

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS DOG?

By Barbara Schaefer
assisted by Kathy Miyoshi and Charlene LaBelle

Gateway has had a pretty exciting year. He earned 120+ miles in 4 races towards his Sled Dog degree. He and his Jr. Handler, Stephaine House, earned several 1st place placements in Junior Showmanship competitions (dog shows). He earned 6 points towards his AKC Championship. One of those points he earned Saturday, May 19, 2001 in Ogden, Utah; unfortunately he didn't make it to the show on Sunday.

May 19, 2001, around 10 p.m. Gateway was tucked away for the night in his crate by his friend and handler Barbara House. He had several other dogs as company in Barbara's locked van in the parking lot of the Comfort Inn in Layton, Utah. At 5:30 a.m. on Sunday, May 20, Barbara went out to the van to walk dogs. To her horror she found that the back window of her van was smashed in and that Gateway had been meticulously stolen. The perpetrator or perpetrators left 2 other Siberians and 3 English Mastiffs, closed the crate door, and carefully closed the doors of the van after removing Gateway from his crate. That moment began the mad nation-wide hunt for Gateway.

Don't panic! THIS story has a HAPPY ending! This story really does have a good ending. Unfortunately most of the lost/stolen Siberian stories do not. Because of our success I was asked to describe what we did and what we would have done differently next time (heaven forbid there is a next time) so that others may learn from our experience and hopefully have success stories of their own.

Here is Gateway's amazing story:

Immediately upon discovering he was missing, Barbara House called the Police and then promptly called me and John. (Thank goodness for cell phones and home offices!) We faxed a photo of



Gateway to the motel for the police to use for their report. The officer that responded is a dog owner and took this incident personally. He took copies of the photo immediately to the local PETSMART nearby, as well as Animal Control, and spent time that day driving the neighborhood looking for Gateway.

John got going with making up a flier which he then emailed to the local Kirkos (address and phone number found on Kirkos web page <http://kirkos.com>). He gave his credit card number and had 500 card stock quality fliers made up within 1 hour. A basic poster that was easy to read from a short distance. The information was simply:

**!REWARD!
STOLEN DOG,
a photo of Gateway,
our home phone number**

I called my dear friend, Kathy Miyoshi, and asked her to get going on getting the word out to dog-related email lists. Kathy M. dropped everything and started work right away. We had no idea if Gateway was still in Layton. Perhaps, since he was stolen from the motel parking lot near a traveling thoroughfare, he was in some other state by now. Kathy M. also contacted some of her local rescue contacts who got on the band

wagon (thank you Marilyn, Jacques Porter, and Randee McQueen). Charlene LaBelle (Belle Kennels) heard the news and quickly assisted Kathy in getting the word out on additional lists. Email lists do not allow attachments so Melissa Beers (Sibertopia) made a web page on Gateway, <http://beerstm.home.net.com.com/gateway>, this way information could be easily and quickly distributed to lists. Later on, the information was also made available to our local sledging club's web page as well as other internet sites.

While Kathy M. was doing her piece I coordinated efforts and searched the internet for Siberian breeders and shelters in Utah. I found Kathy Stender in Ogden, Utah, and luckily for me she didn't mind me calling her so early in the morning and she wasn't at the show. Kathy S. and I had met at a dog show years ago and she remembered me. Kathy S. offered to put up fliers, personally contact the local shelter and prominent community figures, as well as house Gateway if he were found. Kathy S. also agreed to act as my "local contact" since I was in California. When Barbara House was done with the police she cleaned the glass out of the back of her van as best she could and headed to the show grounds with the dogs and her twin daughters, Stephanie and Lauren. Stephanie and Lauren took care of getting the dogs settled and organized for the show while Barbara alerted the Show Committee and passed out fliers to everyone there. Barbara went back to Layton and put up posters. By 10 a.m. posters were up all over the area that Gateway was stolen. Barbara returned to the show grounds and talked with as many people possible, passing out even more fliers and asking folks to post them at truck stops, gas stations, and restaurants as they were driving home.

In the meantime, I discovered a fab-

ulous site <http://petfinders.com>. This site lists Animal Welfare Organizations by state with email addresses and phone numbers. Being Sunday, these organizations were closed so I sent them emails with a photo of Gateway. John used <http://mapquest.com> to print a map of the general area where Gateway was stolen so we had a better idea of where to focus our efforts. John logged into <http://yellowpages.com> to locate vets, pet stores, groomers, kennels, and schools in the area (www.411.com is a similar site). John faxed a flier to each and everyone of the business that were open on Sunday. He faxed to the remaining businesses on Monday (when we could call and get their fax numbers). In hindsight, what these agencies really needed was the generic "lost" flier plus more complete details and stats on Gateway.

