

# RUFF DRAFTS

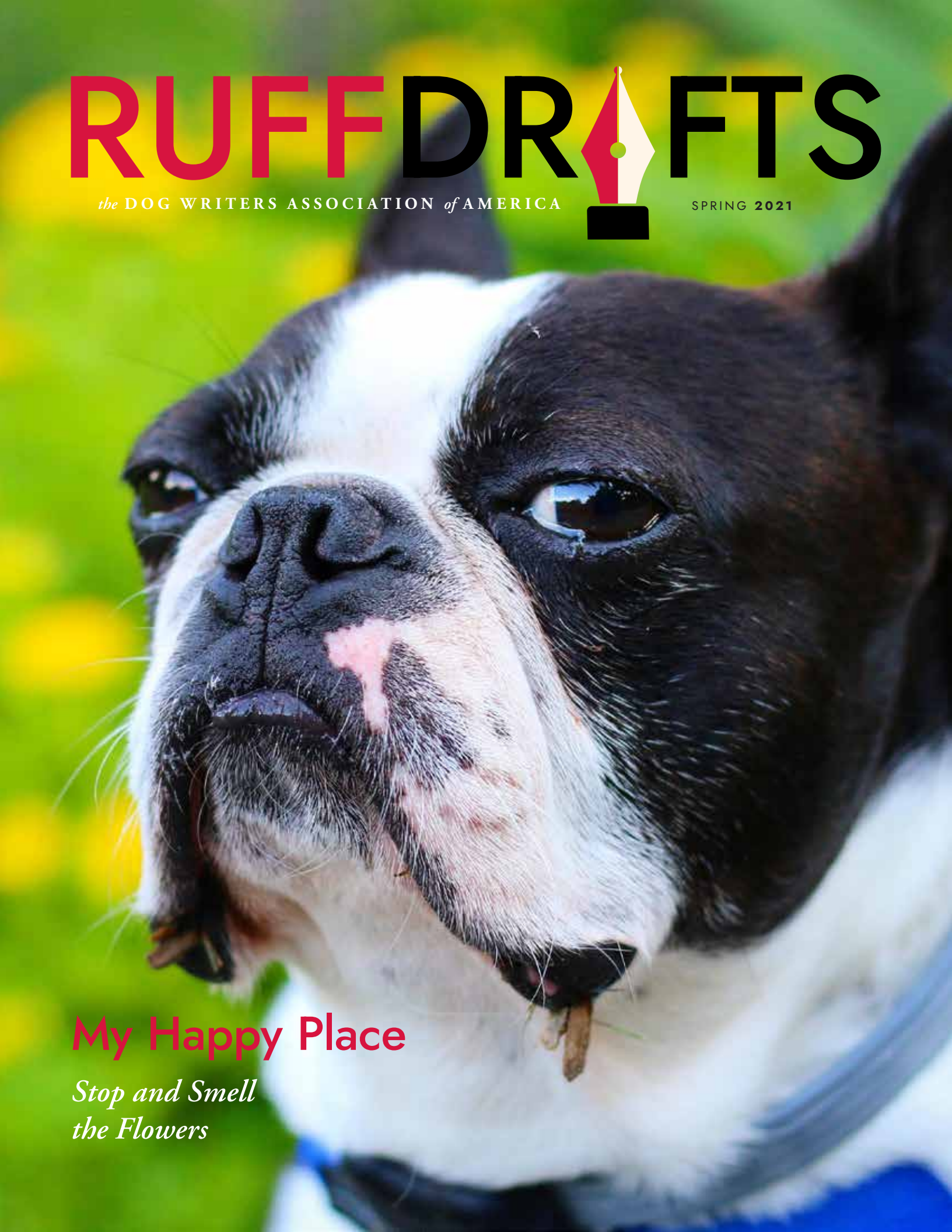
the DOG WRITERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA

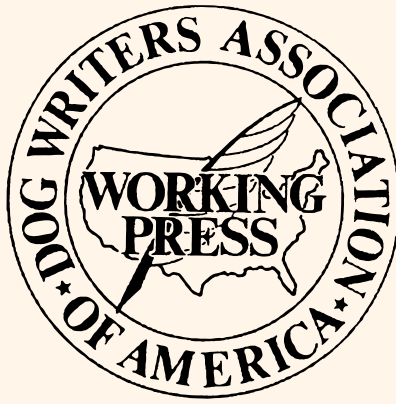
SPRING 2021



## My Happy Place

*Stop and Smell  
the Flowers*





## Ruff Drafts

Send all material to Merrie Meyers  
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Spring, April 2  
Summer, July 3  
Fall, October 2  
Winter, January 1

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

**When asked to write about what I hope to accomplish during my tenure as the new president of this amazing organization, my first thought was, "I'd like to achieve world peace."**

THE TRUTH IS, I don't feel a pressing need to make a lot of changes to our organization. In fact, the thought makes me uncomfortable because it smacks of criticism. There certainly isn't much to complain about because our former president did an amazing job.



Therese Backowski  
and her dogs, Lucy  
(L) and Hank



Then, I remembered the mice. The tiny white mice were housed in a large glass terrarium. The mothers maintained a nursery. Mama mice nursed and groomed every baby, no matter whose baby it was. All of the little ones lived in a cozy tunnel that the mothers fabricated out of pine and paper towel cardboard roll "thingies." When the terrarium was cleaned, every single mother mouse panicked because of the disorder. As soon as clean bedding was dropped into the big glass cage, the moms began to reconstruct the nursery, working frantically to restore their normal. Because I don't speak mouse, I didn't ask them if they worked together because of love. I am pretty sure they did this to ensure survival and a common good.

We have over four hundred members, and all of us need to be mice. As Albert Camus said, "The purpose of a writer is to keep civilization from destroying itself."

I hope to strengthen friendships, provide opportunities for more interaction between members, recruit more volunteers, and offer opportunities for more learning. We writers are a priceless resource for other writers. Support for one another needs to go beyond the occasional sharing of possible freelance jobs, though that certainly is nice. When our typing fingers and our brains don't seem to work properly, we need a peer to push us through the process. Sometimes it takes another writer to help rebuild the nest.

That said, there isn't any reason that we can't grow, and I don't mean just in numbers of members. I've watched membership grow, and as it does, so does the potential for a disconnect. I am guilty, too, because for many years I ghosted the website, read the emails, and didn't respond. Obviously, that has changed.

Our association needs to go beyond the contests. I am hoping for more volunteerism so we can mentor and encourage more young writers, a peer review group so we can utilize a second pair of eyes for our work, and more than anything, an increase in friendships so our nursery stays in order. We don't have to love one another, though that would be nice. But, it is important we unite to write the truth about the dogs we love so much, and that is a benefit to the world around us.

Oh, and I still want world peace.

*Therese Backowski*

**Therese Backowski**

DWAA President

# RUFFDRAFTS

Spring 2021

MY HAPPY PLACE

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

**T**HE THEME OF THIS ISSUE IS “MY HAPPY PLACE.” The Oxford English Dictionary—a recognized authority on the English language—defines this phrase as “a place which a person associates with happiness, visualized as a means of reducing stress, calming down, etc.; (hence) a happy state of mind.” In this era of COVID fatigue, finding your happy place has been a top coping skill.

My happy place is actually an intangible feeling. It starts with the time I spend with my dog, Sunny. I have a space in my heart where I store memories of our time together. He is a buoyant, hilarious and irascible Parson Russell. I am definitely over the 400+ holes he’s dug (and I’ve filled) in our backyard this past year, but on the plus side, he’s my BFF. He can sense my moods and will move in close to cheer me up if I am having a down day. I try to return the favor, comforting him when he’s agitated and showing him love, even when he’s driving me nuts! I would imagine you share some of these same feelings.

The Australian website Pawshake recapped a few reasons why dogs make us happy. They provide us with companionship, create opportunities for plenty of exercise (and what a joy it is walking dogs in a storm), and encourage social interaction with others. Dogs are also a tonic for good health. Canine connections can reduce stress, lower blood pressure and promote the production of endorphins, known as the happy hormones.

In this issue, many of you write about the social interactions that are the result of being a dog person. Let’s face it, dogs give life meaning. I am sure you would agree that dogs enrich our lives in many ways. After all, this is the DOG Writers Association. And, now more than ever, this is important.

But what about our dogs, do they have a happy place? If they could submit their thoughts, what would they say?

According to Modern Dog, “Besides steak and bottomless cookie jars and slow cats and bellies full of grass, they probably have a much more doggish list of things that truly make them happy, secure, and fulfilled.” Modern Dog correspondent, Steve Duno, suggests things that create happiness for our four-legged friends.

They include good nutrition, guidance, proper socialization, enrichment activities such as problem solving, solidarity with the rest of the pack, praise that is earned, and calmness and consistency. I’m sure there are as many ways to create hound-happiness as there are dogs.

Getting back to Sunny, I’m sure he would report that he has indoor and outdoor happy places. Outside, he enjoys rolling in the dirt from those holes he’s dug, usually right after a bath. Inside, he enjoys lying down like a sphinx on the back of the living room couch, keeping tabs on the world at large. Actually, his favorite happy place is wherever I am, and mine is with him.

Thanks so much for this issue’s wonderful submissions. Some of them touched me deeply, and some made me laugh out loud. Both experiences I have filed away in my happy place.



Merrie Meyers and her dog, Sunny

*Merrie Meyers*

**Merrie Meyers**

Editor, Ruff Drafts



## MEETING MINUTES

# DOG WRITER'S ASSOCIATION *of* AMERICA

## ANNUAL MEETING

*Sunday, February 14, 2021*

*6:00 pm ET*

*Meeting held via Zoom*

**Present:** Carol Bryant (outgoing president), Darlene Bryant (outgoing event and contest chair), Maggie Marton (outgoing vice-president), Kristin Avery (outgoing secretary), Marsha Pugh (treasurer), Emelise Baughman (secretary), Jen Reeder (past president), Caroline Coile (board member), Susan Willett (incoming vice-president), Therese Backowski (incoming president), Dr. Joel Gold (board member), Jill Schilp (new board member), Rachel Brix (new board member), Laurie Williams (board member), Barbara Magera (member). Meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm.

## **I. Welcome and General Introductions**

- a.** Welcome to new officers and board members
- b.** General introduction of all present

## **II. President's Report**

- a.** Recap of programs instituted
  1. New website and blog. Thanks to Chris Roy for volunteering to do this as the DWAA Webmaster, and for streamlining the membership process. The website has been updated with new information.
  2. Private members only page.
  3. There has been an increase in membership. Carol wrote a personal letter to award sponsors. Last year the banquet and awards ceremony was moved to a wonderful venue at a new location in New Jersey, but this year the awards will be on video, and broadcast on the DWAA Facebook page.

