



THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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ELAINE RUETINGER
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Samoyed People

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks With
**Wilna Coulter
WHITECLIFF**
San Carlos, California

Part II

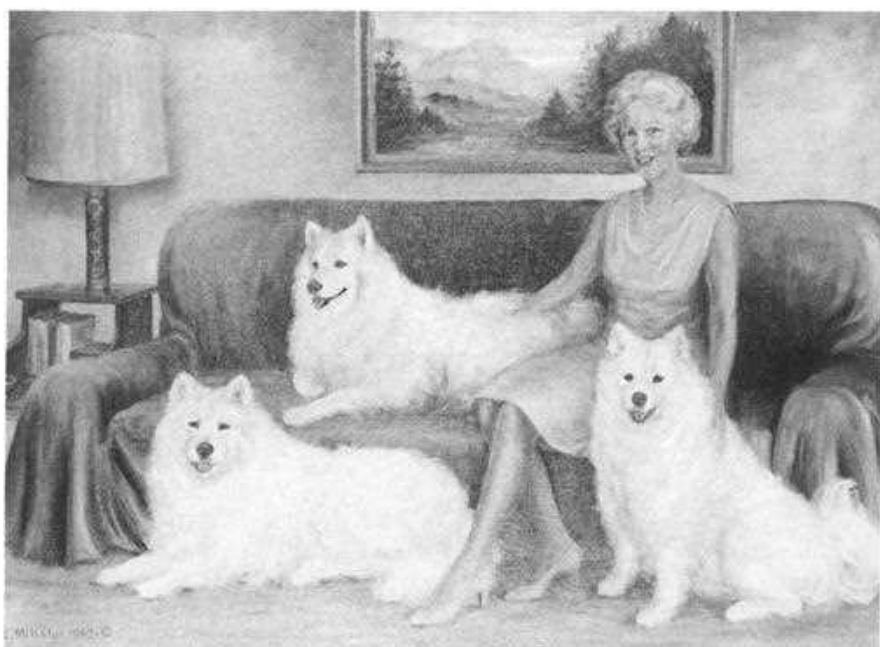
This interview was conducted at the home of Wilna Coulter in January of 1992 by Debbi Sencaubaugh.

Has your experience been that the bitchy bitches are the best show girls?

Our Gainesborough was very showy. With our old Czar, we never had to bait. Their ears and tails were always up. We never even used bait with them because they were just natural. With Alexis, it might be better if we didn't because she is going to grab that food and take your whole hand! (laughter) Alexis will absolutely bait to your hand and you don't need any with her and if you do, you use it sparingly. She doesn't care and she will bait to anything. Now Chelsea just didn't care about shows that much. She loved to go but she would just as soon stay outside the ring. Not Alexis; she wants to get in there.

Star and Yeti traveled together and often one would take the Breed and the other Best of Opposite. On the Oregon circuit when Janet Rollins, Jo Geletich and myself were all together traveling that circuit, in Klamath Falls Star had taken the Breed and Yeti BOS; and in Medford, it was just the opposite and Yeti took the Breed and Star BOS.

There we are in a Group out on that big expanse of lawn with Star and all of a sudden she got a look at Yeti in that ring, and she was so mad she started barking her head off at him. While we were watching the Group, I had to face her away. (laughter) She wanted to be in there. Then a man with a camera came up and was taking pictures of some dog in the Working Group and Star, with her back to the Group, saw him taking pictures and barked at him until he took her picture and he knew that's what she wanted. (laughter) She was another one that you could put her at ringside with you and she'd watch every single thing that was going on.



Left to right: Ch. Sho-off's Czar, Ch. Sho-off's Dorok, Ch. Dorka with Wilna Coulter. Painting by Elizabeth Mihalyi, 1967.

Whitecliff's Progressive Jazz, Sebastian's brother and Alexis' son, Pat Enslin now has. Pat is so entranced with him that she is always calling me and telling me things that he is now doing. She had just started the movie "White Fang" and he got a look at that movie and he watched the whole movie on TV. He was right in front of it and she had to move her chair and look at it sideways because he was blocking it. She said she's never had a dog watch a whole program but he watched that one. (laughter) I was thinking, if it rains, and I'm going to put Sebastian in the house all day, I'll turn the TV on for him and he may think he has company if I'm not at home. (laughter) I've turned the TV on before but I don't know that he's actually ever watched it.

Ch. Yeti of Whitecliff was a Czar son and owned by Janet Rollins, my veterinarian friend. Janet's mother and father, I've known ever since we've been in San Carlos. Janet is about the same age as my younger son. When Janet was going to Davis, she was going to get a Malamute puppy and her mother said, "Why don't you talk to Wilna Coulter?" We had this litter that Czar had sired in the Santa Cruz mountains. She came over and we went up there and picked out Yeti. She was working summers for a veterinarian and there were some longhaired German Shepherd puppies that were not show quality, and were going to be put to sleep,

and she rescued this female Shepherd and raised Yeti and the German Shepherd together. She took them to school with her. Janet's folks, when she started school in Davis, bought a house there for her and she rented rooms to students. All the time she was going to college and then to vet school, she had her own home so she could have these two dogs there. After she finished and became a veterinarian, she sold her house and bought a place in Redwood City which she has been in ever since. Yeti was her constant companion.

When Pat Enslin was running her sled team, we were all going out and putting our dogs on her sled team and she measured them and we had harnesses made by Mel Fishback. We all had our dogs and were down there some weekends on the salt flats, running the dogs. There was a regular trail that Pat would take them out on. One weekend we were out there and Pat had three teams going and Yeti went out on the first team. Janet wasn't there, but Frances Powers, at that time, was living in Redwood City in the same area that Janet was, and so they became quite good friends. They unharnessed that team and got the next team ready to go out. We were right by this canal, this slough, with dirty, crummy water, and Yeti chased a duck across the water and landed on the island. He wanted to come back but he didn't want to swim back across again. (laughter) We did everything trying to get that dog to

come back. Here he was on an island with mud and sludge all over. He was a mess! (laughter) I don't know how many of us were out there trying to get that darned dog back! Janet wasn't even there. Frances Powers had brought him in her Porsche! (laughter) At that time, Marine World, Africa, USA was adjoining this area. We even thought of going over and getting a boat. Finally, Ron Bona said, "You know, if he thinks we are all going to leave, he's going to come back. Get in your cars and start them up like you are going to leave," and we did. He swam right back! (laughter)

About a week after that, Don and I had taken Yeti to a couple of shows in Southern California and Jo Geletich was going to show him for Janet. He had taken the Breed and I was going to get him ready for the Group, we had him up on the table with all of us working on him and I started telling about this episode with him and that dog was so mad that I told about it! You won't believe this, but all of us there understood, he looked at me and was really irked. He turned around and wouldn't have anything to do with me the rest of the day. (laughter) It was very apparent to all of us. He didn't want us all laughing at him. He knew what we were all talking about.

Janet is another one of my friends who has been a great help to me in everything. Our friends are all ages, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's - and on up. (laughter) But the ones we see the most are these younger people. There are all these stories that I haven't thought about for years. Jean Blank had many, many wonderful stories and it's too bad that we didn't tape record her stories. There was one dog that had been placed with a ranger in Arizona or somewhere in the Southwest and was lost. She finally traced the dog way up in the mountains to an Indian village and the dog had been living on fish that he would catch in the stream and what little food the Indians might give him. Jean, finally, knowing the dog was lost and had been seen up there, rescued him. It's a marvelous story how she made this detour way up there and placed the dog with very well to do people down here in the Bay area.

Another time, she was taking a dog down to a show very late at night. She was evidently going too fast and got stopped by the highway patrol. The dog had been asleep on the back seat and she rolled down the window and the officer is looking in and Ch. Cheechako comes up and knocks the fellow's hat off. (laughter) He was very interested in the dog and didn't

give her a ticket.

