

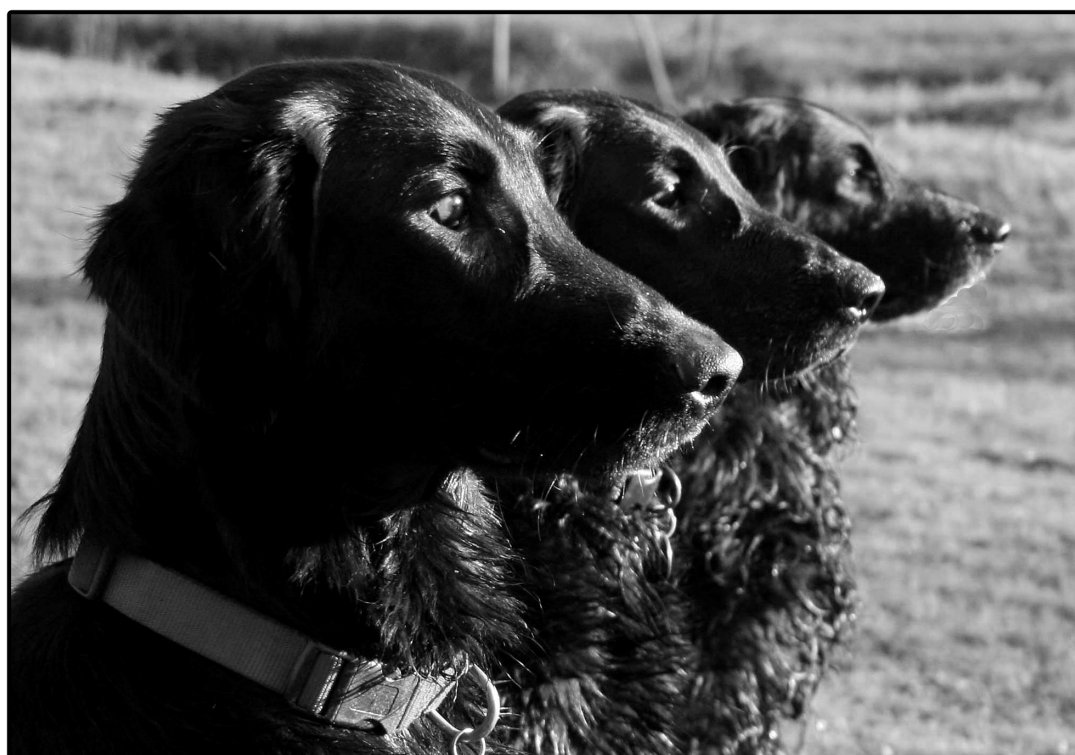


THE WRITE DOG

DOG WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, INC.

Founded 1935

December 2006



Gina Spadafori caught this attentive line up of her three three flat-coated retrievers, from left: Woody, McKenzie and Heather

President's Column

By Ranny Green

With an approximate membership of 550, the Dog Writers Association of America isn't exactly a household name among North American pet owners or even the dog-show world.

To become recognized we need to embark outside our territorial borders of dog magazines only. That means appearances at major dog shows attended by a wide cross-section of pet owners, not simply show enthusiasts, and stories, photos, poems, etc., the things we do best, in major newspaper print edition and Web sites.

I hear you already. How do we get into major newspapers? It might be simply pitching a lifestyle or news editor on a solid local feature story. Granted, their budgets are tight these days, but just breaking through once might get you on the inside. Major newspaper editors are inundated daily by publicists and freelance writers trying to place or sell a story. Make certain your idea is unusual, has good photo possibilities and has not been covered before.

Another route is offer to review a new mainstream dog book on the market. Some newspapers or area dog magazines – we now have Seattle CityDog magazine in our area – are looking for experts to review specific subject areas. Showing them some of your crisp, well-written clips might be all it takes to get that review in print or online. When it comes to book reviews, some newspapers pay and allow you to keep the book. Others offer no stipend but permit you to keep the volume and be satisfied with a byline.