## **III. Contest Report given by Darlene Bryant**

**a.** There were a total of 877 entries, only 107 less than last year, with 535 in regular categories and 342 in special categories. Category G, online entries, had the most with over 200 entries. The Dogster Health and Wellness category had 43 entries, but the Petsitters category had no entries. Over \$13,000 was raised in entry fees. More judges are needed.

**b.** There was a discussion of judging guidelines, and the need for judging sheets for each specific category so that everyone is judging based on the same criteria, including content, grammar, and punctuation. Barb Magera said she is working with her cousin, a professional photographer, on criteria for judging photos, and questioned whether the entrant's name should be seen when the photo is being judged. Susan Willett suggested looking at the Cat Writers Association contest judging sheets, and Maggie Marton described those CWAA detailed judging sheets. Rachel Brix volunteered to come up with rubrics for judging.

**c.** Darlene said it was her pleasure to serve as Event Chair, and she offered best wishes to all as she steps down from this post.

## **IV. Vice-President's Report**

- a.** Maggie Marton reported that all sponsorships have been paid.
- b.** Ruff Drafts is getting a lot more submissions. It helps to have a unifying theme for each issue.

## **V. Secretary's Report**

**a.** Kristin Avery reported that membership has increased in the past two years, and she has had to order new pins to send out to new members. We currently have 240 members, but some people haven't renewed yet so that number should increase.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

YEAR ENDING 2020  
1/1/2020 THROUGH 12/31/2020

There was a problem with logging on but that has been fixed now. She will help Emelise, the incoming secretary, with the membership process.

**b.** Kristin noted how much she enjoyed working with Marsha, Jen, Sue, and all of the other officers and board members.

### VI. Treasurer's Report

**a.** Marsha said the club's finances are stable and looking very good. The treasurer's report will be attached to these minutes.

**b.** Payment via PayPal was discussed, and the need to use the Friends and Family option in order to avoid a fee and small monetary loss for the club.

**c.** Marsha reported that Maggie did a great job getting sponsorships.

### VII. Special Reports by Carol Bryant

**a.** Jen Reeder will receive the AKC Distinguished Service Award, which is very well deserved. Jen expressed her appreciation for this.

**b.** Carol reported several needs the club has at this time:

1. There is a question as to whether the club's legal counsel will remain the same.
2. Young Writers on the Web needs a volunteer.
3. DWAA needs a Public Relations person. Carol has been doing this.
4. Shelly Bouche is stepping down as the DWAA Facebook manager.
5. The writing competition and the event chair are both vacant and need volunteers to fill these very important positions. Carol will help new volunteers take on these jobs.

### VIII. Comments

**a.** Barb Magera asked if there was any interest in starting a writing group, for members interested in sharing their work in any genre for critique.

**b.** It was reported that it is not feasible right now to provide links to the works of contest entrants. When we had in-person awards ceremonies, these works could be posted on a wall.

### IX. Meeting was adjourned.

Title	Category	Amount	TOTAL
<b>Opening Balance</b>			<b>32,494.00</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>			<b>53,288.77</b>
	Applications	4,849.72	
	Awards Banquet	7,749.64	
	Contest Entry Fees	12,692.16	
	dues	8,167.25	
	Restitution	2,094.80	
	Special Award Sponsors	17,735.20	
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>			<b>(37,712.93)</b>
	Banquet Expenses	(6,008.78)	
	Computer Services	(2,435.86)	
	Contest Chair Stipend	(3,000.00)	
	Contest Expenses	(2,544.69)	
	Contest Supplies	(3,410.04)	
	Insurance	(1,250.00)	
	Printing	(4,005.17)	
	secretarial expenses	(114.89)	
	Special Award Winner	(14,925.00)	
	Tax	(18.50)	
<b>Ending Checking Account Balance</b>			<b>48,069.84</b>
<b>Savings Account Balance</b>			<b>101.39</b>

BY LISA BEGIN-KRUYSMAN

# WALKING *the* DOGS *of* OTHERS

In late February of this year, my husband Rich and I made the extremely difficult decision to put our beloved Teddy to rest. I've written about our Teddy Boy in several articles that have appeared in this newsletter. In a previous issue of Ruff Drafts, I recalled how Teddy had endured his challenges with Vestibular Disease and his subsequent loss of hearing. More recently, I wrote about his then ongoing battle with an aggressive Mast Cell Tumor.

I

N SEPTEMBER, we'd made the harrowing choice to have one of Teddy's hind legs removed in an attempt to stop the spread of his tumor. Perhaps I should've listened to the wisdom of his surgeon. Testing showed the promising news that the Mast Cell Tumor had not spread to his organs; however, Teddy's surgeon had advised me that, although a drastic procedure such as amputation could possibly win a battle, it couldn't always win the war.

Like any devoted dog lovers, however, we knew that there was also the chance that the amputation could extend Teddy's life for years, so we proceeded with optimism and hope.

Our "Steady Teddy" as we'd come to call him, recovered from the operation in his true intrepid style. He wore his "Cone of Shame" with barely a complaint and was hopping along on three paws within a day of coming home from surgery. Soon, he moved so well, many couldn't even tell he was a tri-pawd.



Unfortunately, however, Teddy's surgeon had been correct. We'd won the battle, but the war had continued. As we'd been advised, I was preparing to have Teddy's checkup three months post-surgery, when I discovered that a new tumor had appeared just above the amputation site. My heart sunk. I knew the MCT had returned. I made the call to his vet who upon examination confirmed that it had.

We opted to treat his condition with what I called Prednisone and Prayer. On that regimen Teddy was given only approximately one month to live; chemo would've only extended his life for an additional month or two. My vet relayed that a few of her patients had gone on to live for an additional year on Prednisone, however, she didn't feel this would be the case for Teddy. Despite her pessimism, we hoped we'd beat the odds and have him through the summer. For a while he did rally, eating and playing and being his fun-loving



self despite his tri-pawd limitations and the side effects of his meds, but Prednisone is a drug that offers great promise and the potential for abject heartbreak.

As the days wore on, I noticed Teddy slept more and seemed to be experiencing some pain. His meds were becoming less effective and one day, he just stopped trying to be alright for us.

When he made it clear that he was ready to be released from his pain, we listened.

In the fall issue of Ruff Drafts, I'd written about how Teddy lost his leg just about the time that 93rd observance of National Dog Week was set to start. I'd written that despite losing a leg, Teddy would walk on in his own personal Dog Week parade in the spirit of its theme 'Keep Calm and Dog Week On!' Our dog walks were always a bonding adventure. When my husband and I moved several states from our home last March, just as the nation's pandemic lockdown rolled out, walking Teddy helped me adjust to our new neighborhood and community. He was my therapy on a leash, literally leading me to a new life. Each walk brought a different perspective, or a new acquaintance and hope for better days.

There is something sacred about a dog walk when a leash becomes a heartline bonding dog and owner. Each of our walks was a ritual filled with his favorite sniffing spots, a favorite new tree and the million markings left by other dogs that informed Teddy of local secret dog codes, turf warnings, mixed with "love notes" left by a sweet Chihuahua mix who'd developed a crush on him.

Since Teddy's passing just weeks ago, it's been suggested that we go out and get another dog, foster a few, or just pet sit or walk the dogs of others. I *have* been walking the dogs of neighbors and friends, and although it's quite rewarding, sometimes it's a sad reminder of the special bond I'd developed with Teddy over eight years. That bond can't be replaced by the occasional walking of the dogs of others, but it does satisfy my inner dog-lover and lets me see the world through the unique perspective of another dog.

Walking my nephew and his girlfriend's 70 pound "Mastiff-like" rescue dog the other day, I realized that Teddy, and so many other rescue dogs, were all once the dogs of others, for better or worse. Ozzie is a big stray rescued from the streets

of Mexico where he'd been horribly abused and abandoned; Teddy was a foster dog removed from the negligent home of an incompetent rescuer. In our very first walks together I regarded Teddy as the dog of others, his former owners, and his soon-to-be new owners, who ultimately turned out to be my husband and me.

Once Teddy officially became ours, it took patience, trust and many long walks to develop the unique relationship that would deepen over the years and to convince him that he was finally home, and not the dog of yet another.

I suppose it's inevitable that another dog will con their way into our home and hearts at some point. Until then, I'll continue to walk the dogs of others, but keep Teddy's old leash hung by the door for the day someone else's dog just might become ours. ■

*Lisa Begin-Kruysman is an award-winning author who writes books and articles for dog lovers of all ages. Her work is inspired by her promotion of the enduring Awareness Observance of National Dog Week founded in 1928 by Captain William Lewis Judy who was also influential in the establishment of the DWAA in 1935. A native of New Jersey, she now creates and resides in St. Marys, GA.*



# TIPS & TACTICS

MERRIE MEYERS, *RD Editor*

## Book Promotion Planning

Over the years, I've marveled at how accomplished our members are. So many books are published by our prolific community in such a short time! Many of the books are self-published, or produced by small imprints, without the big budgets of international publishers such as Simon & Schuster. So, how does one promote their work to generate reader interest and book sales? So often, it's a herculean task just to get the thing out of the computer and over to the graphic designer for paste-up and illustrations or graphics. It's hard to think ahead to the business side of the equation. What follows are some tips I've consolidated from the blogs of best-selling authors. Because, hey, theft IS the highest form of flattery!

### INITIAL STEPS

#### Create a Timeline Checklist

#### Research the Target Audience

Focus on tactics that reach the **right readers** with the **right message** at the **right time** to spend less money (and time!) while selling more copies. Ask your existing audience questions digging into their buying habits, online behavior, and demographics. You can ask via surveys, interviews, focus groups, and social media. Their answers will help you better understand how to reach them *and* more readers like them via the right channels and messaging.

#### Learn how your audience searches for books

Compile a list of search queries that the audience uses to search for books like yours. You can incorporate some of these into your promotional plan and metadata. Research trending keywords, using Google Trends and Google Keyword Planner. Look at reader reviews in the genre and find language readers use to describe the books.

#### Speaking of Genre

Compile a list of comparable authors. Doing research on this early on helps you cater your promotional copy and creative. Hint: check the "Also bought" section of a book or author's retailer pages.

#### Research book promotion channels and tactics

BookBug Partners Blog <https://insights.bookbub.com/> offers case studies that describe book promotion tactics. Review past experiences to decide what worked well, and what didn't.

### EARLY BOOK PROMOTION

Here are some ideas for creating initial buzz about your soon to be published best seller.

- Announce a title reveal or a book deal. You can even create a hypothetical conversation between two of your characters.
- Post a Cover Reveal. The first look should be sent to those sites (blogs, platforms, publications) identified during your reader research.

