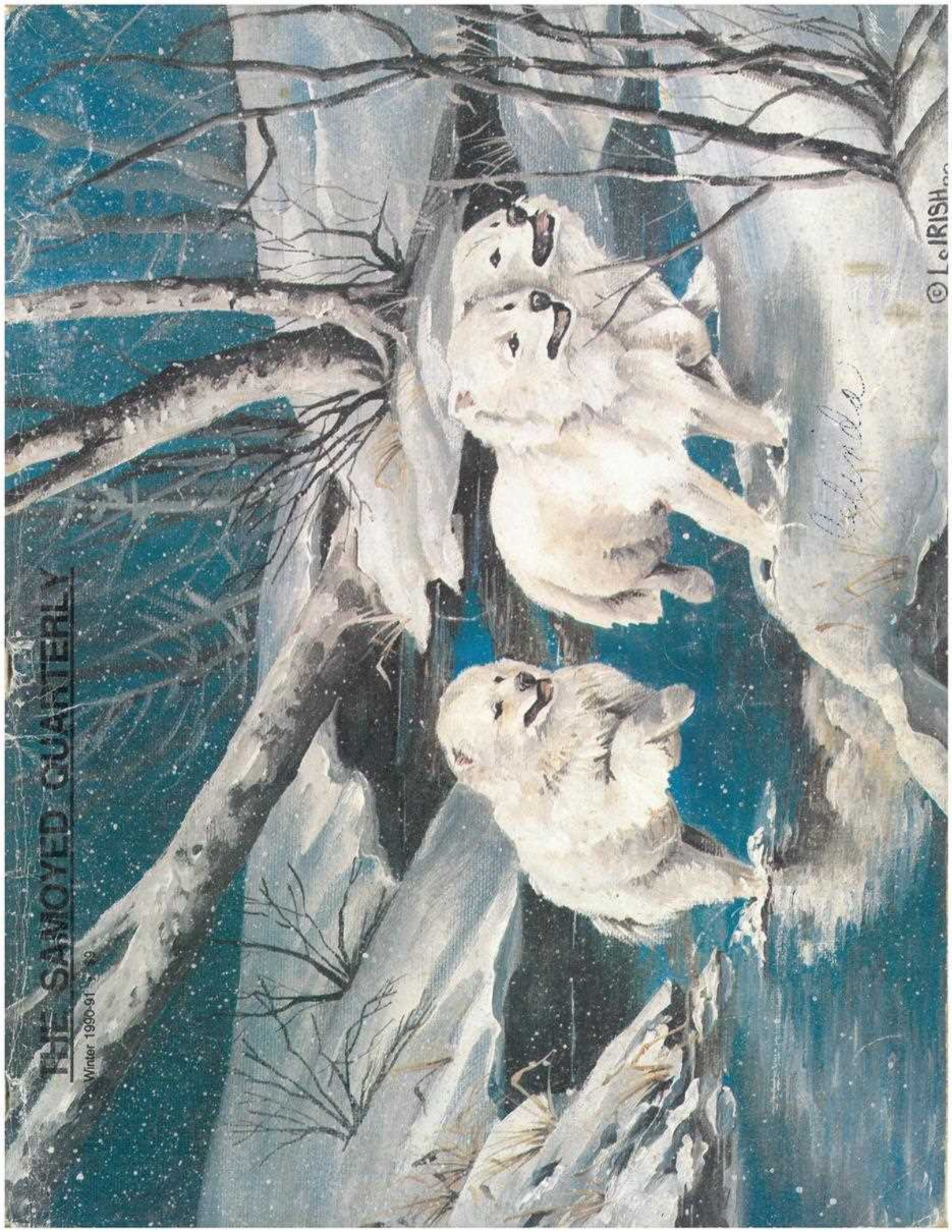


THE SAMOYED QUARTERLY

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Delinda

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Samoyed People

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

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

How did you become involved in Samoyeds?

Marilyn: When Derek and I were married, he had a Colorado Sheepdog/wolf mix creature who was absolutely wonderful. When she died at sixteen, he told me he wanted one of those white fuzzy things. We didn't even know what they were called. So we went to Doctor's Pet and bought one because we didn't know how to find a breeder. It never even occurred to us to find a breeder. I was teaching fifth grade at the time. One of the parents of my class showed Rottweilers and said, "What a great puppy, you should show it." So we took it to matches and it never won a thing.

Derek: It never beat another dog.

Marilyn: It was badly cowhocked. He was not a true specimen of the breed, but we loved him dearly. Later we looked for a good show puppy.

How long ago was that?

Marilyn: In 1972.

Where did you go to look for a show puppy, and how did you end up getting one?

Marilyn: Many years ago, in the early 70's, there was a magazine published called "The Pacific Coast Samoyed." It didn't even last a year. It was a little, slick, black and white pamphlet-like magazine. There were some ads in it, and one of the ads that really caught our eye was Kubla Khan. The other one was Darius, both nice lines. We didn't know anything at that point, but liked the pictures! We called Pat Morehouse to see if there was something from Khan. The day before there had been a litter born in Hayward, which is very close to us, from Am/Can Ch. Tsonoqua of Snowridge. We went and looked at the litter, bought pick bitch and eventually finished her as a specialty winner and everything. That's how we got started.

