

These Pembroke Welsh Corgis have touched the lives of both their owners and online fans. By Jen Reeder

# LARGER THAN Life



*Jojo in his trademark life vest*

Courtesy, Josephine Zosar



Gatsby at Crater Lake

Everywhere Ryen Lung goes, people tell him, “I got a Corgi because of you.” That’s because the Bay Area resident loves to create YouTube videos of his Pembroke Welsh Corgi, Gatsby—and they’ve amassed a huge online following.

Back in 2014 when Lung brought the little puppy home, his friends and family were surprised by his breed choice, sometimes even calling it a little “weird.” Like Lung, they were previously unfamiliar with the breed.

Lung had always considered himself a “big dog” person, but he was renting an apartment with weight restrictions on pets. So he started researching smaller dog breeds and grew intrigued by Corgis.

“They always describe Corgis as a big dog trapped in a small dog’s body, in the sense that their personalities were so big that they match more of a big dog,” he says. “Then I watched a few videos on YouTube and I’m like, ‘Oh, I do see the appeal.’ I feel like they’re really magical.”

During his first year with spirited pup Gatsby, Lung “vlogged” on YouTube, posting on his Great Gatsby Corgi channel every single day. The intelligent, happy dog charmed viewers with his

upbeat antics—like popping under his round dog bed and then scooting around the room with it on his back like a flying saucer.

After a year together, Lung made a 46-minute compilation video with the best snippets from each day—and it went viral.

“You could see him grow up in one year from the day I got him to one year later,” he says. “It has 25 million views ... people say that’s what convinced them to get a Corgi.”

### Living Life to the Fullest

Now they’ve shared 12 years of adventures with their fans, from rollicking road trips to Gatsby’s treatments for nasal cancer following a 2022 diagnosis.

The past several years have involved intense treatments, including radiation that caused dental issues, and a separate diagnosis of adrenal cancer that required surgery. But Gatsby beat the odds.

“After his cancer diagnosis, they said that he had one year, that the median survival rate for nasal cancer is about one year after treatment before it comes back. So I think the first year, I just spent the whole year just being sad and

waiting around for the year to end, which was really bad,” Lung says. “I felt very frustrated about that. Last year was the year when I was just like, ‘He’s actually still doing really well, and it is three years after the treatment. He’s lasted way longer than the median.’ So we have to take advantage of all the time that we have together.”

That’s why in 2025, they took three epic road trips. Springtime saw a jaunt to Las Vegas. In summer, they drove to visit a friend in Vancouver, Canada, stopping at scenic spots like Oregon’s Crater Lake National Park along the way. In fall, they make the trek to Fort Collins, Colorado, for the annual Tour de Corgi, a meetup that brings thousands of Corgis and their people to the Centennial State.

Along the way, Lung shared updates on social media, to the delight of Gatsby’s legions of followers. Gatsby himself seemed delighted to be adventuring, and particularly loved heading to a Major League Baseball game to cheer for the Seattle Mariners at a dog-friendly “Bark at the Park” event. Lung thinks it was the highlight of his beloved dog’s year.

“He was so excited to walk with



all the dogs and all his peers. He was definitely acting like a puppy again,” he says. “I saw his eyes were super lit up with life.”

Thanks to their adventures together over the years, Gatsby has taught Lung valuable life lessons. For instance, when Gatsby went sledding in Lake Tahoe, or ran on an open beach along the Oregon coastline, the Corgi showed him how to live.

“Both of those times I just spent my time watching him and his face and seeing how he was living his life in that

moment,” he recalls. “Nothing really mattered except for whatever was in front of him—the sledding and the snow and the sand—and he was just running and enjoying his time. So I think the main thing that he really taught me is to just look through his eyes and appreciate the moment and just to be present.”

Lung loves sharing his amazing dog with others. He’s created numerous calendars of Gatsby with eye-popping photos by photographer Kohki Yamaguchi, and sends an upbeat photo and story about Gatsby each month to members of the Corgi on Fleek “Ray of Sunshine” Club.

### Going Viral

Lung’s not surprised that Corgis have become so popular in the age of social media. It’s notable that the Pembroke Welsh Corgi has been in the top 20 most registered AKC breeds over the last decade or so—but 30 years ago, the breed was barely breaking into the top 40.

Cardigan Welsh Corgis have also seen their popularity rise over time. The breed was the 65th-most popular AKC breed in 2025, while in the 1990s it was found in the low-80s to high-90s portion of the list.

For Lung, getting to see Corgis in action online changed everything.



