



ruff DRAFTS

Winter 2020

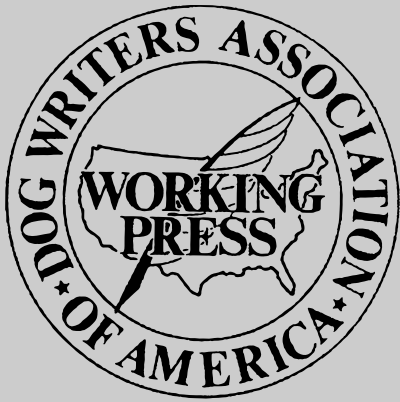
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fidoseofreality@gmail.com

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maggie.marton@gmail.com

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kristinavery9@gmail.com

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President's

COLUMN

By **Carol Bryant**

DWAA PRESIDENT

Hello Fellow DWAA Members,

Sold out! Those two words are magic to an event planner's ears. I am happy to announce the 2020 DWAA Event and Awards Banquet is officially sold out.

In addition to the networking and awards, including over \$14,000 in special sponsor monies, ticket holders are in for a real treat. This year, we have surprises, giveaways, take-home goodies, and more. A waitlist is available for those who wish to attend but missed out. Complete details are located on DWAA's website under the "EVENT" tab.

On Sunday, February 9th, the annual meeting takes place at the event host hotel from 4 to 5 pm. Formal minutes will be recorded and printed in the next issue of Ruff Drafts. For those unable to attend, be sure to follow our social feeds on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We will livestream certain portions of the event and share across our social platforms. If you haven't visited our social properties lately, be sure to stop by. DWAA's social team including **Shelley Bueche**, **Lisa Begin Kruysman**, **Hannah Zulueta**, and **Dawn Taylor** keep things moving, updated, and current with dog writer news, views, and more.

As our first issue of the new year and a new decade, the theme is hopes, dreams, and plans for the year ahead. Ruff Drafts is by and for DWAA members and all submissions become a permanent part of the organization's records. Did you know that Ruff Drafts



Carol Bryant, President of the DWAA

submissions are also eligible to compete in DWAA's annual writing competition? Be sure to peruse the categories if you've been published in the eligibility period for submissions each year.

In other news, freelance writers, including DWAA member **Kim Kavin**, are working hard in New Jersey to stop legislation called S4204/A5936. We are so grateful for her efforts on behalf of freelancers.

As we understand it, the legislation is similar to California's AB5, which went into effect January 1. Essentially the legislation was intended to help Uber drivers get benefits as staff employees instead of being independent contractors – but includes writers and editors as well.

Your current executive team is helping to grow the organization by attracting new members while honoring and

See PRESIDENT'S COLUMN pg 14

By **Merrie Meyers**

Dear Members;

As I write this it's snowing, somewhere. Here in Florida, our gray skies forecast the approaching rainstorm. Stuck indoors, I have an opportunity to sit and think.

This past week, I finally got the last of the holiday décor packed away, albeit after dropping a bucket on my head and wrenching my back once or twice from lifting heavy boxes over my head and heaving them onto a shelf.

Now, it's time to refresh and reset my sights. I've been so focused on my holiday obligations that I considered what I want to work towards in this new decade. That is, unless you count losing the four pounds of holiday weight I recently acquired- that's an immediate task! At 5', four pounds is a whole pant size!

One goal is for sure: Looking forward to potential accomplishments during this decade of "The Roaring Twenties," as they are being called, I know that I want to stretch my storytelling skills and become a more versatile writer.

Heretofore, my writing has been largely non-fiction. I began as a journalist in the mid-1970s and morphed into public relations writing; press releases, speeches and brochure and web copy in the mid-1980s.

During the "teens" decade, I learned a new style of writing- preparing funding proposals. Grant writing was uncharted territory. My fundraising skills up until then were limited to schmoozing through personal contact and soliciting sponsorships for special events. Through



Merrie Meyers, Editor of Ruff Drafts

trial and error, dumb luck and mentoring, I honed my technical writing skills. They served me well. I generated about \$40 million in new funds in a six year period, which made me very popular at the college where I worked. Now retired from my 9-5, I continue to support client needs on a contractual basis.