Was she your brood bitch?

Marilyn: Yes. We got a male from Barbara Yamasaki that turned out to be Ch. Frostriver's Toy Drum. We added another bitch, Rickshaws Sundara O'Sansaska, who was a Silvermoon Williwaw bitch. She was a big, beautiful bitch. She was brain-damaged from a real bout with kennel cough, bronchitis, pneumonia and high fever. She was a mess. She was really sick and it took a long time to cure her. Sunny never really had a lot upstairs after that, so we never showed her. The other male we added was Ch. Rickshaws Subatai O'Sansaska, another Khan son. So everything we had was Silvermoon, Williwaw and a little bit of Snoridge. Without knowing what we were doing at that point, we started out with a

How many litters have you bred?

Marilyn: Maybe fifteen. We have one, sometimes two, sometimes zero, a year. Last year we had two litters for a total of six puppies.

Have you had a best litter?

Derek: We've had some good ones, but no particular one comes to mind.

Marilyn: A litter that has turned out to be very important was a breeding we did before either sire or dam was finished. We bred our Ch. Mark to Ch. Sansaska's Pandamonium. That produced Ch. Sansaska's Beau Zeau, who has sired a number of champions, and Ch. Sansaska's Marzipan. A number of dogs have come from her that do a lot of winning and good producing.



foundation that no matter what we were doing, we were linebreeding. We were linebreeding on very good dogs, and it gave us a good start.

Were you able to use Sunny as a brood bitch at all?

Marilyn: Once. She produced two puppies. We kept a male, Sansaska's Sherman T, the sire of our Ch. Mark. So even though Sunny only gave us two puppies, Tank did well for us.

How many champions have been in the litters that you've bred?

Marilyn: We've bred somewhere around 20 to 25 champions, but offhand, I don't know.

Who was the best dog you've ever owned or bred?

Marilyn: That's a tough one. The obvious answer to a lot of people, I think, would be Mark, because he's the one we specialized and did a lot of winning with, but I'm not necessar-

ily sure he's the best dog we've ever owned. As far as all-around type, structure and movement, everything together, Marzipan was one of the best.

Derek: I won't disagree.

Marilyn: It's hard. From one aspect, it would be one dog, and from another aspect, it would be another. For just having a favorite dog to hang around the house, it would be another one. It is such a tough question. When I was really sick, in the early 80's, Mark was the dog that meant the most, because he was always there. But in terms of silliness and being truly obnoxious to live with, we loved our old Shalimar, though she'd eat a sofa if we'd leave her in the house alone. She came to us when she was two. She'd been the product of a divorce and had been abused, so she used to take it out on the furniture. (laughter) We learned to simply crate her if she was in the house when we were going somewhere. It was safer than big bills.

Was Mark your biggest winner?

Marilyn: He's the only dog we've ever specialied with any type of regularity. Then it wasn't a big push. One year we went to maybe 30 to 35 shows. For us, that was a big deal, but compared to the way people special dogs these days, it was nothing. He did well. He made it into The Samoyed Quarterly ratings somewhere in both systems for a couple of years. I don't know where, fourteen, fifteen or somewhere in there.

Who or what has influenced your breeding program the most?

Marilyn: A couple of things. I've always been a person who feels movement must come first. For a long time, it was at any expense. Our first bitch could move like the wind. She wasn't a real typey, pretty bitch, but she could fly. Somewhere along the line, I read an interview that was done with Robert Forsyth. He was extremely adamant in his interview that it didn't matter how well a dog moved. Yes, a dog should move. However, if it didn't have the type for the breed, he didn't feel it should be considered as much as one that was maybe a tad less good in structure but was the type the breed should be. I contemplated this for a long time. I find that I am now agreeing with him, to a point, in that if we don't follow our standards for what the breed should be, then we're in a lot of trouble. Sometimes now in the breed, we have a lot of dogs with sweeping side gaits, however, the rears are not good.

Derek: And they're ugly.

Marilyn: There are a lot of poor heads and

earsets, bad pasterns, and we're losing our type. If you read the standard and look at some of the dogs that are out today, there is a real discrepancy between them. Forsyth has really been an influence. A Sammy has to look like a Sammy. Of course, there's a wide degree. If you look around the kennels here, you'll see a

She was pretty busy with Ch. Suntori and Ch. Rickshaw's Drum at that time. She started us, and Shirley Mangini with Snopaw. It was a good time for us to get involved and learn.

Barbara also did something for us that I don't think I can ever thank her enough for. With our first litter, she said to me, "You need



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

variety of sizes and shapes, but there's no doubt that they're all Sammies.

When you first started out, was there any one person who helped you along?