- Secure blurbs from comparable authors. This can catch readers' attention. Posts containing author quotes yield a higher click-through rate.
- Keep your author profile up to date. Readers can learn about your work in many ways. Once they develop an awareness of you and your work, BookBub offers a space to create an author profile. Your newest title should be listed, along with links to pre-order, as soon as possible. Getting more BookBub followers can help widen your reach, which can lead to more book sales. The more followers you have the more people will get an email about your new release. Here is a link to more ideas for building a "followership." <https://insights.bookbub.com/ideas-for-getting-more-bookbub-followers/>
- Build a mailing list on your website. Include a subscription form to include email addresses. That allows you to directly contact readers with information about upcoming releases and opportunities to pre-order. When people subscribe, send them a welcome email and a freebie of some sort (special writing, sneak peek at an upcoming piece) and a thank you for signing up.
- Author Street Teams. A street team is a group of fans who work to promote an author, building word-of-mouth buzz for a book. Some authors use Facebook to organize their team and/or recruit new members.
- Create high quality images of your book covers. You can use these images in social media campaigns and throughout other promotional campaign activities.
- Create a News Release and distribute it to retailer sites and other groups (Facebook, book clubs, etc.) where you'd find your readers.
- Pretest book promotional copy. Don't assume you know what will "sell" your book to readers. Float the copy to several individuals, use polling software or run a split ad using two platforms to determine which generates the highest audience response.
- Book Swag. Consider your target audience and decide what promotional items will help them remember you. Flat items are the easiest to include with a book. Consider what would

be relevant for your audience, ties into the story and, if not free, is positioned at a desirable price point.

- Book Back matter should be updated. If you own the rights to your existing books, update them to promote the preorder of the new book. Also, if you include an excerpt of the upcoming book, that can help promote and sell copies.
- Update social media headings, images, and content to reflect the upcoming release.
- Promote preordering by placing ads on the sites where the book will be sold.
- More pre-order sales ideas. Create incentives for readers who pre-order; Create an online contest for readers such as fan art, guessing plot lines, etc.; encourage people to post pictures on your site; if you have other material, create a digital gift pack of past material, deleted scenes from other publications or vignettes that weren't included in the main book.
- Create a countdown clock on social media.

## RELEASE DAY

### Media Relations

Republish your news release. When your site is live, send an updated news release to all of the sites you touched during the pre-release phase.

### Social Media

Update your author branding and social media. Create headers on home pages/landing pages to increase awareness. Make sure you change the "pre-order" now call to action to "buy now." You can also have a Facebook live celebration on the Release day. Offer a Q&A session. You can run it live, record it and make it available to others.

### Retailers

Add retailer links to your social media to help readers quickly purchase the book in their desired format. Update and re-run the ads on these sites.

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# THREE'S *a* CROWD

—from—

SUSAN'S UNFILTERED WIT  
BY SUSAN GOLDFEIN



**W**E MAY DISAGREE on a number of things, such as the best way to unroll the toilet paper, from the top or from the bottom, but my darling and I are in complete accord when it comes to dogs. We love them, and can't live without them.

If you're not a dog person, or even a cat person, (birds and fish are questionable) you may want to stop reading now. If you decide to continue, please do not judge us.

Proof of our adoration would be the succession of dogs with whom we've shared our lives over the past forty years. Different colors, different breeds, but they had one thing in common. They were big. Therefore, they shared our lives and our bedrooms, but not our bed.

Let me explain about our bed. In the absurd, but amusing terminology from the company whose mission it is to keep us awake, I would describe our bed as Grande, larger than a Tall, but definitely smaller than a Venti. We are both more or less average size people, so the Grande, or queen-sized bed, as it is commonly known, has always been perfectly adequate. Besides, who has the arm span to fold a king-sized sheet? If there's a woman out there who does, I don't think I want to meet her.

But, back to the point. Enter Sam into our lives. Sam is a 15-pound rough coat Russell Terrier, who, in Starbuck-speak, is a Short. To equal the size of one of our Labrador Retrievers would require five Sams.

Having a small dog for the first time is a very different experience. It's like having a puppy that never grows larger. And you know how it is with puppies. Well, some of you do, anyway. Therefore, those of you not already excluded by the second paragraph will completely understand the temptation to continue to snuggle with Sam at bedtime—in our medium-sized, but formerly adequate bed.

At first, it was just for a few minutes. When we were actually ready to turn out the lights, I would gently place young Sam in his cozy crate, where he, and we, would be safe for the night.

When Sam got a bit older, and I could trust him not to consume my bedroom rug, I bought him a bed. This was not any old dog bed, but the ultimate in dog beds, purchased from the Neiman-Marcus of dog bed stores. Nothing was too good for our Sam.

For a while, we held to the same routine. Cuddle for a while, then into the supreme dog bed for the night. This was working just fine. Until it wasn't.

The visits in our bed got gradually longer, so when we tried to place the sleeping Sam into his own over-priced mattress, he would wake up and give us his most forlorn stare, accompanied by a muted, but very pathetic, whine.

We disagree about which of us was the first to give in. I know it was him. Nevertheless, Sam now spends the entire night in our bed, the size of which currently feels diminished to a Tall.

Sleeping has become an entirely new experience. At first, Sam was polite, and would curl up at the foot of the bed. But gradually, he worked his way to cuddle positions, sleeping between us. And, if he's dreaming he's an Alpha dog, he crawls to the top of the pillows and sleeps above our heads. And I dream there's a furry tail tickling my nose.

It's not unusual for me to wake up in the middle of the night because a large mass has been tossed against my legs. It's my husband, repositioning Sam. "Why did you do that?" I ask in a tone of voice appropriate for one disturbed from a lovely sleep. "He's touching me," he replies.

"Goodness," I think. "What if it had been me?"

You recall the old saying, *Qui cum canibus concumbunt cum publicibus*? Of course you do. But you may remember it as: *Lie down with dogs, wake up with fleas.*

Fortunately, this is not the case with Sam. But I do wake up with an occasional stiff neck, cramped leg, or a cold tush because the dog has requisitioned my share of the blanket, or half of my portion of the bed.

I'd be less than truthful if I said that having a dog in our bed has not affected our intimacy. We must reach over Sam to deliver a good night kiss, and the old "spoons" position is no longer possible. Which is probably just as well, because my honey might reflexively fling me off the bed.

And I never use the old excuse of "Not tonight dear, I have a headache." That has been replaced with "Please. Not in front of the dog."

Buying Sam his own bed has not been a complete waste. It's the perfect spot for his daytime naps and for hoarding the bits of paper he steals from the wastebaskets.

◀ Sam in "his" bed

See THREE pg 38 ▶





TED SLUPIK

## THERE *is* NO PLACE *like* HOME

AS JUDY GARLAND ONCE SAID, “We’re not in Kansas anymore”. With the Covid pandemic being part of our world for a year now, our lives have been turned upside down. This not only applies to humans, but to our dogs as well. Before the pandemic, my therapy dogs and I visited nursing homes and junior high schools on a regular basis. When I visited schools, I talked to students about therapy work as well and how rewarding volunteering could be. It was an easy sell when you had a few therapy dogs tagging along. Needless to say, my happy places have been shut down for a year now. Most nursing homes and assisted living facilities still do not allow visitors. Virtual visits are allowed, but without the human contact and in-person communication they don’t mean as much. These wonderful, happy visits probably won’t resume till the fall.

I worry that even when vaccinations are eventually distributed to all, there might be reluctance to resume activities. Most organizations that allow therapy visits have not yet decided on reopening their doors to therapy dog handlers and their teams of eager dogs. My volunteer group consisting of 9 junior high and high school students and their parents, may be reluctant to resume visiting as well.

Even the therapy dog organizations themselves have suspended their usual requirement to do in-person therapy visits to be able to maintain teams’ certifications until June 30, 2021. This leaves me with a conundrum as to when I will be able to revisit my “happy place”.

It also leaves an empty feeling for therapy dogs and their handlers. My happy place work was something I did on a weekly basis and became a routine I cherished and now has



- ▶ suddenly stopped. I also believe that my dogs, both therapy-certified, are bored and listless. Some weekend days when I leave my house, I see them eagerly waiting at the door; anticipating that their “work day” might begin again. I’m starting to realize that I like routine as much as my dogs do. I wonder how much re-training will the dogs require? It might be very difficult to start again.

As a tester/observer for a national therapy dog organization, I previously volunteered to test dogs and their handlers in order to certify them as therapy teams. It was a lot of work, but now that job mostly disappeared. However, some very limited dog training has continued. I recently tested a young paramedic assigned to a fire station and her dog. The basic training was done outdoors, in a park, and walking through outdoor shopping areas. This owner and dog team did not want to wait for Covid restrictions to end. Their final training was done at the fire station where the dog is expected to visit regularly when the owner was not on duty. What amazing dedication this effort was for the owner/handler. She is willing to give up her free time to bring comfort and peace to first responders as they wait for their next call.

There is no doubt that my favorite dogs are rough coated collies. When I visited the six collies last March (in 2020) little did we know our visits and “jobs” would stop suddenly when Covid hit. One of the best therapy dogs in this group of six, Laddie, passed away on September 11. Collies, as part of their nature, need a “job”. They don’t get Covid and they certainly don’t understand why their job no longer exists.

However, I’ve realized that dogs can still find a way to help others, even though they can’t do their regular job. Simple gestures when out on daily walks can make a difference to someone sad or alone. Visiting with any of those people, even for a couple of minutes, can make a huge difference in their lives. I realized that going out of my way for a few moments helps. For example, while walking my dogs, I regularly meet “George”, an 88 year old man with his 13-year-old dog, Bailey. George is very happy to stop and talk. He is now very pleasant, optimistic and cheerful every day. George and Bailey have overcome obstacles every day to be out and about and encouraging them keeps them going. They are a tremendous inspiration to me.

A friend of mine who owns collies recently bumped into a stranger who had recently lost her own collie. My friend and her collie visited with the woman for a while and this impromptu therapy visit was an amazing experience.

It then occurred to me that the happy places that I missed so much were just that...places. Although I eagerly look forward to resuming my work at nursing homes and schools, I have now realized that this important work can be done at home and in my own neighborhood. Home—what an unlikely place to find what I’ve been missing.

There have been more walks, more outdoor visits to parks, and indoor visits to pet stores. I even hosted an outdoor dog birthday party in my back yard, complete with masks and social distancing for the human guests to celebrate two therapy dogs’ joint 12th birthdays. Let’s hope that their 13th birthday party will find us all back to “normal”.

I always knew that therapy dogs are a very important part of life:

- They elicit an increase in mental stimulation which can assist in memory recall.
- That interaction with therapy dogs has been shown to improve cardiovascular health.
- That therapy dogs have been proven to decrease stress levels.
- Therapy dogs don’t get Covid.

We all can hope that the remainder of 2021 will be better. But in the meantime, close your eyes, hold your dog, click your heels and repeat after me...“There is no place like home...” ■

*Remember, every day is a gift!*



LESLIE BROWN

# THE DOGS *in* *the* DOG LIBRARY

—from—

A DOG AND A KEYBOARD

**T**HE DOG LIBRARY is a place that has books just for dogs. The books don't have words, they have different smells.

Dogs love going there because they can sniff so many things in one room.

