



ruff DRAFTS

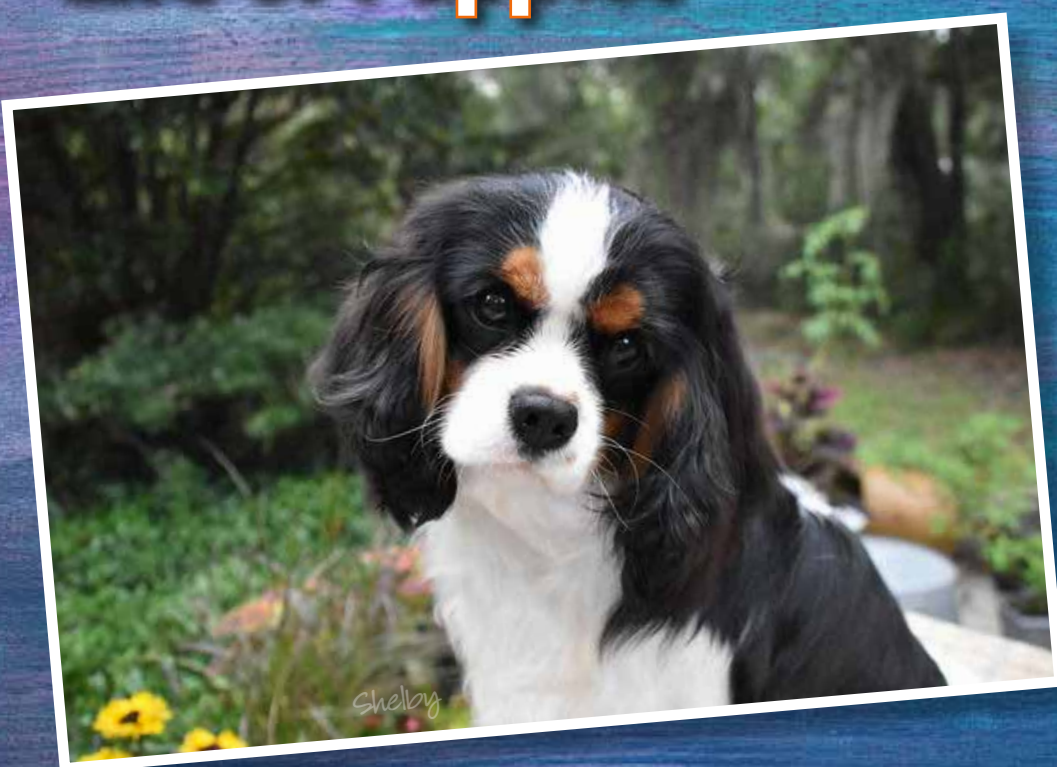
Fall 2020

In This Issue

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A Day in the Life of Puppies



It is a warm Indian summer day with blue sunny skies and minimal humidity. The Cavalier youngsters are learning to walk on a slip lead. As we walk through the neighborhood, their gait slows. They sniff and examine sticks, leaves and pine straw on the pavement. A helicopter flies overhead, which immediately grabs their attention. They stare at the sky while the Coast Guard chopper performs its daily routine of surveying the Charleston coastline.

Continued on page 10



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President's

COLUMN

By **Carol Bryant**

DWAA PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow DWAA Members,
It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. This famous quote from Charles Dickens has been a constant refrain in 2020. We are living through unprecedented times with the donning of masks, social distancing, teleconferencing, and the shift to a virtual new normal.

It is in these times that we call upon family and friends, which is the overarching theme in this issue of ruff DRAFTS. Of course, in the canine lover's thesaurus, family and friends is a metaphor for dogs. We are creatures united by emotions. Our dogs share a rainbow of feelings with us, their human companions. Dogs are the best of us when the worst of us breaks our hearts and lets us down. How many of you have leaned a little bit closer to your dogs since the pandemic began? I'm raising my cyber hand in union with you.

With my loyal Cocker Spaniel by my side, 2020 has forced me to pivot: to follow up on the courses I've been wanting to take, to start that dog-themed novel I've been wanting to write, and to surround myself with cyber family and friends who value my presence in their lives. What has 2020 forced you to do or feel? I'm trying my best to stay strong and shine a light down this dark tunnel we've been sequestered to since March.

While on the topic of pivoting and writing, the annual DWAA Writing Competition showed no signs of slowing down this year. Our Competition Chair



Carol Bryant, President of the DWAA

received close to 900 entries, which was nearly tied with last year's record. Finalists will be announced in December, and winners will be revealed in a virtual ceremony on February 14, 2021. Without our treasured sponsors, there would be no competition, so a big thank you to each and every one of you.

Looking ahead, the holidays are right around the corner and this year's celebration is all about pivoting as well. The holidays are generally a time of great celebration and joy, and I urge each of you to find serenity and gratitude during the season. Start some new traditions with your dogs, such as visiting drive-through holiday light displays, giving back to your local dog shelter or favorite breed rescue group, creating a memory album of actual photos in an actual photo album for your dog,

See *PRESIDENT'S COLUMN* pg 32

By **Merrie Meyers**

Dear Writers;
Happy Fall Y'all.

Happy? Well yes, because despite all that we have experienced in these first ten months—the civil unrest across the county, the pandemic, the wildfires, torrential floods, disastrous tornadoes and 25+ storms and hurricanes—there is still much to be thankful for. Day follows night. Nature continues to dazzle us with its brilliance. As I write this, my grey wood decks are flocked with a beautiful carpet of gold, rust, red and greenish brown leaves.

Friends and family have created innovative ways to stay connected. Like many of you, I have taken up baking. Once a week, I wonder what the heck I'm gonna do with all the sourdough starter in my fridge. Thank goodness the neighbors like bread, scones, pretzels and quiche.

Meanwhile, as the world runs like a dog discovering someone left the gate open, going this way and that without a discernible pattern; never has connections with loved ones been so important.

Margaret Mead once said, *"One of the oldest human needs is having someone to wonder where you are when you don't come home at night."* If my dog had a wristwatch, he would be tapping it every time I walk to the mailbox or take out the trash. He has no clue that the world is perched on the edge of reason. So, I still get morning licks, and insistence that it's always cookie time. Don't you?



Merrie Meyers, Editor of Ruff Drafts

To underscore the importance of these lifelines to maintaining good mental health, we selected the theme of family and friends for this issue. It seemed appropriate to create an opportunity to share the goodness, for just a moment. A literate exhale. An inward smile. Thanks to everyone who contributed content to this issue, the rest of us are grateful.

In other news, congratulations to everyone who submitted an entry in the Writing Competition. Good Job!!! As a frequent judge, I have to say that the entries just keep getting better, and tougher to score. This is the third writing competition I've judged this year and by far the best writing I've read. Hat's off to you, DWAA members! 🐾

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Susan Ewing, Marsha Pugh

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Ida Estep, Chair
Carmen Battaglia, Patricia Cruz

2019 CONTEST

Darlene Bryant, Chair
Officers and Board

HALL OF FAME

Joel Gavrielle-Gold
Bryna Comsky

LIAISON WITH CAT WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Susan Ewing

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Marsha Pugh, Chair
Bryna Comsky, Susan Ewing

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Jill Caren

Ruff Drafts

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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.

Report from the NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The nominating committee of Susan Ewing, committee chair, Amy Shojai, and Dusty Hellman put together a slate of officers, to be voted on at the February annual meeting. If no other nominations come forward, the slate will be approved by the current secretary at the virtual annual meeting. Any member in good standing may run for office if they submit a petition containing the signatures of ten members, also in good standing, by November first to the secretary.

President: **Therese Backowski**
Vice President: **Susan C. Willett**
Secretary: **Emelise Baughman**

Treasurer: **Marsha Pugh**
Board member: **Jill Schilp**
Board member: **Rachel Brix**

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE NOMINEES ARE SHOWN BELOW.



Theresa Bankowski and Hank

President **THERESE BACKOWSKI**

Therese Backowski is a 2015 graduate of The Ohio State University. She majored in English with a minor in Professional Writing. She is a past editor of *Off Lead* Magazine, and a frequent freelance contributor to *Clean Run* magazine, as well as several other pet industry related publications. Her all-college winning essay, *Designer Dogs, Fabulous Fact or Fiasco*, written while she was a student at North Central State College, is published in the Pearson textbook, *A Ticket to Write*.

She is a four-time DWAA Maxwell medal award winner for her outstand-

ing work with *Off Lead*, as well as her informational newsletter, *Groomer to Groomer*.

Ms. Backowski recently finished editing a film script for a local production, *Chasers*, which will be filmed in Mansfield, Ohio.

Therese teaches dog obedience to private clients, and trains service dogs. In addition, she spends a great deal of time adjusting her halo and angel wings, because they seem to always be askew. She lives with a neurotic rescued Standard Poodle and a Chihuahua, also rescued, that has a very unusual, heart shaped nose.



Susan Willett and Jasper



Emelise Boughman and Hazel



Marsha Pugh

Vice-president SUSAN C. WILLETT

Susan C. Willett is an author and blogger, whose award-winning stories, poems, and humor appear in print and online, including her website LifeWithDogsAndCats.com and on Facebook, Twitter (@WithDogsAndCats), and Instagram (@lifewithdogsandcats), as well as publications such as Dogster, Catster and Cat Talk magazine. Her work is featured in multiple Chicken Soup for the Soul books, including two published this summer—The Magic of Cats and Listen to Your Dreams—and several anthologies by Callie Smith Grant: Second-Chance Dogs, Second-Chance Cats and a Christmas-themed dog book slated for 2021.

Susan shares her home with dogs Lilah, Jasper, and Halley, as well as cats Dawn, Athena, Elsa Clair and Calvin T. Katz, The Most Interesting Cat in the World™, whose photo went viral and now has his own social media accounts.

Susan served as a council member for the Cat Writers' Association and is currently a board member of the New Jersey chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. A winner of multiple writing awards, in-

cluding several from the CWA and the DWAA, Susan finds plenty of inspiration for her work; often it's hiding in a box, splashing through a mud puddle, or taking up an entire couch.

Secretary EMELISE BAUGHMAN

When asked for her bio, Emelise reported that it was hard writing about herself, and even harder because the Chesapeake beside her kept wanting his ears rubbed. Plus, he's shedding, so she wondered if she shouldn't vacuum first?

Emelise is a lifelong dog fancier, and a writer of many decades. Her dog involvement led to serving in leadership positions with several dog clubs over the years, including being a Board member for the American Chesapeake Club and the Columbia (MO) Kennel Club. Most recently, she served as secretary for the Grand Island Nebraska Kennel Club for about ten years. She is known for compiling meeting minutes that are accurate, phrased correctly, and informative to the membership.