Marilyn: Two or three people. The woman we got Milka from, Margo Gervolstad, Norgemar Samoyeds, had been around a long time. She had a Group winning bitch in the late 60's, and that's pretty good. She helped us a lot with learning how to do things. Pat Morehouse was very helpful, but from a distance. She's in Los Angeles. Barbara Yamasaki was a great influence in helping us get started.

to learn how to tube-feed a puppy in case you ever have a problem." She came over when the puppies were newborns and taught me on a healthy but very small puppy how to properly tube-feed a puppy so that if I ever needed to do it I could. A couple of years later, I had a bitch that had trouble, and I had to raise two puppies. That was very valuable.

Have you used linebreeding, inbreeding or outcrossing in your breeding program?

Marilyn: For the most part, linebreeding. We do an occasional outcross, which I think you need to do, but it's really hard to find a

good dog these days, linebred or outcrossed, who can produce consistently. I'm not wild about inbreedings. I've only done one and had no problems, but I prefer not to do that type.

How many dogs do you keep now?

Marilyn: Right now we have eleven, ranging from six months to thirteen and a half years. We have just entered our thirteen-and-a-half-year-old in Brood Bitch at the Nor Cal Specialty. She looks like she's about eight or nine. She has her up and down days, but if she feels good, she's going in Brood Bitch. Her produce will be a six-and-a-half-year-old Specials bitch and a ten-year-old Veteran Dog Special. We thought we'd have some fun with that if she feels good. I just mailed the entry yesterday. She has two teeth left, and she won't let me look in her mouth to see if there are any others. She does just fine. She still single-tracks at thirteen, which I cannot believe.

Do they have a Veteran Dog and Bitch class at the Nor Cal Specialty?

Marilyn: Yes, they do.

Are you going to enter her in that?

Marilyn: No, she's been spayed.

Sometimes I think it's a little unfair that they can't be entered if they've been spayed.

Marilyn: I do, too. Don't get me started on that. I don't see any reason why Veterans cannot be spayed, or at least have a class for spayed and neutered Veterans. I hate letting our bitches, especially, go. Mark had tumors in his testicles, so he was neutered without a second thought. It would have been so nice to bring out the old man in Veterans.

What is the largest number of dogs you've ever kept?

Derek: We were up to sixteen or seventeen at one point, but not for very long.

Marilyn: It was absolutely crazy! When you have a high number, for some reason, that's always the time you get two or three back.

Derek: They attract.

Marilyn: We're licensed for nineteen, so we can have up to nineteen. But we have no plans to go anywhere close to that. I like to be at about seven or eight.

How did you come up with your kennel name?

Derek: It's a combination of the breed name and some misinformation. Somebody had told us when we started that you can't incorporate the breed name into your kennel name. It was going to be "Samsaska". "Sam" for Samoyed, "sas" for Sasha, a pet we had, and "ka" for Milka. Somebody told us we couldn't have part of the breed name in the

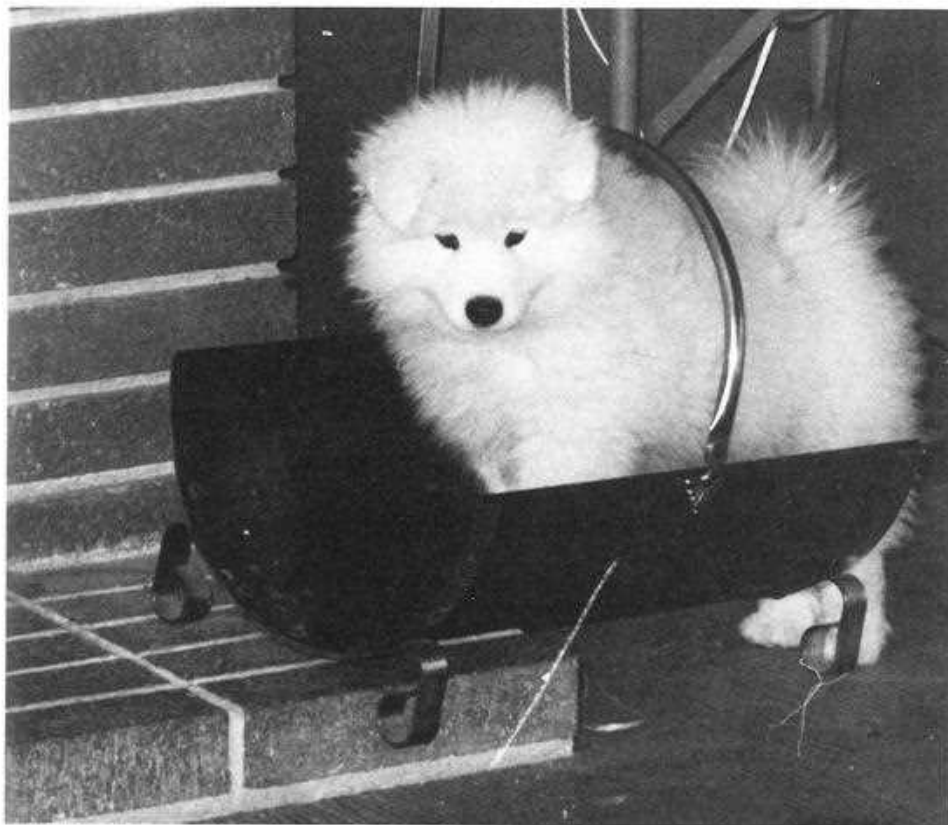


*Sansaska's Legacy at four months
(Ch. Torch x Ch. Cassie).*

kennel name, so we changed the "m" to an "n," and that's how it came out. It's very unique, unless you speak Alaskan Indian, I under-

stand.

