

# ROBERT ZOLLER



# THE CRITICAL YEARS

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Thank you Mr. Zoller for the dogs you bred, the way you bred them and for  
your true love and dedication to the Alaskan Malamute breed.

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## ***Introduction***

I haven't been active in alaskan malamute affairs for quite a long time. But I keep in touch with a few people and Dick Tobey is one of them. A couple of years ago i told him about an article I had written for the New Zealand Kennel gazette, about the many problems we encountered in getting our breed established in the 1940's and the 1950's - - - the critical years. Dick thought it should be published in our newsletter. The more we talked about it, the more i agreed with him that the events of those years following world war II should be told in some detail, before all the people who were there were dead and the true facts lost forever.

I had tried to do this in my New Zealand article. But, done properly, it's a long story and i felt there was a limit to the space an all breed publication halfway around the world would devote to a 30-year-old history of a single breed here in america. So I had to skip a lot of details and just hit the highlights, without explaining what really happened and why.

I had also shied away from naming names. Even after thirty years, it is difficult to call a spade a spade, because it may appear self-serving to do so. It may even be construed as an attack on old enemies who are no longer around to defend themselves. I assure you it is not that at all; I just became convinced that, finally, the full story should be told. For many years some of the bizarre happenings were covered up to spare feeling and to maintain as much unity as possible within our club.

In the short run, i believe that is the proper thing to do. So i rewrote the story and here it is: names, dates, places, people, dogs - - all as accurately as possible.

It is important to say some things clearly, right up front. My first point is that after all these years i bear no animosity toward anyone. Not even a little bit. In those days I had ample reason to be outraged on many occasions but I don't think I ever was, really. And lest you think with that statement i may be proposing my own candidacy for sainthood, I assure you I am not. I am human. I bleed when punctured, and I bled from a lot of stab wounds in those early years. I was indeed "teed off" from time to time, but I got over it quickly for several reasons.

First, by nature i am not a grudge-holder. I am a fighter, and I suspect not one bit less opinionated than most others in our breed. But I have never believed that others must agree with me to deserve my friendship or respect. (I've been a democrat surrounded by republicans all of my life!)

Secondly, after the initial shock, much of what I saw coming out of New Hampshire in those times was so audacious that some of it was actually amusing, and practically all of it was fascinating to observe at close range. You had to see it to believe it.

Most important, I think, it wasn't all that difficult for me to be somewhat generous in my judgment since, eventually, I ended up winning all the fights, at least the really important ones.

It wasn't always easy, believe me.

Many times I sincerely feared for the welfare of our breed. It wasn't always easy. I was relatively young, not known in our breed or anywhere in the world of purebred dogs, and I was taking on some pretty important people. Like many other newcomers to the wonderful world of Malamutes, I was a bit "snowed under" in my initial contacts with the "in" group. But I learned fast and was able to sort things out in rather short order. After that, it was mostly a matter of hard work.

Much of what I write is indeed fact, the show records of "third strain" dogs; the events that resulted in changes in the standard, the charges and countercharges and the outcome of the historic "Seeley vs. Zoller" trial at AKC. Much is well documented by official records, some is subject to verification by people still living who are knowledgeable about the events described. It should be clear to everyone that when I say our Cherokee was the best Malamute ever, that's an opinion. While there is much evidence to support such a belief, there is of course no way to compare him or any of the top dogs of his time with any of the outstanding winners who may have come along twenty or 30 years later.

In a few cases, I present facts I can no longer prove. Perhaps because they were never made a part of official records, or because after many years the letters or whatever were lost, or maybe never intended to be kept. They are facts, nonetheless.

This is about the Kotzebues and M'Loots and our own Husky-Pak dogs. It's about where our breed came from and how it got to where it is.

It's about a few years when varying opinions led to vigorous disagreements. choosing sides, and bitter battles over what the Alaskan Malamute is and what it should be; about a rare on again-off again policy as to American Kennel Club registration: about changing the standard; about who runs the club and how. It's about The Trial that totally determined what our breed was from that point on.

Almost all registered Malamutes today are in some way related to the events that occurred in a relatively short period of time, more than 30 years ago. Had things turned out differently then, our breed would be a lot different now!

Malamutes are pretty much a product of evolution, so they've been around for a long, long time. Early explorers wrote that the dogs of the Malamute Indians of Alaska were bigger, stronger, more beautiful and more gentle with their human companions than any other Arctic dog they had seen. But the breed was virtually unknown for many years. Until AKC recognized Malamutes as a distinct breed in 1935, they were jumped with a

lot of others as "Eskimo dogs."

Even then, not much happened before and during World War II. But in the late 40s and early 50s a lot of people became interested, all about the same time. That is when the modern Malamute really began.

I saw my first Malamute in a primitive U.S. Navy officers club in Newfoundland in 1941. Impressed, I decided to learn more about those dogs - someday. When "someday" came in 1947, my wife Laura and I began our search. We read everything we could find (there wasn't a great deal to be found). We fell in love with the breed, went to New York and talked to AKC wrote dozens of letters (maybe hundreds) and logged thousands of miles driving around to see almost every Malamute we could locate.

There were so few dogs to see. so little written about them. So few people who seemed to know much, that we were doubly interested. We felt we had stumbled upon something rare, beautiful and virtually unknown.

In our search we saw a lot of Malamutes - some not even close. Everyone with an Arctic dog had a story to tell, and no two stories were alike (in those times, they didn't even agree on how to spell "Malamute"! ). Pedigrees, often recorded in handwriting, were difficult to decipher and frequently misread. We soon learned that most early sled dog people were not very good at recordkeeping, and usually didn't really know much about our breed.

In all, it was like living a detective story - trying to sort out the clues, separate facts from fiction and the good guys from the bad guys, and somehow arrive at the truth.

It took a lot of work, but we finally learned and we applied what we learned to a limited breeding program. I stress the word "limited"; people today are surprised to learn that Husky-Pak's numerous national championships and breed records were achieved with a handful of dogs, and we produced only twelve litters in twelve-and-a-half years, start to finish!

Our dogs won about everything there was to win. This made me exceedingly unpopular with an awful lot of people. But it helped us develop credibility and resulted in a following of good people who supported us and became important contributors on their own.

From almost total chaos in the late 1940s, it took us less than ten years to achieve a stable, established and secure Alaskan Malamute breed; an active, growing, democratic national breed club; and a new standard that worked well and which everyone could live with for many years to come.

At that time, mission accomplished, we quit and went on to other interests, and many others carry on the legacy we left to all who followed.

In one sense, Husky-Pak came to the end of the line on July 16, 1968, the day Eagle, our last Malamute, died. But in reality, it closed up shop in 1962 when we sold the last puppy in our "M" litter. In case you are counting, we didn't have an "F" litter, so it has been years since we have been active in any way. Remarkably, we still get letters, some from overseas. They are nice letters that talk about the great Husky-Pak dogs of the 1950s and many tell us there have been nothing like them since. We are exceedingly grateful to be remembered after all these years.

## ***The Kotzebues, the M'Loots and the "Third Strain Dogs"***

In the 1920s and 30s, a few people here in the USA became interested in sled dogs and discovered the Malamute. They brought from Alaska a number of dogs believed to be Malamutes. But nobody really knew what they were. There was no IKC (Indian Kennel Club) or EKC (Eskimo Kennel Club) - and of course, none of them were registered, and with many even their immediate ancestors were unknown. In all cases, it was a matter of opinion.

Since opinions differ, different looking dogs were selected, labeled "Malamutes," and bred.

In New England, we found the Kotzebues. Their stateside beginnings were mostly at Arthur Walden's kennel - he was the noted "dog puncher" who handled the dogs on the Byrd Antarctic expeditions - but they were taken over and their progeny later AKC registered by Milton and Eva Seeley. The Seeleys also imported other dogs that resembled what they believed the Malamute to be.

Scattered about in other places were the M'Loots, assembled and developed by Paul Voelker, near Marquette, Michigan. Voelker was an enthusiast who sold a lot of puppies but wasn't interested in showing or in the AKC, so none of the M'Loots were registered.

In Newbury, Vermont, we saw an older dog named Irwin's Gemo that we thought was the best we had run across. Once owned by Lowell Thomas, the famous explorer-newscaster, Gemo (sometimes "Gimo" or "Chimo") had been shown to Best of Breed at Westminster in Madison Square Garden in 1941. We bought his grandson, a puppy we named "Kayak," and we learned these dogs were neither Kotzebue nor M'Loots: there weren't many of them, and some had been crossed with M'Loot-strain dogs. Dick Hinman, the owner, had gotten some of his dogs from Dave Irwin, another explorer and author of *Alone, Across the Top of the World*. Later, I began to call these dogs the Hinman-Irwin strain or "the third strain," although actually they weren't a strain at all, just a few individual dogs (or perhaps a family) that were neither Kotzebue nor M'Loot.