So, now what? Two years ago, some neighbors and I formed a local writers group. Most of the members (we are five) have self-published works of fiction. I even had the opportunity to edit one of these books. Anyway, we gather monthly and take turns submitting work for peer review.

When it's my turn to submit my work, I suffer from tremendous anxiety. What should I write? Is the plot too simple? Am I showing enough through

See EDITOR'S LETTER pg 15

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Ruff Drafts

send all material to Merrie Meyers
merrie.meyers@gmail.com

ISSUE DEADLINES

Spring, March 1
Summer, June 1
Fall, September 1
Winter, December 1

The editor reserves the right to refuse and/or edit material, and is not responsible for errors in difficult to read copy. Every attempt will be made to publish information accurately. Submission implies right to publish all or in part. Unsigned or misleading material is not accepted. Material published is the opinion of the author and does not imply endorsement by the editor or DWAA. Neither editor nor DWAA assumes liability for information contained herein or typographical errors. Reproduction of photos and editorial is forbidden without permission.

Healing Paws

By **Barbara E. Magera MD, PharmD, MMM**

As the holiday season approaches, compassion floods my mind as I reminisce about my unfortunate patients. I thank those who provided a glimmer of hope to patients with physical impairments.

A 46-year-old painter lost his footing on scaffolding. He fell 30 feet and sustained fractures to his back and neck, leaving him a paraplegic. This was a man with previous boundless energy who was a perfectionist and in high demand by many wealthy homeowners. His injuries were severe but his psychological state was devastated. Hospitalized for nearly three months, his wounds remained infected. Most of the medical staff gave up on this poor man.

I encountered him in a neurological unit generally reserved for victims of devastating strokes, traumatic brain injuries or end-stage neurological events. He could barely move his upper extremities or speak in meaningful sentences. His malnourished state was so profound that his extremities and torso were edematous, that is, severely swollen. This man was not obese but was suffering from extreme fluid collection. In layman's terms, his body resembled the Michelin-Man tire character. Over the head of his bed were written the letters "DNR" or Do Not Resuscitate. While examining him, I felt that this guy still had a chance. If we could improve his nutritional state, consult with a few specialists like Infectious Disease, Psychiatry and Physical Therapy, maybe his future might change.



The next day, he seemed a bit more talkative. When I asked about his family, he told me he hadn't spoken to his kids in years and his wife left him long ago because of his workaholic personality. He had no friends or hobbies because he was "always working." Past interests included duck hunting with his Dad who died more than 20 years ago. He explicitly told me that he was not interested in any religious fellas "comin' around" because he was sure God was not looking out for him the day he fell. He ordered us that no doc or nurse had the right to contact his family. As far as he was concerned, he was "good for nothin'" and just waiting and wanting to die.

His anger and edematous broken skin filled with putrid smelling wounds made it impossible to ask any hospital volunteer to visit this man, if only occasionally to wave from his door. He was

clearly suffering physically and emotionally. On several occasions, he was so verbally abusive to me and the staff that several health care workers flatly refused to care for him.

The psychiatrist diagnosed him with severe situational depression and some other personality disorder. For a week, the psychiatrist came daily or every other day but then disappeared probably to care for more pleasant patients. The next to exit were the physical therapists who felt that he was uncooperative and unmotivated. They omitted to say he was boisterous, using profanities and a whole vocabulary of other superlatives.