DWAA has received considerable mainstream exposure the past year, starting with our first Hall of Fame presentations on the floor of Madison Square Garden between first-night groups at the Westminster Kennel Club show in February. Does it get much better than that? Instant identity, not quite. But 18,000 spectators heard our name, most of who probably didn't even know we existed beforehand.

And the New York Times' Tuesday (second day of Westminster) feature story of our awards banquet and the initial presentation of the HOF awards Sunday was huge, too.

Plans call for DWAA to again make presentations to our two newest HOF recipients on the floor at Westminster in February 2007.

Again, we had a major presence at the Cat Writers Association show in the Bay Area last month with the writing seminars and our banner overhead.

Add to that 10 of our members traveled to Long Beach, Calif., earlier this month to participate in a book signing at the big AKC Eukanuba Dog Show attended by thousands.

And, of course, we've had a smaller but central presence in the busy lobby of the Affinia Manhattan Hotel in New York the Saturday before Westminster with a book signing.

While the traffic through the lobby is chiefly breeders, handlers and owners that nevertheless results in contacts and opens new eyes to DWAA's presence.

I remain hopeful that our new scholarship marriage with Fifth Avenue Veterinary Associates will put our name on the map even more with AKC breed clubs and veterinary schools nationwide. The award is now \$3,000, which should draw more applicants than in years past.

If you have any ideas how DWAA can reach into your community better, we're open to suggestions. Simply e-mail myself – rannygreen@hotmail.com – or your new incoming president Amy Fernandez, at flappy666@aol.com.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy New Year to everyone. Be safe and enjoy these festive holidays with family and friends.

AKC's Cocktail Reception!!!!

(Editor's note: this reception is the Sunday prior to the Westminster Kennel Show, just before the DWAA banquet)

The American Kennel Club cordially invites you to a Dog Writers & Metro Media Cocktail Reception:

Sunday, February 11, 2007

4:30 pm to 5:30 pm at: The American Kennel Club
260 Madison Avenue, 4th Floor, New York, NY

Meet fellow dog writers, local media personalities, and the AKC Communications Team while enjoying some cocktails. The AKC Library, the country's largest canine research collection, will be open for viewing. Please RSVP by January 26 to Lara Minch-Klass at 212-696-8228 or lmk@akc.org. We look forward to seeing you in New York!

Westminster Book Signing

The DWAA Westminster book signing event will take place Saturday, February 10, 2007, at the Affinia Manhattan Hotel. The event will run from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. The following authors have reserved space; if anyone else is interested in participating please contact Amy Fernandez at Snappyprints@aol.com or (718) 544-6092

- Deb Eldredge
- Kate Eldredge
- John Clifton
- Melanie Coronetz
- Sarah Ferrell
- Patti Lawson
- Colleen Pelar

DWAA-Pro List

Join the DWAA-Pro Internet list! The volume isn't high, the information is applicable and the networking is of great use. To join our e-list for writing questions, advice and conversation, send a blank e-mail to DWAA-Pro-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

A Tale of Two Books

by Charles Doggins
(kidding! by Kate Epstein, The Epstein Literary Agency)

Marley and Me has been on the *New York Times* bestseller list for a year. The success of *Cesar's Way* has been pretty spectacular too. There's never been more attention to books about dogs than there is in the wake of these two books. As an agent who's had the pleasure of selling a few dog books, I often consider what this means for dog writers.

1. There's a sense of optimism about the success of dog books among editors that doesn't apply to most other books. Publishing people can be, well, a little negative. Maybe it's from the sheer fact that we have to reject so many hard-working writers, or because of competing mediums and declining rates of reading. But about dog books, there's a sense that you never know, you could be holding the next phenomenon.
2. There's going to be a lot of dog books published. Bestsellers always spur imitators. It's a good time to get an editor's ear for a dog memoir or training book.
3. Some dog books will fail. Among *Fido and I* and *Murray and Myself* and *Yuri and Yours Truly*; among *Fred's Method* and *Sarah's Technique* and *Andrew's Process*, they can't all find as many buyers as they hope for.
4. With any luck there will not be a backlash.
5. *But* it's going to be all the more important that a book on the subject of dogs be really, really original.

