

# The Hunt for A Perfect Golden

*Pure happiness is a Snowshoe Golden Retriever reunion.*

*This five-generation family tree consists of seven tail-wagging housedogs and their equally enthusiastic visiting relatives. With unstoppable energy and boundless joy, these Golden Retrievers run playfully, chasing tennis balls or one another. Snowshoe Golden Retriever breeders Sue and Steve Schnarr glow with pride as they introduce their retriever family.*



"Passion," 4 months old, already loves to chase tennis balls.

Coming back to Inver Grove Heights, Minn., from his home in Waterloo, Iowa, to help tell the Snowshoe story is "Presley," a 7-year-old show champion whose 12 suffix titles make him the most versatile Golden in history. A Master Hunter, member of the Golden Retriever Show Dog Hall of Fame and Outstanding Sire, Presley is a one-of-a-kind male who undoubtedly has proved that Golden Retrievers are not only gorgeous, they also can excel in the obedience ring and can perform multiple marked and blind retrieves in the field.

"Gidget," who is 9 years old and now spayed, is the dam of five Snowshoe litters, one of which brought Presley into the world. Gidget lives with



"Montana" is Snowshoe Golden's top conformation winner. At 9 years of age, he is as regal today as when he was campaigned.

a loving family and their two children in nearby Woodbury. Visiting with her family and their two children from Rosemount is "Honesty," a 6-year-old who was also bred five times, two times to Presley. One of those unions resulted in housedog "Smooch," the No. 1 Golden bitch in 2006.

Smooch and "Flirt," the other resident brood bitch, had litters two days apart last June. Flirt's show-potential puppies are growing up with Brian and Mary Clegg, retired professional handlers who own three boarding kennels in Cincinnati. Two of Smooch's offspring — 4-month-old "Passion" and 12-month-old "Sydney" from her 2007 litter — live with Sue and Steve.

Standing calmly watching his relatives run around is "Montana," a majestic, manly 9-year-old

Golden who also happens to be the canine love of Sue's life. With stunning show-ring presence, Montana won Best of Breed at Westminster in 2003 and was ranked No. 2 in the breed in 2002 and No. 3 in 2003.

Lastly, this Snowshoe reunion includes housedogs "Gracie," 10 1/2 years old, and "Glory," 6 years old. Snowshoe's first Multi-Best in Show winner and 2000's No. 4 Golden, Gracie, the dam of Honesty,



The Snowshoe Golden Retriever family tree includes clockwise from top: Sue with four generations consisting of Smooch, Passion, Honesty and Montana; Bogey, the first home-bred champion, and Panda, the foundation bitch, both whom have died; Sue with a second four-generation line represented by Sydney, Smooch, Honesty and Gracie; and Sue with another four-generation line that includes Sydney, Smooch, Presley and Gidget.



jump-started a steady line of Snowshoe top conformation winners. Glory, who has the same sire and dam as Presley, though whelped from a different litter, is obedience trained and has a Canine Good Citizen title; she will soon become Sue's first therapy dog.

Missing from the lineup are "Panda" and "Bogey," both members of the Golden Retriever Show Dog Hall of Fame. Panda, Snowshoe's foundation bitch, died in January 2007, just weeks shy of turning 16. Bogey, Snowshoe's first home-bred champion and Steve's constant shadow, died in 2006 at age 11 from hemangiosarcoma, a common cancer in Goldens that spreads rapidly throughout the body.

The Schnarrs began with Goldens in 1987 as the proud owners of a pet named "Echo." Steve had wanted a Golden for years, having fond memories of growing up with a Golden named "Nipper." His sister, Mary, gave him Echo as a birthday present. At the time Sue wasn't even sure she liked dogs.

Mary Schnarr, who later married Brian and became Mary Clegg, was herself just getting started professionally in dogs. She, too, had a Golden Retriever. When Mary's Special was diagnosed with hip dysplasia, Steve



and Sue decided to get a show-quality Golden that could be a playmate for Echo and also give Mary something to show.

Three years later, the Schnarrs bred their first Golden Retriever litter.

In 14 years, Snowshoe Golden Retrievers has tallied eight Golden Retriever Show Dog Hall of Fame inductees, seven Awards of Merit and six Top Twenty Awards. They have four Outstanding Dams, two Outstanding Sires and two Best in Show females, a rarity in this male-dominated



Steve designed the Snowshoe Golden Retriever logo shown on this sign.

breed. Their accomplishments have come quickly considering that the Golden is the fourth most popular breed in America.