Marilyn: Yes. We were at the Golden Gate Kennel Club show last weekend and a



Ch. Frostriver's Toy Drum at two months.

man came up and wanted to know where we found our Indian name. We said we made it up, and he said it sounded very much like an Indian name from the Northern Alaskan Indians.

I met Frank and Helga Gruber back in 1985 in Minnesota. Their kennel name is Shebaska. With Sansaska, she said, "Had you ever heard of us when you did your kennel name?" I said, "No, we had no idea of anybody around." Nobody has really confused us because they're in Canada and we're here. The names do look a little bit alike.

Derek: They start with an S and end in "aska."

Have you named any of your litters by any sort of scheme?

Marilyn: One, and I don't know why it occurred. The Beau-Marzipan litter from Mark and Panda all have Z's in their names, and I don't know why. It just occurred. There was Beau Zeau, and that really fit him. For the bitch, who was the only bitch in the litter, I wanted to name her after Mark and Panda. I saw a thing in the newspaper one day that said, "Marzipan, an Exquisite blend of Sugar and Nuts." I said, "That's it," and she became Marzipan. Her nickname is Supi, because as a

young puppy she looked more like a marsupial than a Marzipan. (laughter) Marsupial became Sups, so to her friends she was Supi.

Do you feel you have established a distinguishable line?

Derek: In the bitches.

Marilyn: Yes, people have told us they can recognize one of our bitches. Our bitches have been very consistent. I guess we've bred more on our bitch lines than on our male lines, when I look back in the pedigrees. I had an interesting discussion with Roy Stenmark at a dinner about a year or so ago on breeding for stud dogs and brood bitches. As we talked, I realized I had really bred for bitches all the way along, not always realizing that's what I was doing. Our girls, over the last fifteen years, pretty much all look alike. They're good moving, solid bitches. You can tell one of our girls.

Derek: With a quick look, I can't tell them apart sometimes.

How would you rate type, temperament and soundness in order of importance?

Marilyn: Equal, truly equal. I know that's a cop-out, but they are equal. They have to be sound in mind and body. They have to look like Sammies. You have to weigh all

three.

Derek: It's too easily ignored. If it's not balanced, it's not right.

Marilyn: When we first started out, the temperament in the Open Dog class in northern California was like a war zone. It scared me to death to take my little male into Open Dog. We always ended up behind this big critter who would attack anything within five feet of him. People around here really worked on temperaments until temperaments really improved. For the most part now, most of the dogs nuzzle each other in the ring, and that's great. But we're beginning to see a few again that we don't want to be near in Open Dog. That bothers me a lot. We have to be very careful.

What are your long-range goals in breeding dogs?

Marilyn: I'd like to breed some consistent males. Our bitches all look alike, but our males come in various sizes and shapes. One of the things I want to work on is establishing a more consistent line of males, without losing the bitches at the same time.

Do you have any plans on how you're going to go about that?

Marilyn: Rattling around in my head, but nothing I've thought more than one or two generations down. I do a lot of paper breedings and looking at dogs on paper before I decide what I'm going to do.

Do you keep more bitches here than dogs?

Marilyn: We have seven bitches, two of which are spayed, and four males, one of which is neutered, and a ten-year-old male I haven't used at stud for a number of years. We usually have more girls around. We had a young male who turned out hating dog shows, so we sold him. He is the best backyard champion you'd ever want to see, a gorgeous dog. Everybody who came here would say, "Why don't you show that dog?" So we did, and his ears would go out like an airplane and he looked like he was going to throw up at all times. He got some points, but we sold him to a wonderful pet home where he's a couch potato with a retired doctor. I need to bring another male in somewhere along the line.

You have just applied for your judge's license, haven't you?

Marilyn: I've been approved as a Provisional.

Will you have to cut down on your showing?

Marilyn: For us, no. Because of my arthritis, I can't go in the ring. We use a handler most of the time. The same handler,

Brian Phillips, has been showing for us for about eight years now. If I'm judging somewhere, he can always take a dog somewhere else. I would prefer not to judge much locally. Actually, I don't want to do a tremendous amount of judging. I'd like to do maybe three or four nice assignments during the year and that's it. I don't want to be on the road all the time. Some people do overkill. We see them constantly. I really don't want to do that. I have my first assignment in September. Then I have a couple more pending for the following year, and nice ones. We'll just work at it quietly. It's a different aspect, and I found that I really liked judging when I did it.

Are you just going to do Samoyeds for a while?

Marilyn: Yes. I eventually should add Siberians. The Siberian people out here have been really great to me. They had me do a specialty match for them a couple of years ago. There were 67 Siberians entered that day. I took a deep breath. I had visions of ten two- to four-month-old puppies all rolling around the ring at the same time. (laughter) But there were very few in 2-4 month, and most of them were leash trained and the classes were broken down nicely. I had a great time, and they're still speaking to me. They've been very adamant about me getting their breed, so I will add them eventually, but I'm in no rush.

