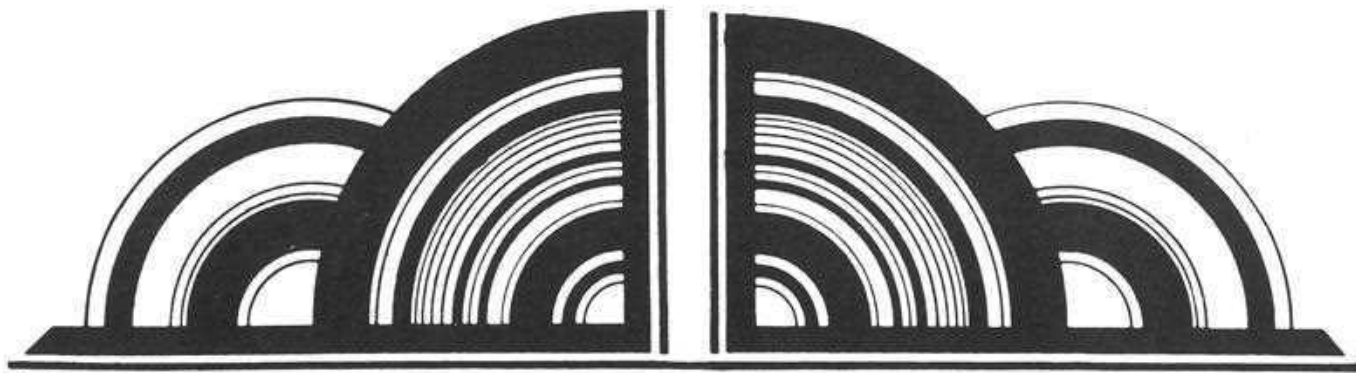




*When what to my wondering
eyes should appear...*

THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY
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SAMOYED PEOPLE

The Samoyed Quarterly
Talks With
Mildred Sheridan Davis
PARK-CLIFFE KENNELS
Mt. Sinai, New York

Part II

This interview was conducted in August, 1982 at the home of Mildred Sheridan Davis by Cynthia Kerstiens.

Amelia: What other champions that you know of threw blue-eyed dogs?

Ch. Trip of Farningham was the only dog I ever heard of, from Mrs. Romer's kennels. Oh, I was telling you about her kennels. She had the biggest runs I ever saw, and she had houses almost twice as big as this. Every dog had a house and a run. They completely surrounded this old farmhouse that was falling to pieces! When I went there, she had a barrel, a hog'shead from Sprats, sent over from England, with dog biscuits in it that were 2" thick and 6" long, with pieces of dried meat in it. Every dog was given a biscuit each day, and that's all it got. That's the way she raised her dogs; they were all around her house. She was so well-known that all I had to do was tell the bus driver I wanted to stop at Mrs. Romer's kennels and he would stop right at her door. There was a trolley car that went from Bridgeport to New Haven. I went up every year in the early Spring and bred my dogs there until I had enough dogs that I had to have a male of my own. Her dogs were big, hairy, hundred-pound dogs - they were a hundred pounds in those days. You know, every time I see these miserable things, I can't get over it.

The dogs used to be from 70 to 100 pounds. I've seen Sams at 125 pounds. Mrs. Letcher of Stony Brook had dogs weighing from 100 to 150 pounds. Ch. Poika must have weighed 125 pounds.

Amelia: Which year are you talking about? When were the dogs that big?

1960, 1964 - we had, at the Suffolk County Dog Show at Riverhead, 9 champions in a row. Louis Murr showed my first Sam for me in 1923 or before that at Spring Valley.

Amelia: Do you know what dog that was?

It wasn't the first I showed, but it was Ch. Sarafan, which means "white scarf," and I thought that was such a lovely name. I've had several Sarafans. I was telling you about going to the Eskimo village and getting Hasorva, that dog with one ear and one eye. He's in the first part of the book. He lived to be in his twenties. I have 65 champions, all in that book.

Amelia: Was it normal, back in the 1930's, to have dogs as large as that, about 100 pounds?