“There are people who have been in the breed twice as long and not had half of Sue and Steve’s success,” reflects Brian Clegg, who handled Montana, Presley and many other top Snowshoe dogs. “Their mission statement has always been first and foremost to breed family dogs, and second, versatile dogs that can

do whatever you choose whether it is obedience work, hunting trials or dog showing. They have always emphasized health and temperament in producing all-purpose dogs.”

Originally a hunting breed, the Golden Retriever is the result of a cross between a wavy-coated retriever from the 1800s, the water-loving Saint John’s dog of Newfoundland, and a Tweed Water Spaniel. The Golden consistently has ranked among the Top 10 of all breeds, attesting to his popularity as a companion and family dog and versatility as a working and service dog. He also excels in obedience trials, hunt tests and agility.

“Every single one of our friends, except for one who house-sits a Snowshoe Golden belonging to her son, has one of our dogs,” says Steve. “We love the breed and what these dogs do for children and people. We love the companionship of these dogs. They definitely keep us young.”

Much of the Snowshoe success has to do with the Schnarrs’ competitive, take-charge nature. Sue is executive vice president of a property management company, and Steve is the owner of an electrical contract company and a hobby wildlife artist. He created the Snowshoe logo with its alpine look featuring three snow-covered



Sue handled Montana (AM/CAN Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CH Snowshoe’s Escape to Big Sky, SDHF) to his Best of Breed win at the Greater Twin Cities Golden Retriever Club Speciality in 2004.

evergreens that represent the early threesome — Steve, Sue and Mary.

Since breeding their first litter in 1994, Sue and Steve have bred or co-bred 34 Snowshoe litters, producing 32 conformation champions. Twenty-six of those champions are descendants of their foundation bitch, AM/CAN CH Arieh Pandamonium In Our Time, SDHF, OD (“Panda”).

Panda was hand-selected by Mary and Sue in 1991. “Mary found Panda’s litter,” says Sue. “She researched pedigrees and watched videos to study movement. We flew to South Carolina to choose a puppy from Trina Boggs and were told we could have the fourth pick of the litter. Mary and I picked the same pup.

“I had no clue what it meant to have a show dog. Panda was born in March and then Mary took her to the National Specialty in September as a 6-month-old, where she won second in her class. I didn’t realize the importance until I saw her win her class at the Land O’ Lakes Kennel Club show. I thought, ‘This is cool.’ I was hooked instantly.

“But, you don’t always win, and that makes the search and hunt all the more exciting.”

During her career, Panda, who was handled by Mary, won 23 Bests of Breed and 17 Group placements. She finished her championship quickly at 21 months of age with back-to-back majors. Six months later she was inducted into the Show Dog Hall of Fame. In 1993, Panda was ranked as the No. 3 Golden bitch and was No. 7 in all systems.

Steve gets credit for choosing the sire of Panda’s first litter. “Steve met ‘James’ (AM/CAN CH Asterling’s Wild Blue Yonder, OS, SDHF) at a dog show and thought he was the most gorgeous dog. He absolutely fell in love with him,” Sue explains. “Later James became the all-time winning Golden in the history of the breed with 52 Bests in Show. Mary Burke of Glendale, Wisconsin, owned James, and she agreed we could have one of his pups.



Professional handler Mary Clegg campaigned BIS CH Snowshoe’s Kiss for Luck, SDHF (“Smooch”), the No. 1 Golden bitch in 2006.



Brian Clegg, a professional handler and Sue and Steve’s brother-in-law, handled Montana at more than 250 shows in 2003, including his Best of Breed win at Westminster, above.

“We were thrilled to get a boy, Asterling’s Love Em & Leap Em, out of James. We called him ‘Clark Gable.’ The puppy finished his championship at a young age. He had just won a Group First in Duluth, Minnesota, on Sunday, and then on Tuesday, he snuck a boneless pork chop from the kitchen counter, choked and died. He was only 2 and was supposed to be bred to Panda. Within hours she was in season.”

So that’s how Panda was bred to James. Dubbed the “Star” litter and the start of naming puppies with a theme, the breeding produced nine Golden puppies, four became show champions. Panda was bred four more times. “We take very good care of our bitches, and it works well for us to breed our bitches back to back when they are young,” says Sue.

“We were very lucky we started with Panda,” she says. “We acquired two other females that became two different lines. Our best success is that we have now crossed the lines by breeding Presley daughters to Montana and Montana daughters to Presley. We have taken the best traits of both and have capitalized on them.”

