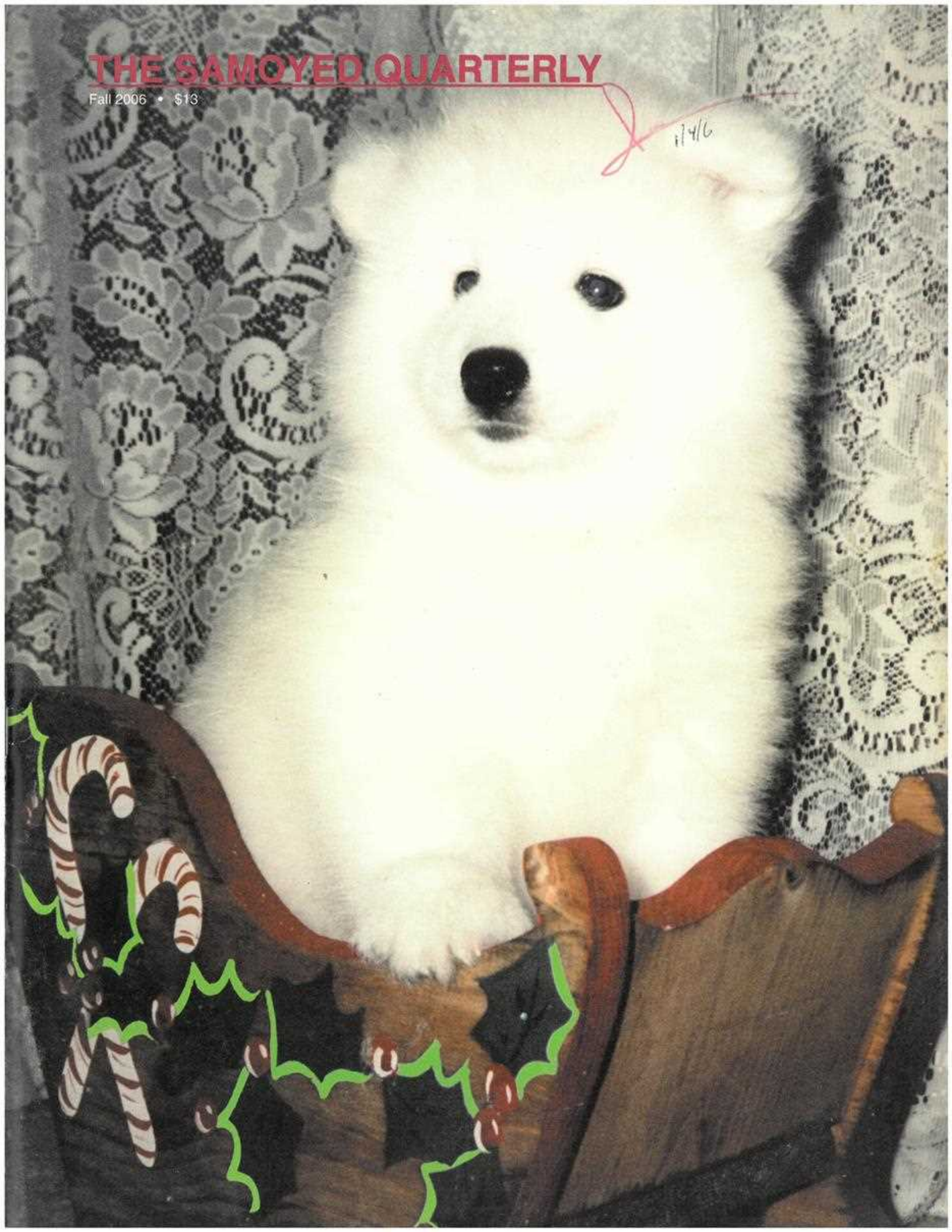


THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

Fall 2006 • \$13



Samoyed people



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

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

How did you and Karl meet?

Jo: We went to high school and college together. Karl went into the Air Force and we were married after he got out of the service. We've been married 46 years. Add another eight to ten before that - we've been together a long time.

How did the dogs come into your lives?