There are three main dogs in the library. Arthur the Delivery Dog, a Saint Bernard, pulls his wagon into the library every week with a batch of new books.

Margaret the Dog Librarian, a Standard Poodle, puts the books on shelves in the aisle where they belong. Some of the aisles are Treats, Travel, Dinner, Home, and Other Dogs. Most dogs hang out in the Treats aisle. It has books that smell like peanut butter biscuits, chicken sticks, and glazed doughnuts.

Margaret also helps dogs find books they might like. For example, she thought a Dachshund would be interested in a book that smelled like a mouse.

And then there's Stanley the Mischief Dog, a mutt who runs around the library knocking books off the shelves and hides them in the wrong places.

## BOOKS FOR DOGS

Here are some of the books dogs can find when they sniff around the library.

"Begging for Beginners" is on a shelf in the Dinner aisle. It smells like a hamburger bun with ketchup and mashed potatoes with a lot of butter.

"Crazy About Car Rides" is in the Travel aisle. It smells like a dog leash, the front seat of a car, and wind.

"Decorating Your Doghouse" is in the Home aisle. It smells like a once-fuzzy blanket, old towels, and different-colored socks.



▲  
Dog librarian  
researching topics  
of interest

## GAMES FOR DOGS

Stanley likes to make up games, such as "Guess What This Book Smells Like." One time he took a book from the Dinner aisle and put it in the Travel aisle. The book smelled like a mix of mashed potatoes and the inside of a car. None of the dogs got it right.

Another game was "Find the Hidden Book." The dogs loved this game and sniffed eagerly up and down the aisles. But a few of the books were never found. They were probably buried in one of the holes Stanley dug outside. ■

BARBARA E. MAGERA MD, PHARM D, MMM

# Nibbles

MY ANGELIC BLENHEIM boy is sweet, responsive and well-mannered. But that all changed at about 11 months. Well-meaning friends told me “it’s just a stage he is going through.” Not comforting words following his chewing rampage of my husband’s favorite chair, wood molding and even sheet rock! It’s not like we don’t have enough chew toys at home. How an idyllic puppy transforms into a destructive chewing machine is beyond my comprehension. Now I understand a parent’s plight when living with unruly teenagers.

As our frustration level increases, so does the nights “Nibbles” spends in a crate. No longer may Nibbles sleep with us. Nightly night cuddles are replaced with mandatory “jail time” in a well-secured crate devoid of a soft doggie bed, which surely would be shredded by morning.

In the show ring, Nibbles morphs back into the well-mannered and obedient pup that I crave. He holds his head high, with bright eyes shining, and prances around the ring with tail wagging. He stacks perfectly. He understands exactly what is expected of him before the judge.

As we return to the hotel room with ribbons in hand, I plop on the bed exhausted from 4:30 am awakenings to groom and prepare for the show ring. A five-minute nap would clear my mind. Within seconds, I dream about munching vibrations. As the intensity of gnashing teeth grows, I awake startled. My sleepy eyes are drawn to my beautiful Cavalier who is perched high on a fluffy pillow.

Reality sets in. My mouth drops as I sternly shout his name. Blue material falls from his jaws. I realize that the crunching sounds were not a dream. I see his show ribbon chewed up into tiny pieces. His coveted show trophy lies shredded in bits and pieces on the floor. With sweet innocence, he cocks his head as if to convey a nonverbal message of “who, me”? Tears stream down my face. I am so frustrated with his chewing stage. My patience is wearing thin. My nerves are shot.

With age, thankfully emerge social skills. Finally, Nibbles is interested in chew toys. “Jail time” gradually decreases in frequency. He shares bedroom space with us as I anxiously sleep with one eye open. With dawn, I am reminded of his puppyhood as I discover my shredded iPad cord. Could have been worse I thought. At least he left the computer, printer and lamp cords intact. Wonder how my little starlet chooses which items to munch on and which to avoid.

Suddenly, Nibbles discovers girls. His little baby sister loves running and rolling with him. What initially was cute is now disastrous as Nibbles drags her around by the ears. In response, she grabs his ears and starts to chew. Spraying perfume on their ears to deter this activity is futile. The only effective remedy is to separate them. Now I have two pups doing “jail time.”

Discussing the chewing antics of my Cavalier youngsters with seasoned breeders only invokes feelings of guilt. “They chew because they are bored,” I am told. “They chew



**But just in case your karma is off, we have an experienced dog psychic who accepts two-hour minimum appointments designed to sort out the cerebral conflicts between you and your canine.**

#### DOGGIE STORE CLERK

because you don't have enough stimulating toys," I am counseled. "You need to try bully sticks," I am educated.

I am off to the holistic doggie store. I inquire about "durable" doggie toys sans stuffing. The experienced clerk introduces me to a colorful line of what looks like dyed fire hose rectangles with handles. "Even aggressive Rottweilers would have difficulties destroying THIS toy. So, what kind of dogs do you own?" she asks innocently. "Uuuurrrr... determined ones," I answer quickly. I am embarrassed that two Cavalier puppies are destroying my home and belongings. She introduces me to a kind of desiccated cow tendon affectionately known in the trade as "bully bones." "With increased chewing these bully bones assume an aromatic quality that dogs find irresistible," she says. "Transferring their aggression from your stuff to interest in their stuff should completely resolve your chewing problems. But just in case your karma is off, we have an experienced dog psychic who accepts two-hour minimum appointments designed to sort out the cerebral conflicts between you and your canine. Clients tell us she is a godsend." "No thanks," I mumble as I grab my treasures and slip out the front door. "So, now I am a client with screwed up marbles," I mutter.

When I return home, the pack storms me at the door. They are frantic to get a bully bone. Trying to remove the airtight plastic wrapped tightly around each bully bone is a challenge. They are jumping and barking with excitement. Finally, each has their own bone. The mingling of dog saliva with cow tendon produces an interesting stench reminiscent of freezer-burned hamburger

meat. Yuck! But if this works it may be the canine equivalent of baby pacifiers. A plug in the mouth of babes stops the screaming. Perhaps the bully bones are the antidote to destructive chewing.

Despite the stinking bones, I settle back into an overstuffed chair to read a little while the dogs are pacified with their treats. I decide to get some packing done before we leave for the next dog show. As I drag out my suitcases, I notice all the luggage tags are chewed off. Even the leather tags are torn up. Not to worry, I think, the bully bones will distract them from destroying any more of my belongings.

Relieved, I go into the kitchen to fetch a cool drink. I look lovingly on my Cavalier family. All is quiet except for rhythmic gnawing. I calmly glance at Nibbles who is chewing intently. But as my eyes focus more clearly, I realize his bully bone lies several inches from his mouth. I gasp! Nibbles is gnawing on my dining room chair. After further inspection, the bully bone is the same diameter and length as the last rung of the chair! As I frantically grab Nibbles, a wave of anxiety rushes over me. Maybe he just got mixed up, I reason. After all, both look very similar. Maybe he really is trying to test my limits. Maybe the two-hour psychic session might provide some kind of insight.

I stare into his eyes with my nose touching his and ask, "Why are you making me crazy?" I wait, as if expecting a reasonable verbal explanation. He blinks his large brown eyes at me and licks my cheek.

I am frustrated and worn out. But I realize that with time, this phase too shall pass. I am smitten with him despite his destructive habits. I decide to clear my hectic schedule for the next week and focus on helping Nibbles. Perhaps if I spend more time with him I can change his behavior. I want to ensure that we progress through this phase of life psychologically intact. As we cuddle, Nibbles falls fast asleep in my arms, hopefully dreaming about chew toys and bully bones. ■

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

PATRICIA LIPE

# MY PUP'S TAKE



e will never know where he was born or how he came to Woodstock Farm in Albemarle County, Virginia. A little ball of fur, a mere handful of starving pup, he was following the heels of grazing cows. No doubt, hoping for a drink. The cows kicked him away; he persisted. That pup was a survivor. We brought him home, fed him, took him to the vet, and now he has become a yacht pup. He is one loving, loyal, and smart sailor.

Becoming a yacht pup did not happen overnight, but it did not take long. As soon as he was on board the boat, he acknowledged it as home. Sure-footed as he was, there was no question of his falling overboard nor did he make any attempt to jump. The first day, he learned how to swim with a life vest. We dropped anchor out at sea and had to literally drop him in the water. Of course, he was frightened but I was swimming along to grab him or coax him along. He was not pleased but he did swim. We hauled him up the swimming steps onto the swim ramp protruding behind the boat, disrobed him, and both he and the vest were hosed off before he could climb up the next level to the main deck. This routine became a daily ritual, but not that first night since we returned to the dock. The next day was for real.

It was late afternoon before the breeze became enough of a wind to give us momentum. Our sailboat, a 42 foot Jeanneau, has an engine, but it has not worked since we left the Dominican Republic. We rely entirely on the whim of the wind. This has been an amazingly windless summer so our progress has been slow. Captain Alexander and I had sailed seventeen hundred miles without the engine. We were glad to finally reach the mainland of Florida. It was much longer than

we anticipated and we needed to be in U.S. waters before we could retrieve Woodstock.

As we left the channel of Cape Canaveral, the so-called 'wind' diminished. What had taken a half hour the day before took three and a half hours today and this just to get out of the channel to the ocean! It was dark. As we sailed through the night, I worried about Woodstock. He must need to go to the bathroom. He treated the boat like his home and would not allow himself to make a mess. In vain, we tried to encourage him. I won't even discuss some of the ways we tried; and I'm sure he was not oblivious of our intentions, just stubborn in his opposition.

By morning, it was clear: he would have to be taken ashore. Thus began the pattern which would cause us to take weeks instead of days to travel up the East coast. We could not get on the 'Atlantic Express' (the Gulf Stream) and ride it north because we needed to hug the coast to accommodate Master Woodstock.

Our sailboat has a draft of six and a half feet. This limits just how close we can sail to the shore before dropping anchor. The first morning, the distance to shore was quite far. We learned a lot that first day.

We put Woodstock's vest on: a converted child's coast guard approved life vest placed upside down and strapped over his back. Not pleased, he was none the less tolerant. Alexander pulled in the dingy, which had been bobbing along behind the boat. We threw in the oars and then I got in. Alexander handed over the bewildered pup. With Woodstock in the middle, I sat at the bow with an oar and Alexander took to the rear with the other oar. We untied the line and started rowing.

Now keep in mind that we are rowing to the shore; therefore, we could almost ride the tide and surf onto the beach.

And surf we did. As we approached our destination, the little white foam we had seen from the boat became a very large, serious wave.

“Keep rowing,” yelled Alexander over the roar of the surf. I looked back over my shoulder. There was a huge wave descending upon us. “Row!” he yelled again.

“But look . . .” I attempted. The wave crashed down and we went under. The dingy was now sideways because of my not rowing, flipped over. “Where’s Woodstock?” I sputtered after coming up for air.