One day, as I was entering my notes in the computer, a Leonberger was making his rounds with his handler. They were a therapy dog team. This gentle giant stood about four to six inches above the usual hospital bed. Immediately, I asked the owner if she would allow her

dog to meet my paraplegic patient. I explained the difficult psyche of this tragic man. We agreed that if either dog or owner felt uncomfortable, they would graciously exit his room. At the owner's request, I agreed to return only after the dog and handler were present with my patient for about five minutes. When I reentered my patient's room, I apologetically announced that a four-legged visitor might pay him a quick visit. I was astounded at what I saw. The dog quietly was resting his head near the patient's fingers. His brown eyes locked onto the moist eyes of my patient. Tears were rolling down my patient's cheeks but he was partially smiling and whispering

to his therapy dog. He tried to extend his fingers toward the dog to touch his snout or ears. All the while, the dog was only moving his eyes as if to read this man's thoughts. The owner was quietly behind her dog and motioned towards me not to disturb this encounter.

After that first canine-human encounter, my patient's will to live took a 180-degree turn. Jake, the therapy dog, and his owner made a commitment to return daily and remain with my patient for at least an hour. My patient gradually achieved movement of his arms and fingers. Within two weeks he was patting Jake's head and ears. My patient was cooperating with his physical ther-

apy. This much-needed muscle movement plus improved nutrition resolved his edema. With improved tissue, muscle and skin integrity, his wounds were slowly healing. The threat of ever lingering sepsis or blood borne infection lessened. More importantly, strong bonds were present between Jake and the injured man. Even his psyche changed as he physically and medically improved. Now, he was motivated and excited to transfer to a specialized hospital for spinal injury patients.

When the day of his transfer arrived, Jake paid him an extra-long visit with

See HEALING pg 13



© Laurie Leach
November 2019



DOG BLOGS

By **Leslie Brown**

A NEW MEMBER

I've worked with dog blogs for 10 years, writing, editing, and managing the content. The first one was Dogspired, a blog with inspiring articles, from dog rescue to product reviews. The site isn't active at this time, but during those years, I learned a lot about creating effective content and design.

Later I started my own dog blog, [A Dog and a Keyboard – Stories from a Crafty Canine](#). The blog was inspired by my dog Tasha, a feisty Golden Retriever I rescued when she was very young.

The Crafty Canine is Tasha's alter ego. She's an inquisitive and precocious dog who writes stories on a keyboard. She tries to use people words, which she learns from having conversations with her human mother.

All the stories are short. That's because dogs have a short attention span.

In one story her mother says, "The internet is down." When the Crafty Canine wants to know what an internet is, her mother answers, "It's how people explore things, like when you sniff around the yard trying to find something good."

In another story the Crafty Canine uses the phrase "digging up my words."

Her mother corrects her and says it's supposed to be "digging up my bones."

The Crafty Canine also reads, and she tries to teach other dogs to read, too. In one of her stories, she starts a group called the Association of Words for Dogs. Guest speakers show the dogs different pictures for different words. One speaker showed the dogs an overweight Basset Hound. It was for the word weight control.

My blog didn't have a real theme when I started it. It was loosely about a dog who learns words. Then I developed the concept of a Dog Library, a library with books just for dogs. The books don't have words, they have different smells.

There are three primary dog characters in the Dog Library. One dog named Margaret, a Standard Poodle, is the Dog Librarian. She puts books in the aisles where they belong, depending on their title and the way they smell. Some of the aisles are Treats, Travel, How-To, and Home.

For example, a book in the Travel aisle called "Crazy About Car Rides" smells like a dog leash, the front seat of a car, and wind. Another book, "Decorating Your Doghouse" is on a shelf in the Home aisle. It smells like a once-

fuzzy blanket, old towels, and different-sized socks.

Another dog named Arthur, a Saint Bernard, is the Delivery Dog. He pulls his wagon into the library every week with a batch of new books. Some of the books are blank and don't smell like anything, so Arthur has to take them back to the place where they get their smells, the Stinky Smells Store.

Stanley, a high-spirited mutt, is the Mischief Dog. He runs around the library knocking books off the shelves and then hides them in the wrong places. One popular book he hides is "The Jelly in a Jelly Doughnut." Instead of staying in the Treats aisle with the other doughnut books, Stanley puts it in the How-To aisle between the book "How to Hide Rawhide" and a blank book with only the faint smell of liver and honey.