Jo: I was raised in Ohio, and we always had dogs. During the war when my dad was overseas we went back to the farm where we always had hunting dogs, hounds and sporting dogs.

Karl: I never had a dog,

My parents had cats; they are from the old country and animals had to do something. (laughter) My uncle had a white dog when I was about five years old. I'm sure it was part Samoyed, and I fell in love with it. When I was in high school I saw this white dog and I thought that if I ever had a chance to get one I would get one like that. In college a school teacher invited me over to his home and out came this beautiful white Samoyed and I said, "That's the dog I'm talking about!"

After we got married I saw a man walking down the road with five of these dogs and I made a u-turn and asked, "Where can I get a dog like that?" The man replied, "I don't have any, however there are some people down the road who just had a litter." We didn't get one from them, but they had the number one Samoyed in the country which was Yurok of Whitecliff. He

was a five-time Best in Show dog.

Jo: Which was the record then. Actually we had to wait a year, but she was worth it. In the meantime we went to visit Percy and Lena Matheron, who were Yurok's owners and just incredible people, they sent us home loaded down with books to read. I look back now, those books were precious and some of them were out of print even back then. Percy said, "Learn everything you can ahead of time so you're ready for your puppy." They were great people and they helped us all along from our first step, even the first breeding we did was by Lena's arrangements. She always said, "Pass it on; help someone else when they're getting started." We were lucky, we could have walked in anywhere.

It was fortuitous that you made that u-turn.

Jo: Yes.

Was the puppy you got from them your foundation animal? And who was that?

Jo: Yes, Ch. Mala of Lassen View, bred by Dr. Sanford and his wife. We went out to Redding to pick her up. I remember Lena said, "Do you think you might want to show or breed?" Well, by that time I had been breeding and was all enthused. I said, "We might like to have a litter." Because we actually got her for our first son, who's 45 now; originally we wanted a pet for our baby. After reading and watching Yurok I thought that this might be a great hobby - something for me to do in my spare time. (laughter) Lena said, "If you think you might want to show or might want to have a litter, I won't let you have the pick of the litter, but I'll make sure you get one you can show and you can breed. That's what she did. She was our second champion, her son was our first homebred champion and he finished his championship at a National Specialty at eighteen months. I wish we had that dog now. He was taking Breeds when we didn't know to stay for the Groups ... we didn't have a clue what we were doing. I'd love to have him today!"

Karl: In fact, he finished with four majors, a five, five, and a four, which gave him fourteen points, and the National Specialty was coming.

Jo: This is how naive we were ... get this ...

Karl: We entered the National Specialty, and Jo said, "Oh, look at all these trophies in the Bred-by-Exhibitor class!" So we entered the Bred-by-Exhibitor class. Then she said, "Look at all these beautiful trophies they're offering for the Open class." Let's enter the Open class. (laughter) However, the catch is if you are defeated in one of those classes you cannot go back in for Winners. So you have to win both of them. We entered both of them and when we got to the show and picked up our armbands, someone said, "I see you're entered in two classes. You know you can't go back in if you're defeated." I said, "I just won't show in the classes." (laughter) He said, "No, it doesn't work that way; you're here and you have to show."

Jo: These classes were huge!

Karl: It was a National Specialty in southern California. Well, the dog won both classes! I don't know if anyone else has done that.

Jo: I don't think anyone else has been so stupid! (laughter) But that dog won both of them. Between classes we were walking around talking instead of letting the dog rest. We did everything wrong! Thank God, the dog was so good.

Karl: We went to that Specialty with some friends of ours who were also in Samoyeds, John and Evelyn Coloma. They were just starting out like we were. We traveled with them in a van that was just loaded with trophies. (laughter)

Jo: And on the way down, they had two dogs, we had two dogs - vans were little then - there were the two of us, our luggage, and four dogs. When I look back, I don't know how we got down there.

Karl: We were young! (laughter)

Jo: It was in Thousand



Ch. Mala's Snow Lad of Whitecliff, whelped 1967 (Ch. Sho-Off's Czar of Whitecliff x Ch. Mala of Lassen View). Completed championship at SCA National 1969 under breeder-judge Joyce Cain at eighteen months old. Photo by Ron Gaffney



Left to right: Ch. Mala of Lassen View, Ch. Mala's Snow Lad of Whitecliff, and Ch. Natasha of Lassen View.