It's the best of times for dog writers and their agents. It's definitely not the worst of times. But more than ever, the people who will see their books in print—and, more importantly, sell—are going to be the best of the best.

Advertising Opportunities in DWAA Banquet Program

Don't forget! For the first time, DWAA will accept advertising for the banquet program that is distributed at our DWAA Awards Banquet in New York. Over 250 programs are printed. Prices are inexpensive and start at \$25.00 for a quarter page. Please consider purchasing an ad or passing this information to a friend or supplier who might be. Contact Terry Albert for more information at terryalbert@cox.net or 858.748.9863.

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Anne Page

annepage@hal-pc.org

Another Fine Member Award! Therese Backowski

Therese Backowski is the recipient of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections External Gold Star Award-the highest award for quality service. She was nominated because she is a dog "trainer-instructor" for Ohio's state prisons. She refers to this as "humbling," which just goes to show you what a wonderful person she is. Congratulations, Therese!

Westminster Dinner Banquet Information

For those who cannot make it to the cocktail party at the AKC, there will be a cash bar at the Affinia Hotel by the Grand Ballroom.

Dinner Buffet

Price \$65.00

Date: February 11, 2007

Place: Affinia Manhattan Hotel

Awards Presentation begins at 6:00 PM sharp

371 Seventh Avenue

New York, NY 10001

The banquet will follow the Awards Presentation.

Menu

Antipasto

Fresh Mozzarella, Grilled Vegetables

Sun dried tomato Gnocchi

Grilled Shrimp, Portobello Mushrooms

Pomodoro Basil Sauce

Veal Milanese

Radicchio, Endive, Fennel

Chicken Contadina

Mushrooms, Peppers, Onions

Roasted Potato, Sausage

Tiramisu

Assorted Sodas

Freshly Brewed Starbucks coffee

Decaffeinated Coffee, Tazo Teas

Please make checks payable in US funds to: DWAA

% Pat Santi

173 Union Road

Coatesville, PA 19320-1326

610-384-2436

Fax reservations held pending payment: 610-384-2471

e-mail: your reservations will be held pending payment: rhydowen@aol.com

If you have food allergies or special diets please advise me on your reservation so I can try to accommodate you with the hotel staff.

We regret that we cannot give refunds up to two weeks prior to the date of the banquet. When we reserve the number of meals, then we must pay for that number of reservations.

Reservation for DWAA Banquet on February 11, 2007

Affinia Manhattan, New York, NY

**Send to: Pat Santi, Secretary
173 Union Road
Coatesville, PA 1932-1326**

Name(s) of attendees: _____

Address _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____

Amount enclosed at \$65.00 per person

\$ _____

Do you have food allergies or need a special diet? If so, please contact Pat with the details.

HAPPY HOWLIDAYS TO ONE AND ALL!

Dogs Can Brand Books



Jean Keating and her little sidekick Puff attended their first Virginia Homeschoolers' conference to promote Jean's dog-related books. Since the conference was held at the Science Museum of Virginia, no animals were allowed, but the Science Museum Board made a concession for Puff Keating and issued him a special invitation and his very own exhibitor's badge. So many kids swarmed his table that the gold-trimmed black tri-cornered hat and white plumb that were a part of his Blackbearded the Pirate costume were in danger of being smashed. But Puff solved the problem like a true Virginia gentleman; he removed his hat while inside the conference. From the looks of this picture, he also took a few 'cat' naps -- or is that doggie naps -- during the picture taking session.

Deborah Wolfe Looking for Radio Guests

Deborah Wolfe (www.campgooddog.com) mentioned on the DWAA Pro List that she is looking for guests for her radio show, THE ANIMAL MAGNET -PET RADIO. Her show deals with all kinds of animal topics including seeing eye dogs, healing therapy dogs, wildlife conservation and pet rescue plus pet advice and answers to audience questions about the dog who won't come and the cat who won't use the litterbox and other rude dog and naughty kitty problems.