It's sometimes a challenge for me to think of good ideas for these stories. During a particularly long bout of writer's block, I wrote a story called "Writer's Block and the Story Button." The button is on the Crafty Canine's keyboard, and when she presses it, it gives her story ideas.

I wish I had one of those buttons on my keyboard, too. 🐾

Meet our

NEW MEMBERS



Will Hank

Will Hank

Will Hank first became a dog owner at age 25. Since then, he's done his best to make up for lost time. Will has taken his rescued Norwegian Elkhound mix Harley hiking and exploring across 10 different states. The pair volunteer with Therapy Dogs International, visiting nursing homes, schools, and private homes in the NYC area. In 2019, Will began working for the American Kennel Club, and entered a whole new world of dogdom. Harley is surely suspicious of Will writing stories about other dogs all day, but the pup has been the biggest beneficiary of his owner's new dog knowledge. Will is excited to join the DWAA and further his dog writing career.

Michael Suttles

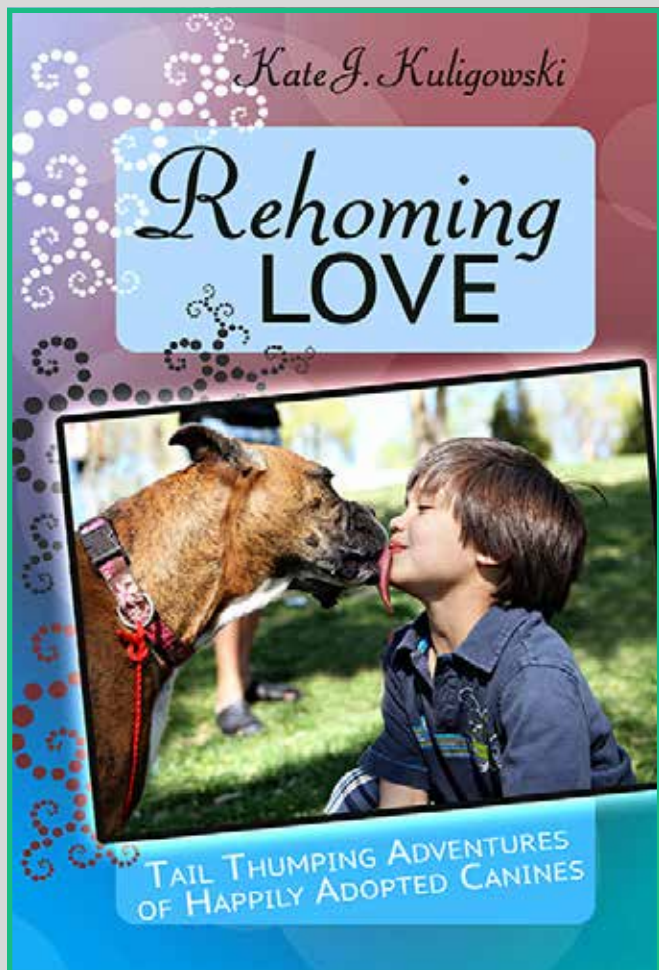
Michael Suttles is a data scientist with a complicated background, including working for the CIA. He recently launched Doggy Data Zone (doggydata.com), which is dedicated to fun studies about doggos—including the landmark study that looks at which New York borough has the most trainable, sociable, bold, and calm dogs. He also founded Save All The Pets (saveallthepets.org), a 501c3 nonprofit that uses data science to save the lives of shelter animals. Since this wasn't enough, he founded a comedy website called True Dog Facts (truedogfacts.com).



Michael Suttles

NEW MEMBERS are encouraged to share a photo and a bit of background information, so we can get to know you! Please email our editor at merrie.meyers@gmail.com.

MEMBER NEWS



Tail Thumping Adventures of Happily Adopted Canines is a new book by DWAA member **KATE KULIGOWSKI**.

The chapters, presented in a timeline from 1910 to the present, peeked into the experiences, both convoluted and incredible, of an assortment of different dogs, different breeds, all in nearly impossible situations. Their successful rescuing and rehoming adventures are unique will touch the heart of all readers who believe in the magic connection between dogs and humans.