She's shown Chesapeakes since 1978, and lives in rural Nebraska with her husband Pat. They have two beautiful granddaughters who also love dogs.

After many years of DWAA membership and several cherished Maxwell

medallions, she believes it's time to give back. She looks forward to serving DWAA as Secretary.

Treasurer MARSHA PUGH

Incumbent Marsha Pugh has been a member of DWAA since 2004 and has been treasurer since 2011. She has led an interesting life, including a stay on Alcatraz (her father was a guard). Her life has always included dogs, with a childhood filled with many dogs, including Chihuahuas. She is a second-generation dog person and has been showing and breeding dogs since her earliest memories. Besides show dogs, she has taken in many strays, including once, an entire litter of puppies. She conducts handling classes and judges 4-H competitions. Until her retirement in March 2010, she was the administrator of a multi-million-dollar pension fund. Now she manages a household of busy Italian Greyhounds.

Board Member JILL SCHILP

Jill Schilp grew up believing that a girl and her dog could change the world. For the next thirty years, she worked as a psychiatric nurse educator and a cer-



Jill Schil

tified professional in healthcare quality. In all those years, she discovered something; she was right about dogs changing the world.

When she retired from health care, Jill began her second act as a certified humane educator, a volunteer therapy animal instructor, and dogwriter. She writes at the intersection of dogs and human health. She aims to show readers how dogs make a unique contribution to human health care and to inspire the reader's curiosity about what is possible in human-animal collaboration.

Jill is the author of *Dogs in Health Care: Pioneering Animal-Human Partnerships*, a book in the *Dogs in Our World Series* published by McFarland Books in 2019. In 2014, Jill's blog, *The*



Rachel Brix

Daily Junior received the Dog Writers Association of America Maxwell Award for Best Blog. Her work has appeared in journal articles, books, magazines, and online, and she has been a contributor to a pet blog for a major daily newspaper. She has co-edited a book on using data for health care performance improvement.

Jill is a frequent speaker on humane education and animal-assisted interventions and volunteers in several local and national dog-related organizations. She served as the volunteer coordinator for Golden Retriever Rescue Alliance in Dallas/Fort Worth and volunteers for several nonprofit organizations dedi-

cated to humane education and mental health advocacy.

Board Member

RACHEL BRIX

Rachel Brix, BSEd, CPDT-KA has been teaching people and training dogs for a combined 22 years. Her dog, Percy, inspired her to resign after over a decade of teaching high school English to pursue a full-time career with dogs. She has also managed two no-kill shelters, mentored Petco trainers and spearheaded and volunteered on campaigns to enact animal welfare legislation.

Rachel is a regular contributor to *The APDT Chronicle of the Dog* and two of her articles have been nominated for DWAA awards. She has also spoken at Association of Professional Dog Trainers conferences and often gives free seminars on Bite Prevention for both veterinarian offices and her community.

She and her husband own and operate Percy's Playground Canine Enrichment Center in southwest Missouri which offers positive reinforcement dog training and a cutting-edge approach to dog boarding. They share their lives with 6 rescue animals; the most recent being Apache, a dog who spent nearly 3 years in a shelter due to unaddressed behavioral issues. 🐾

Editor's Note

Thank you for your submissions to this issue! As we approached the deadline for submissions, we'd received fewer than the usual number of articles. DWAA President Carol Bryant jumped right into action and sent out an all-call. Bam! You came forward and shared your work with us so we could share with others. Thanks for making this issue a great one.

Merrie Meyers RDeditor@dogwriters.org

Attitude of Gratitude

By **Darlene Bryant**, DWAA EVENT & COMPETITION CHAIR

Each year, DWAA relies on an independent panel of volunteers to judge the competition entries. Despite the pandemic, we had close to 900 entries, making this year's competition very close to the number received last year.

Thank you to the judges for volunteering your time, support, and talents

to make this year's competition a success. We appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedules to serve as judges. Without each of you, there would be no writing competition.

This is a great opportunity for writers to showcase their talents and for others to discover what is being created. It develops confidence in both members and non-members to take their journey

further while rewarding a job well done.

We are honored and grateful to each of you. Those interested in being a judge for next year's competition should contact me at frmrtcher@gmail.com. 🐾

President's Note: Special thanks and gratitude to Darlene Bryant for taking on the challenge and task of overseeing and managing the writing competition.



Many thanks to the following contest judges for volunteering their time and expertise on behalf of the 2020 entrants:

Sandy Mesmer
Duncan MacVean
Christy Caplan
Bryn Nowell
Jen Reeder
June Greig
Elizabeth Lopez
Gail Bisher
Melissa Kauffman
Carol Bryant
Theresa Lyons
Dawn Antoniak-Mitchell
Yasmine Ali
Marsha Pugh
LuAnn Stuver Rogers
Tilly Grassa
Mary Schwager
Maggie Marton
Arden Moore

Peri Norman
Paula Gregg
Michael Hoffman
Kim Thornton
Susan Metzger
Angela Schneider
Aimee Gertsch
Kristin Avery
Casey Bobek
Kate Kuligowski
Melissa McMath Hatfield
Bobbie Pyron
Teri Wilson
Virginia Norman
William Patterson
Cori Solomon
Barbara Magera
Patricia Stephens
Mary Burch

Adria Henderson
Hilary Lane
Lisa Bregant
Debra Lampert-Rudman
Marcie Davis
Dawn White
Fran Pennock Shaw
Skye Anderson
Joel Gavriale-Gold
Caroline Coile
Rachel Brix
Michele Wojciechowski
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Shelley Bueche
Cara Achterberg
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Beth Ann Amico
Fay Pacchioli
Sandy King
Sue Bobek
Lisa Peterson
Susan Luck

Cathy Weselby
Linda Saraco
Mary Fish Arango
Deborah Wood
Rebecca Sanchez
Denise Fleck
Corally Burmaster
Emelise Baughman
Alden Taylor
Anne Marie Duquette
Marilyn Singer
Laurie Williams
Mary Abram
Amy Tokic
Kelsie McKenzie
Kathy Mandell
Joanne Anderson
Christy Powers
Karen Harbert
Merrie Meyers
Mara Bovsun
Sharon Fremer
Kathleen Komlos
Ranny Green

MEMBER NEWS

DWAA's Member Wins Prestigious Award

By **Gail Diedrichsen**

Each year, the Illinois State Board of Education sponsors ***Those Who Excel***, a recognition honoring individuals who have made significant contributions to Illinois's public and nonpublic schools. Awards are presented in seven categories, including *Outstanding Community Volunteer*. Nominations are evaluated by a selection committee composed of individuals who represent a variety of educational organizations.

Naperville District 203, one of the largest districts in Illinois, announced their 2020 "All Star Team." Dog Writers Association of America member, Ted Slupik, was selected as the Outstanding Community Volunteer. He was recognized by Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker this October.

Ted's been visiting Madison Junior High with his collie, Rosebud, for sev-

eral years as a visiting author. He promotes the joys of volunteering. With parental support, Ted has successfully coordinated scheduled nursing home visits with students. Relationships that are established with some of the senior residents have also proven to be meaningful for these young volunteers. One only needs to see the ear-to ear smiles to understand how much these visits are appreciated.

Ted and his previous collie, Sophie, volunteered for thirteen years at a local hospital in their animal-assisted therapy program. Loving Sophie profoundly enriched Ted's life. When he lost her, he was compelled to honor her memory. He reminisced, gathered old photos and put pencil to paper to share their story. Ted's book, *Sophie: Best Friends Are Forever*, tells a heartfelt story. Not only does it describe his deep love for this dog, but it fondly recalls their time to-

gether when performing animal-assisted therapy work. Sophie's kind disposition and desire to work opened a door for Ted. His volunteer work continues to be an important part of his identity.

Ted is a certified tester/observer for *Alliance of Therapy Dogs*, significantly increasing the numbers of available teams in his community and the surrounding area. Ted's evolving animal-assisted therapy work includes giving students the opportunity to participate. In fact, a student volunteer, Lauren Marcotte, was tested with her own dog under Ted's guidance. Lauren graduated as a certified junior handler recently and is volunteering with her mom, Carla. Carla and the other parents especially appreciate what Ted has done for all their children.

Sophie's spirit continues to influence Ted in his philanthropic work through his foundation, *Lizzy's Fund*. Besides various fundraising activities, the sale of Ted's book assists the foundation with achieving their goal to help abandoned, older dogs in shelters and rescue organizations find homes.

Following in Sophie's steps, Ted and his current dog, Rosebud, continue to better our world. Rosebud may not have a biography written about her (yet) like Sophie, but she's a favorite with people, young and old, nevertheless. Rosebud has found her own unique legacy with Ted, and it has been hard-won. Ted has joked for some time, "Sophie was my A+ student, however Rosebud is my C+." However, with a personality that shines through whenever on duty, Rosebud has advanced

See SLUPIK AWARD pg 15



Outstanding Volunteer, Ted Slupik, with his collie, Rosebud, and their pet therapy friends

HIT AND RUN Thriller Celebrates The Bond



Many folks know about my nonfiction work that covers cat and dog care and behavior. Not as many may know that I also write fiction also featuring pets. I call my fiction “Thrillers With Bite!” because they all include heroic pets and their human partners. I’m excited to share news about, **HIT AND RUN**, the 5th book in my September and Shadow Thriller series. It’s a true celebration of family and friends, human and furry.

THRILLERS WITH BITE!

Be warned—don’t expect my stories to be warm-and-fuzzy cozy mysteries. These thrillers include mayhem and murder and cover darker subject matter than the typical “animal mystery.” Although pet characters often may be at risk, I don’t kill my animal heroes in the stories. No, it’s only the people who become victims, and usually the bad guys get what’s coming to them! I also get to highlight the best of our cats and dogs in the stories by including hero pets from readers in the

story after they won the [Name That Dog](#) and [Name That Cat](#) contest.

In my fiction, the main character, animal behaviorist and trainer September, partners with her PTSD service dog Shadow and her trained Maine Coon cat Macy. All the stories in the series thus far have been set in North Texas, but in **HIT AND RUN**, September, Shadow, and Macy travel to South Bend, Indiana, to uncover a conspiracy that has festered for decades.

Shadow was based on my own Magical-Dawg. The canine character originally partnered with an autistic child. Because I had no idea how to write in an autistic child’s viewpoint, that first book **LOST AND FOUND** instead showed the story through the dog’s viewpoint in several chapters. And I absolutely LOVED writing in dog viewpoint—not as a “talking” dog (aka human in a fur coat) but as a canine hero who perceived his world through scent, sound, and more, and acted/reacted as a normal dog would. Turns out, my readers loved Shadow’s viewpoint chapters, too.