“Under the dingy!”

We lifted the dingy even as the waves pounded down on us, the surf pushing us ashore. Poor little Woodstock! In the dark, under the shell of the dingy, he was paddling frantically, looking miserable, but afloat with the help of the vest. Not a whimper, nor a yelp. By now we were all ashore. Off came the vest and off went the pup. Relief at last!

That was one happy dog. Forgetting his ordeal with the dingy instantly, he scampered off, found some birds, and, tail extended, ran up and down the beach in hot pursuit.

Eventually it was time to return to the boat. How to do this? We tried pushing the dingy with Woodstock inside through the waves. But, one look at the white frothy mountains descending on him and he leaped out of the dingy into the water front feet paddling like a windmill at full speed and headed for shore.

Next, Alexander took the dingy out beyond the waves leaving me to swim out with Woodstock. He was petrified and I was not strong enough to hold him up as the waves crashed down on the two of us. We retreated to the beach. Poor Alexander had to come back with the dingy. Exhausted, the three of us sat on the sand, staring at the waves, the sea, the boat anchored beyond, and tried to devise a plan.

Finally, Capt. Alexander came up with an idea. He would take the dingy back to the sailboat; get a small anchor, another vest, and a long line. It was a tough trip negotiating the waves again and rowing alone against the tide out to the boat.

This plan worked. We attached Woodstock to the second vest at the end of the long line. The dingy was anchored behind the waves. It was arduous but successful. Woodstock flopped over the side and into the dingy and then we faced the long row, the Captain’s third, back to the boat. This day’s expedition lasted over four hours. Obviously, we had to modify the next outing or we would never get anywhere, wind or no wind.

Our trip from Cape Canaveral, Florida, to Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, lasted three and a half weeks. We have many tales to tell, but our star, our protagonist, our main joy is this young pup from Albemarle County, Virginia. He has changed our lives and we have changed his. Just don’t let anyone tell you that a country pup can’t become a great sailor! ■

BRYN NOWELL

# MY DOG STOPS *to* SMELL *the* FLOWERS

T

HE FIRST TIME IT HAPPENED, I thought it was an anomaly. Yoda, our bowling ball-shaped Boston Terrier stopped while we were on a walk, shimmied his way close to a flowering bush, stuck his round head directly into a bright yellow flower, and sniffed. It wasn't a casual sniff. It was an exaggerated, deep breath followed by a squinting of eyes and a Boston Terrier smile. I laughed, gave him a scratch and mentioned to my husband that Yoda had gotten drunk off some flowers when I got home from the walk.

The following week, it was a hike. As we trudged up a rocky path, he was panting, which helped to mask my own quest to catch my breath. I noticed the flowers near a small trickling stream bed as he ambled his way near them. Between pants, he placed his entire head between the flowers and sniffed them. By the time he was done, his forehead was yellow with pollen. I giggled and he seemed pleased.

By the third week, I started to find paths that I knew were peppered with flowers. A local college campus had gardens along the walking paths,



which seemed like a perfect spot to see if Yoda was really enamored by flowers. Our walk was long, but the distance was short. Every other step, Yoda stopped to smell the flowers. He disrupted honeybees who were lulled by nectar, and they cohabitated amongst the petals, both too focused on flowers to care about each other.

One day, I had gotten some flowers to brighten the room during a rainy spell. I heard his



footsteps come to a halt on our hardwood floor and I peered around the corner from the kitchen. There he was, head lifted, sniffing the air for the sweet smell of flowers. He was entranced. It was no longer a question, our dog stops to smell the flowers. ■

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▲  
Yoda entranced by  
the floral scents

GAYLE  
INTERVIEW

# GAYLE MARTZ

Creator of

The SHERPA Bag®



*Even if you don't recognize the name Gayle Martz, you most certainly have heard of her invention that revolutionized pet travel, The SHERPA Bag®. Gayle's idea for the first soft-sided pet carrier came to her when she wanted to fly cross country in 1988 with her beloved Lhasa Apso and was told that pets were not allowed in the passenger cabin. ▶*

MARTZ



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GAYLE



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MARTZ

## GAYLE

► From that moment on, she worked tirelessly to not only design the perfect carrier, but also to petition major airlines to change their policies to allow pets onboard.

ARTZ



In 1992, her hard work and perseverance paid off when American Airlines agreed to allow passengers to travel with their four-legged loves in The SHERPA Bag®.

Gayle opens up about her bumpy yet amazing business journey that was inspired by her love of pets in her new book, **“IT’S IN THE BAG: How to Turn a Passion into a New Business.”** Gayle answers some of our questions about the book and what’s next for her!

**Q: Who are your current fur babies?**

My fabulous, loving Shih Tzu, KARTU, (also known as “Miss Attitude”) is 14-years-old and always enjoys being around people. KoKo is a **Mi-Ki**. She is one-and-a half-year old and fills my life with joy by being the most adorable, playful, puppy companion.

**Q: What inspired you to write “IT’S IN THE BAG”?**

There was a story that had to be told to motivate, educate and inspire people to learn more about the trials and tribulations of my business and the joy of sharing our lives with our loving companion animals.

**Q: How did your pets give you inspiration throughout your business career, as well as your writing career?**

SHERPA, my globetrotting Lhasa Apso, gave me the inspiration to begin my business in 1988 when I wanted to fly with her to California but was unable to because pets were not allowed in the passenger cabin by a majority of the airlines. If they were allowed onboard, it was only in the hard plastic carrier. I knew there had to be a better way to travel with your pet safely, comfortably and stylishly. I came up with the idea for a soft-sided pet carrier that could be allowed onboard an airplane. After conducting market research worldwide, I learned that a soft sided pet carrier did not exist. My goal was clearly defined, so I created the original SHERPA Bag® and started my venture of sales, marketing and public relations with SHERPA, the dog.

The most important aspect was making people aware of the benefits of traveling with their pets safely in The SHERPA Bag® for all modes of transportation and also for safety at home.

Attached on each SHERPA Bag® was a copy of **TRAVEL TAILS®**, which was written from SHERPA’s perspective and recounted her experience traveling in The SHERPA Bag® along with information on what was needed to be able to travel by plane and car. Included in **TRAVEL TAILS®** was Travel Etiquette® which explained the prescribed form of pet etiquette for every mode

of travel. **TRAVEL TIPS®**, which was written from my perspective, listed the airlines where The SHERPA Bag® was officially approved, how to select the proper size SHERPA Bag® and other important pieces of information to help you travel successfully with your pet.

**Q: What are some takeaways readers will get from reading “IT’S IN THE BAG”?**

The book informs, motivates and inspires would-be entrepreneurs and ambitious business owners as they read my unusually candid cautionary tales of the many “sharks in the water” I encountered in building the SHERPA Pet Trading Company into a global brand. I also hope it can provide an inspiring story on how it’s possible to rebuild your life after misfortune, adversity and tragedy.

**Q: Can you really have a successful business doing something that you love?**

Since I am governed by emotional intelligence, I truly believe you must do what you love with the people and the pets that you love in the places you love. I am fortunate to have done that and hope that my experience will inspire others to start a business based on something they love. Of course, in the book, I provide tips to help readers figure out if their idea is worth pursuing or if they have to go back to the drawing board! And if it is the latter, that is okay because not everything will work out perfectly all of the time when you are in business. I share many of my mistakes which I think is important for readers to know that success does not come without some failures.

**Q: What’s next for you?**

My legacy has always been advocating for pets and helping people to have a business they truly love. I am totally focused right now on making “**IT’S IN THE BAG**” a bestseller, which requires total commitment and great people to help make that happen. ■

 **IT’S IN THE BAG**



JAMES COLASANTI JR.

# LISTENING *with* YOUR HEART

C

CHRISTMAS HAS ALWAYS BEEN my favorite time of the year. The birthplace of my fondest and most enduring childhood memories.

Over the years, I have often thought that if the world was composed of dogs, just dogs, it would be a much better place in which to live.

And I have always slept with dogs, my unconditional loving companions. From a few days after my birth I slept with Butchy, the dog who taught me to have empathy for all. And now, seventy-one years later, with a twenty-one year old Chihuahua named Minnie.

It all began with my father, James Sr., the afternoon he walked into my pregnant mother's kitchen. She was busy preparing the evening meal when he entered, holding something in his big Italian hands. The yipping from the small black, white, and tan terrier preceded him into the room as he tried to get my mother's attention.

"Look, Mary, look!" he exclaimed to her. "I think I would like to call her Butchy," he said, "she is just too feisty to have a girl's name. And I do think she will make a great companion for our son." My father knew in his heart that my mother was having a boy. In 1949, a gender reveal was a thing of the future. You took what you got, but he knew it would be a boy and he told everyone just that.

He was an old man when I was born — fifty years old. My parents would put Butchy in my cradle to keep me warm and to alert them if I needed food or changing. As my puppy protector and babysitter, she instinctively did a good job.

I can remember one particular Yuletide evening in 1964 being very special.

Every night one of my parents checked on me. They were protective since I was their only child. That night this display of parental concern fell to my father.

The hall light softened the blackness of my bedroom and caused Butchy to look up as he

entered. He sat on the edge of my bed. Butchy raised her head from my chest, and my father patted her head as he spoke.

"James," he began, "the best gifts I can give you this Christmas are the little lessons I have learned over the years."

Here was the wisdom of the ages from a man who barely got past the eighth grade. He was a born philosopher, and he was an animal whisperer in the truest sense. He was a gentle man who could sit on a tree stump in the middle of the woods with some ears of dried corn, and within minutes he would have wild deer eating out of his hands. All animals respected him because they knew he meant them no harm. He knew about what he spoke, and he spoke with his heart. He was the one who taught me my understanding of dogs.

"Living life," he continued, "is what we all have to do. But some of us do it a heck of a lot better than others."

"The love of a dog is the magic that binds you together. And it only takes one dog to change your life forever."

"You know, James, Butchy is one of the smartest dogs I have ever known and I know she loves you very much. When I come into your room at night, she always has her head on your chest. It's her way of making sure you're okay. And because she loves you, she also listens to you with her heart when you talk to her."

"Your heart is the center of your life. It is the source from which all of your love flows. Whenever someone is speaking to you, you will never go wrong if you listen with your heart. And Son, if you follow your heart, you can make every day Christmas Day for the rest of your life."

"And one more thing," he began again. "You never knew your grandfather. I need to share something with you that he once told me."

See LISTENING pg 39

# *a n* OLD DOG'S LOVE

a POEM

— by —

JAMES COLASANTI, JR.