The dedication reads: "These stories are examples of and thus dedicated to the selfless pet rescuers and shelter workers who willingly and continually donate their resources, time, talents and love to the millions of America's "thrown-always." They represent the backbone of rehoming pets and deserve more than our applause. They deserve our support."

The introduction provides the backstory on the book: "Join my family as we, our Southwestern families, friends, neighbors and all of our many dogs tackle life's everyday unexpected twists in tail waggin' rehoming adventures, mostly with tail thumpin' endings. Some episodes demonstrate how animals often expose new traits in people we thought we knew. Some reveal their amazing abilities to adjust in almost impossible situations through their celebrated 'smell-intuition.' And some are just a dog and his human... connecting." 🐾

New Member Susan Paretts

SUSAN PARETTS is a graduate of the University of Southern California, with a master's degree in Professional Writing, who primarily writes about pet-related issues for a variety of publications including the American Kennel Club, World of Wag, The Noseprint, Bayer Animal Health, Cuteness.com, the Daily Puppy and the Nest Pets. She always has a furry writing companion by her side and lives with her husband and pets on the West Coast.

Do you have news to share?

Send to Ruff Drafts Editor, Merrie Meyers at
merrie.meyers@gmail.com



Susan Paretts



Have you ever wondered what it would be like to view life through another set of eyes? Imagine those eyes belonging to a jet-setting, adorable, four-pound Maltese pup. Meet **BACCI BOGIE** who spent most of his time traveling the country with me.

Follow Bacci's adventures from California to Washington to Florida, in an illuminating and heartfelt read about man's best friend. Bacci's human-like antics drew people to him wherever he went. People stood in line for his autograph as he charmed his audience. Bacci traveled over 500,000 air miles as a 'jet pet' experiencing life in a very unique way. The nature of my work provided opportunities for Bacci to become involved in unusual, sometimes dangerous situations. His hometown was Aspen, Colorado where he co-hosted my local television show for many

years. I wrote his memoirs from his point of view and in his voice.

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXAMPLE OF BACCI'S UNUSUAL PERSONALITY AND VIEWS ABOUT LIFE.

"Now that I am a retired police dog, I thought it would be fun to share some of my experiences I had during my career as an "Undercover K9 Dog." People ask me how I got into that line of work and I tease that I went to the Police Academy. Actually, my Mommy was a professional Law Enforcement trainer for many years and I got pulled into 'the business' by accident. Mom was hired as a training consultant for a police department in South Florida and we would be liv-

ing in a cool hotel for one month. They had a "no doggy" policy. Canine discrimination if you ask me. It wasn't the first time I was banned from staying at a hotel, restaurant or club. Mommy asked the Police Chief to intervene on my behalf. Alas, the hotel made an exception although Mommy had to pay a stiff dog deposit.

After a couple of weeks hanging out in the room, while Mommy went to work, I was getting bored. The Police Chief agreed to let me come to the police station with Mom for one day. I had to promise to be a good boy and not have an accident on the new rug in the training room. As soon as we arrived and the officers saw me, they started making fun of me. They called me "an almost dog" and "rag mop". I guess I got my feeling hurt as my rebellious side came out and I thought, "I'll show them", lifted my leg

and was a bad boy. You would imagine that Mom was furious at me. She asked the officers to keep my 'accident' a secret from the Chief and they agreed. The rest of the day went fine. From then on, Mom introduced me to her police friends as an "UNDERCOVER K9 DOG". Little did I know what was in store for me in my new assumed role. WOOF WOOF"

Please visit our website at www.baccibogie.com and fall in love with Bacci's photos and videos. Most of all the book is an entertaining testament to the multi-faceted richness that pets can bring to a person's life.