Shalimar's Dobra Screca Yeva.



At six months – Ch. Yeva's Arctic Jo of Shalimar and Shalimar's Dobra Screca Yeva (Shalimar's Kubi O'Noatak x Ch. Whitecliff's New Year's Eve). Bred by Bebe Hoxsey, Yeva Samoyeds.

Oaks, and when we pulled into the parking lot everything was so foggy we couldn't see where we were. So we just parked and went to sleep. We must have slept sitting up because we sure couldn't put the seats back. When we woke up we were right there at the show!

Karl: Right next to the ring. (laughter)

Jo: What was ironic, because people came from all over the country for that National Specialty, the dogs that ended up in contention at the end were John's young male and ours.

Karl: They were up against each other.

And you were both just starting out!

Karl: Yes. We have stayed friends to this day with Evelyn – John has passed away; he became a professional handler as well. We did a lot of family things. They have two daughters, we have two sons, they were the same ages, within three months of each other on birthdays.

Jo: We'd go sledding with the dogs.

Karl: We have a cabin in the mountains and we would

take discs that had handles on them, we would hook the harness onto the handle and go to a large meadow. The dogs would take us around. We would start out with just us and before we knew it there would be about fifteen kids.

Jo: We didn't know where all the kids came from. (laughter) We didn't think anyone else was up there, but word would spread. It was on a kind of golf course, which was perfect, and pretty soon every kid who was on that mountain would be down with us taking rides.

Karl: So we did other things besides dogs. Dogs took a lot of our life, but it didn't consume it entirely. We did a lot of family things; we raised our two boys and they had a lot of sporting activities. We tried to do those things as well - we were pretty busy.

we would have a good leader. In fact, when we got transferred from Yuba City to Lodi, by that time we had three Sammies. When Snow - who was our first champion - would be in the group, I fell in love with a red Siberian that would always be in the group that Tommy Witcher handled. Tommy would tell Karl, "Come on kid, get in behind me," and he would tell Karl what to do. (laughter)

Karl: Yes.

Jo: He was a great fellow. That's the way it was then, everybody helped everybody else. It turned out that this dog, if you look in the AKC book, is the breed standard for Siberian Huskies. His name is Ch. Dichoda's Yukon Red.

We eventually moved to the town of Escalon where Phyllis Brayton lives. She and her husband, Frank, brought the first Siberians to the West Coast in



Ch. Mala's Snow Lad of Whitecliff, eighteen months.



Ch. Mala's Snow Lad of Whitecliff and Ch. Natasha of Lassen View, half brother/sister on Ch. Yurok of Whitecliff.

Jo: Really busy. I don't know how we did it when I look back.

Karl: We didn't do a lot of breeding because we were busy doing the family things; we didn't want to shortchange the boys for the dogs.

Jo: They liked the sledding, but weren't crazy about showing.

Karl: They got involved somewhat, but they didn't take to it like we did and we never really pushed it on them. You have to love it to do it.

Did you have a full team or what were you running on the sled?

Jo: We would borrow some Siberians to help round it out, so

the '40s. She and I became friends and we've traveled all over the world together - Italy, Argentina - and that's the Siberian I fell in love with. So when we moved to Lodi I bought my first Siberian Husky for \$50. And had to pay for him on time. (laughter) He rounded out the team, Siberians were a lot better than the Sammies as far as the running. That's how we got into Siberians.

Have you been showing both breeds this entire time?

Jo: Yes. Then about twelve years ago, the Shiba Inu, I had the fun of showing, probably, one of the first Group-placing



Ch. Mala of Lassen View (Ch. Yurok of Whitecliff x Jerasue of Drayalene), 1968. Bred by Dr. and Mrs. Sanford.

Shibas after they were recognized in this country.

Karl: She took him in for a Group placement.

Who was that?

Jo: I can't even say his entire name. He belonged to a

friend of mine who we got our Siberian from; they now have Shibas instead of Siberians.