Shadow the GSD not only helps his person, September, ward off panic attacks, he’s been trained to track down missing pets. Macy-cat, not to be outdone, has also learned tracking skills (yes, there ARE real-life pet-finding felines). In the story, you’ll learn some other amazing, true pet skills that may surprise you.

This time around, Macy also has a few chapters that show his part of the story through a cat’s *purr*-ceptions. Early reviews seem to love the cat’s chapters just as much as the dog *purr*-spective, so future books in the series likely will continue to include these fun scenes.



WHY THRILLERS, WHY MAYHEM?

Why write thrillers about mayhem, murder, bad guys, and conspiracies? I’ve always had a vivid imagination. During these challenging days, weeks, and months of an extraordinary year, writing a thrilling fiction story helped me escape the darker reality of the real world. Part of that world was my dog Bravo losing his leg to osteosarcoma, and recently finishing five rounds of chemo.

I do put my main character September and her friends through the wringer, but she comes out the other side a stronger, and happier, more hopeful person. I write thrillers because I get to shine a light on pet behavior, control the outcome where good triumphs over evil, and hope lives for a brighter future.

WHAT’S HIT AND RUN ABOUT?

A message from the grave. An assassin on her tail. Sniffing out the truth could get them all killed.

September Day is ready for a new start with her detective boyfriend.

See HIT AND RUN pg 15



A Day in the Life of PUPPIES

SUBMITTED TO RUFF DRAFTS
FALL EDITION 2020

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

Continued from cover

Although they walk in a zigzag pattern, I am pleased they tolerate the lead. Learning to walk in a straight line is a lesson for the future. Interestingly, no one tries to chew or scratch the lead off their little necks.

I bait them with small treats to keep their movement going, and at all costs, I avoid dragging or forcing a pup to walk. The treats and my whistles are the motivation for them to move forward, even if only for a few steps.

As we walk towards our house, the youngsters are mesmerized by the honeybees who are busy pollinating the floral planters lining both sides of our driveway. A special event is a hummingbird flittering around some brightly colored flowers. A soft breeze gently sways the Spanish moss, draping the branches of the mighty oak trees that characterize Charleston and the South.

Today, the Cavaliers are washed and groomed for their glamour shots. Potential pet owners love photos of the youngsters. Luckily, clouds gather, diffusing the sun rays. This is better than direct sunlight, which results in squinting eyes.

I prefer to shoot with my lens at the same level as the dog rather than

**This month's covergirl is Shelby.
Carli is pictured above.**

.....
down on the dog. I cover a grooming table with a non-slip dog blanket and then place the pup on the table. My husband keeps a hand on the pup's underside to prevent the dog from bolting off the table. I hold my camera securely with my right hand and use a squeaky toy in my left hand to get the pup's attention. Since I am primarily interested in expressive head shots, I focus on the pup's eyes. The noise of the squeaky toy or my gorilla grunts grabs the attention of the pup. The ideal pose is the pup's face turned towards me with both eyes wide open and ears

up. I deliberately adjust my depth of field so the pup is in focus while the background is blurred.

After the photo shoot, the pups want to play. I throw the squeaky toy in a small arc. One of the pups catches the toy in midair, runs towards me and drops it at my feet. We play this game of catch and fetch for nearly 20 minutes. Amazingly, the pups are not the least bit tired at the end of our session.

As I prepare dinner in our large kitchen, the pups entertain themselves by romping and running at full speed between the kitchen, family room and screened porch. Their antics keep us laughing. As I put their snoods on to protect their ears, their big dark eyes stare at my face. I carefully place a dish full of dinner in each of their cages. They enthusiastically eat their meals.

It is nearly dusk when everyone finishes eating. We slip on their leads for an evening walk. Halloween is coming and my neighbors have gone overboard with decorating. As we approach a lawn covered with yard art, the pups stop, and with wide eyes study the moving goblins and witches. They are fascinated with the colored lights. With a little coaxing, they slowly walk in the direction of home.

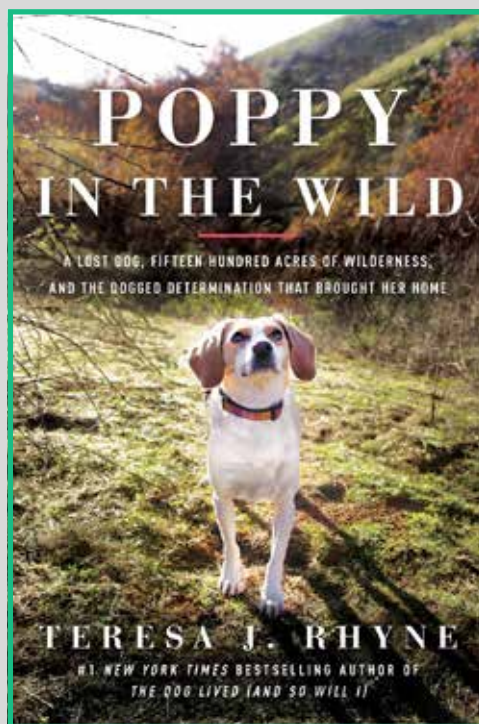
As we settle in for the night, each pup is directed towards their crate, which serves as their safe haven. Everyone is awarded a goodnight kiss on the head and a tidbit treat. As I dim the lights in their room, I thank God for our canines who offer unconditional love and happiness. 🐾

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

MEMBER NEWS

New Book from #1 New York Times Bestselling Author

A tale of love and devotion defying all the odds



After losing her beloved beagle Daphne to lymphoma, author Teresa J. Rhyne launches herself into fostering other dogs in need, including Poppy, a small, frightened beagle rescued from the China dog meat trade. The elation of rescue quickly turns to hysteria when Poppy breaks free from a potential adopter during a torrential thunderstorm and disappears into a rugged, mountainous, 1,500-acre wilderness park, bordered by a busy road.

***Poppy in the Wild* (October 6, 2020)** reveals the quest to find this special dog. Teresa will work with rescue specialists, volunteers, psychics, a Native American who communes with owls, helpful neighbors, decidedly unhelpful strangers, a howling woman, the police, crushing dead ends, glim-

mers of hope, and her own emotional and physical limits as she sits in the wind and rain in the wilderness park for hours each dusk and dawn with bags of roasted chicken and her dirty socks, the human lure for a terrified beagle and packs of less terrified coyotes.

Meanwhile, Poppy encounters heavy rains, a homeless encampment, the Sheriff and his wife, a series of strangers, speeding traffic, hawks, and, ultimately, a world of people willing to do anything to protect rather than harm her. Through a surprising late-night encounter, Poppy is finally caught. After her time in the wild, Teresa reunites with an unexpectedly transformed Poppy, now newly confident and brave and ready to be welcomed into her forever home.

- How exactly do you find a lost dog? In reality, all our natural inclinations are wrong.
- Rhyne reveals the counter-intuitive measures that allowed Poppy to find her way home.

Teresa J. Rhyne is the #1 New York Times, #1 Wall Street Journal, and USA Today bestselling author of *The Dog Lived (and So Will I)* and its sequel *The Dogs Were Rescued (and So Was I)*, which was awarded the Pat Santi Memorial Friend of Animals Award by the Dog Writers Association of America. She was awarded The Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian of the Year by the Riverside Humane Society Pet Adoption Center in 2008 and lives in Los Angeles with her beagles.

A Good Walk

By **Jen Reeder**

I am scared to go outside. It's March, and Denver's mayor has already announced a "stay at home" order in response to the coronavirus pandemic. But my dog, Rio, has other ideas. He's a firm believer in the morning walk that we take without his pesky sister, a little senior poodle named Peach.

Rio seems to understand he should pester me instead of my husband. Bryan is at high risk for contracting COVID-19 due to a kidney transplant. Twice a day, he takes medication to suppress his immune system to keep his body from rejecting the kidney I donated to him. He hasn't left our home in weeks.

So, Rio and I hit the streets of our densely populated neighborhood. My yellow Labrador retriever mix stops to smell a bush as a couple walks toward us. "Let's go!" I urge my dog, eager to cross the street before they can reach us. Not everyone appreciates the importance of staying at least six feet apart.

We walk past an empty elementary school. From the base of a tree, Rio barks at a squirrel, tail wagging non-stop. Meanwhile, I eye the girl on a tricycle pedaling toward us, her mom striding behind her, and pull my pooch to the school's entrance to allow them a wide berth to safely pass on the sidewalk.

A month ago, the child might have asked to pet my friendly dog. Instead she offers a meek "Thank you" as she rides past. Rio whimpers with longing. He loves kids. I wave, wishing she could play with my dog, or with her friends on the nearby jungle gym.

But the world is on fire.



Ten minutes later, a pickup truck races down the narrow street, belching exhaust, just before a jogger passes us from behind, too close. My breathing grows rapid while I feel my chest tighten. I recently googled "panic attacks," but learned I'm actually having "anxiety attacks" when this happens.

Hysteria rising, I start walking faster, practically pulling Rio, and holler, "Cor-

ner!" to round a bend with high hedges that makes it impossible to see if anyone is coming. I never want to accidentally bump into someone. I learned my lesson with the woman staring at her phone the other day.

A voice calls out from across the street, jolting me from my thoughts.

"Is that Rio?"

See RIO'S WALK pg 14

Putting The Magic Back Into My Life

by **Gail C. Parker**

The following story is true. Even though it is about a cat, it could be about a dog, guinea pig, rabbit or any other pet. I thought it might be appropriate at this time because so many people adopted pets during the pandemic-work-from-home situation. What might happen when the adults go back to work? I hope it will make parents realize how badly hurt a child can be when a beloved pet is taken away.

In order to understand this little miracle, you should know the history behind it. So make a cup of tea, sit back and bear with me while I tell you a story....

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who went to live with her parents. That's because people said she belonged there, even though she was happy with her grandparents. Her mother had a cat who had not been spayed because the surgery was attempted by the wrong veterinarian. The mother did not always keep the cat indoors and she had kittens. The father found homes for the kittens at work.

As time went on, the little girl's father ran out of people who had room for anymore cats. The parents abandoned one litter on a farm. In another litter, there was a little grey striped kitten. She had a small orange patch on her head near her ear, just like the other grey kittens in her litter. This particular kitten was different than the others. She immediately bonded with the little girl.