One reviewer noted, "This is a well-written story about a tiny dog who was big in spirit. Just reading about him made me fall in love with him. Great read. While this tale is intended for adults, children can enjoy the book as well." 🐾





By **Ted Slupik**

THE NEXT GENERATION COMES FORWARD

Lizzy's Fund is a 501(c)(3) charity that financially supports organizations that rescue dogs, seven-years-old or older, who end up in shelters or rescues through no fault of their own. These unfortunate seniors are often scared, sick, and lonely and never experienced the chaos they've been thrust into. Lizzy's Fund helps them become whole and healthy so they become a more attractive adoption candidate. The Fund's goal is to assist these senior dogs with getting adopted into loving forever

homes. To date, the Fund has helped over 300 dogs.

Over the past three years, the Fund has expanded its mission to include educating youth about the benefits of volunteering while working with dogs. In order to enrich the lives of local senior citizens living in nursing homes, we've invited junior high students to join us for our weekly Sunday morning visits with therapy dogs. What was already a wonderful experience has become even better. Coincidentally, the certi-

fied therapy dogs are seniors too. Our organization's enhanced goal has given local junior high students an opportunity to realize and appreciate the value of interacting with seniors, both canine and human.

Lizzy's Fund hosts speaking engagements. Invited to visit community schools, we find ourselves entertaining young audiences of up to 250 participants at a time. With the help of students who already volunteer, we demonstrate the importance of giving back to one's

community. Peer speakers describe to fellow classmates how volunteering can be fun. We always take a therapy dog or two, and the dogs are always a hit. The students give witness to how volunteering is a two-way street. Acts of kindness make both the receiver and giver feel good. It's an easy sell as the dogs are great promoters.

We've had great support from the nursing home, school, and parents. We now have twelve student-volunteers who regularly volunteer their time enriching the lives of nursing home residents and staff. Whether the student-volunteers are visiting on Sunday mornings, hosting parties, creating and assisting with craft projects, dressing up as elves to accompany Santa, or leading sing-a-longs, they put smiles on many faces.

Students partner with certified handlers and dogs. They experience firsthand the benefits of animal assisted therapy, learn basic training skills, and gain satisfaction in knowing they provide a valuable service. Again, the dogs are the vehicle making it work. They are the best conversation starters and produce a common thread connecting two very diverse age groups.

We know that our nursing home visits created a "feel good" emotional connection for the residents because of the students; what we didn't expect was that the reverse connection from junior high students to senior residents was just as strong. We received feedback from the students' parents and teachers about just how excited the kids are to visit their senior friends.

During a recent visit, it became clear just how meaningful these visits are. Anne was a 96-year-old sweet lady who was very drawn to the dogs and the girls. Anne loved petting the dogs. The volunteers noticed how her face would light up as her hand reached out toward



“ Let the word go forth from this time and place, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans.... ”

—JFK

the dog. Unfortunately, one Sunday morning we learned Anne had passed away earlier that week. We were saddened, and shed a few tears that day. At least one student asked her parents if she could attend the memorial service. Anne's passing made an impact on all of us. Most important, the students knew they'd made a difference in one woman's life. The lesson learned that day was: every day is a gift!

Many other friendships have been made, including one with a resident who's a stroke victim. Relearning to speak and read again at 94 was challenging. Her therapy was to read a chapter from her favorite book, *Little*

Women, aloud each day. One student was happy to lend a patient ear, and even helped her to get reading on her Kindle. Yes, even at 94-year-old can learn how to operate a Kindle with a little help from her young friends! We've noticed her making amazing strides in a short amount of time. She talks up a storm with the girls and dogs.

Another memorable visit was with a man named Charlie. The student-volunteers had joined us for a St. Patrick's Day sing-a-long and while singing *Danny Boy*, one of our therapy dog handlers noticed Charlie had tears welling up in his eyes. The song jogged a memo-

Continued on next page



Continued from previous page

ry that stirred emotions about a family member. Watching the student volunteers gather around him with a dog for comfort with such compassion was heartwarming.