They always said that Cheechako was one that would probably hold a flashlight for a burglar. He was living with Jean's daughter in the Westlake area of San Francisco and they had come home late at night and, evidently, not locked the front door well or something. They had just gotten to sleep and they heard a roar and a door slam shut and steps. Cheechako had come through and frightened somebody away. I have a photograph of him in his bubble bath. He would get in a bubble bath and lie on his back. He just loved it. They called in Gene Bennett, a photographer and fixed the bubble bath and told Cheechako to get in and he got in and just lay on his back - he would do it every time. (laughter)

They finally decided to retire Yurok when he was seven or eight years old, he had been poisoned. You have no idea the hostility against this gorgeous dog by a lot of people. This hostility toward Yurok we didn't know at the time but it was transferred to us, having these two sons that were so good. Maybe it's just as well that dogs weren't our whole life. It's not going to upset us and they can be hostile to us if they want. We realized in later years that a lot of this had been hostility towards Yurok. They got him to a vet in time when he was poisoned and he pulled through. They were on their way back from a show and they don't know how or where he got the poison but it happened and he'd been poisoned. We are very careful about our dogs. One of us always keeps an eye on them. I don't think we have that much hostility anymore, but we did to start with. It's too bad. I know there are some people whose dogs are just like their children and it's their life.

Going back to giving people information, one fellow who had called me had a Sam. He had moved here from Southern California and somebody had given him my name to call. He had some sort of health problem with his dog and the first person he called said, "Where did you get the dog?" and then answered, "Ask them, don't ask me." These are people who are still in dogs today. You try to help people no matter what it is, give them what knowledge you have. No one taught us how to groom a dog, we had to watch other people. In fact, years ago, when Bob di Giovanni was showing our Dorok and Czar for us, he came up one day and said, "Wilna, will you please stop grooming the competition's dogs?" (laughter) I always keep two before and after pictures of Ch. Elrond Czar of Rivendell CD, owned by the Gaffneys.

The Gaffneys had groomed him and Jim Manley was showing him. The first picture shows Ron after the Gaffneys bathed and groomed him. The same day and same dog, after Jim Manley took him over and groomed him, he got Best of Breed, went on to Group, but Jim Manley groomed him how he should look, which he didn't in the first picture. I keep that in the album to show people that there is a proper way to do it.

So many times people come to us and have no idea how to groom a Sam. In fact, some people from the Midwest came to us with a female to breed. We looked over the situation and they told us they didn't know whether or not they should breed her because the vet back where they came from said he didn't know what it was but there must be something wrong because the dog was losing all her hair. The dog was just shedding. (laughter) We tell people when the puppy is eight or nine months old, he or she will shed the puppy coat and they will have quite a bit of hair and what to do about it to get it all out or they would have a matted dog.

Tell us about the grooming process.

Years ago, we used to spend hours with the hair dryer. I remember once with Dorka, we were getting her bathed for a show and some friends of ours were coming in on a plane. She was still wet, we had towel dried her but we hadn't had time to brush or comb her out and we had to go to the airport to pick up these friends. When we got back, after our friends had left, the dog was dry and one solid mat from head to tail. In those days, we didn't know how to get it out and we worked and worked. We didn't have the proper equipment or anything else, but we finally got all the mats out. I don't know whether we pulled her from the show or not.

You have to get that loose hair out when they are shedding or you are going to have a problem. I have to use a hair dryer on Sebastian because he will not tolerate a big blower, it just freaks him out, but the hair dryer is fine. The minute I change over to the big blower he knows it and he will try to attack the big blower. I have a hair dryer in one hand and a pin brush in the other and brush and dry him all over and partially dry him, and then I do it all over again. With him it's the only thing I can do. If you can use a big blower and blow all that loose hair out, it's so much easier. Alexis doesn't care. You can do practically anything with her and she is very, very good about it. She knows she is going to a



Yuki.

show and it's okay. (laughter) Sebastian loves to be groomed and he will run and jump on the grooming table and sit there and wait for me when he sees me getting out the grooming things. He has a heavy coat and even when he sheds he will still look okay. There are some dogs like that. Alexis has a very easy coat to take care of but she takes a long time to dry, so it's a good thing I have the big blower with her because I'd be forever with the hair dryer with her. Yet, that's the way we used to do it. Bonnie Giffin is a dog groomer and there are no dogs that look more beautiful than Bonnie's. She goes into the ring with her dogs just beautiful.

I named Whitecliff's Progressive Jazz for the Brubeck family, whom I have known since I was a teenager. Recently, Pat bathed Jazz, and evidently took a break and didn't keep brushing and drying him and she only has a hair dryer, too. She called me and he was one mat. She had worked hours on him and he was still matted and I was to pick him up at her work place here in San Carlos at 8:00 in the morning and get him to Gail's by 9:00. She and Bonnie were leaving in the motor home as near 9:00 as they could. I was there

at 8:00 and picked him up and he was matted, one of the worst I've seen. I'd allowed myself a half hour leeway. I turned around, brought him home, put him up on the grooming table, worked about a half hour which only just barely got a few mats out, but it helped. I usually just take a mat at a time and work it out and it's a slow process. Jazz is awfully good about it and will let you do anything. I took him over to Gail's and was waiting on her front lawn because she had just taken two of her dogs to the kennels. I was brushing Jazz and stuffing the hair in my slicker pocket rather than all over her front lawn. They started out on the trip and late that night, she and Bonnie both started working on him and spent 4 1/2 hours. He didn't look too bad, but not at his best.

I tell people who are wanting to learn how to groom to watch the handlers at shows. There is no one who can groom better than John Coloma. He shows beautifully and grooms beautifully. If he gets your dog ready to go in the ring, that dog looks gorgeous. But I tell them to watch these people and see how they do it and learn some of their techniques.

Are they pretty receptive to a novice

watching them?

They have so many people standing around and they are busy and don't pay much attention to who is watching. They probably wouldn't give away their little secrets of just what they are using or something, but you can learn a lot. Because we did not get any information - none - and we had to learn things the hard way, we try to give other people help and you learn things from them lots of times that they will pick up elsewhere. It works out. If anyone is going to own a Sam, they'd better be prepared to learn grooming. When I have that blower on in the backyard, it looks like a snow storm has hit. (laughter) The birds pick up the hair and their nests are full of dog hair. One of my sons came over with his wife and they were trimming the ivy and I told them cut it all down because it gets too heavy too fast. I told them to trim it down to the bare roots. They were really trimming and they took out nine birds' nests, every one of them filled with dog hair, so they do use it. But I'm mad at the birds! With all of our surrounding country around here, they will build right above my back door. (laughter) It's so messy. And, of course, where we live in the hills here in San Carlos, we have all the wild animals. We have deer - there was a big buck in our driveway not long ago. We see a mother deer and her young crossing the road frequently. One time, our neighbor came over and said, "It's either a German Shepherd puppy but my son says it's a fox that's injured on my back patio." I went over and it was a fox, about six months old. We called the humane society. They came out and it had a broken leg. What they do is, take care of it and then release it into the wild again.

I was going to put a doggy door in our dining room for the cat and then the cat started bringing in lizards. He'll bring them in and turn them loose. I'm afraid he would bring in snakes. One time, late at night, I opened the door and he scooted in and went up into my bedroom. My husband had been watching TV and I saw the cat sit in the middle of the floor and drop something. It was a tiny little mouse. I was going to get a piece of paper towel and pick it up and get rid of it. He grabbed it and ate the whole thing right in front of me. He has a certain tone for when he wants to bring in something, a certain meow, and I've learned now to not let him in when he meows that way. (laughter) He's brought in birds, too. For years, he has chased cats off but now when a stray cat comes, he comes to the door and meows. I help him

chase the stray cats off. (laughter) I think he comes to tell me, "You'd better come and help me chase this cat off."