In Samoyeds, will you be doing all breed shows or specialties?

Marilyn: We'll see what happens. I'd love to do a specialty.

Are there any dogs you would like to talk about?

Marilyn: Everybody's special. I could rattle on for hours about our dogs. There was Toy Drum, who was one of the most fun dogs we've ever owned. He loved puppies. He would lie on the ground and let puppies crawl all over him. He would play with them and play with them. Most males, at least in my experience, will not do that. Mark is scared to death of puppies. If a puppy comes within five feet of him, he runs to the back of the house, gets on the bed and hides so they can't touch him.

Derek: Human puppies, however, he loves. (laughter)

Marilyn: Yes, he adores children, but a five-pound puppy can reduce him to a puddle of jelly. I'm thrilled with Charley, our young male. He has a lot of Mark's traits. Mark is a wonderful dog to live with. He really senses my feelings and responds accordingly. Sometimes my arthritis really acts up and I get



BISS Ch. Sansaska's Obi Wan Kenobi CD, at ten years.

so frustrated not being able to do what I want to, that I'll cry. He's always there to nuzzle and lick the tears. He's a talker also, has a lot to say. He's a really great dog.

Derek: Then there was Tank, who used to suck on your arm. He was one of the ones she hand raised.

Marilyn: He didn't nurse so much as a puppy, but as he got older, he would truly wrap his mouth around my arm and suck on it when he was four or five years old. (laughter) I loved that dog. Derek thought he was a little weird. He also used to sleep up on things. He would never sleep on the floor if he could sleep on top of a grooming table. One day I told him to get into a crate because I was going somewhere. He started down the hall and eyed the dining room table. I yelled, "Don't you dare!" He went down the hall and got on the grooming table to go to sleep. I put him in a crate, but he

could unlock it, so we had a deal. When I closed the front door to leave, he could then unlock his crate and go play. He never hurt anything, but it was a game we played. He was a neat dog.

Derek: We got him in an airline crate once. He discovered he couldn't unlock it, and never got into another one. (laughter)

Marilyn: So he always had his wire crate he could unlock. Then there was Shalimar and the chicken. Shalimar, the sofa eater, could also steal anything at anytime and was as smart as could be. We have an indoor barbecue. I went into the kitchen one day and the chicken breast that was on the barbecue was missing. My brain clicked and I said, "Shalimar!" I heard a scramble in the hall. I went into the hall and there was the chicken breast in the middle of the hall. I picked it up and went bounding down into the bedroom, where she was sound



Ch. Sansaska's Cassandra (Ch. Sansaska's Beau Zeau x Sansaska's Hyland Fling).

a Best Puppy at NCSF, points from Puppy, a major. Everybody seems to love Charley, so much so that we jokingly call him the "perfect puppy." He had many stud inquiries when he was only six months old or so. He's been screened, and we'll use him later - maybe this spring. He's been bred to produce well, so we'll see later if he does.

Charley's a nuzzler and loves to sit on my lap or wrap himself around my head and shoulders. He's really spoiled rotten.

There isn't a perfect dog. When I was at the '85 National (there are lots of nice dogs at all Nationals), I must admit that when the Veteran Bitch walked in the ring, I was sitting with Brian Phillips. I hit him with my elbow and said, "Look at that bitch." That was the Lensens' "Sparkle." She looked absolutely spectacular and deserved the Breed that day, in my opinion. What was really neat was that many years ago, the old breeder-judge, Kenny O'Brien, the original Williwaw line, who was a friend of ours, had looked for a bitch to give Best of Breed to, and he had never done it. He had gone to Wisconsin to judge, and when he got back that night, he called me and said, "I

found her! I found her! She's absolutely spectacular!" He had given Sparkle the Breed. Unfortunately, Kenny died before she took BOB for Veterans at the National. The point I'm after is that bitch looked to be the ideal Samoyed that day. She was wonderful. She had it all together.

What are you looking for in a head?

Marilyn: First and foremost, proper eye shape. Proper bite. I've discovered in judging that I'm running into a lot of level bites here and there. I've expounded on this to Shirley Mangini. In her judging, she hadn't run into much in the way of bite problems until recently. She called me when she came back from judging and said, "You're right!" So I think the breed has to watch the bite. A nice balanced head. I don't like the Collie-type head or an overdone bear head. Some of them are so coarse by the time they're two or three. I don't think that's proper at all. I like the heads on a lot of our dogs. Some of them could use improvement. We get big ears sometimes, or an ear that's too high set. It's one of the things the breed needs to watch carefully.

What about eye color?

Marilyn: I prefer a darker eye. I don't like yellow eyes. They ruin the look of the Sammy. I know dark eyes are preferred, and if you have an outstanding dog with a light eye, fine, but I find it objectionable.

What about pigment?

Marilyn: We've been very lucky, we don't usually have any trouble with pigment. We get very black pigment on the nose, eye rims, lips, and even the roof of the mouth. So I've never had to worry about it. I hate seeing painted noses. I would rather see a pink nose than a painted nose.