Our main asset in those days, I believe, was a rare degree of objectivity. The Kotzebues and the M'Loots had developed fanatical followings who were too busy maligning the other side to really look, listen and learn. We kept open minds and eventually came to these conclusions:

The Kotzebues were good type, mainly because of their heads, muzzles, eyes, ears, expression and good body proportions. They were more uniform than the M'Loots, mostly wolf gray, usually about the same size and structure. Generally they had good rears and bad fronts - chests too wide, out at the elbows. And most of them were much smaller than we believed the original Malamute was or should be.

The M'Loots had better size but some were rangy and lacking in substance. Good fronts, many bad rears,



lacking angulation, which produced some stilted gaits. Tendency toward long ears, and long muzzles, with some "snipeyness." Much variation in coats and colors - long, short; from light gray to black and white, some all-whites.

Dispositions differed as well. The Kotzebues were less aggressive, easier to control; the M'Loots prone to fighting, often difficult to handle around other dogs.

In short, the M'Loots were bigger, flashier and more impressive, but they had some rather characteristic faults and I felt they varied considerably in type and in quality. Kotzebues were too small, but they had uniformity going for them, and their main asset was type; as a whole, they more closely resembled the original Malamute as we believe it to be.

We easily concluded that crossing these strains with some skill, to combine their good points and minimize the faults, would produce better Malamutes than by breeding within either two strains.

That "third strain," however, could not be ignored. Kayak, unfortunately, never turned out to be another Gemo. Our second Malamute was one of the better pure M'Loot bitches; she became Ch. Husky-Pak's Mikya of Sequin. Then we really got lucky. Now in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, we found a pair of pups sired by an impressive dog named Alaska (later Ch. Spawn's Alaska). This brother-sister pair that we bought, raised and took to national championships became Ch. Apache Chief of Husky-Pak, "Geronimo," and Ch. Arctic Storm of Husky-Pak, "Takoma." They were the biggest winners of their era and became milestones of breed progress.

Best of all, they had third-strain genes; they were three-quarters M'Loot, one-quarter "other" going back to Irwin's Gemo and Hinman's Sitka. Sitka, incidentally, may have been an even better bitch than Gemo was a dog. I think she deserves a great deal of credit for the quality that resulted later on.

Our pair were as large as the bigger M'Loots but a bit heavier in bone and better proportioned; in body they were almost like king-size Kotzebues. Good coats and coloring and excellent overall balance. Heads were broad and ears were correct size and shape, and set properly on the skull. We knew this combination was superior, and the show results soon convinced a lot of other people.

But we weren't entirely satisfied. We felt a "three-strain cross" would heavy up the muzzles and set the type. We searched for a Kotzebue of adequate size and came up with Toro of Bras Coupe, then owned by Earl and Natalie Norris of Anchorage, Alaska. Fortunately, Toro was in the States being shown by a professional handler. He had just gone BB at Westminster. We brought him to Husky-Pak, mated him with Takoma and produced our "C" litter.

We think this was the greatest litter in the history of our breed. Five were shown, and all became champions. One was Cherokee, and we think he was the best Malamute ever: three consecutive National Specialty Best of

Breeds and three consecutive AMCA Dog of the Year awards. There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that he could easily have gone BB at the next two specialties, for five years in a row, had we chosen to keep showing him. But we retired him as a gesture of good sportsmanship.

Cliquot - the dog shown in our official AMCA emblem - was the first Malamute to win both a championship and a CDX. He was also the top winner in New England. Cochise - was the best in California for a time, and the sire of Ch. Snocrest's Mukluk, our breed's first Best in Show. Comanche and Cheyenne, the "C" litter females, were consistent winners, starting with the big 1953 National Specialty where, at fourteen months, they were Winners Bitch and Reserve Winners Bitch - to their mother's Best of Breed!

Comanche died shortly thereafter. Cheyenne produced two daughters who won three consecutive National Specialty BOSs, and both of whom defeated most of the top males of our breed in that era - including Ch. Mulpus Brook's The Bear, who was our 1954 National Specialty BB and Dog of the Year.

The sixth "C" litter pup was Chippewa, a sure champion except for one little detail: his owner, who I couldn't talk into showing him!

The saying is, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Our "C" litter was The Formula. Unhappily, Arctic Storm (Takoma) and Comanche died from hardpad distemper following the December 1953 Philadelphia K.C. Show. When Takoma died, we had advance orders for more pups than she could have produced in a lifetime. And Comanche, owned by Martha and Bob Gormely, was an extremely powerfully built, broad-headed, heavily-muzzled bitch that I thought could have become a superlative producer of the real, original Malamute type. What a loss!

When we settled down from these tragic events, we decided on two ways to approximate the "C" litter. Mate Geronimo to Takoma's surviving daughter, Cheyenne; and import a Toro daughter, also for mating with Geronimo.

Cheyenne's litter produced three champions including Ch. Husky-Pak Marclar's Sioux, National Specialty BOS (to Cherokee) both in 1956 and 1957, and Ch. Barb-Far's Marclar's Machook, Specialty BOS in 1958 and our breed's first female to place in Group.

Sioux just has to be the finest show female in our breed, unless I missed count somewhere in recent years. She completed totally undefeated in top national competition against the best of those times, from her first show until her retirement. And no other female ever came close. The only male she never beat was Cherokee!

Consider this: Sioux finished her championship in four straight shows in one month's time, defeating 55 different Malamutes, including nine champions! (Fifty-five was a mighty impressive number in the mid-1950s.) And, like Cherokee, she could have won at least two or three more National Specialties, had we chosen to show

her.

Toro's daughter was Ch. Kelerak of Kobuk, right off a dog team in Anchorage, Alaska. The Norrises had sold us a good one: we showed her to two National Specialty BOS. And after all these years, we still talk about her wonderful disposition. Her mating with Geronimo produced three fine champions. Erok was the youngest Malamute ever to place in Group and be a winner and outstanding sire in California. Echako was rated the outstanding Malamute of 1960 (Phillips System), held the breed record for Group placings (and probably still does on a percentage basis) and was our 1960 BB at Westminster. Except for his first show as a puppy, Echako was never beaten by any other Malamute!

Eagle was the best of the three, but he came along about the time we lost interest in showing. We showed him only a few times and he was never given a chance to show what he could do. Still, he was BB at Westminster in 1958, held the Dog World Award for his overall show record, and in Group placings he defeated several of the all-time record holders in other Working Group breeds. And I think Eagle may have been the best moving Malamute I ever saw.

Our Husky-Pak "E" litter was the first and perhaps the only one in our breed to produce three brothers to place in Group (which was difficult for any Malamutes in those days) and two to win BB at Westminster.

Show results play a major role in the improvement of all breeds because they are supposed to be expert, unbiased, third-party judgments. They usually are that (or about as close as you can hope for in this imperfect world), except for relatively unknown breeds as ours was in the 1950s. In such a case, expertise is not always provided. Since judging is a matter of opinion, mistakes are made, probably a lot more often in the lesserknown breeds. I showed under several judges who were seeing Malamutes for the first time. But that's all part of the game and there isn't much you can do about it.

So a few wins or losses don't mean a lot; a consistent pattern of winning is what counts. Quality of the competition, and who beats whom, and how often, are the major factors indicating relative quality.

Before 1953, with a few exceptions, competition among Malamutes was mainly local or regional. It was in early 1953 at the National Capitol and Harrisburg shows that the top regional winners got together and national competition in our breed began. Then in October 1953 we held our first real National Specialty in Rye, New York.

In these biggest and most important shows of their time, the results were revealing. Geronimo won both at National Capitol and Harrisburg. Takoma came out of two year's retirement to win the specialty, defeating all the best dogs and bitches of that era. Her brother Geronimo was BOS and three of her fourteen-month--old pups won just about everything else: WD, WB, RWB, and BW! (In the Best of Breed judging, Takoma's and Geronimo's main competition was their father, Ch. Spawn's Alaska.)

By year's end - after the Philadelphia show in December was again a total family affair - the message was

loud and clear: strain crosses had produced a superior Alaskan Malamute.

If further evidence is needed, consider this: in National Specialty Shows in the seven years between 1953 and 1959, all seven BBs and five BOS were strain crosses involving "third strain" genes. (Our Kelerak, a Kotzebue, had the other two BOS.)