The people who lived here had him for ten years and he was a mature cat when they got him, and I've had him for three years. When they moved they didn't know what to do with him because he had been an outdoor cat. I used to feed him when they were on vacation and I said, "Bring his feeding dish and bring the cat up on our patio and I'll take care of him," so I have a cat I don't need. It's a beautiful Siamese. He knows that all this area is his. He'll sit on my bed and watch the dogs from the sliding glass door. He and Alexis seem to have a good relationship. Alexis got out of the car not too long ago and made a beeline for the front door and the cat was sitting there and didn't move. Alexis sat at the front door, waiting, didn't chase him or anything. But then Sebastian comes in and the cat is a little irked at me about Sebastian - it's a strange one. He'll disappear when he sees Sebastian. I don't think Sebastian would chase him but to the cat, Sebastian is a strange one.

The cat got me up at 4:00 one morning wanting out so I went in the family room because I'd heard a rustling around with one of the dogs and Alexis was up on the hearth at the fireplace. Of course, she was all ready for the show and bathed and all she needed to do is get herself black from the soot of the fireplace. But she was intent on something in the fireplace and she was going to get it. I put the dogs in their crates and rolled up some paper and lighted it and out came a little mouse, but I don't know where it went. I don't know whether it got out or what, because we had to leave and I left it up to Alexis to take care of that mouse if she could find it. But that's all I would need would be to have her head black with soot. It's the hardest thing in the world to get out.

How do you get it out?

I have worked corn starch in, which is good on grease, but it doesn't do too much good with the soot. I use soap and water and more soap and water. You just have to keep working it out. I don't know what to really use. There is probably something, but I don't know what it is. That's why I have my fireplace so barricaded. About this time of year we use the fireplace quite a bit but I'm going to wait until after the Cow Palace show, that's for sure. She is such a character. I don't really need a cat and if I go away I have to get somebody to come and feed the cat. Yet, I'm getting very attached to that cat. (laughter)



Ch. Pushka Czar of Snowcliff (1967-1980).

I have a picture here of Lena and Percy Matheron and Lena has on a sweater made of Yurok's hair. I have some things here made out of dog hair. These were made by Frances Roe and this is a stole made out of our Star's hair. Each article has a little name tag on it. I have a sweater she made for my husband. I experimented with making felt and it didn't turn out bad. You card it and put it on a piece of material, like an old sheet or something, and you put one layer with the hair going one way and another layer with it going the opposite way and then the third layer, then put another sheet covering it so it has a bottom and a top, then baste it back and forth and put it in the washing machine and the dryer and it turns out like this. I read an article and I thought I would try it. If I had the patience and the time, I would make pieces of it and make a sweater of some sort, but I don't. I have a skirt woven into a border print that Lena made for me with Yurok hair. I've about worn it out. It can be washed in the machine.

Here is a picture of Yeti and here is a picture of me at the dog bath. This one is just a picture of when we first built out house. It was a picture of

Czar in the front entry way. This is my friend Ingrid with Alexis.

Tell us about your dog bath.

When we built this house, we bought the property but knew we would not be able to build on it for two years because we had to wait for a bond issue to go through. That gave us two years to plan the house and I was dragging my husband to all the model homes. I went through magazines and cut out pictures of archways and I would tell the contractor, "This is what I want and this is what I want it to look like." The dog bath was featured in a magazine and I cut it out and had the picture to show the contractor what I wanted and it just exactly fits in that breezeway between the laundry room and the carport with the overhang so we can bathe them out there when it's raining. Everybody comes over to use the dog bath.

When we first made it we were checking every day to make sure it was being done right. They had just put in the building blocks that the shower pans sits on and they were way too high. I immediately took the bricks out myself and told the contractor I didn't want them so high because I needed just the height for me. This is a second back-



Ch. Yeti of Whitecliff and Ch. White Star IV - grandchildren of Yurok, son and daughter of Ch. Sho-off's Czar of Whitecliff.

drop of tile board. The first one was more Formica. It has hooks on either side where I can put the chain to chain them which leaves both of my hands free and I don't wreck my back. It's very easy to boost the dogs up there. Of course, my dogs will put their front paws up whenever I tell them to and I can boost them right up so I don't have a lot of lifting to do. We also have the grooming tables right there and everything is handy.

When they buy a puppy from me, the things they get along with it is shampoo ... I used to work with a fellow in the probation department who bought a beauty supply company that made their own shampoo and things. This fellow bought a beauty supply company and quit his county job and did nothing but make money on this venture. I told him I wanted this blue shampoo. I had tried all the different shampoos they made and one was really good. He would bring me samples of blue shampoo and it was just awful and I might have a blue dog if I weren't careful. Finally, he called me up and it seemed he was in San Rafael in a coffee shop having coffee and talking with somebody. I had given him a sample of My Pet blue shampoo and said, "This is the color I want." He called me up and said the man he was talking to had been the chemist who first made My Pet shampoo and told him what the formula was. So they've used it ever since and it's great shampoo. Everybody who buys a puppy from me gets about a quart of shampoo. It's very highly concentrated and you dilute it to one third shampoo and two thirds water.

Puppy people also get some dog

food that the puppy has been used to having, a complete list of feeding and we also give them some material that is put out by the Northern California Samoyed Fanciers. Our puppy buyers get a whole packet with, usually, a nylon lead and nylon choke chain or one of the Martingale leads. I have to tell them they don't need a great big thick chain. You would be amazed how people come in with a thick chain and a chain lead, especially these rescue dogs we've had. They get a packet and complete instructions and I tell them I would like to see the dog when it is about six months old and at that time I will show them how to show groom the dog. If their hocks need trimming or their feet trimmed, I will show them all this, to tell them how to brush the dog.

I get calls from all over and some of the hardest ones to take care of are when they call and the people have a nine or ten-year-old dog and, for some reason, they are no longer able to keep it. To have to tell these people that there is no way we can find a home for a dog that age. We beg people to take a six or seven-year-old dog and they won't. The first thing we do in Sam Rescue is to find out, if it's a registered dog, who the breeder is. We always recommend that they contact the breeder and, hopefully, the breeder will take their own dog back. There are a few who will not, and that's too bad because we can't do the whole thing. We have to tell the people with the older dogs that they might have to think of putting the dog to sleep because sometimes a Sam does not make a good adjustment, especially if that Sam has lived in the same family

with the same people and it's nine or ten years old. It may never adjust to a new home and would be heartbroken. You have to think of what would be best for the dog but it is a decision they must make and no one else can make it for them. We find out about the different problems they have and try to help them with them. Sometimes when we have given people instructions about certain things to feed a dog, they will say, "My vet said I should use such and such." We have to try to tell them that that one dog food might not be the best for their Sam. There are some people who just are determined that the vet, because he recommends something, that's the thing to do. I have to try and tell them that different breeds do better on different diets, sometimes, and the breeders, especially the show people, know what everybody is feeding and they know what does not go well with a Sam but may go well for a retriever or something of the sort. We have to consider, too, because of the hair of our dogs, that it's a little different than a shorthaired dog. We give them this information, whether they take it or not. We've run into some problems that are very difficult to deal with, like a flea allergy that can get out of hand, and a hot spot can be taken care of with Tinactin or something else that you might use for athlete's foot. I use the powder and find it works beautifully.

Do you trim around the spot first?

No, I work it in and that's all. It stops the itching and works beautifully. One person had a spot on her dog's nose. I did not see it and I was talking with her over the telephone and suggested different things she might try, but not knowing much more than she did. Her vet came up with Preparation H and healed it right away, with a spot on the nose. (laughter) You do learn from other people. Sometimes you may need to change a diet completely, like our Gainesborough. He was only eight ounces when he was born and all the other puppies were around a pound. I was still in bed one morning and my husband came up and said, "You know, she is pushing that little one aside. I don't think he's going to make it." We came downstairs and I put him up to nurse. He was strong enough to keep hold of a nipple, but in his litter there were ten, and we had to make sure they were all on nipples. I even took him to work with me one time. I took a formula and every two hours I would feed that puppy. (laughter) I took him in a box with a heating pad. If you are bottle feeding them or tube feeding them, you have to massage around their tummies and their rectums

so they can urinate and have BMs and he did everything he was supposed to do. The next day I put him in with the others and everything was fine. Within a week he came up to be with the medium sized ones and I began to get kind of attached to the little fellow.

