

Karl Letonja

Karl was bold, bravely boastful and a beloved braggart who did not believe that the meek shall, or should, inherit the world (of show dogs.) He was a gifted mover and shaker who somehow enchanted every dog he touched and loved every moment of guts and glory his god-given talent and uniquely positive personality demanded of him.

I write this because, besides his kind, patient and loving wife Kathryn, Mike and I knew him best as a friend who, along with another friend, Ellen Hoscheit, tolerated his intense energy. We all recognized his gift with animals and his delight in meeting and joking with new, young, old, grouchy and even meanly disposed members of the Saluki community. He walked his dogs every morning before we started our day. Karl shared the work and gave from his heart!

Karl was a master of the quick retort and a truly gentle man; however, the word humble was not part of his vocabulary. Although he had been involved in the dog show game many years before finding 'Mowat' (Ch. Jen-Eff Che-



PHOTO: ROMAYNE SWITCH

val Rouge), sadly and historically, he will be always be regarded as a nobody of stature, wealth or family background from the boonies of north-eastern Ontario, who had the temerity to win *big time!*

It rained during Best of Breed at the 2004 Saluki Club of America National Specialty in Lexington, Kentucky. From an entry of more than 600 Saluki entries, respected Saluki specialist and breeder-judge Rosemary Lewis of Knightlington Salukis, England, awarded Best of Breed to Karl's girl 'Asawari.' The silence was deafening. Ellen and I were there; we cried.

Yes! I saw it happen thanks to Patsy Hoy, who with umbrella in hand, escorted the year's SCOA Emeritus Award Winner Marge Seimers and party through a back door of the horse barn, to the best seats in the house – directly across from the judges' table. That day, after three long hours in the barn, a pack of two never wavered. I learned the absolute meaning of focus, while witnessing the imagineering of an ultimate dream that we all share – winning the Kentucky National.

Rest in peace, Karl!

– Romayne Switch

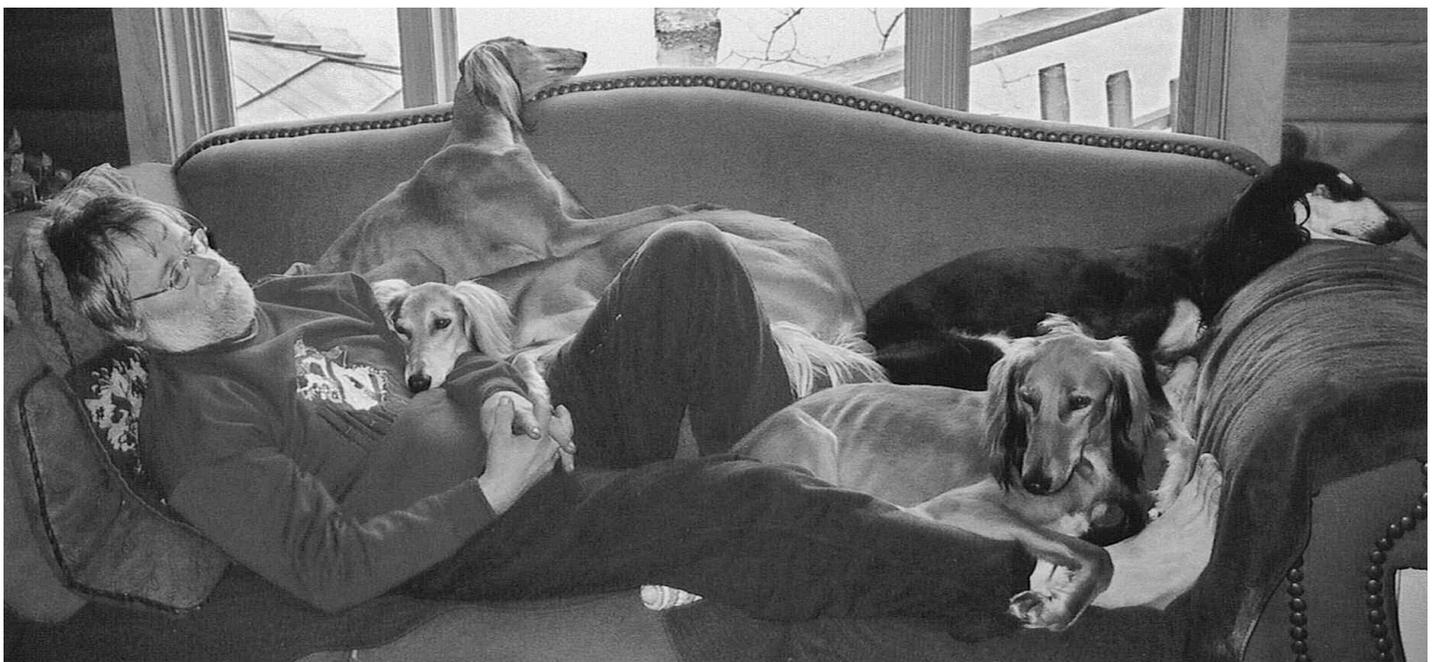


PHOTO: KATHRYN LETONJA