I understand that AKC has told their judges that they are to severely penalize things like that.

Marilyn: They should penalize painted noses and body sculpturing, where the dogs have been so scissored that they really don't look good. There were some dogs at the National in Michigan that were tremendously scissored. That bothered me a lot. There were also some dogs shown at the National that were dirty. That really bothered me. A couple of well-known dogs with owners who should have known better were shown gray. It bothered me because one dog that I'm thinking of especially has been advertised a lot, is known, and the dog came into the ring looking gray. He was obviously dirty and hadn't had a bath. If he's blowing coat, give him a bath, get the coat out and show the dog clean out of coat. Don't show them looking like that.

Was the dog being shown by its owner?

Marilyn: Yes! It was a special. I wasn't the only one who noticed it. A number of people said, "Did you see...?" I wanted to take a newspaper and whack the people over the head and say, "How could you do that?"

Derek, do you get to go to the dog shows with Marilyn?

Derek: Usually I do.

Marilyn: Except when Gail and I don't let you. (laughter)

Derek: Most of the time I do. I don't get to the National very often. That can be a problem because I eat a day up here and a day there of my vacation going to the local shows, local being shows on the West Coast. So it's kind of hard sometimes to get a whole week off to go back East to the National. But yes, I enjoy going to the shows.

Has it been your experience that coat is very important to winning in the show ring?

Marilyn: No. What's more important is that you have a properly presented, clean, well-groomed dog. It depends on the judge. Sometimes you run into a coat freak, even an

improper coat freak, where the hair is hanging all over the place and not right. But for the most part, no. Our dogs carry really nice coats, but I don't consider them heavy coats. We've done pretty well. Some of our guys won as teenagers, when they really didn't have a lot of coat - like Max, when he went out and finished so quickly. He had a nice coat on him, but not a tremendous coat. How much coat can you have at thirteen months? They look pretty stupid at that point, which is why we sent him out for training, never expecting him to finish! Then, of course, you have the dog you think is

don't get me wrong there. A lot of Sammies at this point are straighter in front than they are in the rear and can't go in a straight line. Balance is extremely important. If they aren't balanced front and rear, you tend to get a lot of strange movement. I like to see a flowing gait, not some of this choppy stuff. It can be balanced and choppy if the angles are not there.

Our Milka was a spectacularly moving bitch. I don't think either one of us realized how good she was until long after she was gone. You don't see that kind of old movement that often, where it's balanced all the way

Marilyn: I'd like to see it to the hock. In this area, because of the old Snowridge, we sometimes get short tails. I don't like tight tails, though a friend of mine has always said it's easier to keep tight tails up over the back in the ring! Another gal believes if you can see light between the tail and the croup when the tail is over the back, then your tail set and croup slope are correct. It's an interesting theory. But then you have to look at where that tail is set, because if it's set too high, you can get a lot of light through. You have to be very careful to make sure the croup has that slight dip to it the way it's supposed to. They're not supposed to be level to the tail.

That gets me off on another thing. I want people to read their standards more often. Not that all our dogs are perfect, because I could fault everybody here for a long period of time. Not in print, thank you. (laughter) When judging a couple of matches, I stopped a woman once a number of years ago and told her that her puppy had a level bite. I told her to talk to the breeder to see if this was normal for this line at that time and all. This was a woman who had been showing for quite a while. She asked me if it was a disqualification. It was all I could do not to strangle her in the ring. She didn't know her standard. I can't emphasize enough to people to go read the standard. Currently, AKC has asked the SCA board to reopen the standard for the revision issue. Whether you are for it or against it is not my point. My point is that most of the people in Sammies have not read the standard, so it really doesn't matter if it gets reformatted. They haven't read it anyway. It matters to me.

I wonder if that's not the fault of the breeders because they don't impress upon the novice that he needs to know the standard.

Derek: You should give them a copy of it with the puppy.

Marilyn: You can't impress upon new people enough that you don't just go out and breed dogs helter-skelter. You have a set of rules in your standard as to what you should be breeding for. Of course, we all put our own personal touches on it. The standard is there for a reason. It took people a long time to formulate the standard so people would pay attention to it. We all put our own personal twist here and there about what is important and not important to us, but it's still something we need to follow, even if we don't necessarily agree with everything in it.

Derek: Everybody's interpretation of it is a little bit different as to what is supposed to be pretty. My feeling of what is a pretty dog is not



Ch. Sansaska's Moonshadow Max TT.

ready to go. It's in full coat, looks gorgeous, moves well, and it can't win a point to save its life. That's the other side of that coin.

How should a Samoyed move coming and going and from the side?

Marilyn: I like to see a dog that converges front and rear. I see a lot of wide fronts, and I prefer a tracking front. I don't like the wide rears, where they almost spraddle as they meet and you need a ring 100 feet long before they start to converge. They need a good shoulder and rear end angulation. Not overangulation,

around. I have a couple of photos, but nothing that does her justice. Half of her was old Snowridge, and the old Snowridge dogs could fly. There were other problems, like with any line, but she could really move. Abby comes close. She can really move. She has won a lot under Shepherd judges. (laughter) They love her for the side gait. You could put a glass on her back, she's that smooth. She's almost seven and still smooth.