Witnessing a conversation between a typical 13-year-old and a recovering 94-year-old is moving. Conversations

always begin with a discussion about the dog. These may include questions about, his or her name, age, breed, and often ramble on. Sometimes much of the conversation is patiently repeated when the resident's short-term memory fails. It's heartwarming to witness the patience these kids exhibit as they kindly retrace the facts they just explained minutes earlier. Conversations

find a common thread with topics such as family and often the senior will relate and talk about their grandchildren. Teenagers and seniors have more in common than one may think. A ninety-four-year-old, who served in Patton's Army during World War II, was happy to share his experiences. The young teens happened to meet him at the same time they were studying WWII in their history class. They were thrilled, and enjoyed having a lengthy conversation with him. It meant a lot to him as well to feel appreciated.

Animal Assisted Therapy has proven to be a wonderful way to encourage interactions, inspire conversations, and build bonds. Lizzy's Fund appreciates the younger generation's kindness, and our therapy dogs do too. 🐾

Almost 60 years ago, JFK said – “Let the word go forth from this time and place, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans....”

To learn more about Lizzy's Fund, please visit us at www.lizzysfund.org or on our Facebook page.

Top 10 Songs about Dogs

AS CITED BY BILLBOARD MAGAZINE:

- Elvis Presley- Hound Dog
- Baja Men- Who Let The Dogs Out?
- The Beatles- Marth My Dear
- Neil Young- Old King
- Pink Floyd- Seamus The Dog
- Cat Stevens- I Love My Dog
- The Monkees- Gonna Buy Me A Dog
- Sublime- I Love My Dog
- Dolly Parton- Cracker Jack
- Carrie Underwood- The More Boys I Meet

If these songs aren't to your liking, check out 50 Amazing Songs About Dogs That'll Instantly Brighten Your Day
<https://barkpost.com/life/dog-songs-playlist/>





Healing

Continued from pg 5

a basket of goodies and memorabilia they used to help the man gain mobility. My patient was clearly moved by the thought of not seeing Jake again. He was actively sobbing. He made promises to Jake that all his future efforts and accomplishments would be dedicated to Jake. With permission from owner and patient, Jake licked the tears streaming down the man's face. The final goodbyes were made as my patient rolled down the hall and moved into the ambulance waiting to transport him to the spinal center. Even after the man left, Jake stood there just staring down the hall as if to wish the man's return. After several minutes of silence, Jake's handler soft-

ly said, "John was a tough and angry man when we first encountered him, but he was very good for Jake. You see Jake is battling an aggressive form of osteosarcoma and the vet says the leg amputations will probably prevent him from ever walking again. In fact, John maybe the last human that Jake ever helps as a therapy dog. If things really go badly, my husband and I decided not to have Jake suffer but allow him to run with the Angels." By now my voice was cracking and I couldn't see anything clearly through my tears. I managed to speak these words to Jake and his owner, "Thank you for sharing your time and talents with my patient. Jake, you changed John's life. Because of your love, you melted away his bit-

terness and gave John hope." I hugged Jake and whispered in his ear, Thank you for your Christmas gift to John. May the Christ child bless you both... in this life and the next. We love you Jake. You are a miracle angel-dog!" 🐾

Barbara E. Magera MD, PharmD, MMM (Caracaleeb) is a Cavalier King Charles Spaniels fancier who lives and practices medicine in Charleston, South Carolina.

Photograph provided by C. Anne Eckersley (Chadwick Cavalier and Tibetan Spaniels) owner of Adele, a Leonberger. Anne is a long time breeder, handler, fancier and international Judge of Cavalier King Charles Spaniels who resides in Connecticut.

Photographer is Bryan Sirotkin from BS Photography.

Looking Forward

by **Maggie Marton**

I remember wanting a dog so badly I wept at my parents' feet. I can't remember where the desire came from. I don't remember a single dog on our cul de sac, though I'm sure they were there, and none of my friends' dogs stand out as memorable. I just remember the longing, the need to have a dog.

My parents relented. This was around 1985, and we did what most families in 1985 did when they wanted a dog: We piled into the station wagon, drove to the mall, and bought one from the pet shop.