He had a problem when I was weaning them. I could never get his BMs as firm as they should be and then I read Juliet Levy's book, which was really kind of far out in a lot of things, but even with these far out people's ideas you get some very good ideas that you can work with yourself. In her book she said rolled barley was one of the most easily digested cereals. I started soaking rolled barley in buttermilk and hot water and I added some parsley for minerals. I didn't have a microwave then, but later I would put it in the microwave for ten minutes and mix that with cooked rice and raw hamburger and yogurt and that's what Gainer lived on for months and it firmed him up right now. They loved it. For years I have been giving this, along with kibble, to all my dogs. The last few years I've been mixing it up and putting it in packets, enough for two days, and put it in the freezer.

Then I get a packet out every other day and mix it with their kibble. By the time Gainer was six months old, he could tolerate the kibble if he had this other along with it, and it was such a great diet that for years I fixed it.

When I got Sebastian, he wasn't interested in food and I had to get weight on him and was trying other things with him. He wasn't especially fond of this but he would eat the rice and barley mixture. I don't know how many people have used that. It's very good if you want a dog to lose or gain. If I want them to gain more weight I put more hamburger in; if I want them to lose, I put less and it seems to work. I never take away their kibble but this is kind of a supplement with it. They get one cup of that and a cup and a half of kibble and that would be it. It fills them up. But after we got Sebastian, I quit making it up because it was too much trouble. I probably will start it again. Marilyn Clark in Belmont still uses it for her dogs because she says she can keep their weight better. They are inclined to be heavy and too fat and she uses it for that.

What kind of kibble?

We use Nutro. With mine, I use the Natural Choice chicken and rice with no preservatives. They like it. I think most of the breeders around here that I know use Nutro. Everyone whom I know who has used Science Diet says it makes their hair quite brit-



Roger Craig of the Forty-niners football team with his children and 12-year-old Ch. Whitecliff's Gainsborough at the Passport Celebrity Fashion Show in San Francisco in 1988.

tle. Alexis will eat anything. Some of the shows will give you cases of food. When I had a case of one brand given to me, Sebastian wouldn't eat it. He would leave it. I sent it over to Jazz and I'm now getting Trader Joe's brand canned chicken and Sebastian loves it, so I'm giving that to them now with the kibble.

Are you concerned about ethoxyquin?

Not particularly. I don't notice that it's hurt anything. They say it's in such small amounts.

I so appreciate people who keep in contact with me and I hear about the dogs. A doctor's wife whose dog died a few months ago called me. It was an old dog she had gotten from me quite some time ago and we got her one of Carol Thompson's puppies. She called to ask a few questions and said, "We thought the other dog was gorgeous, but I've never seen a Sam as beautiful as this one." I tell people, "It's a good thing you think your dog is the best because that's what makes you keep showing the dog and everybody should think their dog is the best."

Do you think the handler's attitude is as important as the dog's in the ring?

I think so. I have found that it works a lot better when a handler will take that dog out and play with it before they go into the ring and not just come to the ringside and, "In you go." We've had a few run-ins with that over

the years with the handlers. The handlers, some of them, you can't tell them anything - they know it all. Some of them, of course, resent being told what they didn't do right. If I'm hiring a handler, I'm hiring the handler because the handler does a good job. My husband got so mad at Bob di Giovanni years ago at the Cow Palace show. Bob was taking in Yeti and Don said, "You better work with that dog before you take him in," but Bob said, "Oh, no, no. I have no problem." Well, Yeti was an idiot in the ring. My husband was so mad at Bob di Giovanni and I was so embarrassed that my husband would act like that. He was so irked about it. They would have their differences but they were always good friends.

Over the years, when we first got started, Bob di Giovanni was a big help to us and John Coloma is an excellent handler and has been very good with our dogs. There is no one who can show Alexis better than Frances Powers and Gail's daughter Debbie. They really do a marvelous job. They seem to be natural with her. There are some dogs that are better with certain handlers, like with Sebastian. Ann Gamlin was working and training in the classes with Sebastian and then she decided to have Sebastian go in the ring with her husband and Sebastian just worked beautifully for Paul Gamlin. He was



"Gainer," at age 12.

kind of acting up with Ann, but with Paul he settled down. Paul told Ann, "Sebastian is a man's dog to show in the ring." Paul picked this up and we did, too, but until Paul took him in the ring, we didn't know this. Paul also had taken time to play with him and he has one of these little small bikes to exercise the dogs. The bikes are little, fold up and you put them in the car. You can go all over the show ground with the bicycle - it's low down - and Paul and Sebastian have a ball with that bicycle. I think there is something Sebastian feels, that he cannot pull the stuff with Paul that he might with me or Ann. He behaves better in the ring with him and is more calm.

Gail's daughter Debbie was showing Gainer and Gainer began to pull these things. They would work beautifully until the last go-around, then he would be a complete idiot, twirl in the air and jump and was just out of control. Dr. La Ham was a judge at Santa Cruz and my husband and I were there and Debbie had taken Gainer into the ring and I was sitting with another dog show judge. We all felt Gainer had it. Dr. La Ham picked him out right away and you knew that was the dog he was interested in. I said to this judge that I was sitting with, "No, we haven't. This isn't the last go-round." (laughter)

Gainer started pulling that and Dr. La Ham stopped the Group and said, "Get your dog under control and go around again." He gave that dog three chances and he blew it every time. I never saw a judge do it before, but he actually threw up his hands and gave it to another Sam. Debbie came out of the ring crying and my husband had said, "I can't watch this," and he left the ring. (laughter) That's when we started having John Colomo show him. He got him under control and he never pulled anything on John, but John would anticipate when he was going to and would stop him before he could ever start. John took him on to some beautiful wins. These dogs will pull all sorts of things on you. (laughter)

Can a big name handler help a dog to win?

The politics, yes. At a show here recently I was talking with someone and they were saying that a certain dog was going to win, because he'd won a specialty. I pointed to another dog and said, "If you'll look very closely at the background of this dog, you know who is going to win today," and it was that dog. I'm not going into details of who it was, but it was definitely politics. There are lots of times that we have gone to these shows and some of us have sat there and actually said what

was going to happen and it has.

Describe your idea of the ideal Sam.

It would be very difficult. We're getting their ears too big sometimes and sometimes too small. You like them in between and yet I have dogs who have bigger ears that I would like to have a little smaller, but the all over dog grows into that where they are well proportioned. I like a good, stocky dog with a good front and a good rear, but first of all, they have to have a beautiful head. Then I like a good moving dog. I'm not one who can tell you exactly the different parts of the dog that I like but I can look at a dog and tell you whether I like it or not and tell you what I might not like about it, and it might be a simple thing like the ears are too big. Also, I've seen a few, not many, where the ears are too small. To get a good balance for the overall picture, they have to be a beautiful dog. I've seen some pretty ugly dogs, headwise, now and then, that have amazed me because I'm particular about a good head and I don't want to lose a good head.

For our breeding, we try very hard to get all the things we like and still keep a good sound dog. You'll get one dog and absolutely adore that particular Samoyed, yet probably other people would say this and that about that particular dog that you think is perfect. This goes on all the time with everybody. I believe the word for it is kennel blind. (laughter) I don't mind people thinking their dog is the very best and if you are going to show a dog, you've got to know that you've got the very best. You've got to know the dog is going to go in there and be able to compete with some very fine dogs. If you are in the business and you have one that you know is not going to make the grade, go on to another one. Our Chelsea from England was a very beautiful bitch but she didn't give a darn about the shows. Sometimes she won and sometimes she didn't and we never finished her. We've had quite a few that have had points but, for different reasons, we haven't finished them. Sometimes it's no more than we have another Samoyed coming in that is better so we'll work with this one and more or less retire the one we had been working with before. This is what happened when we got Star back when she was seven years old. We had others, we had Kristahl and others that we had been showing, but Star was exceptional so we concentrated on her. What I might think of one Sam someone else might not.