The girl named her Tuffy and she came when the child called her. All too soon, the kittens were ready to leave their mother. The little girl begged and pleaded with her mother to keep Tuffy. She even offered her mother every dollar in her bank account, but to no avail. The mother decided this litter would go to the SPCA and made the father and little girl, who was sobbing by this time, take them inside while she waited in the car. She told the little girl to tell the lady at the desk that if they didn't find homes for the kittens to call and



Danny and Magic

they would come back for them. The girl agreed. Of course, the SPCA does not do that but the lady was being kind. She must have seen how upset the child was. The little girl never saw Tuffy again, nor did she know what happened to her and the other kittens.

Lucky finally did get spayed. The girl never forgot Tuffy, even when she was an adult and had her own cats. She bought a cat angel with a plaque you could have engraved with your deceased pet's name. She had Tuffy's name added to the cats she'd loved who had died. One day, the girl, now an

adult, was out in her garden looking at the cat angel. She wanted another male cat because her eldest male had passed away a year before. She thought of Tuffy with tears in her heart and decided that in Tuffy's memory, she would look for a male grey striped cat, with maybe a touch of orange. She sent a little prayer up with the cat angels that such a kitten might want to come live with her and find her.

She went inside and something told her she should check her email, so she did. At the same time, miles away,

Continued on next page

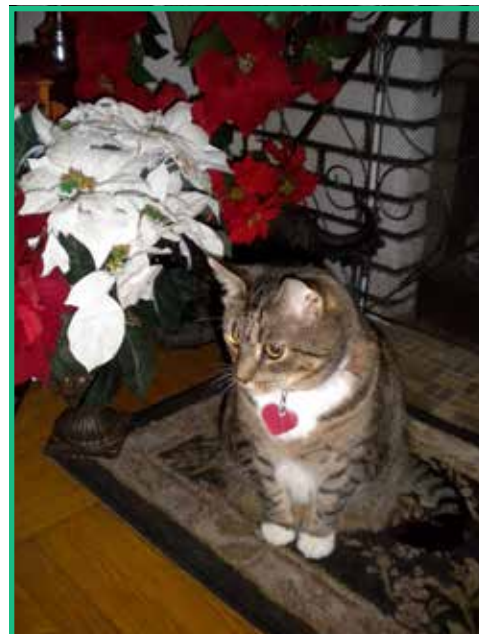
Continued from previous page

a friend of hers found a kitten in her driveway. She could not keep him forever, so she posted a message about him to her English Setter rescue list. She said he was grey striped and for some reason, he was the only one of the three kittens she could find with the stray mother cat. The others were not grey. She hoped someone on the list might know of a home for the kitten. The lady could not believe her eyes! She immediately emailed her friend and asked if she could please adopt the kitten. She was emailed a picture of him and there, by his ear, was a very light orange patch!

The lady and Bonnie, the rescuer, decided to keep the identity of the

adopter a secret until she actually had the kitten. Bonnie teased the people on the list about who this person might be. One of the listers, Nancy, asked if there was a cat man to go with this cat woman. The lady's father had been called Catman by his co-workers because of the kittens and it had been his CB moniker. Maybe it was his way of saying he was sorry he had been powerless to stand up to her mother all those years ago and he made sure she got to keep Tuffy this time!

Can you believe why, after all this, that the lady named the kitten Magic? It was truly Magic how he came into her life. I was that little girl. Please join me in celebrating the Magic! 🐾



Magic

Rio's Walk

Continued from pg 12

The questioner is Rachael, my favorite baker from the farmers' market. Rio strains at the leash, trying to get to his friend, but we keep our distance to hear the good news she shares from behind a mask: She is starting to offer home delivery of sourdough bread, rolls, pretzels, cookies and bagels – carbohydrate comfort food. There are flour shortages, but her supplier has been coming through so far.

"We leave orders on the front porch so there's no contact," she says. She gets it. She cares. My mouth waters thinking of buttered bread. Thank goodness Rachael recognized my dog.

I relax as Rio and I head on. Our luck has shifted. We stumble upon a chalk drawing of suns and hearts on concrete stairs with a note reading, "The sun still shines!" I look around. No one is coming. I take a photo of Rio next

to the message so I can text it to my parents later. It's been so hard being separated during lockdown; they're in California, and I'm in Colorado. It was only last month that we were together in Secaucus for the DWAA awards banquet, but it feels like a lifetime ago.

When will I get to see them again?

Rio and I travel haphazardly, our route dictated by avoiding contact with others. We pass a "little library" box offering not just free books, but dried pasta and a precious roll of toilet paper. I wouldn't have seen this generous gesture if my dog hadn't insisted on this walk.

I hold out my hand and say, "High five!" My good boy slaps it with his paw and wags for a treat.

In the next block, a chalk star blazes across the pavement. Someone has scrawled, "So close and yet so far away." Indeed.

Then we hit the jackpot: an entire block of chalk art. Various hands had drawn a rainbow.

Ice cream cone.

Happy faces.

Hopscotch squares.

Prancing unicorn.

Squiggles.

Flowers.

Mermaid.

Birthday cake.

Planet Earth.

A handmade banner spans a fence proclaiming, "Believe!" Posters in windows announce, "Be awesome!" and "You are strong!"

Rio poses for more photos as tears stream down my face. I reward him with treats for his efforts. Then he rolls in a patch of grass, kicking his feet at the sky, elated by the simple pleasures of a good walk.

I don't feel strong. But I used to be. I need to be. I realize in a flash that my dog – and my neighbors – will help remind me how. 🐾

Freelance journalist Jen Reeder is Immediate Past President of the Dog Writers Association of America.



Madison Junior High School students enjoy a moment with visiting therapy dogs

Slupik Award

Continued from pg 8

to the head of the class. It's a well-deserved promotion.

As an invited guest author, it's only natural that Ted would encourage young students to express themselves through writing. In fact, two of these volunteers wrote stories describing their experiences with therapy dogs. Daley Dodsworth and Kathryn Prerost each won the Dog Writers Association of America's Junior Writers Maxwell Awards. Both students traveled to New York City to be recognized. Ted appreciates the opportunity Dog Writer Association of America provides for these young writers.

Natasha Konrad, District 203 Librarian, shares, "Ted's author visits provide students with a positive message about the benefits of volunteering and the power of writing your own story...The connection that Ted has built with our school community makes him an outstanding volunteer."

Kudos to DWAA's Ted Slupik. Congratulations as well to Rosebud, whose enthusiasm and happy tail continue to motivate young volunteers and writers.

"Sophie was my At student, however Rosebud is my Ct."

—Ted Slupik

Hit and Run

Continued from pg 9

Believing she's finally put her husband's death behind her, her life upends when his mother sends her a safety deposit box key that could unlock the truth. But before she can examine the cryptic contents, she's brutally attacked, the files are stolen, and her former in-law is murdered.

Determined to uncover the harrowing facts, September and her dog Shadow battle to stay one step ahead of the merciless killer. But when they stumble upon shady business at a cattery, she must expose the mastermind before she too ends up in the ground.

Will Macy-Cat sniff out the key to unmask a decades-old horror? Can September and Shadow confront the past and live to tell the tale?

WHERE CAN YOU FIND HIT AND RUN?

The book **HIT AND RUN** released on October 4, 2020 as both an Ebook (\$4.99) or as a print paperback (\$12.99). You can order **HIT AND RUN** online from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, or request your local booksellers or libraries to order the book. Here's a YouTube video TRAILER for the book (with a cameo of my Magical-Dawg *sniff*): <https://youtu.be/rIIYUmD-1Vc>

Amy Shojai (<https://www.SHOJAI.com>) is the award-winning author of 35+ nonfiction pet care and behavior books, and the September & Shadow thrillers. She lives in North Texas with Bravo-Dawg, Karma-Kat, Shadow-Pup, and the enduring memory of Magical-Dawg and Seren-Kitty. Follow her on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), or on [BookBub](#) to stay up to date with new books.

GOLLY MISS MOLLY

By **William Patterson**

By merely being in the wrong time in history, my wife June and I have been prisoners for the past several months. To acquaint you with the system, there are various levels in this confinement: independent living, assisted living, dementia care and nursing home. We broke no laws that I am aware of. The government and the facility management just said not to continue ordinary living.

Bingo games stopped, happy hour disappeared, worship services disbanded, and the daily dining room schedule vanished. No visitors were allowed to see us and if we drove our cars outside the compound wall, we were required to spend 14 days in our rooms quarantined. The once bustling hallways and courtyards became empty except for the sporadic checking of mailboxes. Meals were at first delivered in plastic bags hung on our doorknobs, but more recently we have had to pick them up from the dining room kitchen crew. Boredom, despondency and occasional thoughts of suicide intervened in our days.

The following poem reflects my emotional journey:

At last things seem to be improving as everyone has adapted to the three basic rules of surviving the pandemic: Wash hands frequently, always wear a mask outside of our apartment and maintain the prescribed social distancing.

Perhaps the most important reason elderly people survive in a retirement home environment is the continued companionship of pets. In our community of about 150 residents, there are 20 or 25 dogs and a few cats. The dogs are all small and energetic with short coats but no two look alike and there is scant

resemblance to the pictures of AKC breeds. Coming from a background of breeding and showing Welsh Corgis, I have tried unsuccessfully to categorize the dogs as terriers, perhaps like a Yorkshire or a Brussels Griffon. The main attraction of these pets is that they provide companionship and regular exercise to their owners. To the rest of us, they create memories of the pets we used to own ourselves.

Molly is a miniature poodle everyone here knows by name and looks forward to seeing. When the breakfast bags are



Troglo-dyte

Did you look out your cave today?
Eons ago we likely lived this way.
Waiting for the sun to rise or the cloud to clear
And hoping the bearer of food would appear.
Did loved ones really exist in our distant past
Or did we imagine them as they left us so fast?
Platitude, rectitude, solitude, states of mind
Reach out, reach out and hope to find
A path to follow and join us there
Living together in a new somewhere.



William and his wife June

It was nine years ago when they decided to get a new pet. They found a neglected forlorn pup advertised for sale by a woman and her son. The asking price for this animal was \$300 but an offer of \$150 was immediately accepted. An examination by their veterinarian discovered that the puppy named Molly had originally been registered and microchipped. Having come from an animal-friendly background, Jim gradually trained Molly on a leash in basic obedience.

When his wife passed away in 2015, their puppy Molly at first became withdrawn in her own period of grieving. With patience and coaxing, Jim restored Molly to the exuberant pet she is today. She delights in prancing around The Inn property with Jim cruising behind her.