Yes. I never saw such miserable little things. The Wingdale Kennels of Tuxedo Park brought over some dogs, Mitboi and Yukon Mit. They were so little, we couldn't get over it. They were English dogs, and they were so little we couldn't believe that they were real dogs. They all had droop ears, every dog. He couldn't get out of the droop-eared dogs, and got so disgusted that when his daughter took it over, they had a trail built that held twelve racing Huskies, because she couldn't stand the droop ears on the Sammies. An English import brought in hip dysplasia.

Amelia: Did any of these dogs seem to have eye problems?

No! I never heard of it until I read about in a magazine; we haven't got it around here.

Amelia: It's a recessive gene; when you keep inbreeding, you pull it out.

DeWitt of Argenteau was a big dog; he was an actress' dog. She was one of these flighty things that was always throwing her clothes around. She showed him a lot all over.

Amelia: What about Ch. Greenacre Czarewich?

That's the dog I went up to buy; I paid \$75 for him and he was killed. He was in every pedigree of those days. He was the only male around, and very good, too. He had big ears and was around about the time of 1910-17. Malschick was a dog that could win today; he was one of the three brothers.

One of the ugliest dogs, a dog that was everything a dog shouldn't be, was a champion and the father of half the dogs in the U.S. He was ugly looking and structurally poor, with long, skinny legs, a sickle tail, the wolf type, big ears, small nose, a long neck and flat shoulders. He had everything wrong. They stuffed him and put him in the Peabody Museum as a Sam! All because he was the first big champion! He was one of the three dogs that started the Sams in this country.

Amelia: What about Kola, an English import out of English Ch. Viking and Laika?

Laika I knew. She was a tiny bitch brought to the country by Mrs. Romer. She was about the size of a pup, and another one, like that, Otiska, was a dog they showed and



Ch. Park-Cliffe Snow Pack Dandy



Ch. Koni Ad of Silver Lake

showed and showed, an awful looking dog. Ch. Barin was a nice dog but so heavily marked with brown. That's one of the Donerna dogs, afterwards to be the Laika Kennels.

Amelia: What did this Champion Fang look like?

He was an English dog, just an ordinary Sam. You paid an arm and a leg for English dogs, like Patsy. I got a million ribbons with her. They are all up in the attic. She was the best dog on points in England in 1946.

Amelia: What was her full name?

Snowpack White Cloud of Park-Cliffe.

Amelia: But the English didn't send you their best dogs?

Oh, they sure didn't! One of the first I ever got - and surprisingly, it turned out good - was my other male; they sent me a picture of him.

Amelia: Who was "they"?

Mrs. Westcott, I think. She sent her picture and said, "I'm not going to send you this dog; it's the only male in the litter," or maybe it was the only dog in the litter - I don't know which. She said, "It's so poor, there was no use sending it," to me. It was the only male in the litter, I guess, because the female was a good one. She said, "I'm sorry, we'll just hold your money and the next time we have a bloodline that you want, we'll send a dog instead." So it took her a little time and I guess I wrote a letter to her; the first thing I knew, this dog came along! He would have fit on two hands! He was very lively. I always bought a male and a female alike,

then I'd have plenty to breed. It was as cheap to send two as one. This little dog came and I went down to the English airplane and said, "Where's the dog?" He said, "This is it." So I put it on the back seat of the car and my husband and I drove home. I didn't say a word to him, but this dog kept nibbling the seat. He could just reach from the front of the back seat to the back of the front seat; he kept chewing all the way home. He was so little and so cute. He was cute until the day he died and he lived to be about twenty.

Amelia: What was his name?

I'm trying to think; the dog the colored man bought for \$1,000 ...

Amelia: Verla of Parke-Cliffe. ... and because they wouldn't



Snowland Princess Verla of Park-Cliffe

have a colored person in the Sam club, he got disgusted.

Amelia: They wouldn't let a black person in the Sam club! Of course, they wouldn't let in Italians or Jews, either!

We struggled and struggled with it; at first, I didn't even show him around here. I sent him to a friend out in Pennsylvania and she showed him in the Pittsburgh shows and all those things. He did all right, but she said he was so hard to manage. We had a terrible time. We had everybody trying to show him. He mounted every woman he met, in the ring! You couldn't break him of it. I couldn't show him at all, but he turned out to be a great breed dog. We had given him shots and everything, but that dog they had said would be no good turned out to be one of our best.