I am very comfortable with the idea of working with what you have and there are traits in dogs that I would

certainly never breed to. For instance, an aggressive dog, one that is notorious for being aggressive for no certain reason. Quite a few years ago, there was a Sam that was notorious for being aggressive, even to attacking a dog that was just walking by. The owner had not had a good hold on the dog and the dog attacked another breed that was just walking by. He was notorious for this sort of thing. I would never have bred that dog. The people who had him and bred him are no longer in Sams. If you are going to breed, try to get the very best you can. We all do that, but what one person thinks is the very best, another person might not. We do the best we can. I think this is where we have had an advantage, Frances Powers, Gail Spieker and myself, in that we communicate. We get information from each other and we get ideas and without them I don't think I would have half the success with my dogs that I've had. What I find interesting at the shows while sitting there watching with other people, and what is very fascinating while you are sitting there with these people, some of whom you don't even know, they will pick out a dog in the ring and I might know the background of this dog. To me, it's quite interesting what other people think.

One of my very good friends is Kathi Horton. I have known her since she first had Ch. Midnight Sun Kimba. Kathi and I very seldom see each other because we are so far apart, but every now and then we are on the telephone, and my husband would say, "Do you know you talked an hour?" My reply was, "Yes, but it's better than a plane ticket." (laughter) When Kathi and I talk, we talk a long time. I will always consider Kathi one of my very good friends and she has always been very loyal to Whitecliff. She is another very special person. She has contributed a lot to Samoyeds. I have known Kathi and her father for many, many years, and have been in contact with them. When they got their second dog through me, he was an entirely different dog than Kimba. This kind of thing makes life more interesting, that these dogs aren't the same and all have different personalities.

We also had sent a dog up to Kathi Horton's father. This dog we knew was never going to make it as a show dog. He had been kept in a very small apartment in San Francisco. I think he was a son of our Czar. Really, he never had the chance to be exercised or what a dog should normally have had. He was on slick floors and he had a terrible rear. Kathi's father took Ivan



Ch. Whitecliff's Alexis.

because I didn't know what in the world to do with this dog and I said he would never make a show dog. He's a great pet. He was still a young dog when I sent him to Kathi's father who called him Ivan the Destroyer. (laughter) I think he practically wrecked so much furniture. He was a beautiful dog. Finally, I found a family over in the Santa Cruz area who would give him a good home and he lived a great life there being absolutely adored. I still don't know how Kathi's family ever tolerated him for the time they did. (laughter) When you have a dog like that that has a bad background ... and I don't know what ever really caused his bad rear except that there were very slick floors and not having a real normal life that a Sam should have with outdoor exercise and everything that our dogs get today. We laugh about a lot of things when I'm together with Kathi.

Do you think Sammies are a hyper breed?

No! I have never had a hyper Sam. My Sams are very calm. They get excited when I come home or when we have company, but all I have to say to them is, "Get in your crate," and

they're there. There's not a sound out of them until I let them out. I have never had a dog that I would consider hyper. I can remember Peggy McCarthy many years ago with some of her dogs that she had in her kennels that would pace back and forth all the time. Of one, in particular, she said, "He's never still. He's like that all day long," but I've never had any like that, so I don't know what to attribute that to, except that I say, again, my dogs are family dogs. If you have a dog that has been kept outside, they may become a bit hyper and when they are let inside, they don't know what to do, they're overactive. But if you have a dog that is used to being in and out and is part of the family, I don't think you ever have a hyper dog. Maybe when they are kennel dogs, they are, but I don't know.

Do you think nutrition has something to do with it?

You read a lot about it and that I wouldn't know because I stick to more natural things myself for my dogs. I believe in vegetables for them and I go into everything as naturally as I can. Mostly, I go to the Nutro products, with supplements of yogurt or vegeta-



Ch. Miss Whitecliff, "Missy" (Ch. Kubla Khan of Whitecliff x Czarina Mishka of Whitecliff).

bles, or recently we had turkey so they had turkey scraps and a bit of turkey broth. Their diet always consists of three-fourths kibble and one-fourth supplement. Sebastian is the only dog I've ever had that didn't seem to care whether he ever ate or not. Alexis doesn't care what she eats as long as she eats. She is a thief and will steal any food she can. I have found things that Sebastian will eat that I add to the kibble and he is now gaining weight and eating much better. It's harder for me when I get a dog that is two years old to change his habits and yet we do now and then. I have heard of people talking about their hyper dogs but I have never had any. Mine are lazy. (laughter)

Let's go back to the ideal dog. If you could rate the whole dog on a point scale of 100, how many points should the head have?

I am the worst person in the world for mathematics and I would probably screw it all up but maybe 25 percent and that's probably wrong. It's important to me that they have a pretty head. I always think that you should be able to look at a Sam and say whether it's a male or a female. Sometimes you have these bitches that are as big as a male and you have to ask whether it's a male

or a female, and that shouldn't be. You should look at the female and know it's feminine, and a masculine male which probably has size and a bigger ruff that would make the difference. Every now and then I see a really big female that I think is too big.

What size and weight do you prefer for a male and a female?

Alexis is around 50 pounds and is very solid. She's not a big bitch. I shouldn't think a female should weigh over that. If she were not as solid as she is, maybe a little less weight would be better, but she carries her weight very well. My males have usually weighed around 60 pounds. Some females have 50 of fat but Alexis is very solid and she can carry that 50 pounds but no more. I watch her because she would eat everything in sight and I do see that she doesn't get over that. It's kind of hard to say because there is so much to take into consideration, such as their bone structure and the whole bit.

Do you prefer males or females?

When I've got a good male here I prefer him and when I've got a good female here I prefer her. (laughter) People say to me, "For a family pet, which would you have?" and I have

told them that in my own experience that the males make just as good family pets as females. There's one thing that I do not like. I haven't had the problem with my dogs but I've seen it happen in the ring, that a male will be humping everything, and I don't know to what to attribute that. My two sons out of Yurok, when we would have a breeding and were using Dorok, if the female turned around and bit him, he would have no more to do with her. He'd walk off and lie down and there was no way he was going to breed with her. Czar was different. Of the two, Dorok was considered more aggressive in the show ring. At home it was Czar who was the king, you might say. If Czar couldn't go out the door first, he wouldn't go out at all. When they were being fed, we put their two dishes out with their food in them and they would go and stand over their dishes and growl and each other and then change places and eat. (laughter) They did it all the time.

They were very good friends and really depended on each other quite a bit, or when one had been away for a while and came home, I kept them separated, sometimes for a week. How we would know they were going to get along together, because they were in their separate pens at times, we would give them each a milk bone and if they threw it down they were mad and were not going to make up yet. If they ate the bones everything was fine. (laughter) You find these little things out. I can remember one time we were going to Southern California for a show and the two males were in the back seat and we stopped to get gas and I was going to take them out for a piddle. I took Dorok out first and Czar tore into him. In the show ring, it was Dorok that was the aggressive one, but Czar was telling him, "I go out first!" At home Czar was the leader but at the shows he didn't care about being a leader, but Dorok was then in his glory.

I can remember a few things that Lena Matheron would tell about Yurok. Every time they had company they would always let Yurok come in and greet everyone and he would go clear around the room and say hello to everybody then go on out. That was what he expected to do. If they didn't let him come in when they had company, he would rip up his rug and pour his water dish all over it. (laughter) There were little things like that they used to tell us about the dogs and it was very much a fun time of our lives, knowing these dogs and getting these tales from Lena and Percy. Sometimes when these things occur to me, I should

write them down because I forget them. I hadn't thought of this for years about Yurok.