Molly accompanies Jim but is never encumbered by a leash. He enters the large hallway on his electric scooter and Molly trots back and forth between him and the various residents. When Jim has picked up his breakfast sack containing the dry cereal, banana or apple, milk carton and blueberry muffin that we all tolerate or enjoy, little Molly will suddenly hop aboard the scooter to accompany him home. We love Molly and know that Miss Molly loves us. 🐾



Molly



The author takes Molly for a ride

handed out each day, the residents take turns greeting and petting Molly. Her owner, Jim, has lived here nearly three years. Growing up in the oil country of West Texas, Jim started riding motorcycles when he was 16. He recalls enjoying

large group motorcycle trips to Mexico, sometimes with one of his dogs riding behind him. He and his wife were married for 44 years, settling in San Antonio to operate a machine shop for their last 16 years together.

The author is William (Bill) Patterson who is 89 years old and living in San Antonio, Texas with his wife June. He served on the DWAA Board along with Mordecai Siegal and Pat Santi back in the old days.

NOVEMBER IS ADOPT A SENIOR PET MONTH!

Here's How to Lend an Older Pooch a Helping Paw

By **Laura T. Coffey**

Senior dogs are awesome. They're calm, mellow, sweet, loveable, and they're usually already house-trained. All of these traits make them so much easier than puppies — and yet, as wonderful as animals over the age of 7 are, they often represent a high-risk population at shelters across the United States, where about 1.5 million dogs and cats are put down each year.

How can this be? Why is it that the most snuggly, tranquil, ideal companions are in this situation? For starters, this happens to most senior dogs by no fault of their own. Confronted with financial pressures, illness, or another life upheaval, animal owners suddenly may be

unable to care for their pets. Then, once older animals land in shelters, they can get overlooked because people think it will be too sad to bring them home.

But wait! Not so fast! There is overwhelming evidence that adopting a senior can be even more rewarding than choosing a younger dog. In fact, it's likely to go down in history as one of the best things you've ever done.

Just ask Lori Fusaro, the photographer for the non-fiction book I wrote, [*My Old Dog: Rescued Pets with Remarkable Second Acts*](#). Lori once thought it would be too sad to adopt a senior — “I didn't think my heart could take it,” she explained — until the day she welcomed a sweet-natured 16-year-old dog named Sunny into her family. Sunny transformed almost immediately from a sad shelter dog to a happy, beaming family member, and she thrived for more than two and a half years in Lori's care.

“Sunny showed her love for me every single time I came into the room,” Lori said. “It's like she knew I rescued her. She freely gave kisses and followed me around everywhere. It's like these dogs know, and they just want to let you know how grateful they are to you.”

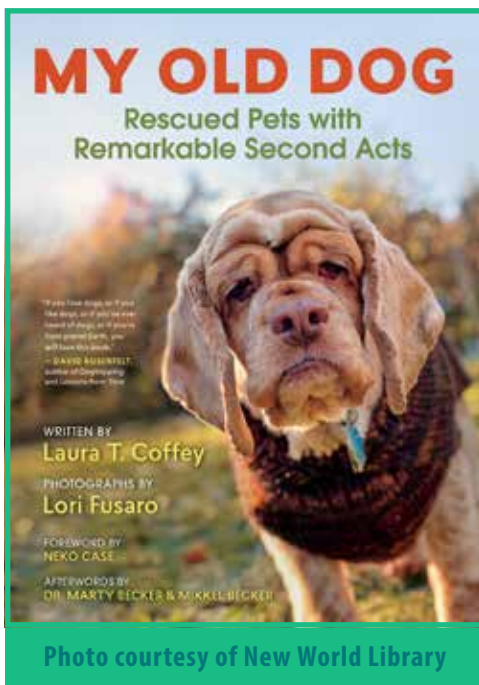
Seeing a dog feel so relieved and grateful and content is *the best thing ever* and taking this step doesn't have to cost as much money as you might expect. While it's true that many older shelter dogs need veterinary care like dental work, people on a budget really don't

have to be too scared about this because there are a variety of ways to solve for it.

My Old Dog includes a comprehensive resource guide with contact information for senior dog rescue groups all over North America and overseas. These groups spring older dogs from shelters and handle all of their major veterinary work before putting them up for adoption, allowing people to bring home a dog who is good to go.

What's more, some organizations, such as Old Dog Haven in Washington state and Old Friends Senior Dog Sanctuary in Tennessee, do something slightly different that is quite amazing: They pull older dogs from shelters and take care of any urgent veterinary needs, and then they place the dogs in permanent foster homes and continue to cover all veterinary costs for the rest of the dogs' lives. In such situations, people who open their homes to these “final refuge” foster dogs never have to worry about a single vet bill.

“Seniors for Seniors” programs are another wonderful provision offered by many shelters and rescue organizations. These programs match mellow older dogs with older humans, and they typically waive adoption fees and cover all initial veterinary and grooming expenses. Many “Seniors for Seniors” programs also provide free welcome-home kits with dog bowls, leashes, harnesses, collars, food, medication, dog beds, and more.





**Author and past DWAA Vice President Laura Coffey knows just how sweet life can be with senior dogs by your side.
Photo courtesy of Lori Fusaro**

Even if people adopt senior dogs directly from shelters without taking advantage of any special programs or assistance, they can keep these cost-saving details in mind: With older dogs, it often doesn't make sense to do high-dollar, heroic procedures such as lengthy cancer treatments. Instead, the focus is on helping dogs enjoy good quality of life, minimizing discomfort, and giving them lots of love.

Of course, not everyone's circumstances allow them to adopt or foster a senior dog — even if they're crazy about dogs. But that's OK, too! There's still so much you can do to help a senior! Shelters and rescue groups always need volunteers in areas like animal caregiving, professional grooming, high-quality photography, marketing, fundraising,

and administrative assistance like filing, paperwork, and document design. If you have a special talent, why not throw one of these hardworking groups a bone?

These organizations also are so grateful for financial support to help defray vet bills and other expenses for the animals in their care. You can donate money to specific, local senior-dog-rescue efforts highlighted in the resource guide in the back of *My Old Dog*, or you can opt to help to a nationwide program. For instance, the [Grey Muzzle Organization](#) does careful background checks and provides grant money to effective programs that help homeless older dogs across the United States. Grey Muzzle also donates orthopedic dog beds to shelters to get kenneled seniors off the concrete floors, pays for dental work to

help older dogs feel better, and supports compassionate hospice programs for senior dogs who need that level of care.

See? Helping a senior dog is such a great thing to do, and there are so many ways to do it! Please consider it, and please trust us: You'll never, ever regret it. 🐾

Laura T. Coffey is a past vice president of the Dog Writers Association of America and a senior writer, editor, and producer for TODAY.com, the website of NBC's TODAY show. Lori Fusaro is a staff photographer at Best Friends Animal Society and the owner of Fusaro Photography, whose clients include many animal-rescue organizations. Their bestselling book *My Old Dog: Rescued Pets with Remarkable Second Acts* is a winner of the DWAA's Best Book Award. Connect with Laura and Lori and find more information about senior dog rescue at www.MyOldDogBook.com.



Five Tips for Motivation to Train Competition Dogs

As heard on the podcast, *Pure Dog*, written and hosted by **Laura Reeves**

The global coronavirus pandemic has brought with it a plethora of change. Event cancellations, isolation, quarantine, toilet paper hoarding and stay at home orders crashed down on all of us in march. And here we are, nearly seven months later. Still, a few events have been held around the country. The purebred dog fancy has generally been careful to follow all mandated precautions at these events in order to encourage more events to resume. A great many more events have continued to be cancelled for any number of reasons.

Exhibitors are frustrated. Exhausted by the ups and downs. It can seem daunting and pointless to maintain our usual routines when there is no identi-

fiable goal. The finish line is uncertain and hazy off in the distance.

Regular listeners know my “penchant for Pollyanna” ... a lemonade out of lemons mentality that helps keep me grounded.

With that, here are five tips for staying motivated in your training, conditioning and grooming plans during the pandemic.

Win the War on Weariness

We are all tired. Tired of homeschooling and masks and no hugs. Exhausted by national politics and worried about money, health, and the future. Weary of the unending unfolding nightmare that 2020 has come to represent to nearly everyone.

One guess as to the best medicine for this type of fatigue and burnout... Yep. Dogs. EVERYONE is either buying or attempting to buy a new dog. We have all seen our inboxes flooded with puppy requests. So, if John Q Public sees the benefit of acquiring a new best friend, *clearly* we dog people are ahead of the game! We often have “multiple” dog households! We have dogs to snuggle, to listen to our darkest fears. We have dogs to distract us, to get us off the couch, away from the fridge and keep our blood flowing.

Celebrate “man’s best friend” and all she represents to you by practicing your stand stay, your send out, and your watch me. Whatever your discipline, there are games you can play to keep your dog sharp and your muscle memory intact, while simultaneously

beating back the looming grey clouds hanging over our heads.

Working from home, home schooling and limited social outlets can feel chaotic, confused and disorderly. One of the few things you can absolutely take into your own control is the time you spend with your dog. Whether you choose to carve out an hour a day for training, trimming, trotting or simply tears behind closed doors, you are in charge. That small measure of being in control of SOME damn thing is a major part of defeating depressed moods and being better able to cope with the rest of the daily “aggro.”

Prevent Pandemic Pounds and Pandemic Puppies

While we’ve all been eating -- and possibly drinking -- our feelings during the last seven months, our young dogs have had nearly zero socialization opportunities. Our motivation to improve our dogs’ future success can provide the kick in the pants we need to get up off the couch, push back from the dinner table, and head for the grooming table.

Even if you have to wear a mask, walking around the neighborhood is allowed everywhere. Walking or running or biking with your dog will keep both of you fit and ready to handle whatever comes next, including fitting into show clothes ... Innumerable studies have proven conclusively that the more physically active we are, and the more time we spend with our dogs, the healthier we are physically AND mentally. The healthier we are, the safer we are from ALL types of viral infections.

Build the Bond

One of the most valuable results of spending time training your dog

or grooming or conditioning, is building the unshakeable bond of trust that our dogs crave. Every time we reinforce “watch me” for eye contact, every time we use our quiet hands to calm their excitement, every single time we work through a knot in their coat or pull coat in wire coated breeds or run a clipper or a Dremel, every time we take off on a loose lead walk or jog, we are teaching our dogs. Every single interaction between us and our dogs is an opportunity to teach and mold them.... Or, conversely, for them to learn that our cues are meaningless and it’s easy to blow them off and do their own thing.

Find the Fun

Wait for it.... This is, or it’s supposed to be, fun! Whether you are showing your dog, running fast CAT, barn hunt, agility or a field trial, it’s okay to have a good time! Competition is great. It keeps us sharp and striving to succeed and improve. But as soon as you aren’t having a good time, rethink what you’re doing. Because if you hate it, your dog definitely does.

Because It’s All About the DOGS ...