What about tail length and set on a Sammy?

going to agree with yours or with somebody else's. There are certain boundaries that I think 90 percent of us are going to be in, but there's a great deal of variation within that. You still need to be aware of it.

Do you think the Samoyed Standard is a good one?

Marilyn: Yes.

Is there anything you would like to see changed?

Marilyn: No. I really think we have an excellent standard. Going back to AKC requesting formal revision, from a judging standpoint, it's so nice to read standards that are in the same format when you go to judge. Our standard is excellent. The people in California I have talked to are adamant that the standard not be changed. So when this does come to vote in a couple of weeks, I cannot consciously say, "Yes, let's reopen the issue," because everyone I have talked to has said no. To represent the people in the area, I will vote no. However, if the board votes to reopen it, then I'll get to work on it. I can see reasons for both. Our standard is excellent.

What are the most serious faults in the breed today?

Marilyn: We're losing head type, fronts and ears. We've lost a lot of the look of a Sammy. If I flip through *The Quarterly*, I very often can't tell the girls from the boys. I can't even tell once I read the names. (laughter) I saw the most spectacular dog in there. I thought, "I'm going to write these people, get a pedigree and see if I can use this dog." As I read the rest of the ad, I discovered it was a bitch. There's something wrong there. Maybe it's me, but it was a big, doggy-looking bitch. We have to watch type. We need excellent side gaits on our dogs, but not at the expense of the rest of the dog.

Derek: It's back to balance.

Have you observed anything else, since you go to shows but don't show?

Marilyn: We're concerned with having dogs that get along well with each other, not necessarily running all of our dogs together. There used to be a Golden kennel next door and a kennel across the street. So between the three kennels, there were always bitches in season. I like my males because the worst thing they do is bark at each other, and I don't have anybody currently that wants to fight. I don't expect every dog to get along with every other dog in the kennel. They're like people and have their personal likes and dislikes. I will not tolerate an all-round bad temperament, especially in the ring.

Derek: The judges are too lax on bad temperament in the ring.

Do you think champions should be specialed?

Marilyn: No, not always, not just because they're champions. There are many dogs that are truly worthy of a championship (I mean dogs and bitches), but there are very few that should really be specialed as far as I'm concerned. We've only specialed one dog in fifteen years, and only halfheartedly. We take our girls out occasionally. If we show them ten times a year as a special, that's a big deal for us. Rating systems are a lot of fun. I think too

particular, so they can get people wanting stud service. Have you seen that?

Marilyn: I would hope that no one would ever get enough stud services to cover the cost of specialing a dog for a year. The dog would be exhausted. There are some dogs that truly love to show, are fine examples of the breed and should be specialed, dogs and bitches. I have no objection to that. Jack with Star. Rising Star is a show dog, and he's gorgeous. I haven't seen Lucky Duck in person, but I hear he's coming out to Nor Cal, so it will be nice to see him. Torch is a great show dog. You take that dog in the ring, and he is on from the



Ch. Sansaska's Marzipan (Ch. Sansaska's Mark of Evenstar x Ch. Sansaska's Pandamonium).

many people get caught up in them and want to win at any cost and get five more points because maybe they'll end up number one. It's a great ego trip, but it takes an enormous toll on the dog. People lose track of what they're doing.

Some people special their males, in par-

minute he goes in the ring. He loves it. They show him a lot, and that's fine. All three of those dogs are worthy dogs. But I sometimes think people will take a dog out to special that really doesn't enjoy it that much, or perhaps it just doesn't have it to be a special. A special is special. It isn't just any champion. I don't



Ch. Sansaska's Pandamonium at six months.

like my dogs gone a lot. We might take them, and then, of course, the cost gets really high if we're out in our motor home and paying a handler, too. That can get crazy, costwise. Or we send them, which we do occasionally, but I really prefer them home. I'd rather play with them than have them out on circuit all the time. Also, if you're serious about maintaining a line and continuing a line, it's more important to see those dogs come up and consistently finish champions in a consistent pattern and not drag every dog around everywhere. That's crazy. To have good dogs that continue to win over the years is more important than the one big winner.

Derek: It shows consistency in what you're doing rather than the flash in the pan that anybody can have.

Does making the Top Ten or Twentymean anything to you?

Marilyn: No, not to me.

Derek: It's nice, but it's not a goal.

Marilyn: We've recently been offered a dog to special next year if we want, a very nice dog that I could probably do some nice things with if I gave him to Brian. We are talking about this now. I'm not sure I want to get into running a special next year, but it's a lovely offer on a really nice dog. If we decide to do it, then we'll do it right and get the dog out to the right number of shows. It's a full-time undertaking and expensive. Right now, with Lia running Torch, the Mark son, for her it's a full-time job outside of her regular job. She works hours every night keeping that dog in condition. He has a magnificent coat. There's never a speck of dirt on him. But she's also exhausted. It's hard work.

Do you think judging is fair?