*I'm convinced that life is a combination of magic and dogs. My father taught me that a dog listens to you with its heart, but it loves you with its soul. He was the educator of my understanding of all animals.*

*And Minnie, our old Chihuahua-mix, was the dog who enlightened me that loyalty does not diminish with age, it only grows stronger into an inseparable bond.*

*For 22 years, everywhere I went Minnie followed, staying close beside me. She was my guardian; she was my protector. Minnie was always there meeting me at the door, acknowledging my arrival. She was my happy place bringing me joy with every bark. Like a big-eyed chipmunk with long legs, she was always near heeling on my heels.*

*On my bed lies the furry Sherpa throw I had purchased for more winter's warmth. Minnie confiscated it. Every night it became her own personal nest right next to me. There she slept until her final day.*

*I know someday we will meet again on the Rainbow Bridge. Sitting together as we often did, we will watch as the unicorns run by us making their way to Heaven.*

GWEN ROMACK

# *from* RESCUE DOG *to* WRITER

SPREADING LAUGHTER *when* WE NEED *it* MOST



W

WHEN I STARTED introducing the world to our rescue, Finn, the question I got most was, “What kind of dog is he?” That was often followed by, “A what?” Vizslas (“veeeeshhluh”) are a Hungarian breed


known for their sensitive and clingy personality. They’re known as “Velcro” dogs because they’re almost always touching their person if they can. Finn is actually a “Veagle,” a Vizsla mixed with Beagle and some Pittie sprinkled in for good measure. This combination, it turns out, makes for a hilarious, stubborn, vocal little dictator we like to pretend isn’t the boss of us.

His full name is Finnegan Count Smooshie Tushie and this is the story of how he went from wandering the streets of Swansboro, NC under the age of one, to the good life as an author and social media star spreading laughter and joy to all of us who need it more than ever. It’s also the story of how he saved me when I needed it most.

Finn came into our lives unexpectedly, when a wonderful rescue in GA asked us to temporarily foster him. Finn was a particularly challenging guy, having been previously kicked out of a few homes for his stubborn untamed behavior. We agreed to take him, planning to correct his nutty behavior and set him up for a great life with another family. From the very first day we could tell Finn was going to be a challenge. He bonded instantly to my husband,



 [www.thefinnchronicles.com](http://www.thefinnchronicles.com)

 Social Media Links

 Book One

 Book Two

 How to Train Your Human

 Children's Activity Book

who he considered the “alpha.” He decided my role in the pack was to be dominated as the “charlie” to his “bravo.” The pack order was formed almost immediately and it was clear my husband would be the most important “hooman” in Finn’s world.

I started posting weekly “updates” in Finn’s voice to various Vizsla and Beagle Facebook groups thinking it might help some prospective adopters fall in love. The updates recounted his challenges trying to tame and train his newly-assigned rescue hoomans, who he only referred to as, “the Hairy One” and “the Squishy One” for his first few months. I’ll let you guess which one of us was which. Funny, irreverent and often sarcastic, Finn’s voice emerged as he detailed the various ways in which we weren’t providing adequate service, or his struggles teaching us to do things the way he wanted. He has his own vocabulary, like calling seagulls, “beach chickens” and ice cream, “frozen dairy slop”. He also reflects on the absurdity of our strange hooman rituals, like Santa breaking and entering while we pretend the plastic Christmas tree is a real tree. As time went on, the posts got really popular and fans would even reach out via private message to find one they missed.

Fast forward a few months and it was clear that starting Finn over in a new home was a bad idea. His OCD and strong will to control everything had finally calmed down a bit in his new routine. He found comfort in his Hairy One and rather enjoyed bossing around the Squishy One. He announced he’d be officially adopting us and hinted that the reports might not happen

anymore. His fans protested and that’s when I realized how much joy his posts, pictures and videos were bringing people around the globe. So, we continued faithfully every week and are now in his fourth year of updates.

Fast forward again to April 2020. I lost my corporate job and found myself job hunting during a pandemic. I also found myself watching way too much Netflix and way too many YouTube videos about growing tomatoes. Spoiler alert: fertilizer is the key. Anyway, for years, fans, friends and family had urged me to write a book about Finn and his “Finnanegans.” I decided it was time. Sourdough bread starter and artisanal pickles could wait. Thanks to the helpful and generous women who were willing to help me navigate the complex world of book-making, I was able to figure things out and get started.

Fast forward one more time. Between May 2020 and March 2021, Finn published 4 books, built up a 4k+ person social media base, sold more than thousands of books in the US, Canada, the UK, Brazil, Germany, Switzerland, Australia, the Philippines, Argentina, and even Cambodia! He’s been profiled in a dozen newspaper and magazine articles, and he’s even on the shelves of public libraries in 5 states. What a year!

Finn helped me find a happy place I didn’t even know existed. I’ve always volunteered with rescue and been passionate about saving dogs. I’ve always loved the way rescues, in particular, seem to love a little extra and bring a little extra “crazy”

See FINN pg 41 ▶

## BRANDY

ANNE MARIE DUQUETTE

IRISH CHERRY  
JUBILEE

NDY

*My happy place was my first apartment as a new bride. It wasn't in the greatest neighborhood, but it wasn't in the worst either. Newlyweds, we moved in our meager possessions and our new dog, Brandy, an Irish setter.*

I MEET MY FUTURE HUSBAND in the hospital. He put on my cast and we became engaged that same year. He asked me what I wanted for our wedding present, and I said A DOG!

Shortly after our wedding we settled down to married life. My new husband and I went to DOG ORPHANS in Massachusetts, a no-kill shelter. I hoped to find a German Shepherd, which is what my family owned when I was a girl.

There were no shepherds in the shelter, and as my husband was partial to hunting dogs, I asked if there were any and was told about an abused Irish setter in bad shape. He'd been beaten, neglected, starved and was full of parasites. He didn't even have a name yet, just a number. The male dog wasn't healthy enough to be released from quarantine, but I could see him now if I wanted.

I said, "Sure, why not?" Five minutes later the handler was back. The dog hid under the desk, cowering. The handler tried to coax him out, pulling gently on the leash, but he didn't come until I said, "Come here, boy."

I managed to touch the silky fur on his head just once, then the dog yanked the leash out of

the handler's hand. The setter hurled himself against the closed front office door, popped it open, and took off running.

This was near a busy route with heavy traffic. All I could imagine was a squished dog. I was the one who eventually found him — head out the open window of my car! There must have been 50 vehicles in the parking lot, yet this setter was in my back seat! Quarantine or not, that dog watched me with big brown eyes, and I knew.

I looked at the men and said, "He's coming home with me." My spouse returned to fill out paperwork and I climbed in the back seat with the runaway. I named my new dog Brandy, after the color of his coat, and my vet and I nursed him back to health.

I also didn't realize how clever Brandy was. He was my first Irish, and the list of smartest dogs does not include Irish Setters in the top ten. But he was a perfect bird dog, "pointing" at New England pheasant and flushing them from the fields during our walks. He was a great dog inside the house as well—except he was a food



Y

addict. Starved and skeletal when we got him, he never felt safe that a next meal was coming.

First, he pulled the bread loaf down from the counter. We found him with his nose buried into the bag. Next came the other foods we stored securely—or so we thought—in the cold oven. He opened the oven, and now had a package of cookies go to with his bread. At least he never figured out how to open the refrigerator!

But the coup de grace came when I baked my favorite cake for the evening's church function—a cherry chip. It was displayed beautifully in a crystal Princess House cake pedestal with a glass cover, and a knob on top so you could easily lift the cover. I came back home after running errands to find it gone. The pedestal and cover were exactly in place and as clean as if they were just out of the dishwasher. I was fuming. When my husband came home, I asked why he had eaten the WHOLE cake meant for church. He said he was at work all day and hadn't touched it.

"Maybe Brandy did it," he said.

My response, "A dog who lifted up a cake cover top, ate a whole cake, licked it clean, then replaced the glass top in the exact same place without breaking the glass? He would have to have four paws on the counter!"

"Then yes, he did," my indignant husband replied. "Because I didn't do it. That leaves only one culprit left." He called Brandy over. "Time to smell your breath."

A pause, a sniff, then, "Yep, cherry chip."

"I don't believe it!" I had to sniff for myself, then turned toward my husband. "I guess I owe you an apology," I said, smiling at my clever dog who had lifted the cake top, eaten a whole cake, licked the pedestal clean, and replaced the lid exactly centered correctly without leaving so much as a scratch, crack or chip in the glass.

I had to laugh. It was too hard to scold my bonny thief. From then on, we put all food in the refrigerator. He never did manage to get it open.

I had the smartest dog in the word, and Brandy proved it two years later when he trapped a convicted murderer in my kitchen while I took the trash out to the dumpster. He'd already killed one woman for drug money. The police arrested him. I would have been a victim myself if my bonny boy hadn't saved me! I gave Brandy

a steak for dinner and told him what a good boy he was.

He continued to be a CLEVER good boy, showing me that the breed list of smartest dogs was a crock. Brandy beat the number one placed Border Collie hands down. I loved him dearly for many years and rewarded him many times, especially for his gentle loving care of my two children. Our favorite place remained wherever our family, including our loyal family dog, were all together.

But I made sure he never got another cherry chip cake! ■

BRANDY



CHELLE MARTIN

# *a* LITTLE DOG'LL *do* YA

When my friend Jenny called and said, “I need you to come shopping with us. You’ve got an eye for detail.” I’ll admit, I did feel a bit of superior fashion sense wash over me. Yeah, I could pick out a wardrobe that would make Paris Hilton proud. So if I could lend a hand, who was I to argue?

S

SO OFF WE WENT on an overcast day in June to drop some cash in what I expected would be some of Princeton’s upscale clothing stores. I thought nothing of Jenny bringing her Pug, the infamous Good Golly Miss Ginger May Care as she was recognized in the AKC world, but known to the rest of us as Ginnie. All wrinkles with a permanent grin and big bulging eyes, you couldn’t help but smile when you looked at that face; Ginnie’s, not Jenny’s. At one time, it could have been either, but I’m pretty sure Jenny has had Botox. I’ve noticed wrinkles missing despite her protests to the contrary.

“Can we hit Starbucks on the way back?” I asked, knowing how shopping can wear out the best of women. A jolt of caffeine can get us moving again.

“Sure,” Jenny said, as she drove her Mercedes into the Princeton North Shopping Center. She pulled into a parking spot and announced, “We’re here.”

“Here? Where?” I asked her.

“Utopia For Pets. Where else am I going to find a dress for Ginnie?”

“Whoa. A dress for Ginnie? You needed my expertise to pick out a dress for (oops, I almost said *your dog*) Ginnie? Does she have a big date or something?”

Jenny smiled and I realized what they say is true. Owners start to resemble their pets. Big brown eyes, goofy excited look—and now without the wrinkles. (She’s not fooling anyone.)

I had no time to protest. Jenny had already hooked up Ginnie’s leash and was trotting her over to the store. I hurried behind like some entourage in tow.

A sign in the store window said: *Voted Best Pet Boutique in New Jersey* by New Jersey Life, Health and Beauty Magazine. Snazzy place.

The store was filled with Poodles and Poms, Shih Tzus and Lhasas, Collies and Dachshunds. I wondered, Wouldn’t wiener dogs go to the Short and Long store?