Once I felt comfortable the local area was being covered I sent out email messages to Siberian Husky breeders and friends in neighboring states including a color photo of Gateway. I asked these folks to contact their local agencies and I offered to pay for the printing of fliers at their local copy shop if they'd be willing to put up fliers focusing on vets, pet stores, groomers, truck stops, and shelters. I remembered the deadline for the ISHC NEWS and SHCA Newsletter was fast approaching so I called Pam Thomas right away and emailed Olivia Harvey to place an ad in these publications.

Layton's local newspapers were closed on Sunday so I called first thing Monday morning to place a brief ad with a photo (brief just like the fliers). The end result of all this activity was that by Noon on Sunday, 6 long hours after discovering Gateway missing, everyone at the dog show, most businesses within the general area of Gateway's abduction, and half the world knew that Gateway had been stolen.

Barbara House got a list of the Layton area shelters and called each to get their fax numbers. Barbara provided this list to me and I faxed a flier to each of these agencies. We faxed our generic "lost" flier to these agencies. (For the animal control agencies we should also have included Gateway's stats. Luckily Gateway's markings are so distinguishing that a photo covered most of it.) Kathy and I spent most of Monday on the internet and on the phone answering

and responding to ideas and offers to help.

Monday late afternoon we got a message from an animal shelter in Utah. They had a collarless dog that met Gateway's description. The local authorities had found him running along the highway about 10 miles south of where he was abducted. There were no leads. Animal Control said "local authorities found him running along the highway in Farmington" (about 10 miles South of Layton, Utah). The local police figure it was teenage boys who stole him. After they saw the community involvement to find him they decided to turn him loose (good kids who made a bad decision and didn't want to have anything to do with him). Another friend of a friend, Stephanie Howells (Mastiff Rescue), picked him up from the shelter and housed him overnight until my husband John could get to Utah from California to pick him up. Gateway sat in the backseat of the rental car telling John all about his adventures every step of the way home from Utah to California. If only we could understand!

Why did we recover Gateway? Lots of LUCK as well as tons of good thoughts for his speedy return from around the world. The major things we had in our favor were:

4 people all working together to locate Gateway within an hour of noticing him missing. That number doubled and tripled throughout the day. By the end of the day thousands of people knew Gateway was stolen and were doing what they could to help find him.

Well stocked home office with a scanner, fax, copier and high speed internet connection (<http://www.Starband.com>). Really good computer skills: email, internet searching, making up fliers, scanning photos, etc.

A great photo showing Gateway's distinctive features readily available.

Not being afraid to ask for help- for example, calling Kathy Stender who I hadn't seen or talked with in years.

Getting the word out quickly. Including phoning key people who had been sent emails and had not responded because they weren't on line at the moment.

Including the time, date, including year, in the body of the emails so that folks understood the urgency.

Here were our plans if Gateway were not recovered so quickly:

Travel to Layton, Utah to spend about a week 'pounding the streets' and continue to travel there for a few days every month or so.

Continue faxing description and phoning in an increasingly larger area of agencies and shelters (going state by state).

Weekly reminders to agencies local to Layton.

Reminders to email lists, spreading the word to as many people as possible.

What would I recommend to you to prepare you for this emergency? Right now, not tomorrow, get all those dogs of yours tattooed and/or microchipped. Take really good, show quality, photos of your dogs emphasizing any distinguishing features. Keep a clear color copy of these photos with you when traveling. Set yourself up to (or have a network of friends who can) scan photos, email, and fax. (John usually has his laptop with him when traveling, now I'll ensure it's with us-with photos of our dogs already scanned on his machine.) Keep with you, organized, all your 'contact' numbers for friends and family you can call on in an emergency.

How can you help to prevent this happening to you? If you are unable to bring dogs in your hotel room with you consider using a battery operated baby monitor so you can hear if anything disturbing happens with your vehicle. Car alarm? Don't know about this one, some of my dogs are big enough to set off the alarm just with turning around in their crates <g>, but if it works for you, do it! I understand you can get special alarms that do not sense motion but rather listen for the sound of breaking glass. Bars or grills across windows that block access to locks, should the window be broken in the attempt to gain access to your vehicle.

A huge THANK YOU to all those hundreds of un-named folks that aided us in this time of need. All of you played a part in locating our Gateway, it was an incredible effort. Gateway's safe return shows how much can be accomplished when we all pull together. We could not have done it without you.

Barbara Schaefer & John Berdner
Qualobo Siberians