This final point is one I see waaaaaaaay too often left behind. Walked past. Ignored. Don’t know what you’re talking about.

In the race for points or rankings or notoriety or whatever one hopes to gain from dog events, folks have a painful tendency to forget the dog entirely. They’re so busy jacking their jaws, they pay NO attention to the dog... Is it spooked? Doesn’t feel good? Uncertain? Jacked up? Mad? Who knows! Exhibitors of this stripe rarely even look down the leash, never mind the feel of the vibe from the dog.

So, in the final analysis, our “motivation” is always the DOGS. There will be a next year. There will be another dog event. There might even be another dog. But there will never again be THIS dog. So, find your mojo. Give her the best you have of time, training, grooming, conditioning and effort. Build your bond with your dogs. And, for the love of all that is holy, have FUN! 🐾



Proactive Pet Parenting

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MBA MPA CVA MRCVS

When considering the health of our pets, it is unrealistic to expect any pet to be completely free of all imperfections. Also, since many problems tend to run in families (in humans as well as pets), they are often multi-factorial and may be caused by a variety of genes and a multitude of environmental factors. Therefore we should not expect most screening tests to be definitive, especially when it comes to predicting risk.

There are certainly some rare (often very rare) genetic disorders that are truly debilitating and may lead to early death. On the other hand, conditions considered to be at least partially hereditary, such as allergies, periodontal disease, arthritis, diabetes mellitus, and even obesity are widespread in the pet population and are often a much greater risk to the average pet.

Family History

Family history is one of the most important determinations of genetic health, but in many instances we don't necessarily have access to this information for our pets. Depending on how and where they were acquired, we may have information extending back many generations, or none at all. The more health-related information we collect on our pets and their families, the better we can deal with relevant risk factors.

When we don't have the benefit of knowing about family history, we often have to infer health care risks based on less specific information, such as *breed predisposition*. Breed predisposition refers to conditions that are believed to be more commonly reported in specific breeds and potentially their crosses.

Unfortunately, breed predisposition is often subject to bias because it may not reflect "relative risk" based on actual prevalence in general or hospital populations. Sometimes, especially with rare diseases, predisposition may be generalized to an entire breed, even when it may be relatively limited to a small subset of the population.

Despite all the problems with breed predisposition, and those problems are real, it remains one of the most important criteria we have for proactive testing in the absence of actual family history. So, if we have no corroborating family history, and we are worried about whether we should be screening for hereditary glaucoma, knowing that a pet is a breed at risk would raise our index of suspicion just based on breed predisposition alone. It may not be fair, and it may not be entirely justified, but we do the best we can with the information available to us.

Genetic (DNA) Testing

DNA testing can be used to identify certain risk factors for specific hereditary conditions, but with some cautions. Some genetic variants are actually very likely to be associated with dysfunction, while in others the association may be more variable. A genetic test that detects a variant known to be associated with a specific disorder in a specific population of animals will be highly predictive. This would be referred to as a "direct" or mutation-based test. On the other hand, if the test detects a "marker" or a group of genes that is associated with a change in risk for disease (higher or lower), then the test might be suggestive but is unlikely to be definitive. This would be known as an indirect, mark-

er-based, or linkage-based test. These are not problems with either the DNA or the test, but rather a statistical variability based on what is being measured and how likely it is to be associated with actual disease.

It can be quite illuminating to run such genetic tests in our pets, but we can often achieve the same types of results if we have access instead to the genetic test results of our pet's parents. If there are no concerns in the test results for the parents, that is good assurance that there should not be concerns in the results of the offspring either. These are sometimes designated as "clear by parentage." That's why it can be so helpful to purchase a pet from a seller who already has genetic test results from both parents.

The most important aspect of DNA testing in pet-specific care is that it helps identify potential health risks for pets so intervention can begin early. However, even if a result indicates the presence of a disease variant, it doesn't necessarily mean dire consequences for a pet. For many conditions in which DNA markers are identified on a test, remember that it only indicates a risk factor for the pet, not necessarily a diagnosis. So, when pets have tests that indicate some risks, fight the temptation to panic or over-interpret. Use that information with your veterinary team to be proactive and monitor your pet. If there is early corroborating evidence, you can intervene early when you have the most chance of making a positive impact. 🐾

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Christian

A dog story

By **Patricia Lipe**

The telephone rang in that seesaw aggravating and piercing way only French telephones can sound. It was five AM. I rolled over, picked up the receiver, mumbled "Oui," and a frantic male voice screamed at me. Come at once, he said. "Venez vite! Il n'y a pas une minute à perdre!" The "animal" was loose. Everyone was "terrorized" (he did not mince his words even if this is a translation). "Il s'est enfui de la cage. C'est pas possible ça!" he yelled through the speaker. And with a sigh, "Ah! ces Américains!" he hung up.

When I left Washington, it was ostensibly to have a little vacation in Europe. Christian was placed in a kennel. But after several weeks in Paris, I decided to totally immerse myself in the French lifestyle for a year. I rented an apartment in Sèvres and sent for my companion, Christian.

There was a large screened-in area, like a huge cage, at Orly airport. It contained unclaimed boxes and baggage, and today, one frightened young German Shepherd. When I called him, Christian ran up to me, tail wagging and tongue licking and so loving and grateful for my presence that it really made the airport stewards look foolish. These big Frenchmen had not dared to enter the "cage" and many irate passengers were impatiently waiting for their bags.

I did not realize it then, but my entire stay in Europe would revolve around this young pup. Christian came home to my apartment outside Paris. He was one worn out dog suffering from a major bout of jet lag. As the days passed,



Christian

I took him everywhere and the French people were wonderful with him. He was allowed in cafés, in taxis, almost everywhere except museums.

Then one day he began to throw up. I took him to the vet, who prescribed him some pills. I also realized he never recouped the energy he had before his flight across the ocean.

The pills did not seem to alleviate Christian's lethargy. In France, at least in those days, water was prescribed as often as pills. Whole stores were devoted to the sale of bottled waters and the bottles were assembled according to their curative characteristics. To the uninformed, such a store looked like a wine shop. Christian had his special water, but still no change. Next on the list of natural cures was a change of environment. If the patient had been human, a spa would have been recommended. In our case, the two options were either the sea or the South.

I had a great uncle living in Rome. I still have Christian's train ticket. It was a long ride from Paris to Rome, which

was made longer because I had to quickly exit the train with my friend every time it came to a stop, worried lest he make a mess in our cabin.

After getting settled in Rome, my first priority was to take Christian to a vet. The outcome of this visit was the diagnosis of both heart worms and tuberculosis. The doctor said we first had to kill the heart worms and then, if he survived, deal with the TB. His diet for the former was pasta. This would be the worst diet for the TB but absolutely necessary for getting rid of the worms.

We took long walks. Of course, Christian could never shed his "disguise." The Romans knew a wolf when they saw one. "Cane lupo, cane lupo" someone would yell and a whole block of people would run across the street leaving my shepherd and me with an empty sidewalk. If you are in a hurry in Rome, this certainly has its advantages.

Christian improved, regaining some of his spark and stamina. We had

See CHRISTIAN pg 27

The Opportunity that is COVID

By **Rachel Brix, CPDT-KA**

COVID has been a nightmare for much of the world. Whether it be sickness, job loss, forced separation from family and friends and even the total disruption to our daily routines, the coronavirus has impacted all our lives. So, it's no surprise many of us are feeling sad, lonely, even depressed and despondent. While a return to some semblance of normal seems far off somewhere in the distant future, we're all coping the best we can. And while we try to navigate through the storm that is COVID, I'm reminded of one of my favorite quotes, by Marcel Proust, "The real voyage of discovery consists, not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." I want to try to see the best in things. Even this thing.

Thank goodness for dogs.

My husband and I put all our eggs in one basket and opened a dog boarding/training facility that focuses on

enrichment in March of 2019. We had a banner first year, took some time off after the holidays and then COVID hit. Hard. Suddenly we – our facility and our spirits – were empty. All our confirmed reservations cancelled. The phone wasn't ringing, no boarding or training requests in our inbox. Not to mention we couldn't be open anyway since our county mandated all non-essentials closed through the beginning of May. We abruptly had zero income yet still had two sets of bills: the house and the business.

We readied our house to sell while applying for loans and grants. Long story short, we had an offer on the house after seven days on the market and were able to get two SBA loans, which we repaid upon selling the house. Simultaneously we remodeled 1000 sq ft of the main building of our facility into living quarters, where we now live with our three dogs. It's been a hell of a six months.

My biggest saving grace wasn't throwing myself into work (our business thankfully has been picking back up), immersing myself in some long-overdue writing, or even my husband. It's been my dogs. Making sure they've had my support in adjusting to their new, smaller world. Making sure they get ample attention from me. Making sure they have the best quality of life I can give them considering our tumultuous year.

So, I added some new activities to our new daily routine, one of the most fun being trick training. So far both Apache and Emmie have gotten their Novice Trick Dog titles and now we're working on Intermediate. Our super senior Sadie is always in on the fun as well, and I'm happy to be able to spend more time with her in her golden years. When we're playing and "funning" I don't think about whether or not our business will have a good month or if all the bills will get paid on time. I live in the moment with them, and we play. Hard. And when we're finished, I still don't think about those bills. At least not for a little while. Instead I bask in how grateful I am for my dogs who, besides my husband, are my family. I wonder if they know how much I've leaned on them. How much I've needed them. How much I love them.

My emotional gas tank fills up every time we play. Every time they master a new trick. Every time we come back from a hike from a newly discovered slice of the beauty that surrounds us here in the Ozarks. And reflecting on this year and what's to come in the next I try to see COVID as something else: an opportunity to have those new eyes. 🐾



Apache celebrating his Novice Trick Dog Title



Emmie showing off her Novice Trick Dog Title

Finding Victoria

By **Sherri Telenko**

Fog blankets the parking lot and I'm up this chill morning before sunrise, wiping wet dew off the car windows. Six a.m. marks the start of my four-hour drive to meet what will possibly be a new family member: a week-old female Sprocker puppy, half Cocker Spaniel and half Springer Spaniel.

Hopefully, this will end my recent emotionally rocky quest for a new dog and repair the canine-sized hole blasted in my heart after my best buddy and plus one, Victor, died in July 2020.

First, there's a four-hour highway drive ahead of me. I'm leaving early to beat the rush – both the early morning traffic through Toronto and the rush for puppies. Yes, a rush for dogs. This litter of nine was posted online two days ago. And only one remains unreserved – one, two days after an advertisement for \$1500 mix breed puppies went live.

If I want her, I've got to be the first there today with a deposit. Early morning fog be damned.