Amelia: White Cloud is the one who did all the winning in England, right?

Yes.

Amelia: We were talking about Donerna's Barin.

He was a nice dog. You can't criticize him in any way, and Vilna of Yurok was a nice dog but she was small. Olga, the English import Ch. Olga of Farningham, was one of the big, long-legged things. Tobolsk was probably the best dog of that day, about 1922. He was an English dog also. All I can say is how much they would like to be alike at this time. Ch. Ivan was just so-so; Nanook was a nice dog.

Nobody had a lot of dogs; there weren't a lot of dogs to have. Right here were practically all the dogs in the U.S.; there were no dogs further

West than Ohio, and there were only a few in Ohio, as I told you. There was Mrs. Fowler, who bred to all these dogs and all of them have Lady Olga as their mother; Lady Olga is the dog that came from me. People have said she wasn't any good. However, she produced practically every champion that was around at that time, so you can't tell. She was sweet, lovely, not too small for a Sam, and without any major faults. She was just a nice Sam. What do you expect? If there is only one, you can't have a choice. You have to take that one.

My original dogs came from right next door here, in 1914. They were from Scotland. Carter came over and brought Kilburn Scott dogs, at least a couple of pairs. Snig was a nice dog.

Amelia: What about Star of Farningham?

She was from Kilburn Scott Kennel, and she was owned by

Martha Humphries; she's out of Ice Floe of Farningham.

When the hurricane came, all those dogs came over here; I had them until she could find a place for them. They were all nice animals. They weren't the best because she had cancer of the heart, if you can imagine such a thing. She died soon after. Finally, I did manage to ship the dogs around, but she just took them down to the dock and left them there, and the captain put them in a room and called me; I went down and got them. It was a terrible hurricane. It wiped everything out in Rhode Island; it wiped her right off the map.

Amelia: What was Cogolev like?

He was the father of my dog. He was probably more a bear type, because I never bred to the wolf type. I didn't care for them.

Amelia: But you bred to Cogolev, because he's behind Park

Cliffe Corbesky.

Yes, he was his father.

I still want to know where you went from the forties.

When the war broke out, I went into the Red Cross ambulance driving service, and did that until 1946. During that time, I didn't show the dogs because I didn't have any food stamps, and I didn't have any driving stamps; I didn't have anything. So in 1946, I started to show the dogs again. I showed them right and left, from here to kingdom come.

Amelia: Who showed them for you?

At first I showed them and when I couldn't show them anymore, Mrs. Scharf showed them, right through until 1972. I got a letter from her; her mother is 96 and still going strong.

Amelia: Who was showing in the 1940's with you? What was your competition?

There was plenty of it! I showed all over Canada, all over Nova Scotia and had the best time of my life showing there.

Amelia: What dogs do you have here now on your premises?

Nothing but Willie, the house dog. Two Sams outside. Rita Sommers has the rest of my dogs at her house.

It's the only way I can be sure they will get proper care. My kennel man is almost as old as me!

Amelia: What is the dog's full name?

Park-Cliffe Snowpack Deebo.

Amelia: What was the most dogs you ever had here?

In about 1976 or 77, we had about 125 Samoyeds; the whole place up there was kennels.

I had some Garden winners - Frosty and Frost. Frosty was Snowfrost, who was Kim's puppy, and Park-Cliffe Snow Buccaneer, Ch. Park-Cliffe Snowpack Frost, Park-Cliffe Snowpack Fitz, Park-Cliffe Snowpack Flake and Park-Cliffe Snowpack Snowflake - all of them won. There was another one - Frosty Snowman.

Amelia: You bred Snowkobi Corbesky of Park-Cliffe, out of Int. Ch. Cogolev of Corbesky and Silver Orb of Vyhurst? They were both English dogs?

Yes; I bought Ch. Snowkobi Corbesky from England. Park-Cliffe Snowpack Flicka was one of the ones that weighed 100 pounds. Most of the won Groups; either the Working Group or ... Flake was the only one that went higher; he went up for Best in Show a couple of times. Flake's brother, Koni Add of Silver Lake, went Best in Show a couple of times. I gave a woman in Sparks, Nevada two dogs recently because I couldn't take care of them. She said the first thing the female



Park-Cliffe Silver Snowland and Park-Cliffe Snow Pack Nevada

did was to tear her icebox and freezer to pieces.