*Josephine Zosa with her dogs Kilo and Jojo*



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Gatsby and Ryen enjoy a sunset at Whiskeytown Lake in California.

“So many of them are so sassy. They have these strong, funny personalities. As I mentioned, that was one of the reasons why I was attracted to them. They’re very expressive dogs. It’s very loud the way that it comes through,” Lung says. “And also, of course, their bodies are so cute and magic.”

Josephine Zosa agrees that there is something special about Corgis that helps make them so wildly popular on

social media and in real life, from their intellect to special skills like herding sheep. Her own famous Corgi, Jojo, has defied expectations of the breed and garnered an outsized online following thanks in part to his surfing prowess.

“Jojo did so many things when he was younger,” she says. “With Corgis,

people think they can’t hike because of their short legs, but they can. And they love hiking.”

Jojo, now 16, loved outdoor adventures like hiking, kayaking, and surfing. He learned to surf as part of his rehabilitation after being attacked by two dogs near his home in San Diego, California.



Gatsby at a Seattle Mariners game



Gatsby glamping in the Pacific Northwest

Courtesy Ryen Lung

## Pembroke and Cardigan: Two Corgi Breeds

While both Corgi influencers featured in this story are Pembroke Welsh Corgis, it's important to recognize that the Cardigan Welsh Corgi, while similar—it's still a Corgi, after all—is a separate and distinct breed of its own.

The quickest way to tell the difference between the two Corgis at a glance is by checking their tails: The Pembroke has a short, docked tail while the Cardigan has a longer, foxlike tail.

Cardigans also have larger and more rounded ears than the Pembroke. The Cardigan also has a slightly larger, more rounded type of body. There are also more acceptable coat colors for the Cardigan.

The histories of the breeds are much different as well, with the Cardigan having a much older lineage. For more on the differences between the two Corgi breeds, check out [this article on AKC.org](#).



The Cardigan Welsh Corgi comes in a wider variety of colors than the Pembroke Welsh Corgi.

He nearly lost his life but rebounded and proved a natural at balancing on a surfboard.

Wearing his signature life vest with a little shark fin, Jojo—known to his fans on social media as Super Corgi Jojo—placed first in his very first canine surf competition and raised \$1,000 for the nonprofit Helen Woodward Animal Center. He went on to win surf competitions in Hawaii, Florida, and Costa Rica—raising money for good causes along the way.

Back at home, Jojo volunteered in surfing classes for children with disabili-

ties. He also became a therapy dog in school “Read to a Dog” literacy programs, for patients in hospice care, and for members of the military and their families through the USO.

“Jojo taught me, ‘Just be kind, be patient, do things with the kindness of your heart,’” Zosa says. “We just love volunteer work.”

She also loves receiving messages from Jojo’s fans about when he’s helped them through a hard time or welcomed home a Corgi because of Jojo. Sometimes she receives children’s drawings of Jojo, or even photos of graduation cakes featuring Jojo from kids who grew up following his adventures on social media. (Jojo is also the subject of the picture book *A Tale of Two Corgis: Kilo and Jojo Go to Hawaii*.)

That online community rallied to support Jojo in August 2023 when he was diagnosed with degenerative myelopathy (DM), a spinal cord disease that can lead to paralysis. Zosa broke the news in a tearful social media post and was soon flooded with messages of support—and advice, such as ways to make him comfortable and a tip to get him a canine wheelchair.

“Without that support, I wouldn’t have known what to do,” she says. “That’s why I’m so thankful for his friends.”

While it can be upsetting to see Jojo frustrated when he can’t play with other dogs as he’d like, or to be unable to take his “wheels” on sand, she can’t imagine getting rid of her beloved dog. She’s deeply dismayed when she sees people trying to rehome senior pets on social media because they’re “old” and can no longer do past activities.

Instead, she feels a deep commitment to finding ways to make Jojo happy every single day. He still loves to swim in a pool in their backyard.

Ultimately, she’s grateful for the oversized impact her dog has made in the lives of other Corgis, his online fans, and her own life.

“I’ve never liked to go out of my comfort zone. I don’t really like the beach. I don’t really like to kayak. I don’t like to do things. But with Jojo, he made me do everything,” she says. “He’s my best friend.” **FD**

### For more information, visit:

- [Vlog After College on YouTube \(featuring Gatsby\)](#)
- [Great Gatsby the Corgi on YouTube](#)
- [Super Corgi Jojo on Instagram](#)



Jojo in his therapy dog bandana