Pet parents squeaked toys and rattled boxes of treats. Discussions involved play dates and trips to the V-E-T. And obedience school, where I’m sure they learned what V-E-T spells.

Jenny called me to a corner lined with racks and racks of girl clothes. Ribbons, bows, glitter and buttons adorned outfits from casual wear to bathing suits to formal wear. I caught a glimpse of myself in a mirror and saw that look dogs get when hanging their heads out of car windows. This place was an assault on the senses.

“What do you think?” Jenny asked, holding up a purple satin dress with a frilly skirt.

“You didn’t tell me the occasion,” I said, trying not to laugh.

“Oh, her boyfriend is having a Bark Mitzvah.”

“BARK Mitzvah?”

“Yeah,” she said, intensely scrutinizing the dress. “Didn’t you know that Samuel the Pug is Jewish?”

“I thought he was neutered, not circumcised.”

“Don’t be silly,” she said.

My friend was picking out a purple dress for her Pug who was going to a Bark Mitzvah and I was the silly one. Oy!

Jenny maneuvered Ginnie’s paws into the garment and tried to close the Velcro without much luck. “Hmm, do you see this in the next size?” she asked me.

“What? No seaweed wrap before the party to get her down a size?” I smiled. I was getting into this.

I was thumbing through the rack when another woman pulled the purple dress in the size I was searching for.

“Oh, this is perfect!” she shouted, snatching it off the rack and out of my reach.

“Hey!” I said. “That’s our dress.”

She brushed me off with a wave and proceeded to try the dress on her Bichon.

I could read the disappointment on Jenny’s face.

“Maybe they have another one,” I offered.

“No, Ginnie couldn’t wear it anyway. That bitch is going to the same party.”

I raised a brow at her.

“What? She’s a female, she’s a bitch.”

“Whatever. Look, let’s find something else. There’s plenty here to choose from.”

Poor Ginnie was put through an arsenal of gowns in every color imaginable. Even I had to admit she looked stunning in a black Park Avenue number. Okay, it was Bark Avenue, but it looked like a canine version of Gucci.

Even the bitch’s human mom drooled with envy.

“That’s the dress!” I said to Jenny.

She agreed and took it off Ginnie so it wouldn’t get wrinkled. Ironic, huh? The wearer could be wrinkled, but not the dress. The more I shopped, the more I got into this whole idea of doggie duds.

By the time we reached the counter, Jenny had amassed a basketful of accessories, including glue-on bows (move over you top-knot dogs!), jeweled collars, a bottle of cologne that was “guaranteed to bring out the show dog” in any breed,

## “BARK Mitzvah?”

“Yeah,” she said, intensely scrutinizing the dress. “Didn’t you know that Samuel the Pug is Jewish?”

and a few novelty tee-shirts with cute phrases like *Princess in Training* and *Pampered Pooch*.

When the sales clerk rang up the total, Jenny didn’t even bat an eye. Ginnie was her baby, after all. I started to feel a bit envious. Neither Jenny nor I had any children, but there was no denying my friend was the best dog mom I knew.

“Oh, look,” someone said from the front of the shop, “it’s starting to rain.”

I left the counter and headed back to the racks.

“Where are you going?” Jenny called after me.

“You can’t leave without a rain coat,” I said. Okay, a couple of hours in a pet boutique and I’d been converted. I could see myself going to play dates and classes and doggie birthday parties. Forget Starbucks. I was going to ask Jenny to stop at the puppy store instead. ■

**Chelle is working on a humorous mystery for adults as well as picture books for children. More information can be found at [www.ChelleMartin.com](http://www.ChelleMartin.com).**



BILLIE GROOM

# LILLY *in the* WIND

LILLY LOVES THE PARK. With lots of open spaces, she can run her very fastest while her Mom keeps an eye on her from their picnic table. There is a playground with a dinosaur slide and a set of monkey bars sitting on a bed of sand.

As Lilly jumped up to grasp the monkey bars, something she could not do even a month ago, she saw her Mom begin to pack up the remains of their picnic lunch. Lilly swung her legs high in the air, thrust herself off the monkey bars feet first and upon landing perfectly on the sand, threw her hands in the air just as she had seen the gymnasts do on television.

“Bravo, Lilly! A perfect ten,” her Mom shouted as she clapped her younger brother Brian’s little hands together. Brian was just learning to walk, making him “a very busy little boy,” according to her Mom. Lilly never saw Brian busy doing much of anything, except for falling down and putting disgusting things in his mouth.

In one fluid motion, her Mom tossed her enormous bag over her shoulder, grasped Brian’s hand and with her other hand, pointed to an empty picnic table halfway between herself and their minivan.

This was their secret signal that meant Lilly was to run as fast she could all the way to the picnic table. Running fast was Lilly’s favorite thing to do, and she was at the picnic table in record time. She was not even out of breath, so she hopped like a frog onto the bench and then onto the table.

“One, two, three,” Lilly counted as she jumped from the tabletop onto the bench, to the ground and back up again onto the bench, where she rolled onto the tabletop and stared at the cloudless sky. It was quiet, and she could hear her Mom, not far off, coach Brian as he bobbed along like a tiny boat on the ocean. Brian whimpered.

Brian whimpered? Brian never whimpers. What was that sound? Lilly sat up, looked around, but could not see anything except the large garbage pail, which, although not full and conveniently placed directly beside the table, was surrounded by torn chip bags, flattened pizza boxes and empty cans of soda. Was the sound coming from the garbage pail? She crawled across the table and looked in the pail. Lilly saw a garbage bag tied with a rope.

The bag moved. The whimpering started. Lilly reached into the pail.

“Lilly, what are you doing? Get out of the garbage, now!”

Lilly reached farther down into the pail and poked the bag. The whimpering stopped. The bag moved.

Lilly felt her Mom grab her arm. “Mom, there is something in the garbage pail!” Lilly could not stop staring at the bag. She saw a long arm grab the bag and pull it out of the pail like a heron plucking a fish from the sea. Her Mom was holding Brian on her hip with her other arm as she swung the bag on the picnic table. She motioned for Lilly to stay back as she opened the bag. Lilly often thought her Mom resembled an octopus.

“Puppies!” Brian squealed with delight.

The two puppies were exhausted from their visit with the veterinarian and their bath. When Lilly’s Aunt Beth arrived, they were sleeping soundly, curled around each other on their new dog bed.

Beth was a large, comforting woman and the puppies yawned and stretched as she gently stroked their black and white heads. Lilly stood still, trying her best to look patient, as her Mom had instructed her to do, while she waited for Beth

See LILLY pg 39 ▶

LOREN SPIOTTA-DIMARE

## Two Authors *and* Artist Receive DWAA Children's Book Award



First-time children's book author, **Jacelyn Botti** illustrator and graphic artist, **Lynn Eberenz**, both of Mendham, New Jersey, and animal book author, **Loren Spiotta-DiMare** of Tewksbury, New Jersey, collaborated on a children's book entitled *Maximilian Rescues Abaco*.

A long-time member of the Dog Writers Association of America (DWAA), Spiotta-DiMare recommended the book be submitted to the organization's annual writing competition.

Nominated in several categories, the colorful children's book recently won a First Place Award in the Graphics Division--Series of Illustrations or Paintings. "We were all thrilled," Botti said. "The book was truly a team effort."

For many years, Botti traveled by ship with her family, friends and her dog, Maximilian "Maxi," a tri-color Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, to various islands of the Abaco Islands in the Ba-

hamas. Their December 2018 trip was incredibly memorable and made a lasting, life-long impression.

In 2019, when Hurricane Dorian struck and annihilated the islands, Botti felt a strong urge to do something to help with relief efforts. She came up with the idea of creating a children's picture book highlighting Maxi's adventures, travels and discovery of the islands.

A real estate executive for 20 years, Botti has an eye for design and is also very artistic. She had numerous photos of

Maxi from their vacation. She contacted author Spiotta-DiMare to learn how to produce a book. The author has been writing animal books for adults and children for over 40 years. She is currently the chair of the Just 4 Kids Writers' Group and a member of the Middle Valley Wordsmiths both located in Long Valley. For the past several years, Spiotta-DiMare has taught Introduction to Book Publishing classes at local venues and she also works as a publishing consultant.

"I was happy to help with the project," Spiotta-DiMare says.

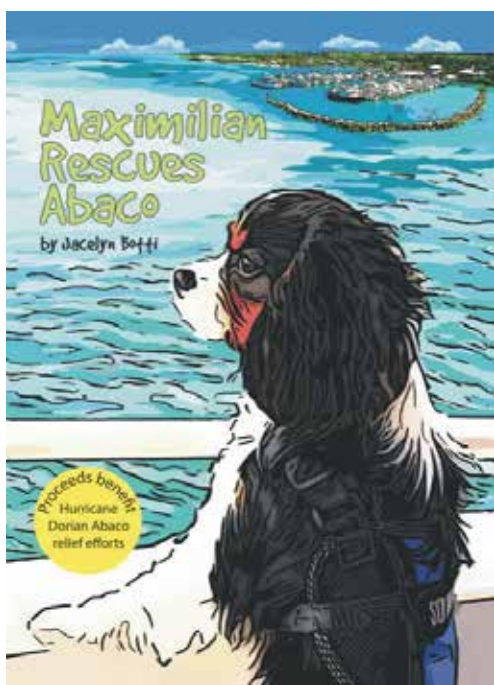
"I love Cavalier King Charles Spaniels. In fact, I've written a reference book, *Cavalier King Charles Spaniel* and a children's book, *Because of Bentley* about them. I was intrigued by Jace's story and loved the idea, the images, and the vision she had for the book."

Once the two authors finalized the manuscript, Spiotta-DiMare introduced Botti to Eberenz to complete the illustration work and design the book. Always artistic, Eberenz recently started her own design business after 20 years as a marketing communications manager at AT&T. She also joined the Just 4 Kids Writers' Group and created a poster and brochure for Spiotta-DiMare. "Given her talents and proximity to Jace I knew she would be the perfect artist to design the book," the author says.

After months of effort, Maxi's story was sent to Perfection Press in Iowa, to be printed. Produced in a large hardcover format, the picture book is quite striking. It sells for \$ 24.95 with all proceeds donated to ongoing restoration efforts in Abaco.

Maxi is a certified Therapy Dog. He epitomizes this important canine service as he loves nothing better than to hug and cuddle. His endearing personality, silky coat, long ears and soulful eyes make him irresistible in person and through the colorful cartoon illustrations and storyline in his book.

To purchase a copy of *Maximilian Rescues Abaco* visit the links below.