In 1955, AMCA selected its Top Ten in our breed and eight were the strain crosses. Toro and Kelerak were the two Kotzebues. No pure M'Loots. (Nine of the Top Ten, incidentally, were part of, or results of, our Husky-Pak breeding program.)

## ***Quantum Leap***

At this point an interjection: you will remember that former President Nixon often said, "Now let me make one thing perfectly clear." I need to do that now, because I well understand that what I have been telling you sounds like a eulogy of Husky-Pak. That, I assure you, is not my purpose. My recitation of the foregoing statistics is essential to prove beyond any doubt that dramatic improvements in the Alaskan Malamute breed had taken place at this point in time. You might well call it a "quantum leap forward."

I'm convinced that statistics prove this point of view because they are overwhelming. That's point number one.

Point number two, equally important, is that because of this obvious breakthrough, immediate steps were taken to discredit all the dogs involved in it; to totally destroy this noteworthy progress, and return our breed to the rather sorry state it was in only a few years before.

I will describe these events in some detail. But first, a few observations on some of the important dogs of those times.

Except for Moosecat MLoot - Mikya's sire, owned by Cecil Allen of Fayetteville, Tennessee, and I think never shown - the best pure M'Loot those days was Ch. Mulpus Brook's Master Otter, owned and extensively shown by Jean Lane (formerly Massaglia, and later Briar). This dog was the first to place in Groups and helped publicize our breed. But he was beaten by Toro, and consistently by Ch. Spawn's Alaska. Alaska was the big winner twice BB at Westminster - until Geronimo and Takoma came along and totally dominated the breed. Geronimo was AMCA's first Dog of the Year. He was a tremendously popular dog, so powerful, regal, impressive, yet gentle and friendly. I suspect he may have done more than any other dog to call favorable attention to the Malamute breed in those days when we were relatively unknown.

Master Otter sired one outstanding winner, Bill and Lois Dawson's Ch. Mulpus Brook's The Bear. Bear was our National Specialty BB in 1954 and our first ever to win the Group. He got his third-strain genes from his dam, and he was a better Malamute than his sire.

The best Kotzebue I ever saw was, of course, Toro. And I suspect his daughter Kelerak was the best of the Kotzebue bitches; show records support this opinion. I was most fortunate to discover these two and appreciate their virtues. And over the years I have deeply appreciated the generosity and good sportsmanship of Earl and Natalie Norris who were willing to share them with us.

In all, the Kotzebue and the M'Loots were important contributors to our breed, and the third-strain and three-strain crosses we pioneered in the 1950s added significant quality and ended up improving our breed for countless generations to come.

Janet Edmonds, an English lady who researched *The Origins of the Present Day Malamute* and published her findings in 1979, tells pretty much the same story I am telling you now, although in less detail. She did miss an important point - the role of the third-strain dogs but I forgive her because she wrote:

"I find it interesting that it was when the types were sensibly interbred that the resulting dogs looked most like the (original) pre-Gold Rush Malamutes. The classic examples of this are the Husky-Pak dogs of the 1950s."

## ***Eva B. Seeley, A Formidable Opponent***

The breeding program described was a significant development, but there were others in those critical years: the lengthy battles over revising, or "clarifying," the standard was one, the fight for control of the club was another. These major conflicts occurred about the same time, with Eva Seeley being the major proponent of the status quo, and yours truly leading the newcomers who came to believe the status quo was intolerable and had to be changed.

To me, the status quo meant total domination of both the breed and the club by Mrs. Seeley. And so long as that continued, our breed was dead in its tracks and going nowhere.

In my initial contacts with Mrs. Seeley and other New England owners, the idea of all-out war never entered my mind. I felt sure that cooperation and negotiation could solve the problems and get both the breed and the club moving. I was wrong. Mrs. Seeley liked things the way they were and she intended to keep them that way, no matter what.

She was, indeed, a formidable opponent. Less than five-feet tall and maybe 90 pounds - her nickname was "Short" she would nonetheless fight like a tiger when crossed. Unfortunately, I seemed to have crossed her early on. And repeatedly. Everything Malamute soon become Seeley vs. Zoller.

I really did not want to fight. She was, I thought, something of a legend in our breed and I was the new kid on the block. But I did have one thing in my favor: early in life I learned you should not believe everything you read or are told. There is value in being skeptical, in finding out for yourself. Already in my life I had met a lot of "celebrities" and was never all that impressed with any of them. I learned we are all human, with our own peculiar set of faults and virtues. Nobody's perfect, it's just that some of us are luckier than others. It is right and proper to acknowledge achievement, and even to honor it when it deserves to be honored. But hero worship is not my thing, and never was.

So I was a bit skeptical right from the beginning and I'm sure Eva Seeley detected that. Unlike many others new to our breed, I did not become a "disciple" and I did not believe everything she said, simply because she said it - especially when I discovered that what she said didn't always make a lot of sense.

Still, I knew she was a pioneer and had rubbed elbows with the likes of Arthur Walden, Leonhard Seppala, Scotty Allen and Admiral Byrd. She owned Chinook Kennels and was well-known by most sled dog people, and apparently by some of the people at the American Kennel Club. So at the beginning I was willing to give her the benefit of the doubt. I listened a lot more than I talked. But eventually I came to not believe a great deal of what I was being told.

It bothered me when the pieces of the puzzle began to fall into place. She had a virtual monopoly on AKC registered Alaskan Malamutes and wasn't about to let that get away. According to the Seeley-Riddle book, there were no more than 30 registered Malamutes in 1947! She owned a number of those and the rest were owned by close friends or had

been sold by her under written agreements that no breedings would ever occur without her approval, and then only with a mate of her choosing.

That you could buy a dog or a bitch and not be allowed to breed it, was a new one to me. But you have to admit, it's a great way to protect a monopoly.

All this wasn't too surprising in view of two later discoveries. When AKC reopened our breed to registration based on the same requirements under which her dogs had been registered, plus a quality test requiring each candidate to be shown and accumulate ten championship points as well - Eva Seeley immediately declared all Malamutes not of her own Kotzebue stock as "Eskimo dogs, not Malamutes"!

This was quite a shock for new owners in those days. They would approach the legendary Short Seeley at a dog show, or by journeying all the way to her home in the middle of New Hampshire, to get her opinion of their new Malamute puppy, and be told their pride and joy was not an Alaskan Malamute and probably not a purebred of any breed!

I saw people shattered by this experience. But in time the word got around. Since it had happened to almost everyone at one time or another, even those of us whose dogs were going Best of Breed (or even placing in Groups under AKC licensed judges), we all began to view this as a sad joke. You just weren't important in our breed until Eva Seeley had labeled your dogs as "Eskimo." It was just "Seeley being Seeley."



## ***Toro Repudiated***

Still, I was indeed surprised when she repudiated Toro of Bras Coupe, probably the best Kotzebue ever. Eva's husband, Milton Seeley, had died and it seems that in the mid or late 1940s she became quite ill. Unable to care for her dogs, she sold her kennel to a man named Dick Moulton, who lived nearby.

Dick produced two litters from the same sire and dam and sold them both to a winter resort in Canada, called Bras Coupe. After a couple of years the resort decided to sell the dogs. They offered them to me and other Malamute people - apparently I was one of the first. Toro was one of these dogs and he caught my eye immediately; I would have loved to have had him. But we were just getting started, already had four dogs, and no plans whatever to be more than a very small hobby-type operation. Toro really tempted me, but Laura said no.

So Earl and Natalie Norris bought Toro and some of the others. When Toro started showing and winning, I asked Mrs. Seeley how she ever let him get away. She literally bristled. "Those two litters were a mistake," she told me. "Those two should never have been mated! I am going down to AKC next week and have all those registrations revoked!"

They were not revoked. But not because she didn't try. I know she tried because later, at the "Seeley vs. Zoller" trial, I cited her actions against Toro and his littermates as evidence of the lengths to which she would go to discredit any Malamute no longer under her ownership or control. I did this both in my defense briefs and again in person at the trial, and it was never denied either by Eva Seeley or her lawyer.

That she was willing to repudiate Toro was surprising, but I thought it was even more surprising that she actually believed AKC would revoke his registration on her say-so.

Later on, of course, she claimed full credit for Toro. When I used him at stud with Takoma, the Norris' instructed me to send him on to Mrs. Seeley who wanted to use him as well. (Surprise, surprise). A bit later, while Toro was still at Chinook Kennels, I drove up to attend the Annual Meeting and Specialty Show in Framingham, Massachusetts. Since I had brought no dogs of my own, Mrs. Seeley asked me to handle Toro at the specialty. He was entered in Open Dog and Seeley wanted like crazy for him to beat the specials entry, who was Ch. Mulpus Brook's Master Otter, the M'Loot owned by Jean Lane. Well, Toro won and I think Short Seeley actually liked me for about ten minutes on that June day back in 1952!