Lena and Percy had a beautiful setup where they lived near Grass Valley. It was on the river and an absolutely perfect place for the dogs. Their bedroom opened off onto a big, big grass area, fenced in, that was a play yard for the dogs. They had three males at that time. They had Junior which was Omak the II and Yurok, and I don't remember the name of the third one. They had every one of these kennels opening off onto this play yard which adjoined their bedroom, and from their living area they could see into the yard. Their dogs were definitely family dogs, too. I've often thought that I wished we had bought that property years ago. That's where Lena and Percy retired to, a beautiful, beautiful spot. We used to visit them often. I remember one time when Percy was in Yuba City Hospital where he had heart surgery. We were at a dog show while he was in the hospital and it was a day that Czar won. Between the time when he got Best of Breed and the time he went into the Group, we went to visit Percy at the hospital. We always kept them very well informed of what these two boys of Yurok's were doing. Lena died before Percy of a heart attack and I don't think they even knew she had a heart problem. They were very fine people.

How did they get into Sammies?

I don't know. It started with Yurok's father, Omak. They started showing, but why, I don't remember. I do remember one thing. They would put him in the shows, win Best of Breed, and then go home. Why stay for Group? They never stayed for Group with Omak. Percy felt very bad when Omak died. He was the love of Percy's life. He, evidently, was a medium sized male that didn't have the longer ears and had a beautiful head. That was one thing that Percy always looked at, was the head. I have gone along with that, too, but Omak was the one they started out with and I wish now that I had tape recorded a lot of the stories that Jean Blank used to tell me. She had been divorced from her husband but was very financially secure and she could travel and expenses didn't mean too much to her. She traveled with her granddaughter all over with the dogs. Lena and Percy kept the dogs at their place, got them bathed and groomed and ready for the shows and Jean would take off with the dogs. They had a very good relationship.

How the name of Whitecliff started was Jean was living in Los Altos and in



Ch. Bar-cea's Dorcha of Drayalene (Ch. Rohandi of Drayalene x Barbee's Miss Dollie), a Yurok granddaughter.

those days in San Francisco and on the peninsula, instead of telephone numbers they had names, like Sea Bright. In Los Altos it was Whitecliff so she took the name Whitecliff from a telephone exchange and they decided they would use it as their kennel name. That's how Whitecliff got started. I believe they had an interview with Jean for the book, "The Samoyed Book," that Hoflin Publishing puts out and I believe she explains that in the book. We have had the Whitecliff name for 30 years and I don't know how many years before that, that Jean and the Matherons started it. Jean may, in that book, have said how she got into it and met the Matherons. I think Jean, also, was a very strong person, personality-wise. The hostility directed at Yurok, she let roll off of her. There are a lot of people who very much resented her because she was very aloof sometimes but she had had all this hostility directed at her and I don't blame her. I don't know how many times I have told people when they have a dog of ours, "There are going to be some people who will give you a hard time because

you've got a Whitecliff dog," and we hear about these things and don't pay any attention to it. You don't let it bother you and you can still go in the ring and win. (laughter) And, yet, we have never really campaigned our dogs, but just put them in the shows that were convenient.

Jean Blank campaigned Yurok. She had the money to do it and she could travel anywhere. This was a very good outlet for her and was probably the main thing in her life and she was good at it. She always wore the squaw dresses. She had them in all different colors. When she went in the ring, she was identified right away with her different squaw dresses. I have one here that Jean had made for Lena but Lena never wore it and gave it to me. But it was a trademark with Jean. It's a funny thing with people and what they wear. Helene Spathold always wore the same tweed man's sport coat and never went into the ring without this sport coat. She always had to go in the ring first. They didn't go catalog order at that time and I have known people who slipped under the ropes and got in

ahead of her. She was upset. It was kind of a superstition with her, I believe, that sport coat and getting in the ring first. All these things go way back, that we pick up as we are newcomers to it, and you forget about them, and then they flash back in your mind again. Here again, this was a case where dogs were her life. She became a dog show judge and her father was a dog show judge. I don't think she had any life outside of that.

The dogs are not my whole life. They are my fun. There are a lot of things I want to do and I'm going to do that have no connection with the dogs at all, but the dogs are part of my family. I can't imagine not having a Sam around and they are the most beautiful dogs in the world. We were laughing recently on the bench, talking about some of the other breeds. Someone was telling about a friend of theirs and a certain breed and they were saying how people look like their dogs and we were laughing and saying that nobody should get a Bulldog because people look like their dogs and nobody would want to look like a Bulldog. (laughter) When my husband and I would go here and there with our dogs we would have people ask us if we bleached our hair to match the dogs because both of us had white hair. I have always said, "With my white hair, that's the only kind of a dog I could have."

Tell us a little about the Golden Gate benched show.

When we had our first Sam they had the Golden Gate shows at the civic auditorium in San Francisco in the arena and they were benched in the adjoining building which was Brooks Hall. I think we were at that show two or three times when our Dorka was a very young dog. Then they started having the shows at the Cow Palace. The Cow Palace is situated right between San Francisco and San Mateo County. It's actually in San Mateo County but it's on the line there, so it's kind of considered San Francisco. I can remember years ago going into the Cow Palace show and we had snow on 101 and we aren't an area that ever has snow. All the cars were going in the slow lanes because they weren't used to snow. But that is one of the few times we have had snow in our area. Another time I can remember it pouring rain and Janet, Dr. Janet Rollins, carrying Yeti, who was a big dog, into the Cow Palace so he wouldn't get dirty and wet. We never know where we are going to be benched at the Golden Gate until a couple of weeks before when we get the information. We're usually in the north hall but whether we will be in the

middle, end or side of the building we don't know, so it's always something to kind of look forward to, where they are going to put us next. This year we knew we were going to have to be in one of the buildings down below which some people prefer because the crowds are not quite as bad down there as they are up in the north hall. The crowds of people are just tremendous up there, going through the aisles. I always end up after the Cow Palace show hoarse because you are talking to people all the time. In our bench, especially, I think we are the only ones who have large area benching. There are 29 Samoyed bench entries this time and 14 of them are Whitecliff dogs.

We have gone to a lot of trouble and a lot of expense to have beautiful benching. One year, one of our members was an interior decorator and he designed our benching with walnut paneling and a beautiful canopy over our whole bench of 24 Whitecliff Sams. All the Sams are benched with a space of about 30 inches each and no barriers between and it was really quite impressive. We have artificial green grass for the dogs to sit on which we have used all these years. For a few years they were giving prizes for the best benching and while they were giving awards, we always won one with our benching and we had different benching every year. In fact, it might have been the same year we had the paneling and canopy that we had hanging from the rafters Pat Ensen's dog sled.

For years, Frances Roe, who did the spinning and the knitting of our garments out of the dog hair, had a table set up by our benching. Since she had to use an electric spinning wheel, we had it all wired, and up until three years ago, Frances always spent two days spinning hair. I would usually sit with her dogs and my dogs. Frances was not one to talk to people. They would ask her things and she would give them information but she depended mostly on myself to give the people information because she was busy spinning. I would tell them more about the spinning of the dog hair and we still use the garments that she made and put them up on display even though she is no longer able to spin or be at the dog shows. People come up and ask about her. I don't know how many times people said, "Please tell her we asked about her." When I go in to see her I will tell her that everybody missed her this year. People come by and see the sweaters and stoles and caps and things that we have hung on display and they can hardly believe that it's made out of the dog hair and some people think we

skin them! (laughter) We say, "No, no, we save the hair when they are shedding." We spend a good part of our time educating the public.

We have fun. We have a potluck and all bring some food. This year I had a turkey, somebody else brought roast beef and somebody else brought ham. They could make sandwiches and we had some salads. We can't put up a buffet, it's against the rules, but we have all of this so well organized and we have it in kind of a boxlike affair and put it up between two chairs and between 12:00 and 1:00 we all have our buffet and stick it back under the benches again. (laughter) We have a good time with it. The benching in Cow Palace is rather unique. Every year you see different things. People think up different benching.