Amelia: What did Ch. Peter Pan look like?

He was a small nothing, but he was a champion. The president of the Sam club owned him; he must have had something awfully good behind him, because he threw nice dogs.

Ch. Tazyza had some good dogs, and all of a sudden, the owner was not showing or breeding; somebody told me that she had hip dysplasia so bad that she had to destroy all the dogs. She bred the wrong way, somehow, and she couldn't get it out.

Park-Cliffe Prince Chan was all right, but he was never shown to his championship because he was a war dog, a dog owned during the war. Ch. Snowpack Joybelle was a nice one, too; she was an imported dog.

When did you start breeding again after the war?

About 1947; that's when, every time I showed a dog, I made a champion! (laughter) If I paid \$75 for a dog, people thought I was insane.

Amelia: That was a very high price for a dog?

Yes, and this wasn't a dog from England. After the war, I paid \$900 for a dog - that's what Patsy cost me. But people didn't have any money ... in 1932, the Kodak people were trying to develop a color picture, and they used white dogs to do it because the white didn't show up yellow. Everything else showed up yellow. They used to give me \$25 for every picture they took and they took plenty of them. His name was Kennedy, and they developed the Kodak color pictures of my white dogs, taken in a garage down on the shore.

Who do you think was your best Samoyed?

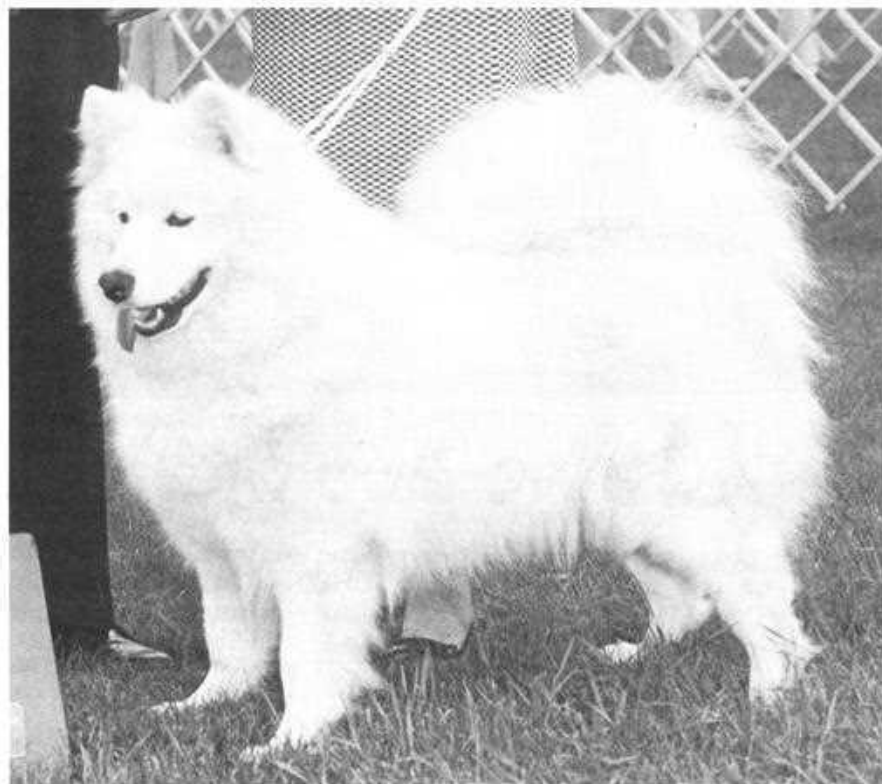
I liked Flake best - Int. Ch. Parke-Cliffe Snowpack Flake. He won BOB twice at Madison Square Garden; he won every time but the last time I showed him. I was sick at the time; I don't know why I bothered; perhaps because William was there. Bob Forsyth took him in and Flake would not go one inch with him inside the ring. So then he picked him up and took him out to the middle of the ring and Flake just stood there. Of course, the judges knew Flake very well and they tried every way; they would have given him a prize, even misbehaving. They might have given him second place in the Group, but the dog wouldn't even waik; he wouldn't do a thing. So, Bob picked him up and carried him out of the ring and handed him to me. That was the last time he was shown. I liked him best for his temperament, also. Flake was a good chewer; this blanket was his



