

INE: Welcome all. Today I'm happy to interview Peggy Newton, author, researcher, retired registered nurse and owner of two beautiful show Samoyeds.

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Lou Blue

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INE: Hi Peggy. Thank you for agreeing to this interview. Tell us more about yourself and your hobbies.

PN: Unfortunately, since we spoke, my big beautiful boy, UKC Ch Majestic's Argenteau Meuse (Lou Blue) has passed away.

So, I am down to one female Samoyed, Majestic's Arctic Foxfire (JoJo).

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JoJo

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Samoyeds have been part of my family since 1981. They were bred thousands of years ago in the Russian Arctic Circle to herd reindeer and pull sleds. Although they are powerful and energetic,

they have a softer side because they were used in their nomadic owners' tents to keep them warm – a primitive electric blanket. Aggressiveness was bred out over centuries.

My Samoyeds have participated, not just in conformation shows, but also herding, tracking, sled pulling and obedience. I am most proud of their work as therapy dogs for ten years in a local hospital's rehab unit.

Samoyeds have a double coat – harsh guard hairs and a dense undercoat which can be spun into an angora-like yarn known as chiengora. The yarn is made from their brushings – the dog is not shaved. I have learned to spin their wool and have several garments made from their fur.

The breed's affable nature – they are known for their Sammy smile – makes them perfect companions. Considering my involvement with the breed, it is no wonder that, when information about the woman who brought them to America literally dropped into my lap, the pursuit was on...

INE: You have a third dog; does she do therapy dog work at hospitals?

PN: Yes, I also have Honey, a twelve-pound Bichon/Cavalier mix – the Samoyeds' pet. She believes that she is forty-one-pound JoJo's mother. But she is a little too shy for pet therapy.

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Honey

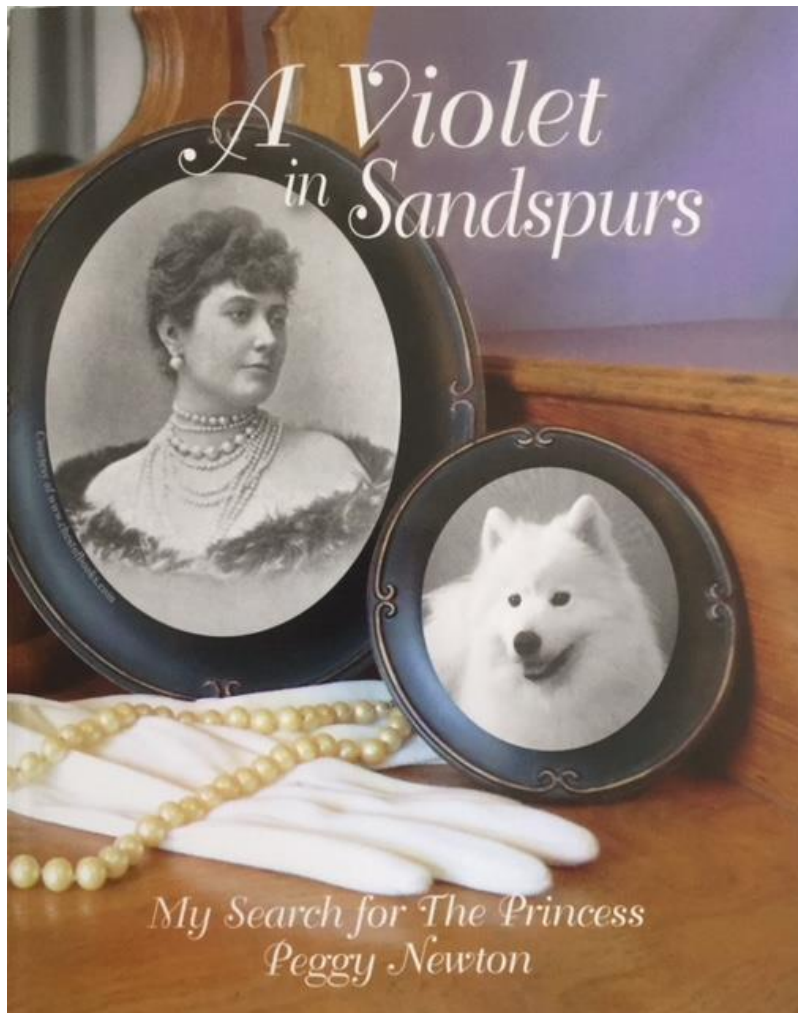
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INE: You've authored a few books. Tell us what you are most proud of for each one.

PN: Nursing has been my profession of fifty years. Writing two books since retirement has, itself, been an achievement and a point of pride.

My first published book, *A Violet in Sandspurs*, has corrected and expanded the Samoyed Fancy's knowledge base regarding the woman who brought the first Samoyed to this country. Previous Samoyed literature contained very little information about the Belgian Princess, Rosalie de Mercy Argenteau. While *A Violet in Sandspurs* is well-documented, it is not pedantic and reads like a novel.

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The Princess' saga of transition from the privileged life of a hereditary princess of the Holy Roman Empire - to marrying a one-armed lion tamer - to bankruptcy and a suspicious death in Tampa reflects the influences of her place in time (1862-1925); her sex; her association with the hedonistic nobility; and her underlying spirituality. I am proud that a copy of *A Violet in Sandspurs* is in the AKC Museum of the Dog in New York City.

