, and we're never around. (laughter)

The advantages have been meeting the people in dogs. We have lots of close friends whose homes we've never been to, but we've certainly spent a lot of time in their rigs and having dinner or partying together. We gave a Thanksgiving party on the Turkey Circuit with Gail and Andrew Spieker. I think we had 40 people for a potluck dinner one night which was really neat. It was a lot of fun. We had a complete turkey dinner. We've met a lot of really nice people. There are a few around who aren't so nice, but that's in anything.

Are there any drawbacks to being in dogs?

Derek: Fur. (laughter)

Marilyn: I don't think so. I'm sure there are days when it's pouring rain and I have to go out to feed, clean and muck around out there and think, "Why am I doing this?" When I look at myself in the mirror and am covered from head to toe with mud, I think, "This isn't what normal people do." (laughter) I really don't think I'd trade the animals for anything. We really love the Sams.

Is there anything we haven't covered, any soapboxes or pet peeves?

Marilyn: The current thing that people produce nothing but show quality animals I

find absolutely fascinating. I want to know how they do it. That's just being snide. I've heard too many people say, "We only have show animals." I think it dilutes the quality in the ring when everybody feels everything they breed is show quality. I'd rather finish one or two from a litter that are really nice than have people drag just okay dogs around forever.

Derek: We want to be proud of what is in the ring with our name on it.

Marilyn: There is always the terror of someone who buys a pet and decides to show it.

Derek: It does happen.

Marilyn: The one I'm thinking of is just a nice little dog. He'll never finish his championship. I told the people if they really insist on showing him to please train him. I wish people would pay a little more attention to genetic problems. I think the Sammies are going to be in a lot of trouble eyewise over the next few years if we're not careful.

Derek: You can't go overboard on it.

Marilyn: Everything in moderation.

Are you speaking of any particular eye problems, cataracts, PRA?

Marilyn: The Sammies have a little of everything. Sometimes I don't think people are serious enough about checking their pedigrees. There are certain combinations that will produce PRA. If you're careful, you can go right about getting it. There are cataracts. Many lines have cataracts. You

have to go into this knowing that if you do a breeding you might get a cataract. We've gotten one or two over the years. We went through a time about six years ago where we had a number of extra eyelashes pop up, which we've now gotten around and everything's fine. There's glaucoma and other eye diseases that other people ask me about. I have a great ophthalmologist. I can call him and ask him anything. A couple of the things I've been asked about over the last few years by other people are "Collie-type" problems. It frightens me to think that we might get into an eye problem like the Collie people. If in doubt, don't breed it. There are plenty of dogs in this world, so if you have something with a problem, you really don't need to breed it. Or if you have to breed it, at least do it intelligently. I've always said it's not what you come up with, because over the years we're all bound to come up with strange things here and there, but it's what you do with it afterwards.

Is there anything you would like to add, Derek?

Derek: Nothing pops into mind at the moment.

Thank you for the interview. I have enjoyed it.

Breeders' Directory

Kennel names are listed in alphabetical order by state.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

- p - puppies listed occasionally
- d - grown dogs occasionally for sale
- s - stud service to approved bitches
- b - dog boarding available
- h - Samoyed handler

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BLEUARTIC pds 403-756-3937 Lee G. Shartau PO
Box 94 Stirling, Alta. Canada T0K 2E0
CUSONA pds 613-542-0995 Kit & John Wilson
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