Karl: She made the dog an international champion. AKC recognized it and it was official on a Friday, and that Saturday



Ch. Statussam's Majestic Star (left) and Ch. Shalimar's Tigertolli (right), 1988.

she showed the dog and got Breed and a Group III.

Jo: He was a neat dog. He lived a long, long life.

Karl: He is a foundation for a lot of dogs in the United States.

Would you talk a little bit about your Sammy kennel, and how it evolved?

Jo: Our breeding has really been limited, mostly because of time and space, and the fact they lived a long time - most of ours lived between eleven and fifteen years. We have had people say, "What do you do?" I say, "I really can't tell you ... nothing particular."

Good genes?

Jo: Yes. We have had to

regroup and start over a couple of times. When we started it was before OFA, we did the x-rays at UC Davis. It was difficult. The dogs would be x-rayed and cleared at a year. We caught early on that you couldn't tell at a year, hips could look good at a year and they would be faulty after. Our puppy contracts always required people to x-ray the dogs at two years of age. We did that before OFA came along. We did have some problems with hip dysplasia and had to regroup a few times. But we came out of it. We have been lucky that we have not had any eye problems, which were a real problem for the breed in the '70s.

Was it PRA?

Karl: Yes.

Jo: It hit whole kennels in the Northwest - it was dreadful. And some really incredible, outstanding dogs came up with it. They already had all kinds of progeny on the ground, they were out and involved. We had bought a bitch from the Northwest, so we really honed in on that. We immediately started screening eyes.

Karl: At the time we started checking them we had to go to UC Davis because there wasn't an ophthalmologist who did it. We were doing this at Davis and we became known to them.

Jo: Then Dr. MacMillan started an eye study and we got

in on the ground floor with him because we already had a history of the dogs being screened. Many years later, it was a human grant that Davis took on for a condition called corneal dystrophy. In Siberians it's clinically the same as it is in humans, except Siberians don't go blind and humans do. So they needed inflicted Siberians for the study. We worked with a lot of other Siberian breeders and rounded up as many as we could. There was a whole breeding colony up there and we did a lot of fundraising stuff to help support it.

When they did all their test breedings with the Siberians, I got a call from Davis one day and they said, "We have a



Ch. Shalimar's Tiger By The Tail, "Tiger" (Ch. Shalimar's Leschiot Czarson x Shalimar's Dobra Screca Yeva) going BOB under breeder-judge Dan Morgan (Darius Samoyeds), 1985.



Shalimar's Dobra Screca Yeva, Best BBE, 1987.

proposition for you. But as a breeder, we know you're not going to go for it to begin with." I thought, "Boy, what the heck is this?" So I said, "Well, tell me ... shoot." They said, "We need to do crossbreedings with the Siberians now that we've got the pattern down. We can use Beagles, but Siberian-Beagle crosses are not going to be that attractive." (laughter)

What they would do is place these dogs in family homes. They were property of the university, it was a controlled study, but they went out into homes so that they didn't have the expense of maintaining all of them. They asked, "How many years have you been doing your Sams?" I told them. They said, "Any problems?" I said, "Not yet." They said, "That's enough for us to use them for the study if you let us breed the Sams to the Siberians." Well that's a no-no with purebred. So I told them, "Let me think about it." So we talked about it and I said, "We will probably get

drummed out of SCA and SHCA." I called them back and I spoke with the lady in charge of the colony. I said, "Could we do it in a controlled way?" That's when she explained that they were the property of the university. I said, "I would be glad to help for both breeds; it would do us both good." So what they did was they went out under a contract which Davis sent me to approve. They were placed in homes and when the study was done and they didn't need them anymore, the university spayed or neutered them. Every six months they would invite us to check on them. Some of them looked totally Siberian, some looked totally Sammy, and some were just absolutely gorgeous combinations, but they were all great pets. It worked out well. We got a nice letter when the grant was over thanking us for our help.

Karl: They used us because we had so many years of doing the eyes.



Tiger.

Jo: We just happened to start it when we got Lonny from up north and wanted to make sure we were okay.

Karl: Since then, there are a lot more ophthalmologists around. In fact, one of the fel-

lows we go to probably worked under that study as well.

Jo: Yes. He is about ready to retire now.

To be continued ...