Park-Cliffe Nanook Sibiri, 1965

favorite; it came from Ecuador and he took it outside, out through the dog door. He was terrible, an awful

dog! He stole everything of mine. This one I have now, Willie, is just like him; if it thunders in the night,



Ch. Park-Cliffe Silver Pamela



1950, future Ch. Snowpack Thunder of Park-Cliffe and Ch. Snowpack White Cloud of Park-Cliffe.

he is right here beside me in bed. How can you beat him up?

What was your favorite female?

Mira. It was too bad about her; her mother only had the one litter of puppies. She had two week old puppies, and you know, two week old puppies a mother never leaves. She went dancing around outside and ran on the next door neighbor's place. I swear, he hit her on the head with a shovel, and I never saw her again. This was Mira's mother. I never found that dog; I spent so much on advertising, but never again. I took care of the puppies, and Mira was one of them. The man was a painter.

What type of winning did Mira do?

Everything. I had an awful argument with that old Mr. Rosenberg.

I had, as I say, these nine dogs up here and the only one I didn't want to win was Mira; he gave it to her. I said, "Why did you do it?" I had put all these dogs in ...

Why didn't you want Mira to win?

She didn't need it. He said, "I don't care; she's still the best one here." He gave it to her. Of course, you wouldn't very often argue with a judge that way unless you knew him pretty well.

Which do you think was your best litter?

The litter by the dog out West, that Koni Add. It seems to me there were only one or two females, and the males were beautiful. I don't remember even keeping a female, but I must have.

Who was the mother?

I don't remember her name. I had a terrible time getting her bred. We were at the Miami dog show and the dog wouldn't breed. Do you remember that black man who was handling dogs that was so lovely? A man from the West that showed the Sams all the time - he stayed at the Holiday Inn, and I stayed there also, and the dogs stayed there, too.

Amelia: Did you give them a room by themselves to do their thing?

Yes! (laughter) We tried and tried, and we couldn't get the dog bred. I guess we were there a week, at \$46 a day.

Amelia: You never tried artificial insemination?

Not on a dog show circuit where you were rushing around. We had to go to St. Petersburg the next day, and we kept trying and moving the dogs around. This poor man was so impatient ... of course, I suppose he was having to pay for his room, too. We couldn't get those two dogs bred. But, they finally bred and then I came home. He went out on the circuit. That dog did a lot of winning. He was the best in the Ten Best Dogs they had. He was in the Top Ten a lot - this was Koni Add, Flake's brother. I never bothered to take him out there because I couldn't be bothered. Koni was doing the winning so let him have it. I don't know what happened to the females; I don't remember keeping any. The males were lovely; I got good prices for them because they were pretty good. I don't know where they are.

You didn't keep any?

No, I didn't; I couldn't. They were too inbred on Park-Cliffe, there wasn't anything else, remember? Flake was all the way back Park-Cliffe, and Koni was all the way back also. The mother went all the way back, also, so it was ridiculous.

Amelia: Inbreeding.

Yes, so I didn't keep any. I had bred her because of somebody wanting the breeding. The woman out West in Sparks, Nevada, wanted one of those puppies. That's the one that tore the icebox up! The man was a minister; he came here and I thought he'd never go. After he had left, he said that he was teaching in Purdue, and I said that was nice.

Did you feel that your most successful breedings over the years were linebreeding or inbreeding or outcrossing?

Inbreeding, if you knew what you were doing and were careful. That's the way with the linebreeding, too. You must know what you are doing and what is in back of the dogs. This is the important part. Linebreeding is the most successful way. You can get rid of anything bad that way, if you've got brains enough to do it. You just can't go out and breed two dogs.

Did you ever do much actual outcrossing?