It didn't last long. A year later, at the 1953 Annual Meeting in Winchester, Massachusetts, the AMC president, Paul Pelletier, greeted me with a verbal attack so violent that I was stunned, and Bill and Lois Dawson who were nearby couldn't believe what they were hearing. After all these years, I don't remember what he said or what I replied. I do know that he and I had virtually no contact ever before. He knew nothing about me from personal experience, so obviously somebody had done a real hatchet job on me among the New England members. It wasn't hard for me to figure out who.

## ***The Alaskan Malamute Club***

Until 1952 the club was a very small, closed (Kotzebue only) organization composed solely of New England members and dominated by Eva Seeley. These people were not very active, either in breeding or showing. Mostly this was just a few friends with a common interest, getting together at a dog show or at someone's house to talk dogs and socialize a few times a year. I didn't know it at the time, but the club was not affiliated with or officially recognized by the American Kennel Club.

But with Malamutes suddenly growing in popularity and quite a number now being shown in other parts of the country, it apparently occurred to the New England group they'd better hurry and get AKC recognition as the official breed club before someone else beat them to it. So I figured they petitioned AKC, or at least inquired, and apparently were told they'd have to grow a bit and get some members from outside their own neighborhood. Or, in other words, appear a bit more like a representative breed club.

This seems logical in view of the fact that all of a sudden, I was allowed to join their club! Me, the guy with the Eskimo dogs down in Maryland! They also took in another outsider, Jean Lane. She lived in New England but she owned an "outside" dog, Master Otter.

So I paid my dues and over the next several months began to wonder why. All I got out of it was an occasional postcard announcing a meeting at someone's house in New England. Some of these even reached me a few days after the meeting had been held! Some arrived prior to the meeting date but seldom far enough in advance for me to plan on going and actually get there. And none ever included a reason for me to drive that far.

Reading show reports in the AKC Gazette, I knew there was a lot more Malamute activity taking place in other parts of the country, especially in the Milwaukee area. On a business trip out that way, I visited Ralph and Marcheta Schmitt who owned Silver-Sled, the largest Malamute kennel in the country. They had heard of me and welcomed me, and immediately started phoning people. In a couple of hours they had assembled more than twenty members of their Alaskan Malamute Club, all of whom lived reasonably nearby. They also knew of other interested owners in Chicago and other parts of the Midwest. Some people in California were getting active as well.

We soon figured out that if my group and their group joined forces, we could come up with 50 or 60 members in a few week's time.

The Schmitts proposed we do just that and petition AKC for recognition as the official national breed club - and leave the New England people out in the cold. But I felt AKC would look more kindly on our putting together a truly national membership, including the owners in New England. I also argued that a cease-fire, if one could be arranged, would be better for everyone.

It wasn't an easy sell. The Schmitts were singularly "unfond" of Mrs. Seeley. But they agreed, reluctantly, to give me a chance to see what I could do. I was to attend the next meeting in New England and spell out the new facts of life to the people there. Their choice: open the club to new members everywhere, or we would start our own national breed club without them. Their response would determine our future course of action.

A few weeks later I drove up to the 1952 Annual Meeting in Framingham, Massachusetts. This was the same day and place where I had handled Toro to the Specialty BB over Master Otter. We held the meeting in a tent on the show grounds. Only nine or ten members were there, including Jean Lane and I. I was surprised to learn the total club membership was only about twelve; or sixteen or seventeen, depending on whether you counted those who hadn't paid any dues for the past year or two.

I told them about my meeting with the Milwaukee Club - including the arithmetic of the breeding and showing activities going on in other parts of the country. After some discussions they agreed - but not very enthusiastically, as you might suspect - to my proposal that we open the membership to any Malamute owners who wanted to join, unless there were some legitimate reason not to accept them.

Jean Lane, apparently still feeling a bit of an outsider, did not have a great deal to say at this meeting. Mrs. Seeley, however, was not at all pleased with the proposal to expand. And, true to form, she came up with a great idea: we would have two classes of members the new ones would be "auxiliary members" and only "original members" would be allowed to vote! I guess that was a bit much, even for the other "original members." Her motion didn't pass, no one seconded it and it never came to a vote.

At this meeting I also pointed out that we would have to give our members something for their dues. A nationwide membership, whenever it came about, would require more services than a few postcards each year about occasional get together somewhere in New England. What Malamute owners wanted, I submitted, was information. Communication was the key requirement.

I volunteered to write, produce and mail an official monthly newsletter to all members. After much discussion - and apprehension - they said okay. But they made it clear they would cancel it if they didn't like what I wrote.

Our newsletter I think has been published every month since I wrote and mailed the first issue in August 1952. Membership grew rapidly as the Schmitts and I and a few others contacted our customers and got them to join. Before long, the new majority pretty

much took over, achieved a great deal of growth and progress and planted the seed that grew into a democratic national breed club. Today we have a membership of nearly 900, including a fair number outside the USA. While growth isn't everything we're not lot better off then when we had twelve or sixteen members in early 1952.

Today's members should know the facts about the democratization of our Malamute Club. At the 1953 Annual Meeting in Winchester, the new majority had gained complete control and I submit, we exercised our control in a most responsible manner. We elected more than a proportional number of New England members - including Eva Seeley to our board of directors. And then our majority on the board (I was one of them so was voting) elected Eva Seeley as our president!

We tried hard to be more than fair because we felt that by doing so, we could convince Mrs. Seeley and her followers that working together was the best thing any of us could do to benefit our breed and our club. It really didn't help. Nothing much improved.

The 1954 Annual Meeting, for some misguided reason (like believing if we continued our goodwill and cooperation we might get some in return), we again allowed to be held up in the middle of New England, actually in Wonalancet, New Hampshire, just a couple of miles from Seeley's home. This, of course, was about as remote and inconvenient as we could get for the vast majority of our members.

This meeting, however, was a major step forward, in that Eva Seeley was not re-elected to anything. And this was not my doing: she had alienated too many members outside her own group. It didn't help any when she hired a highpowered Boston lawyer, and brought him into our meeting to make sure the rest of us did not pull any illegal shenanigans!

(The lawyer's name was Kenneth Tiffin. He had been an official of the American Kennel Club, and at the time, I believe he was President of the Great Dane Club of America. More on. Mr. Tiffin later.)

At the 1954 Annual Meeting, I was re-elected a director and elected president. We continued to be fair; we elected Nelson Butler of the New England group to our board of directors, and appointed Dr. Lombard as our delegate to AKC. We also decided to incorporate - in the state of New Hampshire, as a further gesture to Seeley and our New England members. Shortly thereafter, we became the Alaskan Malamute Club of America, Inc.

Incidentally, in the interest of accuracy, it is necessary to point out that Mrs. Seeley was not the founder of our club. I cannot remember exactly when we achieved official AKC recognition as the parent club of our breed - it probably was in 1953 - but I know for sure it was after we had grown into a truly representative national organization (over Eva Seeley's vigorous objections), thereby meeting the requirements of the American Kennel Club. In my view, it was probably not until the 1954 Annual Meeting that we really became, and began to act like, a national breed club.

## ***Standard of the Breed***

The original standard was based on the Kotzebue dogs, because it was written by the people who had Kotzebue dogs. In all, it wasn't a bad job and it never occurred to me to try to change it. Contrary to some opinions, I was never one who believed "the bigger, the better" when it came to Malamutes. Still, I thought that twenty-inch, 50-pound bitches and 22-inch, 65-pound males, allowed by the standard, were smaller than Malamutes ought to be. And I could not see that 23-inch, 70-pound bitches and 25-inch, 85-pound males should be the upper limit of our breed. But we had been showing our larger dogs under that standard and were doing quite well. Only one judge ever put down one of our dogs for being over the standard size, and I could live with that.

It was Eva Seeley who wanted to change the standard. She had come to Washington, D.C., in early 1953 to show one of her dogs at the National Capitol Show. It was a large turnout for those days, and it included dogs from several different areas of the country. Her dog didn't do all that well, while our kingsize Geronimo took Best of Breed.

She didn't like that. So after the judging, she called a meeting of all the Malamute owners and announced that on her way home she would stop at AKC to "see my good friend John Neff" and have our standard "clarified" to disqualify all Malamutes who were over the sizes stated! She said the original intent was to disqualify; they just overlooked making that clear.

