

## An Ancient Passage...A Modern Treasure by Debby Rothman

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Easy reading text..



Stout Hall

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The Gumpa dogs, bred by Lama Gyen Yeshe, were imported from Nepal into Canada in the mid-eighties by Gerald D'Aoust. Curious about the dogs, I let my interest be known in the spring of 2001 after discovering the group had been in the United States for over a year, turned over to Cecile W. Clover. That led to ten Gumpa dogs being delivered to my doorstep August 31, 2001. Ceese and I talked off and on during the next several years, but it was in July 2004 that Ceese, Ruth Gerah and I formed a team. Working together, we expanded Ceese's Kennel Without Walls, establishing the Gumpa Lhasa Apso Preservation Program, now a legal trust.

Although the dogs are registered with UKC, early on I explored other avenues for keeping their records and possible methods of registration. During this exploration I discovered the Society for the Perpetuation of the Desert-Bred Saluki (<http://www.desertbred.org>). Originally started in the seventies as simply a means of record keeping for Salukis not eligible for AKC registration, in 1988 the Society was formed, and is now an AKC recognized domestic registry. The Society's Head Registrar guided me through set-up, helping ensure our internal registry meets stringent requirements.

After establishing the Gumpa Lhasa Apso Preservation Program, we expanded that internal registry into a database, to include, along with UKC registration records, DNA profiling and microchip identification, many physical measurements (i.e., bite of jaw and bite of teeth), health characteristics, breeding priority, inbreeding coefficients (COI), coat color (birth, six months and adult), litter size and many more data. From this information we are able to generate reports, tracking the progress of our breeding approach, which is based on population genetics, diversity principles and management of small populations.

## AN ANCIENT PASSAGE ... A MODERN TREASURE

By  
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Ceese's original introduction to this unique group of dogs came about during a quest to find a Lhasa Apso for her teacher, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche. The following spring 2000 Mr. D'Aoust could no longer care for the dogs and the group was handed over to Ceese. For a short time, the dogs lived on a farm belonging to two friends, fellow students of Lama Tenzin. Not a permanent answer, she came up with the Kennel Without Walls (KWW) concept. KWW dogs live with wonderful, caring — many very spiritual — people who agree to allow the dog to participate in the breeding program.

It was time for me to meet these people and the rest of the dogs. It was time to share the Program's hard work with the Kennel Without Walls people. So....we had a Dog Party!

Arriving late Wednesday evening, I was met at the small Charlottesville airport by Ceese and Ruth. Within five minutes after arriving at Ceese's house — a beautiful old stone house named Stout Hall — Rincin and his caretaker stopped by on their way out of town. For the next three days, what seemed like a constant parade of people and dogs flowed in and out of Stout Hall. People drove from near and far. Some dogs, including the lama's dog, stayed overnight because their families had other commitments. Dogs were 'done up' for the occasion, washed, brushed and coiffed. Entire families proudly accompanied their obviously well-loved dogs. Dogs came and went out the back door into the garden to socialize. People stayed, talked and learned about our work, including Dr. John, Ceese's vet, a Gumpa dog owner



Chris with dogs



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*continued on page 40...*



the world's second largest Tibetan library) and Serenity Ridge, a Tibetan Bon Buddhist retreat in the Blue Ridge Mountains. It was there I entered a Gumpa for the first time in my life.



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Unfortunately, my photography skills dismally affected the photographs taken of each dog. Outstanding head type- particularly eye shape and expression - was apparent in most of the population.

In addition to collecting data on each individual, I made notes on the group as a whole. Taken from those notes:

### ***"General overall impressions of the group..."***

Excellent temperaments - I haven't counted exactly, but we gathered data on nearly 30 dogs. With one exception, I was able to get all of this without incident, including counting incisors, checking jaws and teeth. Most of the dogs were also microchipped. There were complaints from some of the dogs; reaction was to whine, cry or leave, never to bite. As the dogs came and went, there were a couple of small spats (especially when Tigle, just in heat, arrived) that were quickly over. At all times on Saturday there were at least 12 dogs milling around the house and yard.

Bites - were better than I expected - 6 upper incisors; four lower and one female with 5! Most had large teeth, fully erupted. Lots of level jaws, level bites or reverse scissors.



Head type - the measurements may not reflect this, as they seemed quite consistent, but there seemed to be a vast majority of heads more like Taschi-Deleg and Pomya.

Coats - The expected

Persian cat color. Most had apparent points, some cream points, some lighter silver points. As expected coat textures were excellent, harsh, crisp, heavy. The only dog with curlier hair was Nechung.

All intact males had both testicles. 11# seemed to be what most dogs weighed. Most were approximately 10 inches tall. Only 2 were over 11".

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I was surprised not to find more luxating patellas. Those that I found appeared to be mild. Rears were good all in all. A couple of dogs had twists in the pasterns. There were some with prominent pro-sternums, which made some length measurements fairly long."

I have now actually seen all but three dogs in our breeding population and the majority of the entire population. I have a good grip on familial resemblance; physical traits shared by members of the population and which dogs are passing on what traits. In spite of relatively high inbreeding coefficients and familial resemblance, there was some variety in traits. I attribute this to lack of selection towards a written standard.

After the last dog left Saturday night, Ceese, Mac, Ruth, her husband Chris and I sank into chairs around the kitchen table - returning it to its original purpose rather than 'data station'. We celebrated a great Dog Party, toasting, eating and talking into the wee hours of the night... surrounded by dogs at our feet.

Early Sunday morning - 4AM to be exact - Mac, the kind man that drove the dogs under my care to Colorado in August 2001 - tapped on my door, letting me know 'the bird of time is on its wings'. Flying home, high above USA terrain, I thought about the wonderful people I had met. I thought about meeting the lama's wife and his dog. I thought about how the search for that dog started a chain of events leading to the formation of the Gumpa Lhasa Apso Preservation Program. I thought about what a wonderful gift this little piece of Tibetan history brings to fanciers and breeders.

And, what was the last thought as I stood in that Gumpa, awash with bright colors, steeped in the religion of Tibet? Isn't it interesting that it took one lady dedicated to Tibetan history and culture to save these dogs. Because of her efforts, not only have some of the dogs have made their way back into their heritage and culture, (albeit with a western twist), but fanciers have a precious gift from the past.







*Geese with  
Lhasa May pole*

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To learn more about the Gompa Lhasa Apso Preservation Program visit:  
[www.GompaLhasaApso.com](http://www.GompaLhasaApso.com) (formerly [www.lhasaworldregistry.com](http://www.lhasaworldregistry.com))



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