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Belgian Princess, Rosalie de Mercy Argenteau

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Under the Cap, my second very different book is currently being edited and should be available at year's end. The title was inspired by the founding Dean of the University of Florida's College of Nursing, Dorothy Smith, whose mantra was: "It's not what's on your head (cap) but what's in it." The book chronicles the transition of a young aspirant – me –to maternity nurse, educator, oncology nurse, home health nurse and geriatric liaison.

Under the Cap is a memoir of my fifty years of nursing. My friends called me the womb to tomb nurse, working with dying patients while teaching childbirth class. It was amazing how much I remembered! The memoir will interest prospective nurses and the lay public who might lose some preconceived ideas about nursing [after reading it]. It will definitely affirm working nurses everywhere.

INE: Let us in on the steps you follow for your writing process.

PN: The books are entirely different. Their only commonality - they are non-fiction biography. I have the utmost admiration and respect for my imaginative friends who write fiction.

A Violet in Sandspurs began as an effort to unravel a mystery. I accrued information over ten years while working full time. I joined several on-line newspaper archives, accessed state documents, read several memoirs and nineteenth century historical references.

The difficult part was knowing when to stop collecting data and to start writing. After the first few drafts, I asked friends with various areas of expertise to serve as beta readers. The result of their input was a complete re-ordering of the manuscript with more Floridiana inclusions.

Striving for accuracy forced me to become a little OCD with greater than three-hundred bibliography citations and one-hundred images. Working with those and multiple quotations made the final polishing mechanical and tedious.

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Under the Cap was a different process entirely since it relied solely on my own memories. At different points in my career, I had journaled. Journals bolstered my memories, fleshing them out.

For both books, the process was to write sequentially and then return to substitute more descriptive and specific nouns and verbs; to rid sentences of unnecessary modifiers and qualifiers.

In the process, I discovered that my normal speech patterns are speckled with modifiers and qualifiers. Perhaps that reflects my mid-twentieth century woman's acculturation to soften my message's impact – thus negating it. That was at odds with my intent in writing and a source of frustration during the process.

INE: You did a lot of research for your book, A Violet in Sandspurs. What is one of the most weird and wonderful experiences you encountered?

PN: I had an interest in Samoyeds and Samoyed history for a long time but suddenly, information about their long-deceased USA “mother” began to drop, unbidden, right into my lap – finding Argenteau Castle, finding her grave, finding her love letters – and weirdest of all, a Buff Orpington chicken leading to the discovery of her true whereabouts in Florida when the entire Samoyed Fancy believed her in California.

It was an incognito of her own choosing. Those were the weirdest, even spookiest experiences. At times, it felt like the Princess was speaking to me.

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Argenteau Castle, Pinellas Point, Florida

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Buff Orpington chicken

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A very pleasant experience throughout my efforts was meeting so many absolutely good and helpful people willing to go the extra mile to aid me in my quest. In these contentious times, I find that totally refreshing and uplifting.

INE: Where are some of the places you travelled to gather your research?

PN: I discovered the Princess' Tampa grave, visited Argenteau Castle in Pinellas Point, Ybor City, Belmont Heights, Central Florida and Bartow. A friend investigated papers in the Library of Congress and in Russia's Tretyakov Museum. I discovered letters to her from a former lover, written in French on yellowed paper now in the Largo Library.

INE: What are the top three tidbits you can offer authors taking on a similar challenge?

PN: 1. For the historical mystery/biography: Organize, organize, organize. Be methodical about your research.

2. Keep an accurate record of your sources to prevent future backtracking.

3. For the personal memoir: relax and enjoy it. The memories will come.

INE: What is your favorite quote?

PN: Generally: The best advice from my high school nun:

“Do good and be brave.”

“Mrs. Newton, where is your dignity?” “I have no dignity, Sister.”

“No, your cap, where is your cap?”

~ Under the Cap

“I wanted no sympathy. I hate pity. I have suffered and still can suffer alone, burying my dead within my heart.”

~ A Violet in Sandspurs

INE: Who is your favorite author?

PN: I love poetry and have many favorite authors. Tennyson, Browning and Poe are a few. I am particularly fond of narrative poetry. My guilty pleasure is an addiction to mysteries. My favorite writers are Mary Roberts Rhinehart, Agatha Christie, Virginia Lanier, Susan Conant, Laurien Berenson and James Patterson.

INE: Is there anything else you would like to add?

PN: If any of your followers read the book, I would be interested in their feedback. So far, I have been amazed at readers' gravitation toward the Princess and their insights about her behavior.

INE: How can readers discover more about you and your books?

PN: A Violet in Sandspurs is available for \$12 on Amazon books. The Amazon web page includes a more detailed description. I also have a few and can be reached at arkangel16@verizon.net

Under the Cap should be available on Amazon by the end of the year. Samoyed Fanciers can reach me through the Samoyed Fanciers of Central Florida.

INE: Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to take part in this interview. Best of luck and much success for the future.

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INE Note: answers are provided by the interviewee and are not altered by INE unless the response is deemed inappropriate for a general audience or minor edits are required.