Second, I never thought growing my fur family would be so challenging – I never thought I'd resort to scouring dubious classified sites, but I also never thought I would be over-looked by so many rescues, either. Until three months ago, I was a staunch 'Adopt Don't Shop' thumper. Yet here I am, cleaning off the car, grabbing breakfast through a poorly lit drive-thru, and heading to a remote rural address with less information about where I'm going than a paperback detective has looking for a client's ex-husband.

Before I secure her with a deposit, however, I've got some investigating

of my own to do. I want to see that she exists, in what conditions and is not a puppy-mill off-spring.

How did I get here?

Currently, my fur family consists of three rescue cats – the last one accidentally added when a moving neighbour abandoned him, and he walked down the street finding a much better home with me. So, I'm full up in the cat department (and so are shelters). Don't get me wrong: I love my current fur family. But nine years ago, an eight-year-old cocker-cross named Victor fell into my world and overnight this crazy cat lady became an 'I can't live without a dog' girl.

Unfortunately, when he was at the age of 16 and with advanced canine cognitive dysfunction (doggie dementia), I made the heart-wrenching decision to let Victor go. Guilt led me to believe too soon; the vet counselled me any longer and I'd regret the delay. A no-win situation. We've all been there.

His absence was over-whelming and within weeks I was searching rescue sites, shelters and hounding everyone and anyone in effort to add a small canine to my feline family.

What happened was unexpected at best; soul crushing at worst. I filled in application after application only to be rejected for minor reasons, denied even a meeting because 50 applications for a single small dog was the cut-off, or completely ignored. Shelters and rescues were either empty of dogs or void of small dogs. Applications flooded in for pets not even available yet. I must have filled out at least 20; my reference was called three times. Still no dog.

We all know what happened in 2020. Quarantining had many unforeseen effects including a societal yearning for canine companionship and a US/Canadian border shut down. That last one you might not have considered – I

didn't. But apparently many grassroots volunteer-run rescues in Canada transport van loads of small dogs from high-kill shelters in the U.S. A ban on border runs grinded that to a halt. Add that to the fact efforts to shut down puppy mills (in Ontario, anyway) is working and we're left with a weird good news bad news situation: Fortunately, Canadians aren't surrendering dogs at a rate high enough to supply adoption demand (except for big ones like Pit Bulls), but the demand is fueling some nefarious practices like stealing or 'flipping' dogs online as prices for mutts creep into the thousands of dollars.

What did I do? I did what I was warned not to do and found a home breeder online. (Yes, I looked for a CKC one, but they are over-run by requests, and I want a mix). I drove almost four hours north, following GPS instructions, eventually along a winding country road flanked by calming fall hues to find a rural family with two young kids and a friendly Springer Spaniel named Bailey caring for her litter indoors.

Bailey is a purebred, who they intended to breed. At the age of four, she had one litter of two but wasn't interested in doing it again. So, they left her be – until she took a shine to a friend's purebred Cocker Spaniel while frolicking outside. Fortuitous timing – the demand for Bailey pups proved over-whelming.

I was handed the last unclaimed litter prodigy wrapped in a pink towel.

You know how this ends. I fall in love. Write a cheque and fill my phone with pics. A name pops in my head before I've left the driveway: Victoria. In honour of my Victor, who started me on this doggone journey – a journey now leading me to learn about house breaking, and the cats, no doubt, to months of distraction. Welcome to the family, Victoria. I'm home waiting. 🐾

Piccolo, Pandemic E.S.A. (Emotional Support Animal)

By **Sue Owens Wright**

Sometimes life dumps some serious stuff on you. The year 2019 was one of those times for me. At the end of May, my 96-year-old mother was admitted to a nursing home. That was heartbreaking, but it also meant she could no longer care for her dog, Piccolo, an aging Shih-Tzu/Yorkie mix.

In 2011, at Mom's insistence, I drove her to the Sacramento SPCA to find a dog to adopt. My mother kept dogs her entire life, and she passed that pup passion on to her daughter. I've also never been without the company of a dog. Because Mom was already in failing health, it was against my better judgment for her to adopt another dog, but I well know the healing power of dogs and the love and companionship they provide, especially for seniors.

My parents previously had two Scottish terriers that she and my dad adored. I helped them adopt Laddie and Duffy at the county shelter. Once again, we were looking for love in all the right places. Whatever dog Mom chose to adopt would have to be a small breed, but there were no Scotties in the shelter that day. That's where a "Shorkie" the shelter staff dubbed Peanut enters the picture. When they brought him into the meet-and-greet room, he leapt right into Mom's lap and went home with her that day. She renamed him Piccolo.

I adopted Piccolo rather than see him be returned to the shelter, which often happens when the elderly must leave their home, or they pass away. From that first day he was introduced to us at the shelter, it was understood



The author and Piccolo make a Covid visit

that he eventually might be my dog. I assured Mom that if she became unable to care for him, he would have a good home with my husband and me. Piccolo liked us, and we always gave him lots of love and attention whenever we visited Mom. Unfortunately, the timing for us to adopt another dog couldn't have been worse.

Our beloved 16-year-old basset hound, Peaches, was in the final stages of renal failure. We were struggling to

attend to her needs, knowing that the terrible day we would have to say good bye to her was fast approaching. We'd previously been through the trauma of losing two other beloved bassets, Bubba Gump and Beau. Peaches was never a very social girl, and she needed a lot of attention now, so I wanted her to live the rest of her life in our home as an only dog. It wasn't to be. We lost her on July 3, just a month after Piccolo came on board.

Only those who have loved a dog like the child they never had can understand the void they leave behind when they die: vacant dog beds, abandoned collars and untethered leashes, no more food or water bowls to fill. Most of all, it's the unbearable silence—the absence of yips and barks and the click of toenails on the floor. I've loved and lost a barker's dozen of dogs in my life, and grieving their loss never gets any easier. It's worse when you don't have another dog to ease the pain and help fill those empty spaces. We had Piccolo, but that little guy had big paw prints to fill.

Fill them he has. Piccolo is our first toy breed, which has made him easier for us to handle than the 60-pound hounds we've had all our married life. He may be small in size, but his personality is large. Though a senior dog, he's still as lively as a puppy. He plays with squeak toys and acts much younger than his years. He loves taking long walks with us, something Peaches could

no longer do. He is my wee shadow, my devotee—a “heartbeat at my feet,” as Edith Wharton wrote about her small canine companion. He sits beside me on the sofa in the evenings while I knit and watch television, which I used to enjoy with my bassets in years past. He keeps me company when I'm outdoors in the front garden or on the back patio, as Beau and Peaches once did. He's also become my new literary muse, as this story attests. He dozes behind my chair now while I type at the computer.

Besides all this, perhaps Piccolo's most special quality is that he's a music lover like Beau was. When Beau was alive, he loved to hear me play the ukulele. Whenever I started playing, Beau came waddling in to hear the music. I'd strum and sing “My Darlin' Beau,” by Victoria Vox. It became his song. He'd lie down beside me and stay until the concert was over. I've missed my musical buddy since we lost him in 2015. Since then, I've learned to play the harp. I wish I'd taken up the

instrument while I had Beau. He would have loved it, but now I am playing for Piccolo. He takes his place right in front of the harp while I play, and he's always an appreciative audience. I perform daily harp recitals for my new furry fan.

I cried my heart out after we lost Peaches. She was a part of our lives for so many years, and her loss was hard to bear. She was the last of eight basset hounds that provided inspiration for the canine characters in my Maxwell Award-winning Beanie and Cruiser Mystery Series. Over the past two years, Piccolo has helped me to endure my mother's decline and death, the loss of Peaches, and the shock and awe of a Trump presidency. He has been my much-needed emotional support animal and wears the tag to prove it. My little E.S.A. has also seen me through the COVID-19 virus that I contracted in March of 2020, from which only the love of a good dog has helped me to sit, stay, heal. 🐾

Christian

Continued from pg 23

passed the worm test. Now his diet was changed to beat the TB. Meat replaced the pasta. But the battle was far from won. To help our side, I planned a little trip.

We drove to Assisi; to the Basilica di S. Francesco; or to be precise, to the front pew of the altar in the church of the patron saint of animals. The basilica was dark. Candles flickered near the entrance and a pale light shone over the cross above the altar. But to the tourists who came in the narthex or posterior of the church, the two little ears sticking up from the front pew were visible enough to recognize they were clearly not human. The guide told me later that he was sure St. Francis was

pleased to have Christian in his church, especially a dog so aptly named.

Several months later, we boarded a ship in Naples, once again to cross the Atlantic, but this time in a more leisurely fashion. No more frantic episodes in airports for either of us! Besides, the trip home was strictly first class; at least, it was first class plus for Christian. The kennels were on the top deck while my cabin was several levels below in economy class.

Going through customs in New York, I smiled sweetly, handed my credentials to the officer and then, feigning an embarrassing moment if Christian didn't get to some grass soon, I was able to practically run through the process. If they found out about Christian's illnesses, I thought he might not be allowed back in the U.S. When we

finally returned to Washington, I called the vet and made an appointment. X-rays were taken. It appeared that every internal organ was scared or deformed in some way. The doctor said this indicated some serious illnesses. He was amazed that the dog had survived. “It is a miracle,” he said. “Despite all that has gone before, I give Christian a clean bill of health.” Thank you, St. Francis.

Yes! I will send two. One of Christian looking into the Roman ruins and one of his pass to the grounds of the Villa Pamphili. The Doria Pamphili family were the landlords of my great uncle and gave us permission to walk on the grounds of their property, one of the 7 hills of Rome! He was my “persone d'accompagnato”! My great uncle's story is in my book ‘PATRIOT PRIEST’. 🐾

For One Brief Shining Moment

By **Ted Slupik**

I have been involved with animal assisted therapy (AAT) for almost twenty years. I have owned three therapy dogs during those years:

Sophie, a Rough Coated Collie (therapy dog from 2002 – 2015)

Pixie, aged 12, a Papillion (therapy dog from 2009 to date)

Rosebud, aged 7, also a Rough Coated Collie (therapy dog from 2015 to present)

Each dog has had a most memorable moment. Following are stories about each of their therapy experiences, which have created memorable moments in my life. I will also tell you a story about a dog that I trained (with his owner) named **Laddie** who started his therapy dog career at the ripe old age of 10.

Sophie was my first collie and first therapy dog. Sophie was given up by her breeder to a charity group to be sold because she did not conform to “the breed standard.” I have written about this amazing dog over the past 5 years, including in my book “Sophie...best friends are forever.” This book described her life as a therapy dog, the people she met, and the lives she touched while doing her work. After her first visit with patients, and being the sensitive, empathetic dog that she was, they felt they knew her forever. She left them with a feeling of happiness and solace, and she made a connection with everyone she met.