We have been very fortunate to have some people with great creative talents to own Whitecliff Sams. Katie Molineux, an artist who has done murals in bank buildings, painted our Golden Gate Cow Palace background benching one year. This was a forest snow scene - three panels, each six yards long and four feet tall - we topped it with a green felt banner twelve yards long with fourteen-inch letters in white felt that said, "Whitecliff Samoyeds and Friends," with white felt puppies playing. The first year we used it, some man who said he was in advertising wanted to know who did the painting and told us that it probably could have cost twenty thousand dollars to have ordered it done. We now have an arctic snow scene on the back of the same canvas, beautifully done by another Whitecliff Samoyed friend, Jackie Pearl. We are truly lucky to have such great friends of long standing. This year we had fourteen Sams on the Whitecliff bench. In previous years, we have had as many as twenty-four. My own Samoyeds have been benched at this Golden Gate show ever since the first one was held in the Cow Palace, possibly about 25 years. In one ten-year period Whitecliff Sams took BOB each successive year. When GG-KC gave prizes for benching, we won with our background of walnut paneling and canopy. This was done by another Whitecliff Samoyed owner, Fred Heramb. We also displayed a spinning wheel and Pat Ensen's dog sled. Up until three years ago, Frances Roe always sat at our bench and demonstrated spinning with garments she had made from the dog hair. She also had on display seventeen samples of other breeds of dog hair she had spun into yarn. Frances gave many demonstrations at schools and fairs on



Whitecliff males at Santa Barbara.

spinning of the dog hair. Gail Spieker and I would go along and take a dog that was shedding to demonstrate from dog to garment. We would answer the questions and educate the people on the care of their dogs while Frances did the spinning.

At the benched shows, don't the dogs have to stay there from 10:00 in the morning until 5:30 in the evening?

Yes. Carol Thompson, who lives in Sacramento and raises horses and has Whitecliff dogs, had one of her males on the bench. She was just a doll at taking everybody's dogs out to walk off and on all day. Alexis was very tired because we'd had the mouse in the family room. Even though I didn't get to bed until after midnight, I'd hear her in my sleep with her barking and scurrying around. She spent the whole night before Cow Palace chasing a mouse! (laughter) When she came to the Cow Palace she was exhausted and I was so glad we didn't have to go in the ring that morning. I crated her the next night so she wouldn't chase a mouse all night. It was either that or bring her up into my bedroom. When she travels with Gail and stays in a motel with Gail she shares the king-sized bed with her head right up on the pillow by Gail. When she came home from the National last year, Gail said, "She loves the motel rooms!" (laughter) She decided after that that she should have her own bed. She gets on my wicker settee, rearranges the pillows and sleeps there now. (laughter) She is one who has traveled so much and is very adaptable. She is very reliable. In a motel room, you would never know she was there. You can leave her for hours in the crate and she doesn't care. She always goes as excess baggage on a plane and we always go with her and that doesn't bother her in the least. I can put her in the kennels but we have a little talk and I tell her she is going on

vacation to the country club. (laughter) It doesn't matter with her. Gail has been taking her in motor homes and her van ever since she was six months old and she thinks it's the thing to do, going to all these dog shows and lord-ing it over all these others.

Do you wish they had more benched shows?

No, they are too hard. I'm glad it's only once a year. I enjoyed the Westminster when we were there. Probably the reason I enjoyed it is that Frances Powers did all the work. Frances met me at the airport, we stayed with her aunt in Englewood at this beautiful estate where the dog had free run of the whole house and the whole backyard was a beautiful expanse of lawn and trees. Frances had things planned which she thought I would enjoy, and, of course, I did. The first time I was there to pick Alexis up she had taken me all over Manhattan. I had never been there before and it was a marvelous experience. The second time, we were going to have lunch in Chinatown and were going to do this and that. We dropped off at Madison Square Garden all the crates and everything we were going to have to have. I stayed in the no parking zone in her van while she took everything into the Garden and got all the things for the setup. The day of the show, Frances, of course, knows the show and has lived in the New York area all her life, it was a breeze. She just took me everywhere and did everything and I didn't have to worry about a thing. It was a wonderful experience but it was very different from Cow Palace.

In Cow Palace the benches are sofa height and you can sit there. In Madison Square Garden they are a few inches off the floor and to sit on one of those you are down very low and you can't have chairs like we do at the Cow Palace. There isn't room. You will

either have to stand with your dogs because there is absolutely no room in the aisles, or sit, if you can find a spot. Most of them have their dogs in the wire crates, all they will allow, which takes up the room on the bench and there is really no place to sit. You want to stay with your dog and don't want to leave your dog so it's a little different. Their arena area there is very beautiful and very nice and the seating is very nice, but their benching is not as good as our Cow Palace, and, of course, there are no decorations like we have at Cow Palace. The decorations make it kind of interesting.

Is the actual showing in the ring pretty high pressure?

Not particularly. People can sit right by the ring and have a ringside seat. We go in and stand and wait for our time to go in the ring but it really isn't a lot of pressure. It goes very fast and the dogs are all very well behaved and know what to do.

Should all champions be speccied?

Most of them that are being shown, yes. At the San Jose National Specialty, I made the remark to a breeder from the Washington State area after looking at one dog, "How in the world did that dog ever become a champion?" He said, "Wilna, you know anyone can be a champion if they try hard enough." There are a few, but most of them that are not that good quality drop out before they ever become a champion. In different areas it's harder to become a champion. It's harder to become a champion, I believe, in California than it is in some of the other states. The competition is much rougher out here. People that finally have a champion, whether they have the best dog or not, they realize they are not going to make it with that particular dog if it's not that good of quality and they drop out. Here is an example. A lot of people may not agree with

me on this. Rokandi, out of Yurok, that sired so many great dogs, was not very good himself. I think he had 30 points before he finished but his children were beating him all the time. He was a much better stud dog than he was a champion and this always bothered Helene Spathold, that here was a son of Yurok who in the show ring could not compare to Yurok. But he was one of the greatest stud dogs. Time after time he would go in the ring and get beaten by his own children.

I remember one time when we had Dorka and this was at the time when they'd pulled all the dogs and wouldn't compete against her, and our handler said, "We're going in anyway," and we did and got the Breed with her which gave us the points we needed with her. I had calls from different people, people I hardly knew, who said, "You have made history today. The judge that you had was Helene Spathold's father's best friend. You went in with Dorka with Helene having Rokandi and beat him." I didn't know what it all meant. She was a better show dog than he was, but he was a wonderful stud dog, so what does it matter? The children that he produced are some of the greatest show dogs today - the line coming down through Yurok and Rokandi. I think you will find that many other breeders will tell you, myself included, "Having a pup out of Rokandi is why we are in the show ring today." If you have a very good showy champion that is a consistent winner, keep up with it.

There are quite a few Sams that people will push and push and push and the dog gets tired of it. They are off to shows every weekend, all over the country. You will hear comments on the outside of the ring like, "Why don't they retire him?" because it's a shame he or she isn't showing like they used to. A perfect example of that is Ch. Pushka, out of our Dorok. After he took the Best in Show, they had him all over and it was getting to be quite sad because he would go in the ring, didn't move as well, he was not the dog he used to be, but his owners never gave up - "I have a great dog." Well, sure, but retire him while he's great. Put him in now and then but don't keep pushing him. I hope I never keep pushing one. After you have reached a peak of what you want, show them now and then, but let the dog have a vacation.

What do you think is the one area where breeders are most lacking in knowledge?

Most breeders now are very well read and most of them are very receptive to the newest things that are coming out. I know, for instance, that

Frances Powers goes into medical things much deeper than I do and I am very happy to sit back and let her tell me. Gail is much better read about everything than I am. I used to be but now it's much simpler. They are going to tell me everything that is going on and I don't need to get into it. (laughter) If there is some particular thing that I'm interested in, I'll pursue it. I used to read everything, all the very latest, but I really don't care that much anymore. I'll hear about it but I don't pursue everything.

In your own breeding program over the years, what do you feel really improved and what didn't?