Not until I had to. That Kim, who won the Garden, was owned by somebody ... I had to take the dog upstate to have it bred to some big kennels up there. Bob Forsyth had a dog, Kara Sea's Silver Kim, which was an outcross. That little dog there holding his foot up ... that was an outcross I made. Then I made a dreadful one ... two dogs from out West - I don't know who they were - but Janice Riley ended up with them; they were dumped on her by that Hungarian man. He's in the FBI. I told you of the dog that had no testicles - well, I gave him to this FBI man as a watchdog, and he stayed in the car all the time. Now, on the mother's side, that was a Japanese breeding, but you see, they have their troubles, too.

You said you did outcrosses when you eventually had to. Why did you?

Well, that was one of them.

What point did you get to in your breeding that you needed to outcross?

When I couldn't find anything I liked in my own breeding. I didn't like anybody around here. I usually went far enough away to get an outcross.

I got a poor one, one of the poorest ones I ever saw. I paid \$350 for that as a puppy. She wouldn't take it back.

Amelia: What was the matter with it?

Its hind legs were about seven inches higher than its front legs. He had a sickle tail and was a wolf type, which I hate. She had sold him, misrepresenting him as a show dog. It didn't have a coat. That's the one I would never do business with afterwards. She later stated that if she had known I was a breeder, she would never have sent such a terrible dog, but I never got over that.

Amelia: You wouldn't sell anyone a terrible dog.

Well, that's it. Not for that price, and by air, a huge dog to come from Albuquerque and I finally had to put him to sleep because he got worse and worse. Then, the very first dog I sent out here to Sparks, Nevada, I got a letter about from this woman saying a woman saw that I had this dog from your kennel and she wanted to breed it. She brought

the dog right up and bred it.

Do you have any idea how many litters you have bred over the years?

Upwards to 500, perhaps. They used to say that every dog in the U.S. came from here, which is ridiculous. I would say that every dog in the U.S. has my bloodlines. There's one pedigree I'm proud of, the entire pedigree is Park-Cliffe, the whole page. The dogs weren't

I would never keep a dog that bites; I wouldn't even sell a dog with a bad disposition.

Amelia: What did you do with them?

Mrs. Day got some of them; she took them down to Snowdrift.

Amelia: And gave them away! (laughter)

Look at the pedigree of Mortimer; Mortimer Snerd his name was.

Amelia: It sounds like a car-



Ch. Park-Cliffe Snow Buccaneer

inbred or anything, but they were all the same bunch. It was a pedigree of one of my dogs; that was the most wonderful pedigree.

How did you come up with the name "Park-Cliffe?"

I lived on Park Place in Brooklyn, where those two dogs were taken from the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Then, that cliff up here is a 90 foot cliff, and my dogs were on top of that, so I just put the two of them together.

You started with that from the very beginning then?

Yes, in 1917.

What has been your goal in breeding over the years?

Just to have dogs that people liked in their homes - that's all I wanted. I got rid of many dogs because I didn't like their dispositions.

toon character.

He was! I wanted to show you how, with a few dogs, you could have a really good pedigree. Mortimer's great, great, great, great-grandmother was owned by a priest up in Schroon Lake. Evidently, he thought she ... well, I don't know what he thought, but he called me up and asked if I wanted her and I said yes. She had a very fine pedigree. He said he's ship her down and he did, in a blizzard. When she got to Upper New York City, they took her out and put her in a boarding kennel. After awhile, I was able to get her. I couldn't get a car home, so I had to walk home. She didn't even have a leash on her, so I had to take my belt off my dress and my coat, and put it on her and tromp home from way down here

to where the kennels were. When I got there, I was so tired - I never could walk. I tied her to the banister post and, of course, she ate the banister up. They always did that! I named her Storm Sprite because of all this terrible thing. She was one of my favorite dogs. Well, anyway, there were only about six dogs in Mortimer's pedigree, and it covered a whole page. I always thought it was a really successful way of inbreeding and linebreeding because there were only six dogs to start with.

Do you do inbreeding?

Very little, but as I said, I did a lot of linebreeding.

Temperament was very important to you?

Very important; the most important thing of all, as far as I was concerned. I loved heads, but I hated a very long-nosed dog.

What else do you like to see in the head? What is the ideal Samoyed head?