As Sue explains the Snowshoe pedigrees, the linebreedings and outcrosses, it is hard to believe she was a novice 14 years ago. “Montana and Gracie are products of outcrosses,” she says. “Honesty became the next generation, and then Presley and Honesty became Smooch. Passion, our puppy from Smooch’s latest litter, is the result of a linebreeding on the ‘ grandsire theory.’ Montana, the sire, is Smooch’s grandsire on her dam’s side.”

Sue is quick to credit her brother-in-law, Brian Clegg with helping to educate her about Golden Retrievers. “We owe a lot to Brian,” she says. “He bred under Goldsmith Goldens for 20 years before we got involved.”

Likewise, Brian praises Sue for having a natural eye for dogs. “Sue is a fast learner,” he says. “Early on I taught her about what to look for in a dog’s attitude and body structure, but she quickly learned to judge the total look of the dog. I help her pick puppies for showing, but she and I always agree.”

In choosing puppies Sue considers “the whole picture, the phenotype,” she says. “I look at head type, the way the puppy stands, his movement, and whether he has ‘it.’”

Elaborating, she says, “‘It’ is an attitude that says, ‘Look at me, ain’t I cute?’”

Pointing to puppies Sydney and Passion, Sue says, “They have it.

“Real good ones never lose it. They never go through a geeky stage in adolescence. They grow proportionally and do not become high in the leg, or gangly, nor long in the body or high in the rear. They don’t lose head type or get a snipey nose. Those born with it have it from the git-go.”

## Goldens Born With ‘It’

Gracie, whelped in 1998 from Panda’s last litter, definitely had “it.” Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CH Snowshoe’s High Society, SDHF is beloved for her wonderful personality and for being Snowshoe’s first multiple Best in Show winner.

Another female that definitely had it is Gidget, CH Snowshoe’s All American Girl, whelped from a 1999 outcross between Snowshoe’s “Reo”



Steve and Sue pose with two senior members of the Snowshoe Golden Retriever family. Gracie, 10, their first Multi-Best in Show winner, is at left, and Montana is at right.

and “Casey” (CH Snowshoe’s Starring At Bat), Bogey’s littermate brother. “At the 1999 GRCA (Golden Retriever Club of America) National, Gidget won the 6-to-9 month puppy bitch class, beating over 60 puppies, and went on to win Best Puppy, defeating over 400 puppies,” says Sue. “She went on just a few months later to win a Best of Breed from the puppy classes.”

Montana, one of nine pups from Snowshoe’s “Escape” litter, was also whelped in 1999. His dam, AM/CAN CH Goldsmith California Sunshine (“Callie”), who the Schnarrs bought after she finished her championship, was bred to CH Gangway’s Sweeter Than Whine, OS (“Vino”). Montana, or AM/CAN Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS CH Snowshoe’s

Escape to Big Sky, SDHF, is Snowshoe's top conformation winner.

Heavily campaigned, Montana, handled by Brian Clegg, was shown at more than 250 shows in 2003, the year he finished No. 3, following 2002's No. 2 finish. Glen and Karen Lownsbey of Croix Goldens in Lake Elmo, Minn., became co-owners, helping to finance Montana's campaign.

"Some would say that Montana's head is overdone," says Sue. "But I think you have to go to the extreme to preserve head type. In breeding to him, we've not gotten his extreme but rather beautiful heads. He adds depth to bitches with more narrow heads."

Montana also has "plentiful bone," contributing to his solid structure and exquisite side gait. "Montana is very clean, coming and going," Sue explains. "A Golden Retriever should have a smooth, powerful, well-coordinated gait

in which the legs move symmetrically. Montana definitely has this, and he passes it on to his offspring."

Choosing whether to keep Montana or his littermate brother "Cougar" was difficult as both showed potential. As it turned out, the brother, Snowshoe's Wild Escape ("Cougar"), was sold to Carolina Bibolini, a

breeder from Argentina who Brian Clegg introduced to the Schnarrs. While Montana was winning show after show in America, Cougar was doing the same in Argentina. Bibolini also has "Poker" (Snowshoe's Luck of the Draw), Smooch's brother and the No. 1 Golden in Argentina in 2006 when Smooch was the No. 1 bitch in the United States.

Other Snowshoe Golden Retrievers have been sold to breeders in Venezuela, Mexico, China and Thailand.