This announcement created quite a stir, as you might expect. Almost everyone's dogs were over 25 inches and 85 pounds, and bitches over 23 inches and 70 pounds. We were all fairly naive about AKC based on her claimed relationship with "good friend John Neff," whom we did recognize as the guy who pretty much ran AKC. We figured maybe she just might be able to pull it off.

We heard no more about it, though, until October of that year, at the big National Specialty in Rye, New York. After the judging, Mrs. Seeley (now the president) convened an official meeting and the first thing she did was to introduce the Executive Vice President of AKC - her "good friend, John Neff."

We were totally taken by surprise, and most of us fully expected him to make some pronouncements about disqualifications that we really did not want to hear. But he spoke briefly, complimented us on our large turnout and the excellence of our dogs, and then departed. This was a happy surprise.

The first point of business at the meeting then, was "standard clarification." By obvious pre- arrangement, Delta Wilson made a motion that Eva Seeley be designated as chairman (we didn't have "chairpersons" in those days) of a Standard Review Committee and appoint her own committee members to serve with her. Fortunately, we had the votes to put a stop to that sort of thing. I made a short speech about democracy, and upon my motion we voted to elect a committee representative of the membership as a whole.

Then, with fair and proper consideration for all points of view. we voted Mrs. Seeley a seat on the committee. Bill Dawson, Ralph Schmitt, Jean Lane. and I were also elected.

Leaning over backwards - again trying to accommodate Eva Seeley, which we did on so many occasions, turned out to be a bad idea. She was dead set on regaining control of the breed by disqualifying as many competitors as possible, and she would not give an inch. We argued for two years. Dawson, Schmitt and I agreed on what we felt was a correct, fair and representative standard. Jean Lane, for reasons known only to her, just would not function and contributed nothing whatsoever. Mrs. Seeley insisted on the sizes in the original standard with automatic disqualifications for any over that size. (But not for being under that size.) She wanted to add five other disqualifications as well!

After two years of getting nowhere, the best we could do was to give our membership a choice: the Majority report, the Seeley Minority Report, or leaving the standard unchanged. One hundred seven members voted - 73 for the Zoller-Dawson-Schmitt version (as I remember, Jean Lane didn't vote), nine for Seeley's and 25 for no change.

AKC added the 25 to the nine and said that was "significant opposition." They said we couldn't change anything without a "more unanimous" opinion.

So the committee was disbanded in October 1956 after some two-and-a-half years of hard work, and I declined to waste any more time on the Standard Review matter. Let someone else do it for a change. In September 1957, Martha Gormley, then president, appointed a new Standard Committee consisting of Bill Dawson, Dorothy Dillingham and Hal Pearson. I felt this was a fair committee, in that it represented the three points of view among our members although not at all in proportion to the number of members in each group. (But then it didn't have to be: any sane person knows the majority isn't always right.) At any rate, Pearson liked the big Husky-Pak dogs, Dillingham was a Seeley-Kotzebue fan, and Dawson whose Bear was 25 inches, 85 pounds, and often lost to king-size Cherokee was solidly in the middle.

Size, really, was the major bone of contention from the beginning to end. The new committee finally reached an intelligent compromise: instead of defining a size range they settled for a statement that "the desirable sizes" were 25"/85#s and 23"/75#s, males and bitches. Otherwise, the revised standard was pretty much as written in our earlier Majority Report. I remember writing many of the words that still exist: "There is a natural range in size in this breed," and also that "Size considerations should not outweigh that of type, proportion and functional

attributes ..." I remember writing the closing paragraph: "IMPORTANT - In judging Alaskan Malamutes, their function as a sledge dog for heavy freighting must be given consideration above all else." And the words that follow that statement.

There were no size disqualifications in the committee's recommendation, so of course, Eva Seeley denounced it and voted no. But the membership approved it in November 1959 and AKC gave it their blessing in April 1960, nearly seven years after our first committee was elected and began its work.

What happened then is why I feel now that anyone who suggests "revising" the standard to spell out whether red Malamutes (or whatever) are acceptable, etc., ought to be chained to an iceflow and set adrift in the Bering Sea. Of course, the standard is not perfect it's a compromise. But it's one we can all live with.

I could write a standard better than the one we have. And so could Penny Devaney, whose knowledge of our breed I respect. But I know what it takes to get an "almost unanimous" approval by 800-some-odd members, most of whom want a standard that describes their dogs! I also think you don't want anymore details than our standard now has. You don't want judges to come into the ring with scales and a tape measure, you don't want a standard with so many words that most judges won't read them, and the ones who do will not remember what they read!

Before I leave this matter of size, a few final words: despite what our standard says, I am not at all convinced that 85-pound males and 75-pound females are "the ideal freighting size." That statement was a compromise, the best we could do then, and a lot better than the way it was. But I always felt the "original" Malamute was a big dog, even after many generations of survival in a harsh environment. I think the old photos show that. In the 1950s, near Lake Placid, New York, I saw real, honest-to-God good type Malamutes, brought out of the Arctic by Jacques Suzanne, that were bigger than any real Malamutes I have seen before or since.

For many reasons I was told that anyone who ever worked sled dogs had found the big dogs "much less efficient" than the smaller ones. Some even said any dog over 80 pounds was clumsy and more likely to break down and drop out. Not being a driver, I couldn't argue. But now that opinion has been made to look silly by Will Steger and his gallant companions who journeyed totally across Antarctica in what has to be said to be the greatest feat of human and canine endurance ever on this earth. They accomplished this with teams of 100 pound dogs - and their performance was magnificent!

Susan Butcher and her smaller Iditarod dogs are to be much admired. Let us all keep in mind that Iditarod is a race, not a freighting event. The Malamute is "not intended as a racing sled dog." He is a "sledge dog for heavy freighting." Anyone disagree? It's in our standard.

And now, again, let me be perfectly clear: I did NOT say the bigger the better. And in no way am I suggesting we rewrite the standard to conform to my opinions.





## ***The Plot Thickens (Enter John Hofftt and John B. Roth)***

By late 1954, Eva Seeley was an unhappy woman, to say the least. She was no longer allowed to run the breed and the club, her dogs were not winning anything important, AKC had registered a lot of dogs she claimed were not Malamutes (i.e., Kotzebue), and it looked like she was failing in her efforts to eliminate the competition by rewriting the standard. There were rumors she was up to something.

Soon we heard she was gathering "facts" to prove our dogs were not purebred. She had told a number of people that Dave Irwin, Dick Hinman, Hazel Wilton, Paul Voelker and Brud Gardner - all breeders of dogs behind my stock had "admitted" their dogs were not purebred Malamutes!

I immediately checked with Hinman and Wilton and they said this was totally untrue. Seeley had said Jean Lane was with Paul Voelker on the occasion when he had repudiated all his M'Loot dogs, and Jean Lane said this never happened. "Quite the opposite," she maintained, "Paul said his were purebred, and a lot better than hers!"

My friend Jim Lynn was a friend of Brud Gardner, so I asked him to check that one out. Brud told Jim that Seeley had approached him, asking that he sign certain "affidavits" and he flatly refused because "they were based on falsehood."

On January 23, 1955, I received a most interesting letter. It was from Margaret Tracy Irwin, wife of Dave Irwin. These people did not know me at all. They did not even know where I lived, so they addressed their letter to me in care of the American Kennel Club! Something strange was going on, she wrote in her letter, and they thought I should know about it.

She said that a man named John Hofftt had popped in at the Irwins' a few months previously, with no money, no job and a truckful of hungry Malamutes. The Irwins had helped, fed the dogs and gave him a job. Some weeks later, he left. Now he had come back.

Mrs. Irwin wrote: "Recently the man has been calling, writing and coming here to get affidavits signed by Mr. Irwin. Since he has not been successful, a letter we received yesterday took on a most threatening tone."

The letter, she said, was signed by a "John B. Roth" - but was "suspiciously in the handwriting of one John Hofftt!" It was a long and rambling letter, but among other things it said:

"Mrs. Seeley has letters you wrote to Mr. Wolff also one fingerprinted affidavit from Lowell Thomas, Margaret Dewey, Jack O'Brien and Dick Moulton."