[www.maximillianrescuesabaco.com](http://www.maximillianrescuesabaco.com)



[maximillianrescuesabaco](https://www.facebook.com/maximillianrescuesabaco)



▲  
Billie Groom

## Three's a Crowd

► CONTINUED from pg 13

As for us, we shall remain cozy but crowded, because I'm sure even a larger bed would not prevent Sam from sleeping on my head. And there is the matter of those sheets. ■

Susan Goldfein's newest book, *How to Complain When There's Nothing to Complain About*, is available at Amazon.com and other on-line books sellers. Read her blog at: [SusansUnfilteredWit.com](http://SusansUnfilteredWit.com).

## NEW MEMBER

BILLIE GROOM

HELLO! I am Billie Groom, an unintentional behaviorist with an unconventional learning journey spanning three decades. I work exclusively with dogs over the age of six months to address anxiety, aggression and behaviors associated with adolescent and adopted dogs. My success with rescuing and rehabilitating hundreds of dogs with checkered pasts early in my career lead to the creation of UPWARD Dogology, a scientifically proven methodology grounded in cognitive behavioral therapy, proven to decrease surrenders and euthanasia due to behavioral reasons. This developed into a successful career as a behaviorist. I am referred by veterinarians, industry experts and clients.

In 2019 I published "The Art of Urban People With Adopted and Rescued Dogs Methodology," which describes the evolution of the world of dog rescue, explains the need for cognitive behavioral therapy for dogs, and introduces UPWARD Dogology. The book won the 2019 America Best Book Fest Award for narrative, non-fiction/pets.

On my podcast, Upward Dogology, I share my learning journey and explain different training methods. The episodes cover client experiences, create awareness for people and organizations helping animals, and dive deep into animal science. The podcast is on 11 platforms and has received great reviews.

I am a member of Comparative Cognition Society

and the Animal Behavior Society. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Western Ontario. I currently reside in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

My character driven, fictional script, "Who Needs Enemies," won the 2011 WildSound Script Writers Contest. The honest humor and character development were praised, with the judges claiming that as much as they "can relate to the characters, we are glad we are not in their shoes!" Perfect! My script, "A Duck in a Puddle" won the Regina Little Theatre Script Competition (shorts) and subsequently performed on stage. It is a character driven play with honest humor that took place in a women's prison. Hmm...again, glad we are not in their shoes.

I am grateful for the many dogs I have had the opportunity to work with, including dogs from the Yulin Fest, fighting rings, reserves of Northern Canada, backyard breeders, basements, ditches, rooftops, the streets of Mexico, Costa Rica, Thailand, China, Korea, and the Galgos from Spain.

My current dogs include a street dog from Mexico and a street dog from Costa Rica. The dog in my profile picture is one of my many transports to Canada from Mexico. I am a cardio junkie and lover of the outdoors. I enjoy reading fictional books (especially crime thrillers), and I can be seen enjoying a beer on a patio, preferably with dogs, on a sunny afternoon.

## Listening

► CONTINUED from pg 28

“Remember Son, you were loved by a man who loved dogs — who loved dogs more than he loved people.”

And do you know why he told me this?

Because he knew that, unlike people, the only time a dog will break your heart is when he dies.

As the hall light got smaller from the other side I heard my father say, “Merry Christmas, James.” ■

James is a Maxwell Medallion award-winning author and member of the Dog Writers Association of America. A past president of the Animal Rescue & Foster Program of Greensboro, NC, he shares his home with four rescue dogs. He is retired from Barnes & Noble Booksellers, and his stories have appeared in *Cesar’s Way*, *New York Dog*, *Simply Pets*, and many others.



## Lilly

► CONTINUED from pg 36

to choose which puppy she would like to keep. Beth had wanted a puppy since the fall; however, had felt it best to wait until spring arrived.

Beth looked to Lilly. “From what I hear, you saved their lives. You should be proud of yourself.”

Lilly smiled shyly. She was proud, but mostly she was excited because she could keep one of the puppies and she could visit the other puppy every weekend.

“Lilly runs as fast as the wind, which was lucky for the puppies,” Lilly’s Mom explained, as she pushed Lilly’s bangs away from her green eyes.

“Lilly,” Beth whispered, “I think you deserve to choose the puppy you would like to keep.” Lilly looked to her Mom who smiled and nodded.

One of the puppies stretched and yawned. “This one. She has nice long legs,” Lilly said, gently patting the puppy.

“Good choice! What are you going to name her?” asked Beth.

“Windy,” Lilly stated, “because together we will run like the wind!” ■

## NEW MEMBER

ELLIE BEALS

JOINING THE DWAA unifies two of my great passions, writing and dogs. I’ve been a writer all my life, working primarily at poetry and short-stories in my youth. When I “grew up” I entered the field of management consulting in Ottawa as a specialist in plain language.

I’ve also been a dog lover all my life and started training and competing in Obedience in Canada in the mid-1990s. My boy Fracas and I placed in the National Top Ten, ten times, claiming

the number one spot in 2014. My husband and I also coach other obedience competitors. As Covid hit, we temporarily halted our coaching to retreat to our cabin in the woods of Quebec. There, I wrote my first novel, *Emergence*, a psychological thriller whose protagonist is an obedience competitor and coach, and whose worldview is filtered through her focus on communicating and working with dogs. *Emergence* is scheduled to “launch” in late February or early March of 2021.

## MEET THE PRESIDENT

TERESE BACKOWSKI

Therese Backowski is the former editor of *Off Lead Magazine* and Barkleigh Publication's *Groom-O-Gram*. She is a free-lance contributor to many other publications, including *Clean Run* and *Groomer to Groomer* magazines. Her essay, "Designer Dogs: Fabulous Fact or Fiasco?" Is published in the Pearson College textbook, *A Ticket to Write*. She is the proud recipient of four Maxwell medals, including one for photography.

When other adolescent girls were engrossed in romance novels, Therese was avidly reading *Veterinary Journals*. At aged twelve, she acquired her first professional training assignment, a Shetland pony, destined for the Ohio State Fair's Futurity class. The pony died in her stable two days later. She learned a valuable lesson that stayed with her for life. Never again would she take responsibility for an animal that wasn't recently declared healthy by a Veterinarian.

She was among the first licensed veterinary technicians in the state of Ohio.

A breeder-exhibitor, she co-owned one of the first A.K.C. champion Australian Cattle Dogs in the country. She showed Airedales, Australian Cattle Dogs, a Brittany, Standard Poodles, and

even an English Pointer, finishing most of them in conformation and obedience in the United States and Canada.

Her interest in dogs and their welfare didn't end there, Therese is a former International Dog Grooming judge, marketing representative, and a sought-after key note speaker. She presented seminars in Thailand, Australia, and even Akron, Ohio.

Therese is Animal Planet's featured obedience instructor in their series, "Cell Dogs," and the State of Ohio awarded her a Gold Star for her volunteer work with inmate trainers. She is the animal trainer-wrangler for the movie, *Shawshank Redemption*. (IMBD credited as Therese Amadio.)

While accomplishing all of these things, she owned and operated a retail grooming salon and obedience training center for twenty plus years.

At age 60 something, Therese temporarily stopped freelancing and enrolled in college, eventually graduating Cum Laude with a degree in English and Professional Writing.

Her interest in dogs has evolved to rescue and rehab. She lives with two cats, a Chihuahua with a cleft nose, and a slightly neurotic, rescued from a puppy mill, Standard Poodle.

### ● EDITOR'S NOTE ●

#### Update on Press Credentials for this summer's WKC Dog Show

In case you are living in a sound proof/news proof room, or just don't follow the Fancy, late last year, the WKC pivoted and changed the dates and location of its annual dog show. This year's show will be held at the Lyndhurst estate, June 12-13, preceded by the Agility Championships on June 11.

Media access to the Westminster Weekend events **on-site** at Lyndhurst will be by invitation only and only pre-approved media will be admitted to the show grounds. Invitations will be issued on an ongoing basis, for those who fill out the Remote Media Credential Application. Media interested in covering the events **off-site** are accessed to fill out the Remote Media Credential Application, which will ensure that they receive daily content (video b-roll, press releases and photo galleries).

In essence, the first step for anyone interested in covering the event(s), in any location, is to complete and submit the remote media credential application. All of the details are located in the **WKC Press Center**. The deadline for the Remote Credential Application is Thursday, June 10, 2021.



<https://www.westminsterkennelclub.org>



## Finn

► CONTINUED from pg 31

to the party. Finn is no exception. He's become the very best dog and helped us heal over the grief of losing our last fur-child. And he's brought me a purpose and new sense of joy I didn't know was possible. But, most magically, he's also brought thousands of readers and fans so much laughter and light in these dark times.

The best part about this whole process has been spreading joy. It was fun to dust off my neurons to learn something new and stay busy during an otherwise depressing time. But the messages from fans telling me how much joy his posts and books bring them — how one of the books helped them find joy during a family member's grave illness, or how their children were totally hooked on reading, thanks to Finn. Those have been the most incredible gifts to me in this process. I didn't even consider kiddos when writing, but I love that so many have fallen in love with reading, thanks to Finn. Every

comment, review and message telling me how much happiness Finn is bringing to people wakes up my endorphins and propels me forward. We've also been donating our time to elementary classrooms over Zoom — and what a joy those are. The kids are hysterical and I can't get enough of those sessions. I walk lighter and hum happier tunes for days after each one.

Between being unemployed for the first time in my career, being high-risk amidst the pandemic, the news coming across my TV, and battling depression and anxiety... this last year could have been really bad for me. Thanks to Finn and my new happy place, it turned out to be an amazing gift. I don't know if I'll ever make enough to really focus on this full-time. But for now, it's all the emotional income I could ever need. ■

## Tips & Tactics

► CONTINUED from pg 11

### Fan Base

Send the promotion and news release to your mailing list.

### Other Authors

Ask other authors to recommend or promote your book and do the same for them.

### Package Selling

Offer a combo price if readers buy the new book, they get a discounted price on a previous book.

## POST LAUNCH

### Keep up the promotion

After the book is released, don't stop promoting it. Maintain the momentum you've built up over the past few months. Cross-promote with other authors in the genre; model good practices by regularly recommending their books on your social media platforms; participate in podcasts/interviews; find out if local indie or chain book stores are organizing readings or authors panels and get involved!; post fun photos on social media; add video excitement; run sales promotions; sign up for reporter story sites such as Help a Reporter Out (HARO), you could find an opportunity to be quoted. Ask digital journalists if they will like to your site.

If these tips are helpful, and they work for you, let me know! Thanks, feedback is always appreciated. ■

◀ Finn has brought so much laughter to his readers and fans



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# MIA *on* Myrtle Beach



From her first trip, Mia enjoyed our warm-weather jaunts to Myrtle Beach as much as did we humans. One aspect of those trips, though, seemed to stir particular fascination for the diminutive Shih Tzu.

The drainage basin near the condo complex where we stayed served as her focal point for interesting activities and creatures. She seemed especially enthralled by the vacationer attempting to launch his kite. When he finally succeeded, after several failed attempts, she may have been even happier than he was.

SUBMITTED BY GENE MADDOX

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