People have been more careful about x-raying their dogs, though I don't think you have to OFA every dog you have. I haven't, but if I have a male that I'm going to use for stud, I will OFA him. The first thing we did was have Sebastian x-rayed for hip dysplasia when we got him back so we'd know what to do with him. It's for our benefit. If he had any hip problem I would not breed him and would probably put him in a pet home. People are more careful about these things now. Like the eye problems, and now glaucoma has popped up, and I admire the people who are being very careful about this and are having their dogs' eyes tested and not breeding indiscriminately. These things have improved over the years and people are more careful about not getting something into their line. Our dogs are much better dogs, more beautiful dogs, and maybe more sound dogs than they were ten years ago and I think it's because people are a little more careful. You have to educate the people you are selling puppies to. It goes on and on and never stops. You are always educating people.

With three of you carrying on the White-cliff name, what's the final say if you disagree?

We don't disagree. Frances will give what she would like to do and Gail and I will put our input into it, but we will finally come up with, "Okay, go ahead, see what happens." We allow each other to do our own thing, but we do let each other know what we would like to do and intend to do. Even if one of us says, "I don't know. I don't think I would do it that way, but think it over and if that's what you want, okay." This kind of an attitude is why we have gotten along. We are able to communicate and that is a big plus.

Do you generally agree on the interpretation of the standard?

More or less, yes.

Do you feel it's a good standard?

Yes. Sometimes if you go improv-

ing things too much, you lose it. If you stick to just the basics ... Like this big hullabaloo over the whiskers. I don't care whether they take them off or keep them on but I think it should be your own choice. There are times when the female looks better with them off. For the Cow Palace show, I took off Alexis' whiskers because they were going every which way and I thought it looked terrible, but other times we've shown her with them on. It should be left up to the person and not a law that you cannot take them off. But if they are there for a purpose, like with a cat, maybe they should be left on.

How important is missing pigment?

That's a very interesting subject. Our first Sam, years ago, had the blackest nose you would ever want, but it lightened up as she got older. You would not believe the research I did. I even contacted a doctor in Israel or Arabia or somewhere. I'd read an article where he had done some research on black people that have these white spots appear and there was a certain thing that he had used that eliminated that. But I was younger then and it was a little crazy to do that. He informed me he really didn't know anything about dogs, but it was a nice letter. (laughter) But I wondered if it didn't have something to do with the loss of pigment.

When Missy lived in Daily City, the place was surrounded by eucalyptus trees where there was hardly any sun. Her nose, which had been dark, became very light and it was hard showing her with such a light nose. Then she moved to Belmont and here the yard was very sunny and a different environment entirely. Her nose got nice and black again. This is still a puzzle to me but after she made the move to Belmont she developed a flea allergy and we had quite a skin problem with her. She lived to be about fourteen but we did have a constant battle with a skin problem that she'd never had in the other place; and she'd never had fleas in the other place but she did in this place. I don't know. There is so much that would be very interesting to know, and that, particularly, I'm very interested in; but why do these dogs lose their pigment when they start with a coal black nose?

I have a letter written by the daughter of someone, who brought the dogs from Siberia into England. She writes that in northern Siberia where the dogs came from, the dogs had the lighter pigment but they had a sparkling white coat. In the southern part they had more the biscuit coat and the very dark pigment. I thought that was quite

interesting. Of course, they have always had the snow nose and we had that with the male we brought down from Alaska for breeding. Barbara Weinig told us his nose would lighten up in the winter and get very black in the summer there. He would be down here only a week or so and his nose would darken. Barbara is another very good friend and very loyal to Whitecliff and has been a great help to me over the years. We have a very wonderful relationship with her and she represents Whitecliff in Alaska. (laughter) Regarding our Chelsea, in her mother's scrapbook, they had a newspaper clipping from a show that the mother of our Chelsea had won, and the only comment that the judge could make to fault her was that her black nose and eyes and everything were too black. We have had very few noses that fade coming down from Chelsea.

There is one cute story I will have to tell about her. She had a wonderful disposition and was very, very maternal. She absolutely loved having puppies. She would sell more puppies for us if we had them. People adored her. She would come in and look at them with these eyes like harbor seals' eyes and people just fell for her all the time. One year we had gophers over the whole back yard and she was fascinated by them. She would spend all day in her gopher garden and never hurt them. We'd see them pop up out of their holes and she'd be watching them. She loved those gophers and she would not let the other dogs come by her gophers and she spent that whole summer with the gophers. (laughter)

What do you think are the worst problems in the breed now?

I think we've conquered a lot. Maybe it's the people not telling the buyers of their puppies what might come up that is in the background. For instance, if they have glaucoma in the background and they have bred, they should let people know that this could be a problem. Years ago, there was one litter we had that was a disaster. We'd bred one of our males - we traced it down to what it was and where it actually came from - but that whole litter, all the males in it were either cryptorchid or monorchid and we'd never had any of it before. We started to do research on it, and, at that time, they felt it came through the female and it must have, because we never had it again. You will find these things now and again. You think, "It can't happen to me," but it did, but we only had that one litter and we kept away from that particular strain from then on. I think people are being pretty careful about

how they are breeding now and are looking into things more.

What advice do you have for people just getting started in Sams?

Enjoy your puppy. (laughter) I tell most people that we do the best we can to pick out the puppy for the people. I've found that this is rather important because every situation that each puppy is going to is different. We have a doctor in Sausalito whose old Sam had died and he wanted a female. We got him one of Gainer's litter out of a bitch in Lake Tahoe. We had been to his home. He raises orchids and it's a beautifully landscaped place overlooking the Bay. In his living room as you came in was a sunken fish pond with four of these big Japanese fish that are like carp or something - very big and beautiful and very expensive. We picked out a puppy for the doctor that was very mellow. It turned out great. That puppy would stick her nose in the water and one of the fish would grab onto her nose. They were her friends. There was another of that litter that was named "Pistol Patty." She was a hellion and was sold to a couple who could handle her delightful naughtiness.

Is there anything you would like to discuss that we haven't covered?

Yes. One of my dear friends is Lyanne "Kiwi" Knott. She represents Whitecliff in the Dallas, Texas area. Kiwi works so well with Frances Powers, Gail Spicker and myself. It is very rewarding.

I would also just like to mention some of these dear friends again. Gail Spicker and Frances Powers - even though we don't always agree, we respect each other's decisions. These two friends can always be depended upon to try and breed for the very best Whitecliff Samoyeds. We always have a waiting list for our puppies. When I am no longer around, Gail and Frances

will be carrying on with the Whitecliff name and traditions.

I often tell people who get a Samoyed from me that it might change their whole life. Many of our friends of today are ones that we sold puppies to years ago. Kris Lierboe of Whitefish, Montana - when Samoyed Rescue was in need of support, a check from her would arrive in the mail. We now have an all breed fun show in the middle of January which provides our needs for the year.

Kathi Horton who has been my friend since her first Sam, Ch. Midnight Sun Kimba. It is not unusual for us to talk on the telephone for an hour or more. My husband used to time us. He couldn't believe we could talk that long.

Barbara Weinig from Anchorage, Alaska has been a very good friend, and we communicate frequently.

Dr. Janet Rollins DVM, owner of Ch. Yeti of Whitecliff CD, has always been a help over the years. Yeti was purchased while Janet was a premed student at Davis, California. We often laugh at some of our experiences at the dog shows.

Karl and Jo Geletich have also been friends of ours since their first Samoyed. We co-owned with them Ch. White Star IV and also Ch. Misty Way's Peg of Whitecliff.

We do appreciate the Samoyed people who have given our Samoyeds credit for the start of their champions today. Susan Hampton, we thank you, and also Doris Knoblock for the credit given Ms. Molly and Nakki in "The Samoyed Book." My husband and I have always felt that acknowledgement should be given to persons while they are still living.

Thank you so much for taking the time for this interview. It's been great. •

In our next issue we will present an interview with Don and Barbara Winslow of KARATYLL, as well as spotlight the upcoming stars of the breed. The deadline is May 1 ... don't miss it!