"Mr. Zoller, President of the Malamute Club, wrote John a letter claiming you have a terrible reputation and

that you couldn't tell the difference between a Malamute and Siberian Huskie. Zoller for years has controlled the Malamute and Siberian situation and no dog could be registered unless approved by him. Zoller could expose you as a phony who was never in the Arctic and never was in King Williamland, who simply was lost in the Arctic. The affidavits are for your protection. I have spent a lot of money over this registration business, taking officers of the Kennel Club out to dinner and shows on Broadway. Registrations do not come cheap. I have sent over \$50 in the last few days, buying Scotch for different officials. Now, I don't intend to spend a lot of money to come all the way up to Milford to get those affidavits." (Further on) "Now, Mr. Irwin, these affidavits are for your protection because Mr. Hofft and Mrs. Seeley have enough affidavits and letters to put Zoller on the lam and get their dogs registered. Both Hofft and Seeley are going through regardless whether you furnish affidavits or not. Zoller will put you over a barrel to save himself. For you to hold back the affidavits you are not going to stop Mr. Hofft and Seeley from putting Zoller on the pan, because they intend to do it anyway and let Zoller pass the buck on to YOU."

I responded to Mrs. Irwin and tried to explain what I thought was happening. When she wrote back she enclosed a photocopy of the "John B. Roth" letter. I found several Hofft letters in my files, compared the handwriting, and found beyond any doubt that John Hofft was "John B. Roth."

Mrs. Irwin also wrote:

"There is a garage man, Terpster by name, who befriended Hofft, and to whom David took our Pontiac station wagon after Hofft had messed it up. He told David that Mrs. Seeley was tempting Hofft with a promise of getting him on the South Pole expedition coming up. Hofft perhaps would do anything to get to such a place, although I doubt it is sincere on her part. He had nothing but horrible things to say about her when he was here, and then suddenly he became pen pals with her!"

It was hard for me to believe all this was happening, but there it was, in black and white, before my very eyes.

About the same time, several members noticed and complained that the AMCA column in the AKC Gazette always included a small head study of a dog with a forlorn and unappealing expression - that was a poor advertisement for our breed. They suggested we come up with a better photo. The board agreed. But since the dog shown was one of Seeley's, we were very careful to set up a fair system for selecting a replacement. We solicited unidentified photos from our membership. (As I remember, it was one of Tom that was finally chosen.)

But of course, the very announcement that we were considering a change was greeted by the expected Seeley tantrum and related threats: she was going to protest to AKC and "demand proof" of pure breeding of the dog selected, etc.

I guess this one was the straw that broke the camel's back. Not long after that, I received a strange letter from her. It started out by inquiring about the health and well being of my wife and children and sending them her

best wishes. And then, it issued an ultimatum: I was to prove to her that my dogs were purebred Malamutes and do so within ten days! Failure to comply would result in her immediate launching of an AKC investigation!

At the same time she sent a letter to each member on our board of directors which said, "The American Kennel Club must now prove to me that the persons who signed off affidavits of pedigrees and made their own declaration as to these pedigrees being of purebred of the same breed, have not been impostors."

I wrote back a long letter, saying to her that things were getting out of hand and that her constant harping and outlandish accusations were damaging our breed and our club; but most of all were damaging to her; that many of our members who honored her for her pioneering efforts in the 1930s were now saddened at seeing the disruptive influence she had become.

I felt sorry for her, and with complete sincerity I suggested in my letter that before she issued any more threats, she should check her judgment with some of the people she trusted - Dr. Lombard, Edna Lawlor, and Delta Wilson.

I also wrote to the Lombards and the Lawlors. They were good and reasonable people, I thought. I especially liked Edna Lawlor. Dr. Lawlor had a Malamute team - some were registered, some not - and his main interest was racing. He persisted in running his Malamutes against the Siberian teams and I don't think he won very often, if at all. Lombard, a veterinarian, was one of the best and best-known dog drivers in the world. He ran Siberians exclusively, but always had a Malamute or two around the place.

I asked them to do me no favors, but to please help Mrs. Seeley stop making a fool of herself, that if she would use a little common sense and back off a bit, she could possibly regain some of the respect she had earned a few years previously. I pointed out that while I was the target, literally dozens of other people were involved; if she persisted in her efforts to destroy the work of so many people over so many years, we would have to take whatever countermeasures became necessary, and Eva Seeley would be a certain loser in the process.

I never heard a peep from the Lombards and the Lawlors, and I do not know why.

## ***Seeley Vs. Zoller: The Charges***

In October that year I was notified by AKC that Mrs. Seeley had formally accused me of knowingly breeding mixed-breed dogs and representing them to be purebred Malamutes. If I wished to deny these charges, I could present my arguments at a formal trial at AKC headquarters in New York City. Included were photocopies of the letters that Mrs. Seeley had submitted as "proof."

There were a couple of letters from a man named R. Gibson Perry, a retired medical doctor, establishing that in 1936 he had purchased certain dogs from Milton Seeley. Other letters established that Brud Gardner had obtained some puppies from Dr. Perry and in due course had bred one called "Alaska," and sold one of her female pups named "Sitka" to Dick Hinman. Hinman later had mated Sitka with Irwin's Gemo, producing a dog who later sired my Kayak of Brookside.

I realized immediately, of course, that the same dogs were ancestors of Spawn's Alaska - and therefore, of course, of Geronimo, Takoma, Cherokee, Sioux, Eagle, Echako, Machook, etc. Even Dawson's "Bear" and Pearson's "Banshee" and "Aabara" (National Specialty winners) were involved. In short, most of the National Specialty winners over a period of years, and virtually all of the top dogs and bitches of that era!

So the Seeley charges seemed to be based totally on this: our dogs and many others went back to one or more dogs the Seeleys had owned some twenty years before, and she now claimed they were not purebred Malamutes.

I kept looking through the material AKC had sent me, searching for her proof. I couldn't find any. I wrote AKC saying they must have forgotten to send me everything they had planned to. They replied and said no, that was it. That was everything.

It was hard for me to believe the whole case boiled down to this: Eva Seeley said the ancestors of my dogs were not Malamutes. All I would have to do is prove they were Malamutes.

Question: At this early stage in the development of the breed, how do you do that?

Since all Malamutes in 1936 including hers - were only a generation or two from "unknown," we couldn't prove that the ancestors of our dogs were purebred Malamutes, just as she couldn't prove anything, one way or the other, about her dogs. According to AKC, all Malamutes were Eskimo dogs before 1935!

In my defense brief (mine was hardly "brief," more like a textbook), I took several approaches. I pointed out that she had submitted no proof whatever to substantiate the charges, that her whole case was based solely on her claim that my dogs were not Malamutes. My claim was that Eva Seeley was famous throughout the Malamute world for labeling all Malamutes not of her own breeding as Eskimo or crossbred dogs, and that she

had been doing this for many years, and that nobody any longer believed her or took her seriously.

I also called attention to her repudiation of her own Kotzebue dogs - Toro and the others who had slipped away from her control. This consistent pattern of behavior, I said, should show her claims had no validity.

One thing, however, had me worried. That was the unique nature of our breed in those times: so recently out of the Arctic, so close to the "unknown." I knew the members of the trial board knew nothing about Malamutes, and so could totally err in their findings by not realizing how different our breed was from most others. So I wrote a fairly lengthy history of our breed. And to put Seeley's charges in proper perspective, I submitted a lengthy history of her attempts to eliminate the competition by revising the standard, trying to control the club, and discrediting all dogs not of her own.

I emphasized that this case was in no way a simple "Seeley vs. Zoller" matter, but rather an attempt to destroy the work of years by as many as 70 members of our club (the vast majority as of then), and even including eight of the nine people serving on our board of directors. I established that the fourteen "Seeley years" had produced two AKC champions in our breed, while the following five years had produced 61, most of which she was now trying to discredit and render useless for all further breeding programs.

I even pointed out the Seeley charges made AKC itself look pretty silly. I enclosed a list of 46 AKC-licensed judges - all of them among the bestknown dog judges of those times - who had judged these "Eskimo dogs or Arctic mongrels" and put them up as the best Alaskan Malamutes in our country. If they couldn't tell crossbreds from pure bred, they were obviously incompetent and should have their licenses revoked. This case, I suggested should be renamed "Seeley vs. Everybody Including AKC!"

I also covered the whole story about the Irwins Gemo-John B. Roth case as an indication of how far she would go to build her case. I submitted copies of letters from Irwin, Hinman, Brud Gardner and Mrs. Wilton to show that everyone in the chain had bought, owned, bred and sold these dogs and their progeny as purebred Malamutes.

Almost everyone. One line was missing: Dr. Gibson Perry. This concerned me more than somewhat. I did not know this man at all, but I had heard Mrs. Seeley praise him and quote him on many occasions. I figured he was either a relative or a close friend of the family, and as such, might be willing to sign anything just to help her out.