Marilyn: Like anything else, most of the time. Every now and then you run into a situation.

Derek: Some dogs are more equal than others.

Marilyn: Yes. But there are times we've won and I've heard people yell "politics." It works both ways. We all know which judges are good for us and not good for us. What I dislike is when I go in the ring and I know who's placing before I walk in the ring. That bothers me, without even seeing the dogs going in the ring. We pretty much know which judges do that out there. There are some, but not many.

Derek: I used to publish that judges' thing, showing the judges' alphabetically rather than by show in "The Gazette" so people could see what kind of dogs the judge has put up in the past. They were guidelines as to whether or not they should show under that particular judge or whom they should show under.

Marilyn: The thing that's bothered me more about some of the judges of late (and some judges I refuse to show under) is not whom they put up, it's the judges' attitudes in the ring. We've run into a number of judges (a couple of them breeder-judges) who are so rude and curt to the people that I won't give them an entry. It's not because I haven't won under them in the past, I just don't think that attitude toward people deserves an entry.

Can AKC do anything about that if exhibitors write in and say that a particular judge was rude?

Marilyn: I would imagine they could, but I don't know. I've never filed a protest. There was one judge in particular who did a specialty out here one year. She was so rude to people she had an exhibitor in tears, a new exhibitor. There is no excuse for that.

Derek: If the exhibitors would simply say, "Hey, this person is rude," and not show under him again, that would solve the problem fairly quickly. When the clubs don't get entries for the judges, they'll stop hiring them.

Marilyn: Courtesy goes a long way.

Do you think the policy of the hands-on judging is going to help judges?

Marilyn: Yes and no. I attended a seminar for judges for hands-on. I could see many plus points and many minus points. They have three people who decide which dogs are gone over by the hands-on applicant. Sometimes it takes them longer to choose those eight dogs because they can't agree. (laughter) It would be like taking two or three of our breeder-judges from opposite ends of the spectrum and making them choose the same eight dogs. They couldn't do it. If I was to do a hands-on under one of them, I probably wouldn't pass, and under the other one, I would probably pass with flying colors. So I think it all has to be



Ch. Windigo's Ring Master, son of Ch. Sansaska's Mark of Evenstar. Owners, Sue Templar and Marilyn Gitelson.



Ch. Frostriver's Toy Drum (Am/Can Ch. Rickshaw's Drum x Frostriver Kim Omara). Breeders, Charles and Evelyn James. Owners, Derek and Marilyn Gitelson.

balanced out and they need to work on it a little more. It has some absolutely valid merit, and as a teacher, I can see what they're trying to do with positive points. However, as the applicant, you need to verbalize your reasons for choosing your dogs. Why this one over that one? They want all positive reasons. For those who can't verbalize that, they aren't going to do well. That's a very difficult thing to do. Sometimes you'll know why this dog is better than that one, but you can't give a complete verbal answer. You know, but how do you say it? They're still working on it.

AKC has implemented something now that when you give a dog Winners Dog or Winners Bitch, the points, you're supposed to initial if this is a potential champion. How does that work?

Marilyn: When you give that Winners ribbon, you have to say the dog is championship quality, or you shouldn't give it the Winners ribbon. It's just another way of making judges think. I can see where there would be situations where you might not want to give a Winners ribbon, but then you have to watch personal preference over what the standard says.

Would you withhold ribbons if the quality was not there?

Marilyn: Yes, I think you should. It's a

disservice to the breed to do otherwise.

Would you rather show under an all breed judge or a breeder-judge?

Marilyn: I can answer it both ways. Probably an all-rounder. Not because I don't like breeder-judges, but I think an all-rounder looks at the whole dog, whereas breeders all have things they like and dislike and there are bugaboos. No matter how straight you try to be or how consistent you try to be, there's always something that will bug each one of us. A breeder-judge sometimes tends to look at that, or look for it if it's something he really likes. I think you probably get a better all-around look from an all-rounder. On the other hand, some all-rounders don't know the breed that well and you're better off with a breeder-judge. So it depends a lot on the person.

Do you think advertising influences judges?

Marilyn: Not the advertising we do. (laughter) We've had a fairly good track record. The only advertising we've done in the last ten years has been in *The Quarterly*, and that's one page, fairly consistently, for many years. Then we didn't advertise for a while, and now we take one or two pages here and

there. I can't see that the advertising has made any difference as far as the class dogs go. When you're running a special it probably makes a difference to see the dog in some of the big magazines, not the breed magazines. That's when you're really on serious number one competition type stuff. That doesn't affect more than a few, maybe five percent, if that, of the people in the breed. I don't think it's even that high. I think one thing that people who are running specials forget is that if you were to ask the average Sammy person who the top three dogs in the country were, 95 percent wouldn't have the slightest idea, much less care. I think the top people sometimes tend to get in their own little worlds, where it's almost tunnel vision, and they don't realize this is for them, and for the breed as a whole, it really doesn't matter. It's just somebody out there doing their thing. People don't pay that much attention to it.

Derek: I think it influences some of the judges sometimes, primarily at the Group level, and probably Best in Show, but I've never had that experience.

To be continued ...