Patsy, "Ch. Snowpack White Cloud of Park Cliffe," - just like a nice little Panda bear. Karen's the dog I made all the money on, taking the pictures for the Kodak Company. Park-Cliffe Karen. The other dog was Park-Cliffe Husky. They really spent a fortune on those dogs, trying to make Kodak come out with white instead of yellow. Right down in the garage! But, it was nice. Do you remember the program with the children, the Whiz Kids? I had my Sams on that. We wanted to get all the dogs on the cover of Life Magazine, and we worked all one day from ten until dark.

Amelia: How many were there that you wanted to get?

About twenty dogs, maybe; I never put in such a day in my life! We had so many funny things happen with the dogs.

You were breeding mostly for dogs that people could live with?

Yes; I believed in the temperament in the first place. Captain Shelley, when he had come back from Manchuria, said that the dogs were all kept in the house or in the tents with the people. They slept with the children. This is the man that brought me my first two dogs from Siberia.

Amelia: Do you know where in Siberia he brought them from?

Yes; the boats were anchored off Northern Japan, and the men walked inland, to Manchuria and up to where these Eskimo people had just come in from camp. I don't know what they came in for, but they came from maybe two weeks north of there.

Amelia: But they weren't Eskimo people.

They were Samoyeds, from



Ch. Park Cliffe Snowpack Flake

Manchuria.

Amelia: So you got them straight from over there?

Yes, the one male dog. The one with the one ear and one eye. The one who lived forever and he never made friends with everybody.

Amelia: You mean you started out with an unfriendly dog?

His name was Hasorva.

Amelia: What about the other one that came with him?

They couldn't have been less alike ... you wouldn't even know they were the same breed of dog. She was little and cute and lively, and had gorgeous white hair and black eyes. He was a great big dour old man; he had a dirty old coat. He was always gray because he had all the coal dust in him, and it never did come out in all the years I had him. He was out on the soft coal ships, then when they put him in the Navy Yard, they put him on a captured German boat. He lived on that boat in one spot for a couple of years before I got him in 1917.

Amelia: How do you get a pedigree of something like this?

Well, that was a funny thing. I sent the pedigree to the kennel club; it was written on the back of an envelope.

The pedigree person knew enough to get something from it. The Russian Fur company knew a lot, and they knew that their dog didn't come from Manchuria, but had come from Western Russia, so he got it from them. I knew him until he got shifted some other place, I think to Pensacola, or someplace like that. Then, of course, I never saw him again. They were good enough receipts for the kennel club. He was a big dog; his head was the height of the door handle.

Amelia: That was a good 27".

Dogs were dogs in those days;

they weren't these little mutts you see running around, little bow-legged front-legged things that you see in the shows. My dogs had personality and they had looks. They certainly had better coats than anybody in the U.S. Now I truly think that. I don't know where the coats came from, but they certainly had better coats. After all, those dogs had coats like that. They always had them, except Billy Boy and his tribe. Billy Boy didn't have any coat at all.

Do you think that the breed today has improve or declined?

I don't know enough about it because I don't see them; I haven't seen any dogs in ten years; I don't even see the magazines.

Amelia: Do you think there was a general improvement in the breed in the 40 years that you were showing?

Yes, of course. They have better necks, a little shorter; some of them used to have terrible necks.

Amelia: The original dogs were very long-necked.

Very. Their bone structure is better now because they have better food. Of course, the poor dogs in our day got anything they could get. I hate those straight hind legs, no hocks at all. George Price would say, "Mildred, you may be blind, but you see everything."

Is there anything you'd like to add?

No, except that I haven't been to a dog show.

Do you think it was worthwhile being in dogs?

It has been a lifetime for me; I wouldn't be without them for anything. Not a single member of my family cares a hoot about them.

Would you do it all again?

Oh, sure. That Flake only lived a little while after my husband died. He used to sit in this chair here, and it was terrible. Lightning struck the house right over there, and hit him in the head. He was insured for \$15,000 and I was so stupid, I never even bothered to collect the insurance on him. I didn't even think of it. I wouldn't think of collecting insurance on a person who was dead; I certainly didn't think of collecting it on a dog.

I really have enjoyed this. I appreciate your letting me come.

I had so much to tell you, but I couldn't remember it all at this time; also, it's hard to talk about a whole lifetime. The head of the Philharmonic had two of my dogs and thought the world of them. He showed them to their championships. I've met so many nice people through the dogs.

Thank you very much.