I had no choice but to find out. I learned he was retired and living in the woods way up on the Vermont border near Canada. Jim Lynn offered to drive me there - a long trip. After two days of fast driving, we arrived in a mid-afternoon. It was November and cold. I remember the skies were dark gray. It was just beginning to snow.

We had no idea what to expect. When the old doctor found out who we were and why we had come, maybe he'd throw us out. It was a make-or-break time, I knew that for sure.

He came to the door of his cabin. He was indeed an old man, in his eighties I found out. Didn't see too well. But he was, I soon learned, a right sharp senior citizen.

"Dr. Perry?" I inquired. He said, "Yes." I said, "I've come to talk to you about Eva Seeley." He held up his hand to stop me. He took out a match and lit his pipe. Then in a moment or two without knowing anything more about me, or why I was there - he volunteered his opinion of Eva Seeley.

Throughout this account of the critical years in our breed's history I have, in the interest of accuracy and historical perspective, been totally frank - perhaps more so than some readers may feel is necessary. But so much misinformation still exists, it must be corrected, and I have done so with considerably more charity than I ever received from Eva Seeley or any of her friends.

I cannot bring myself to tell you what Dr. Perry said, although the exact words are etched forever in my memory'. But I knew then for sure that if we ended up losing our case at AKC, it wouldn't be due to Dr. Gibson Perry.

One of the printable things he said about Mrs. Seeley was that she drove him crazy. Always pestering him "to sign something or other." We talked at some length, more than an hour. When we left, he had given us a letter that said:

*"To Whom It May Concern:*

*The dogs I purchased from Milton Seeley in 1936 were represented by him to be Alaskan Malamutes and were understood by me to be of that breed.*

*The dogs I mated to produce the pup I sold to Vernon (Brud) Gardner were purebred of the Malamute breed. I have never had reason to suspect that those dogs were crossbred or purebred of any other breed.*

*I have owned other sledge dogs, but the above facts apply to the dogs in question; those purchased by me from Milton Seeley in 1936. I have never told Eva Seeley, or anyone else, otherwise."*

## ***The Trial***

There were several delays, postponements and changes in the composition of the trial board, so the hearing did not take place until June 1956. Jim Lynn went with me. He was our AMCA Delegate to AKC, and came along as a witness to verify the Brud Gardner and Dr. Perry statements in case that became necessary. My wife, Laura, and Connie Lynn were there, too. But just along for the ride.

We arrived at the AKC offices in Manhattan before the others. Nobody knew us, but we told the receptionist who we were, and we were asked to have a seat in the waiting room. People we didn't know kept walking in and out, and no one spoke to us or paid any attention.

AKC had told me most people hire an attorney for cases like this, but I figured I would handle it on my own. Besides, (with apologies to any lawyers reading this), the money I'd save would buy us a nice trip to Europe later on. Or a new car. Someday. (Maybe.)

Then a lot of people came into the waiting room, all at the same time. A half dozen or more well-dressed, distinguished-looking gentlemen in their 50s or 60s, obviously lawyers, probably members of the trial board, and some AKC officials. Eva Seeley was with them and I recognized Mr. Tiffin, Seeley's lawyer from Boston. Being President of the Great Dane Club of America and a former AKC official, he was wellknown there and was shaking hands with everyone. As a matter of fact, everyone was laughing, shaking hands and clapping each other on the back like longlost buddies or fraternity brothers. Seeley was right in the middle of the festivities, being treated like it was a family reunion and she was one of the family'.

Jim Lynn looked at me and shrugged, with a "win some, lose some" expression on his face. I felt terrible. If ever I saw a stacked deck of cards, this was it. It occurred to me that maybe I had lost the case before the trial even started.

However, the trial board turned out to be courteous and eminently fair. Seeley got to present her case first. She brought in John Hofft as a witness and he told a lot of lies about me. This really hurt, since he was once a customer of mine and I had done a number of favors for him over the years. I could not believe what I was hearing. But as he continued to berate me, I began to realize he was such a bad liar he was probably doing more damage to their side than mine.

When my turn came, I think I was able to discredit him completely. I brought up a few character flaws I knew about and I introduced Mrs. Irwin's letters and the ridiculous John B. Roth letter. Hofft denied writing this, of course. and I told the trial board that it was so obvious that any handwriting expert even one who wasn't very good at it could easily identify the writing as Hofft's. And I insisted on having this done if the board had any doubts about who was lying and who was telling the truth.



I accused Seeley of bribing John Hofft and there was no real response to that, either from Seeley or her lawyer. They just changed the subject.

One thing surprised me: Seeley and her attorney introduced matters at the trial that were not included in their original charges. I thought that was illegal. With no advance notice, they brought Irwin's Gemo into their case.

They had not mentioned him in their original charges, obviously because Dave Irwin had refused to sign their affidavits. But now they claimed he was not a Malamute because he had been shown as an Eskimo dog in 1934! They did not back-up their charges with any information or proof of any kind - no mention of when or where or anything else!

This caught me by surprise. But then it dawned on me that Gemo wasn't even born yet in 1934! I said so, and then I also said it didn't really make any difference anyway, because all Malamutes were "Eskimo dogs" under AKC's definition until they acknowledged ours as a separate breed; and that didn't happen until 1935 - at least a full year later than the alleged showing took place!

And then I declared most emphatically that I could prove that Gemo was shown as an Alaskan Malamute at the Westminster K.C. show in Madison Square Garden in 1941 and again in 1942, after AKC recognized our Malamutes as a breed separate and distinct from the Eskimo.

Introducing such a careless accusation with no evidence whatever to back it up, was, I am sad to say typical Eva Seeley behavior. But I could not imagine her big-time Boston lawyer doing anything that dumb. When it happened, I began to feel a lot more at ease about handling MY own case without legal representation.

The other new "evidence" presented without any advance notice was a statement by Paul Voelker that was potentially damaging to my defense and to all owners of M'Loot dogs (of which there were many). Apparently after Hofft had failed to bulldoze Dave Irwin, he had gone to Arizona where Voelker was living at the time, and tried the same thing with him. I had no way of knowing whether the Voelker statements presented at the trial were authentic or forgeries, and I said so. I also said that, by several years of corresponding with Voelker, I had figured him to be not totally reliable and something of an egotist.

Since Voelker was totally out of the business, and I believed quite jealous of how far the breed had progressed beyond where he was able to take it, it was possible he may have decided to repudiate his M'Loot dogs to get even for imagined wrongs.

Possible, I said at the trial, but not likely. It was easy to prove that for all of the years he had been in the dog business, he had consistently represented his dogs to be not only purebred Malamutes, but by far the best Malamutes on the planet Earth! It would take a lot more than "affidavits" by Seeley and Hofft to convince me the documents they presented against the M'Loot dogs had any more validity than the rest of their case.

Finally they got to the matter of the Perry dogs and I figured this was the big, high, hard one of the Seeley case. And just about the time I was beginning to feel quite comfortable, her lawyer tossed Dr. Perry onto the table with a document about the dogs bought from Milton Seeley in 1936 - and it included the statement, "These dogs not of purebreeding."

I was dumbfounded. What in hell was happening here? All I could do, of course, was to present my letter signed by Dr. Perry which stated positively that the dogs WERE Alaskan Malamutes. I called on Jim Lynn as a witness to tell the story of our visit to Dr. Perry's camp and attest to the validity of my document.

Then I told the trial board I could not explain the conflicting documents but i wouldn't be all that difficult to contact Dr. Perry and find out from him which of us had presented the true facts, and I insisted that this be done.

At that point, Mr. Tiffin began to whisper to Mrs. Seeley, and in a moment or two (rather painfully, I thought) he explained to the trial board that Mrs. Seeley had herself, typed in the words, "These dogs not of purebreeding" above Dr. Perry's signature, after he had signed it!

(I told you early in this story that some of the things that happened in those days were indeed incredible. I don't know what records AKC has kept on this trial or how detailed they would be. But if a complete transcript still exists and is available, it will show this account to be totally accurate.)

I cannot remember every detail, but I do know that another document signed by Dr. Perry turned up at the trial, and it included the words "not of purebreeding." Immediately after the trial concluded, Jim Lynn drove all the way up to the Canada-Vermont border to see if Dr. Perry could explain how that had happened. Dr. Perry was away on a hunting trip, but his granddaughter remembered. "Just as he was ready to leave," she told Jim Lynn, "Mrs. Seeley pulled in with some papers for him to sign. He refused and she told him it was nothing but a statement that he had bought some dogs from the Seeleys at one time. He didn't have his glasses, so he accepted her word and signed.

Then he told her to leave as he was in a hurry."