The show is broadcast from NYC and Phoenix but guests can call in from anywhere using the toll free number at a prearranged date and time. Published authors usually send their books first and book a date that gives me enough time to read them. She actually reads the books then reviews them. The show is noncommercial but she can talk about books when authors are on and she can give websites for authors, although not store names or prices.

You can listen to the show at www.thepn.org) and will discover it is an upbeat program that takes people inside the animal world. How do bees communicate? How do dog packs hunt? Why do cats leave half killed prey for those they love? What makes guide dogs work so hard and so well? Should kids with allergies be away from pets? How can you test your own dog to see if he greets you with trust? Want to say 'hello' to cats?

The Dog Who Defied Physics

By Randi Berger

Although I didn't see it happen, I now believe that some energy formed a cloud cushioning Skooter down the cliff that "should" have been his final death sentence. My entire life had been leading up to this evening, showing me that behind the illusion of every tragedy, a miracle is waiting to be revealed.

When I left Los Angeles, fleeing the toxicity and hostility that I felt had been building up in me over the last several months, my focus was on me. My non-profit animal rescue had been inspiring and rewarding over the past 19 years, but lately it seemed to attract mostly the *takers* and less and less of the *givers*.

I learned that lonely, needy and sometimes outright disturbed people are often attracted to volunteer causes, where the only criteria to be accepted into the group is a willingness to pitch in. And working with animals in need can be spiritually cultivating in a way that often helps people like nothing else can ----- if you move your center of attention to meeting the dogs' needs and not your own. That hadn't been happening.

So here I was, fleeing the needy, the angry, the self-centered. I'd piled my four "unadoptables" into the truck and headed for my house in Washington. These were dogs that required such intense and constant care that they couldn't be left with anyone else. The oldest, Skooter, was 19 years old and had been written off when I first rescued him after he was hit by a car 18 years earlier. Recently, several vets had written him off for failing bodily functions and age.

In my first book, *My Recycled Pets: Diary of a Dog Addict*, I chronicled my journey into and through the establishment of my non-profit dog rescue. Soon after, I also started taking in owners' unwanted pets, never asking for anything in return. I operated as a full-time, unpaid volunteer, existing on energy and donations. It was heady and inspiring. But now it seemed I wasn't able to draw upon any of my inspirational history. The wealth of motivational anecdotes were emotionally inaccessible. All I could focus on was getting the dogs and getting out. All the dogs had problems. But Skooter required the most care. He was a terrier mix, who was almost the exact twin of my first dog, Skippy. At 19, he needed medications and constant watching. Sometimes he could barely walk, and I hadn't seen him try to run for longer than I could remember. So many people advised me that he couldn't make the trip. I just hoped we could make the trip and get to a place of peace before he passed.

After rescuing and helping to re-home thousands and thousands of dogs, rarely did anything evoke fear in me. But, as much as I knew I needed to do it, driving for the first time across two states alone, with four special-needs dogs brought me as close to God as I had ever known.

work so hard and so well? Should kids with allergies be away from pets? How can you test your own dog to see if he greets you with trust? Want to say 'hello' to cats?

I had not planned to sleep -- only to take short breaks. Due to my delirious state, I was sure that I had not properly shut one of the truck's doors each time we departed from a break. I kept envisioning my dogs blowing out onto the freeway -- along with other horrific visions. So I spent much of the drive thanking God for safely getting us to our house on the Island as quickly as possible. Affirmations had become a daily ritual for me since starting my rescue in 1987.

This sacred space had come to me in the last year, but, due to the many senior and special-needs dogs in my care, I hadn't been able to spend much time away from Southern California. When I wasn't able to find anyone willing and competent to properly watch my dogs, I accepted it as a sign to pack them up in my truck and make this life change as a family unit ... as much as I had hoped to escape everything I knew.