"After Montana won at the Garden we received inquiries about our puppies from breeders in other countries. We also have learned about international breeders from our friends who are judges," says Sue.

Presley, the Snowshoe relative visiting from Iowa, came from Gidget's first litter of six males and five females, whelped in June 2001. His full name is BISS CH Snowshoe's Girl Crazy, SDHF, OS, JH, SH, MH, CDX, CD, UD, WCX, WC, VCX, DDHF. Credit for training and handling Presley for hunting tests, obedience and working certificate titles goes to Jack Stevens, with whom Presley now lives.

"Presley is one of those amazing versatile Golden Retrievers that could be shown in the ring one day, and then turn around the next day to sit, stay and retrieve at a hunt test," says Steve. "He won Best in Show at the Minnesota Golden Retriever Specialty in 2006, and then the next day got another leg on the Master Hunter title. He represents what Golden Retrievers are all about. They should be beautiful as they lie by your feet near the fireplace, yet capable of being a gentleman's hunting dog that performs in the field."

An Outstanding Sire, Presley also has reproduced himself through several offspring, one of which is Smooch, or BIS CH Snowshoe's Kiss for Luck SDHF. Smooch, who was handled by Mary Clegg, came from 2004's "Luck"



Presley, the most versatile Golden in history, leaps into the water to retrieve. At age 3, Presley became the youngest Golden to achieve a Master Hunter title and be inducted into the Show Dog Hall of Fame. Above left: Jack Stevens and Presley are pictured with ribbons earned at hunting tests. Presley now lives with Jack, who trained him in fieldwork, and his wife, Bev.



Presley has reproduced himself through daughter Smooch, left. His likeness is also seen in granddaughter Sydney, middle, pictured as a puppy.

litter whelped by Honesty, or Snowshoe's Best Policy. Poker, Smooch's littermate brother, also is a reproduction of Presley with a stamp for Presley's head.

## Making Room for Dogs

Easing into a big leather chair to talk about Snowshoe Golden Retrievers, Sue is immediately surrounded by Montana, Glory and Flirt, who calmly lie down at her feet. Montana sits up and gives her hand a friendly nudge, a polite way of asking to be petted. No wonder she and Steve fell in love with the breed.

Ten acres in the heart of Inver Grove Heights' horse country is where Steve and Sue had their house built in 1997. They designed the finished lower level expressly for their dogs.

"The idea was to have a multi-level house that provided a comfortable space for the dogs," Steve says. "The lower level has its own air conditioner, furnace and air-exchange system."

Entering the dogs' quarters on the lower level is a family area with comfortable leather furniture, office area and built-in custom cabinetry. Around the corner is the official kennel, although dogs that are house-trained have full run of the lower level. Beautiful artwork, portraits, mementos and stained glass, all decorated with Golden Retrievers, can be found throughout.

Tiled walls and flooring make the kennel ideal for caring for dogs. A raised grooming tub is used for the weekly baths given to show dogs in coat training; retired adult dogs are bathed monthly. Besides the tub, the large open kennel room has ample counter space, a television, wire crates and dog beds. A separate laundry room is part of the kennel.

The whelping room sits off the main kennel room. Puppies gradually transition from the whelping box to X-pens and then to the open kennel room.



Sue bathes Sydney in the kennel's raised grooming tub. At right: Sue leads Passion from one of four traditional chain link indoor-outdoor runs that adjoin the lower level of the house; each is 5-by-20 feet outside and 5-by-10 feet inside.

Both Steve and Sue work full time, so they have a kennel worker who comes each day for four hours to help care for the dogs. A weekend nanny has her own bedroom at their house so she can stay when they travel.

Many dreams have come true for Sue and Steve. "In breeding, the goal is to outproduce the dam and better the breed," Sue says. "I know Smooch is better than Honesty and Passion is hopefully as good or better than Smooch. We have now bred five healthy generations that have tested clear for hip, elbow, heart and eye diseases."

Sue also is proud of the consistent look stamped in Snowshoe Golden Retrievers. "Our line of dogs has a distinct head type that is seen in their softness of expression, the width of the top of their skull, and the depth and width of the muzzle."

So it is that the Snowshoe Golden Retriever family tree has very deep ties. No wonder when the resident dogs and the visiting relatives get together it is always a happy, tail-wagging good time. ■



Gracie looks on eagerly as Sue prepares her dinner. Snowshoe Golden Retrievers exclusively eat Purina Pro Plan brand dog food.