The granddaughter said she would tell Dr. Perry what had happened when he returned. He would be mad, she said, and he would go to AKC personally and give his views on Mrs. Seeley if that were necessary.

Although the trial was over, the findings of the trial board would not be announced immediately. So I sent this new information to AKC, just in case. I knew the future of the entire breed was at stake, so I would leave no stone unturned!

## ***The Verdict and the Appeal***

A couple of weeks later we were notified that the Seeley charges were not sustained and that the case was dismissed. Seeley and her lawyer, however, immediately appealed the verdict to the AKC Board of Directors as a whole.

Mr. Tiffin's appeal brief, which AKC sent me, was three pages of undiluted hogwash containing statements like this: "There is further contradicted evidence to be found in the transcript that certain of the dogs in the line of Kayak were first shown as Siberian Huskies ..."

Unbelievable! Another new accusation never before mentioned in the charges or introduced at the trial! And therefore - think about this - there was no possible way for them to be "found in the transcript" as stated. I cannot believe Mr. Tiffin, a lawyer, did not know his tactics were improper. And more important, like everything else charged in this trial, his statement about "shown as Siberian Huskies" was not accompanied by explanation as to which dogs, which shows, when, by whom, or any evidence or proof of any kind!

When I studied Mr. Tiffin's appeal brief, I found no substance whatever. The appeal was based on his claim that with all the affidavits I had submitted, "The people probably were not telling the truth." And the board, he said, should really decide the case on "Mrs. Seeley's own testimony which I do not believe can be questioned."

(Maybe I'm wrong, but that seems to me to be quite a claim about a woman who typed in "These dogs not of purebreeding" over Dr. Perry's signature and introduced it as evidence at the trial!)

I did not even attend the appeal hearing in New York on November 28, 1956. In due course, I was notified that the appeal was denied.

## ***Aftermath***

Several people who had followed the case suggested I should sue Mrs. Seeley for slander, libel, and defamation of character.

I did not. I will fight to defend my interests, but not to get even. I had won the case, but it took nearly two years of my time, a great deal of hard work, and a right fair amount of money I could ill afford in those days.

She had lost her case. But she never really paid the price - not when you consider the tactics she used. Many who knew what happened excused her, and looked the other way. Again. People believe what they want to believe. I didn't care. I was in favor of sweeping it all under the rug, now that she was no longer a threat to our Malamute breed. I actually felt sorry for Eva Seeley although at times I cannot understand why! At any rate, I refrained from publishing the whole story for more than twenty years.

I am convinced also that it never occurred to Eva Seeley that anything she had done was wrong. Even a little bit wrong.

In a few years, I was out of it, and I think that at least in some measure the way I had been treated had something to do with my getting out. On the one hand, we had made a number of close and lasting friendships. We met a lot of interesting "characters- and some really good people. Jim Lynn was always 100 percent with his support and the Pearsons and Gormelys and the Dawsons and some others were solidly on my side from start to finish.

But I think everyone who owned Kotzebue dogs wanted Seeley to win, and they didn't care how. (Human nature is like that. Even as I write millions of Arabs worldwide revere and support Saddam Hussein simply because he is Arab, and nothing else counts.) Most of our AMCA members realized I was fighting to save their dogs as well as my own, and therefore were firm allies at the time.

But quite apart from the trial, and except for a few of us in the middle, our Malamute people remained mostly Kotzebue or M'Loot fanatics and they viewed each other with about the same amount of trust and affection we see between the Jews and the Arabs in the Middle East today. Since I had said some nice things about both strains, I was viewed with suspicion by both camps. Winning a lot didn't help me much either.

You know and I know that our dogs are more like our kids than just possessions. This overstates to make a point, but it's like "you beat my stamp collection and I will admire your stamp collection; you beat my dog in the show ring and I'll hate you forever - and probably the judge, as well!" Some of this you have to expect, but a little goes a long way. Over time, you get a bit tired of it.

Things like this bothered me: just before the trial, a prospective customer in California wrote:

"A touchy matter has come up. Another breeder out here wants us to take one of her bitches ... I told her after seeing Geronimo's picture, I wanted a daughter of his. She wrote back quite a reply. Before you hit the ceiling, let me state again, I like Apache Chief and definitely feel he's the most beautiful Malamute I've ever seen - whatever is said about him. I still like him and want his daughter. Her letter read, 'I'm reasonably well acquainted with the stock ... The dam is an excellent specimen. (Author's note: That was Kelerak.) The sire, Apache Chief, is the dog I spoke of, that is under fire with the AKC. What a shame that a bitch of her quality was bred to a dog of questionable background. '"

I never said anything about that letter, but it's the kind of thing that's hard to forget; the kind of behavior that makes the dog hobby less joyful than it ought to be.

I'm sure there's still some of this going around. But those of you who came into our breed in the 1960s or since found everything pretty neatly packaged and not a lot different than in most other breeds. It may be difficult for you to understand what things were like in the early days. That's mainly why I am telling you this story.

Great dogs like Geronimo and Takoma and Cherokee and Sioux were only a few generations from "unknown." So they were maligned constantly by Eva Seeley and some others whose own dogs were even closer to "unknown." They used the term "foundation stock" as if it applied solely to the Seeley dogs. Actually, Irwin's Gemo and Sitka and the early M'Loot dogs were foundation stock, as well.

And consider this: Ch. Gripp of Yukon, one of the first Seeley dogs to be registered, was by Yukon Jad out of Bessie. Bessie is described as "a Greenland Eskimo" by none other than Eva Seeley herself in her book, *Chinook and his Family*.

What's more, Yukon Jad was sired by Grey Cloud - a dog whose owner, Frank Berton of Dawson, in the Yukon Territory, claimed was "about three-quarters wolf."

(To give credit where it is due, the above information was the result of research by Richard Tobey, who in my opinion, knows more about the early history of our breed than anyone else in the world.)

Now please understand, you cannot use the above facts to indicate the Seeley dogs therefore were not Malamutes. Every breed has to start somewhere. Malamutes - regardless of bloodline all go back to "unknown." Which isn't at all bad when you consider that most other breeds go back to known dogs of other breeds!

## ***A Postscript***

One final note. Years later 1975? - the phone rang. It was Maxwell Riddle. I didn't know this man personally, but I remembered him as one of the best and best-known dog judges in America. He told me he was working with Eva Seeley to produce an authoritative book on Alaskan Malamutes.

I said, "That sounds like a contradiction; to me 'Mrs. Seeley' and 'authoritative' are mutually exclusive. Since she claims there are no Malamutes except her own, obviously you will be writing a very short book!"

Mr. Riddle said he was definitely including our Husky-Pak dogs. That's why he was calling; he needed to verify some of the facts and figures. We talked at some length, and I'm sure he was hearing a lot of things from me that he hadn't heard from her. He asked if I would be willing to put some of it down on paper.

A bit later on he wrote to thank me for the material I had sent to him. "What I have done," he explained, "is to have a chapter 'In the Beginning' by Eva Seeley, and another chapter 'In the Beginning' by Robert J. Zoller. And, he added, "I am printing what you sent, word for word..."

Surprisingly, the Seeley-Riddle book was published just that way. Maybe you saw the book and wondered how this happened. So did I. Could it be that Seeley finally decided the hundreds of AKC-registered Alaskan Malamute champions were really Malamutes after all?

I found out years later in September 1987, when I received another letter from Maxwell Riddle. He told me what had happened.

"After the book was published," he said, "Short Seeley refused to speak to me ever again!"

So that's what happened in our Alaskan Malamute breed in those "Critical Years." Perhaps I have told you a lot more than you really wanted to know. This was a true life adventure and, like life for almost everyone, it was a bit sad in places. But I think it turned out well in the long run - for all of us who love this breed and want it to be the very best it can be.

In retrospect, I am proud of what I did to so affect (and protect) the quality of the Malamutes of today. I don't think about it often, but it hit me recently when Laura and I decided to drop in on a dog show for the first time in more than ten years. There, at quite some distance, we spotted a big male Malamute. "Look," I said, "a Husky-Pak dog!" Anyway, he looked like one, and on closer examination we decided he was the best Malamute we had seen in many years. He was Ch. Vykon Jarva's True Colours, "Sherman," and I did not have to see his pedigree to know that this magnificent dog would never have been born if the events I described herein had turned out differently many years ago. And I'm willing to bet the same is true of virtually every top winning Malamute of the

past twenty years!

For me, my experience with Malamutes was a lot like my involvement in World War II (which isn't a bad analogy, come to think of it). I wouldn't have missed it for anything, but I'd never want to go through it again!

**The End**