Sophie befriended an elderly man named Leo in an Alzheimer’s unit of a nursing home that she and I visited frequently. Once nearly comatose and unable or unwilling to speak to his caregivers, Sophie insisted on visiting him in the activity room when he patted his leg,

almost inviting her to come to his side, calling “here girl.” Sophie moved toward him and without hesitating, nudged his hand until he started petting her. His call to her was remarkable. During his six months of residency at this facility, he had never spoken. In broken words, he said “name” and when I told him “Sophie”, he mumbled her name over and over. As if she understood this poor man’s confusion and frustration, she stayed by him for quite some time while he stroked her. Meanwhile, at the adjacent nurses station, some relatives of Leo’s, who rarely came to visit because of his condition, were weeping. He had finally spoken to another being, albeit a simple dog who wanted to help. That visit led to many others with Leo. It seemed he was always waiting for Sophie at the elevator when

she arrived. Although never an eloquent speaker, he was able to communicate a little with his caregivers, which was an amazing feat.

Pixie is an undersized six pound Papillion with a big dog attitude. She was a companion to Sophie for six years and has now been a companion to Rosebud for the past seven years. Pixie trailed after Sophie on some of her nursing home and school visits where certification was not required. Even though she was not certified as a therapy dog at the time, she watched Sophie intently as she worked.

As Sophie was getting older, I wanted Pixie and the new collie, Rosebud, to get certified as therapy dogs. During the first year of her life, I worked with Sophie on obedience commands every day.. I had not done this with Pixie. Without any



Graduation Day

formal training and some skepticism on my part, I went into Pixie's therapy dog training with some trepidation. She not only surprised me, but the tester/observer as well! Pixie had a natural ability and knew almost all the training exercises, performing them perfectly. The tester said she was the quickest learner of basic therapy dog procedures and Pixie graduated in record time. I believe this was from all the "on the job training" she did while observing Sophie, her best friend. Pixie now continues to astound me with the patience she has with older nursing home residents. She will quietly sit on their laps and allow them to stroke her and take comfort in this little angel, even though she is a terror at home with her younger sibling. Her patience, tolerance, and uncharacteristic serenity with this older population is truly memorable to me.

Rosebud is my seven-year-old collie, also certified in therapy work. She gets emotionally involved with people just as Sophie did. Whereas Sophie loved the older population, Rosebud's forte is children; particularly handicapped children. In the middle school we visit, in addition to the hundreds of students she sees, she also visits with autistic or developmentally disabled students. It is almost as if she is drawn to them. As a frightened sixth grader named Seth approached Rosebud, without any instruction from me, she sensed the child's limitations and immediately laid down, perfectly still, allowing Seth to approach her slowly. Absolutely quiet and with immense patience, Rosebud waited for a long time while Seth made his way over to her and finally petted her. Rosebud's reaction to this boy was all instinctive on her part and I have seen this many times with other challenged children.

The last therapy dog that I'd like to tell you about is Laddie. Surrendered to a local rescue at the age of ten due to his owner's death, Laddie had been passed around to family members who did not want him. He ended up living in a hotel room, spending most days alone with no human interaction. Laddie was fostered by a loving family who adored him and eventually adopted him. Meeting him within days of his surrender, I wanted to be his best friend because of his personality as a quiet gentleman. I was the first person he would take a treat from and I was an easy mark. He fit in perfectly with his other two collie housemates and blended in as if he had lived there all his life. I convinced his owners that with Laddie's laid back and docile demeanor he would make a great therapy dog. They let me train them (and him) and he passed the test in record time. Laddie worked at a nursing home until March 2020, when COVID hit. He had the most direct eye contact I have ever seen in a therapy dog and always elicited smiles from the residents who remembered his name (although rarely remembering his handler's name). Everyone who met him, loved him. Unfortunately, Laddie passed away on September 11, 2020 and although I have many memories of his impact on people's lives, I will forever cherish the work I watched him do. If I ever get another collie, I will name him Laddie in his predecessor's honor.

Laddie's death reminds us that every day is important. He reminds us that every day is a gift. In his limited time as a therapy dog, he made many people happy and he certainly made me happy too. Laddie was one of my most memorable therapy dogs, and another brief shining therapy moment was "Laddie." 🐾

A Better Doghouse with Books

By **Leslie Brown**

FROM [A DOG AND A KEYBOARD](#)

Dogs know when a doghouse is theirs, especially if it has all the right things inside. A bed (a soft one), a chew toy (rubber is okay), and something used, like an old slipper or sock.

But some doghouses are just average, and some dogs get bored. You go in, you go out. A doghouse can be better than that. What they need is some books.

WHAT CAN DOGS DO WITH BOOKS?

Besides trying to read them, dogs can do a lot of things with books. Here are some: Pretend to read. Look smarter than you are.

Chew the book cover and some of the pages. They're your books, after all.

Push the books in front of the doghouse door. This can be helpful for extra privacy. Stand on the books. Especially useful for little dogs who want to be taller.

Hide biscuits between the pages. Important for emergency snacking.

GET MORE BOOKS

Get as many books as you can. Beg for more. Try tearing out a page and let it hang from your mouth.

They'll get the idea. 🐾



TIPS & TACTICS

20 Tips to Help You Improve Your Writing

SUMMARIZED FROM SEARCH ENGINE JOURNAL, BY VIKAS AGRAWAL, AUGUST 9, 2020; THE GRAIDE NETWORK, BY KARL HUGHES, MAY 8, 2019; THE MUSE, BY KAT MOON, 2020; AND, REEDSYBLOG, MARCH 3, 2020.

Writing is an art that requires a mastery of tools. Technology can be an asset or an annoyance for writers. But with a slew of tools out there, finding the ones that fit your needs can be tricky. Here are some online resources as incredibly helpful. It's not an exhaustive list, but it does cover quite a bit of territory for those just getting into the use of tech.

CONTENT RESEARCH

Here are some content research tools that can help you get in touch with your niche.

1. BuzzSumo- Simplifies the entire research process by pulling in popular posts through the use of keywords. Search results can be sorted based on social networks, which helps spotlight content that would appeal to target audiences.
2. Ubersuggest- Another tool for keyword research, Ubersuggest spotlights attention-getting content ideas by expanding the seed keyword with suggestions from Google Suggest and Google Ads Keyword Planner.
3. Portent's Content Idea Generator- This is a free tool that can help you generate content ideas.
4. Quora- A Q&A website that taps into what your target audience asks for. Just use the built-in search feature and useful suggestions will pop up.
5. Reddit- This discussion site has specific subcommunities or "subreddits" for everything, which is a great learning tool for inquisitive minds.

COLLABORATION

A lot of writing is done collaboratively. Editors work read and revise content before publication, and teams work together with writers on presentations, memos and documents. Although some apps require subscriptions, many offer free versions with ways to collaborate. These tools include:

6. Google Docs- This cloud-based document editing platform creates a space that multiple users can work in collaboratively.
7. Evernote- A cross-platform app that lets you manage documents across devices.
8. Notion- Similar to Evernote, this tool lets you write, plan, collaborate and get organized all in one place.
9. Dropbox - A cloud-based app that lets you write, edit, comment and share content.
10. Asana- A tool that lets teams organize their work in one shared space.

GRAMMAR AND STYLE

11. Grammarly- Personally, I find the corrections and auto-corrections from Microsoft Word annoying, but they do help identify basic spelling or punctuation errors. Grammarly also offers a contextual spell-checker to identify commonly confused words (for example, ensure vs. insure), saving you from a literary faux pas.
12. Hemmingway- This app goes a step beyond in the editing genre. It's a task I usually depend on friends for. After pasting your content in a browser, Hemmingway will help you rephrase your work in a clear and concise manner, indicating through color coding several different types of editing options, such as how to eliminate passive voice. This app also has a readability feature that

tells you how difficult your writing is to comprehend. Wow!

13. OneLook Reverse Dictionary- This is an app I want for my crossword clues. Just add a concept you're thinking of or want to write about, and OneLook Reverse Dictionary will give you a list of related words and phrases.
14. Tried and True Editing Apps- Here are some additional editing and formatting apps that you can use to check manuscripts: Reedsy Book Editor (free), Scrivener (free for the first 30 days, \$45 license fee), Ulysses (\$4.99/month, \$39.99/year), iA Writer (free for 14 days, then \$29.99 for Mac, \$19.99 Windows), yWriter (free), Storyist (free for 15 days, \$59.99 license fee), Final Draft (free for 30 days, \$249.99 license fee), ProWritingAid (free with limited features, \$70 subscription), Readable (free, \$4/month Pro version), Natural Reader (free), and, Focus-Writer (free).

17. Google Analytics- Google Analytics It's free and provides the kind of information you need to help you improve content, such as. measuring page views, average session time, and bounce rates.
18. Google Search Console – lets you monitor the performance of your site and optimize it for search engines.
19. LeadFWD- This site is for writers who want readers to spend more time on their website. LeadFWD reports where visitors spend their time on your site and for how long. This helps you tweak content to make it more engaging.
20. Awario- This tool monitors conversations on social media, so you fine tune your content to generate more interest. It's a great tool for business development! It helps

No matter what your writing entails, these tools will help fine tune your efforts. 🐾

SEO AND ANALYTICS

As a content creator, you need to know how to produce engaging content and optimize it for searches using keywords that resonate with your audience. The quality of content is essential. It should be informative and interesting to engage the user. The organization of the content is also important, such as the addition of subheadings to break up the text. Measuring the impact of your work and then refining it is also critical for SEO success.

Here are some tools that can help with content optimization.

15. Yoast SEO- This is a WordPress plugin that rates readability and SEO of your content. You can also use Yoast to focus on keywords for each post.
16. Inspectlet- This app captures user behavior so you know how long users were on your website and where they focused their attention. It also helps determine if people are leaving the site and helps you create content that is more appealing to readers.





Kristin Avery, Secretary
PO Box 7052
Evanston, IL 60204

Roxie

By Janice Biniok



She's obviously a writer... She's putting my toys away in alphabetical order!

President's Column

Continued from pg 2

or simply snuggling up and watching a cheesy Hallmark movie together. Animal Planet works, too.

Last but not least, the new year is upon us. Did you know that four out of five people who make resolutions break them by the end of January? The main reason for this is that trying to stick to so many goals becomes arduous. A little trick that has worked for me (and my dog): space out your goals to one per month! With the pandemic showing no signs of slowing down, resolve to control what you can, stay safe, and stay strong. We are in this together and dogs unite us all. Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and Happy New Year! ! 🐾

Yours in all things canine,

Carol Bryant