We looked at all the dogs they had, and my younger sister kept saying she didn't want a dog that "got old," which my parents surmised meant "got big." So, we ended up with a Bichon Frise, Sparky. Sparky proved to be the oddest dog on the planet. He hated all food other than his one specific kibble, and when the manufacturer changed the size of the pieces, his hunger strike resulted in my mother calling them up and requesting they change it back. He chased airplanes. Every day when my father returned home from work, Sparky ran out the front door, sprinted two laps around the house, then met my dad at his car in the garage. He barked nonstop. He developed skin allergies that created rough patches all over his body. He chewed my toys. He lived in fear of our neighbor's cat. And I loved him like crazy. To me, he was perfect. He only lived a short while. Sparky died in the early 1990s, and I never felt a loss quite so acute. Sparky's death marked one of the very few times I've seen my mother cry.

Despite all his odd behaviors and neuroses, despite the intensity of that

loss, I've never wanted to live a day since without a dog.

At the start of each new year, I believe you have to look back to move forward. Sparky's on my mind lately because my current dog, Cooper, shares many of the same oddities that Sparky had. Cooper barks nonstop. He is allergic to everything under the sun. While he doesn't chase airplanes, he certainly loves to run laps, and he doesn't seem to care one bit about most food.

Cooper's a healthy nine-year-old. I expect him to have a long life ahead of him still—he runs dozens of miles a week with my husband, which is more than I can say—yet, part of me is looking forward. Dare I hope in 2020 to expand our family with another pup? When we added Cooper to the mix, we had one senior dog and one adolescent. I didn't want to wait any longer to get a puppy for the senior's benefit. Are we nearing that point with Cooper, the point where a puppy would be more of a nuisance than a friend?

Since Sparky, I've always had multiple dogs. Oddly, like Sparky, Cooper's currently an only. When I dream about expanding our animal family, I can see our little herd: two kiddos, two cats, two (or three, husband willing) dogs.

A new year brings new opportunity. I no longer need to weep at my parents' feet to add a dog to the family, of course, but I do feel like I need Cooper's blessing... and, I suppose, my husband's. Maybe the right dog will find us this year. I'm open to it. Maybe this isn't the year. I'm open to that, too. Who knows? But, like Cooper and like Sparky long before him, whatever dog finds his way to us, I know that no matter what, to me, he'll be perfect. 🐾



President's Column

Continued from pg 2

retaining veterans of DWAA. Over the past year, along with me, Vice President **Maggie Marton**, Secretary **Kristin Avery**, Treasurer **Marsha Pugh**, and Contest & Banquet Chair **Darlene Bryant**, some really positive changes have occurred. I'm a firm believer in thanking people and paying it forward to continue creating magic and making positive strides.

DWAA's membership has grown, the new website is faster, more comprehensive, streamlined, and updated thanks to DWAA member, **Jill Caren** of 2 Dogs Media, who is our official paid webmaster and tech guru. We keep the blog updated, are fostering and building community, and plan to launch a members-only Facebook group in this first quarter of 2020.

What are you working on and how can DWAA be of service to you? Stay on our radar and help DWAA help you achieve your 2020 writing and publishing goals. 🐾

Yours in all things canine,

Carol Bryant

DWAA PRESIDENT

FOUNDER, FIDOSEOFREALITY.COM



Kristin Avery, Secretary
PO Box 7052
Evanston, IL 60204

Roxie

By Janice Biniok



So... I take it you don't like my critique.

Editor's Letter

Continued from pg 3

dialogue and not telling too much through description? Does the dialogue support or distract from the story line?

Finding the answers to these questions is what this issue is about; Looking Forward: Hopes, Dreams and Plans for the Year Ahead. I plan to keep you posted and hope to hear how you are coming on setting and reaching your goals.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue. Congratulations to the finalists in the writing competition. As a judge I was humbled and delighted to read the submissions. We don't have the bandwidth to feature every one of them in Ruff Drafts, but I encourage you to investigate them on your own. They are worth the read!

Have a great winter! 🐾