The shift from the sweltering 100°F days to the misty fog floating over Puget Sound brought relief to all of us. When we arrived, we all seemed to be invigorated, even after the 40-hour journey. We were too excited to sleep and started unpacking. Our first day overlooking the most heavenly view on Earth seemed to fade into the dawn of the next morning. Skooter woke me up at 7:30 a.m. ready to explore while the others slept. Skooter normally slept until late afternoon, but now seemed to be born again with his new life at 19. The rest of the day seemed to disappear as rapidly as the previous day with deliveries and neighbors visiting.

Just before sundown, I realized that Skooter was not asleep in my bedroom where I thought he was. I became frantic when I realized that he was nowhere to be found. We were surrounded by miles of a forested state park, mountains, Puget Sound and wildlife. As much as I wanted to believe that Skooter had been reborn, the truth was that his vision and hearing were impaired, his rear legs were weak (often giving out from under him), and he was on heart medication. Fending for himself in this rural environment would not have been an option for his survival. I phoned everyone I knew on the Island and a neighbor, Glen, came to help. He drove into the state park while I stayed on foot. There were no signs of Skooter anywhere.

Just as the sun was setting, Glen walked down a road behind my house. He remembered that two years ago he found a dog that had fallen off of a cliff by the state park. This made him begin searching the cliffs closest to my house. He called me over to him when he thought he heard some unusual movement in the cliff. He then shined his flashlight up the cliff, and just when I said, "It's probably only rabbits," I saw Skooter's face peering out from underneath the brush in the middle of the cliff. Skooter wasn't moving, but it looked like his eyes were open. I began crying and didn't know what to do. If Skooter could see or hear me, he might try to move and could have fallen the rest of the way. Glen went home saying, "I climb hills around here all the time. I'll go home and get some gear. I'll be right back." I ran home to get some gloves and quickly returned, determined to get to Skooter -- even if I lost my own life doing so. But I couldn't climb more than a few feet up this vertical cliff without getting scratched and cut from the thorns and brush. This was not a cliff that could be climbed.

Losing hope, I phoned 911 and could barely talk in between my sobbing. Within 15 minutes, two fire trucks, four firemen, and a paramedic arrived. It took them some time to strategize their rescue, and they ended up dropping a man down from the top of the cliff, guiding him to Skooter's body. I ran around the hill and back up to the top of the cliff so I would be there when Skooter was rescued.

Although I couldn't wait to hold Skooter, I was not looking forward to knowing what his condition would be. It was now dark, and when I made it up to the rescue site, I was dumbfounded. Skooter was trotting away from the firemen and back to the house he had only known for one day – as if he couldn't be bothered with any of this drama.

“Oh my God!” I said to the fireman. “He's okay?”

“He looks fine,” I could hear a voice say from a distance in the darkness.

I ignored my torn, bloody legs because Skooter immediately wanted dinner. Hazel, Rooney and Bumblebee were not hungry, so Skooter received all of my attention. I was beyond confused. My 19-year-old dog, who I'd rescued from a shelter in 1988, after being hit by a car, had triumphed over a concussion, then, over 10 years later, cancer surgery, then a severe heart condition, and now was just pulled out of 50-foot vertical cliff without a scratch, break, dent or broken toenail!

Today I realized that my entire life had been leading up to this moment. My journey that began over 19 years ago, one that I felt I needed to run away from, remains to be the vehicle that rescues me. Seemingly endless nights spent at emergency vets and 72-hour marathons won with dogs staring at death's door, have occasionally taken their toll on me, both physically and emotionally. But it's often those very things we want to escape that will follow us forever.

Running away from the purpose of my life – which also happens to make my heart sing more than anything – is something I now know is not possible. In living out this purpose, my life continues to be graced by unexplainable miracles. These miracles are the very things that recharge my body and soul as well as the faith and belief systems of others.

Once again, I have been shown that every detour from what we think is “right” holds a message for us that everything is always in Divine Right Order. The invisible arms that cushioned Skooter down the cliff are here to embrace all of us always. When we call on that energy with the faith of knowing it will answer – our lives will be graced with miracles like this.

I had only asked God to drive us to Washington. I had forgotten that He was, and still is, with us all along.

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