

# RUFFDRIFTS

the DOG WRITERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA



SUMMER 2022

Joy, Laughter  
and Love

PAGE 8

*Interview*

WITH ALICE GERRARD

PAGE 19

*Election Update*

PAGE 18

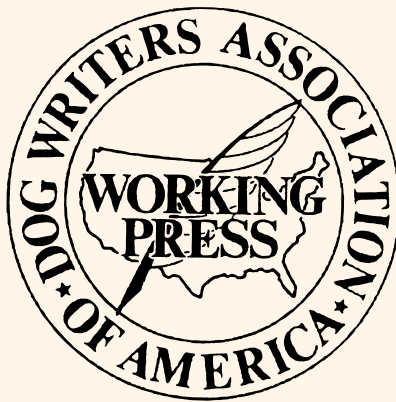
*Tips & Tactics*

SELF PUBLISHING

IN THIS ISSUE

*Poetry Selections*

FROM OUR MEMBERS



## Ruff Drafts

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Spring, April 2  
Summer, July 3  
Fall, October 2  
Winter, January 1

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

*Finally!*

**I** DREAM OF THE DAY that I can sit down to write my column and fill it with flowery wishes and good news. Perhaps this might be the beginning.

I owned one of the very first A.K.C. Champion Australian Cattle dogs in the country. I've shown Cattle dogs, Airedales, Standard Poodles, and even a Brittany in both obedience and conformation here and in Canada. I did this while hauling several of my five enthusiastic and sometimes rowdy children along with me. I did this while running a business, editing a magazine, and freelance writing. It took a great deal of juggling and planning to do so. The stress of staying organized was mind boggling.

But... nothing in my former life can compare to the stress that accompanied the reconstruction of our Writing Contest. Several people accepted the responsibility of managing the event, only to resign because of illness, or because they discovered how much work it is. It was disheartening.

I stopped announcing the names of volunteer Chairpersons because I was afraid that doing so would jinx the project. It didn't help that despite Facebook, Mailchimp, the Group io, and ongoing general announcements, individuals would call and email me asking if there would be a contest. If even two of those dear folks would have volunteered to help, all of this could have happened sooner. That is a gentle reminder that non-profits cannot run themselves. All of us need to help one another by volunteering.

With that said, I am pleased to announce that there will be a writing contest this year.

We will be accepting articles with publications dates from September 1<sup>st</sup> through August 31<sup>st</sup> during the years 2020 through 2022. Because this is an expansive time period, it is important that submissions meet

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



those criteria. We will begin to accept entries on September 1, 2022. I wish you all luck with your entries.

Very soon we will be calling for judges. Judges may still enter the contest, but obviously can't judge a category that they've entered. When you see the announcement, please feel free to accept the responsibility by either judging one, or many categories. This isn't difficult to do, after all, writers read, artists look, and photographers, (also artists) gaze at everything.

We need to send a huge thank you to **Barbara Magera, Lisa Begin-Kruysman, and Merrie Meyers** for forming the necessary committees to co-chair this event. **Marsha Pugh** is serving as the advisor, thank heaven, and I too will be on committee.

**I AM SENDING ALL OF YOU LOVE AND FLOWERS.**

*Therese Backowski*

**Therese Backowski**

DWAA President

# RUFFDRAFTS

Summer 2022

JOY, LAUGHTER AND LOVE

- 6**  
**Quincy Bean**  
BY BRYN NOWELL
- 8**  
**Enjoying Agility When Age is Just a Number**  
BY CHEYENNE LORD
- 10**  
**Escort**  
BY TONI EAMES
- 13**  
**Last House on Willoughby Way**  
BY JAMES COLASANTI JR.
- 15**  
**Poetry**  
BY RALPH PROTSIK
- 16**  
**Member News**  
Member Publications
- 18**  
**Tips & Tactics**  
Self-Publishing Hat Trick
- 19**  
**Sharing is Caring**  
Expanding Tips & Tactics with your help
- Election News**
- 20**  
**Scooter**  
BY MARGARET M. DUXBURY, DVM, DACVB
- 22**  
**Therapy Dogs for Kids with Disabilities**  
BY CASEY BLOOM
- 24**  
**Finding My Best Friend**  
BY NICOLE ORONZIO
- 26**  
**Leading a Life of Quiet Desperation**  
BY PAMELA S. DENNISON
- 27**  
**How Do you Measure Intelligence?**  
BY PATRICIA DALY-LIPE
- 28**  
**Camping, Canoeing and One Happy Canine**  
BY SHERRI TELENKO
- 30**  
**A Water Dog is Born**  
BY SANDY KUBILLUS
- 31**  
**The Annual Basset Hound Picnic**  
BY SUE OWENS WRIGHT
- 32**  
**Away from Home**  
BY BARBARA E. MAGERA
- 33**  
**Brillo's Not-So-Excellent Adventure**  
BY SUNNY WEBER
- 34**  
**His Master's Smile**  
BY RON HEVENER
- 36**  
**Two Poems from Every Day is a Dog's Day**  
BY MARILYN SINGER

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

**H**OW IS YOUR SUMMER GOING? Things seem to be “opening up,” the on-trend phrase for getting back to what used to be normal. People are returning to indoor gathering places, mostly without PPE, and hoping for the best. I went to a movie theater for the first time since 2019. Outdoor places are becoming almost crowded again. *Hopefully, this newfound innocence won't be marred by yet another highly contagious covid variant or another horrible incident like the one that occurred in Highland Park, Illinois.*

So far, the summer heat has been oppressive, and it's really affected my mood. I find myself getting cranky over small stuff, like someone hacking my PayPal account. They must be dog lovers, though, because they tried to place an order with Chewy.com. LOL. Because my PayPal account is tied to a credit card, I cancelled that and awaited a replacement card.

Murphy's Law was in high gear. Cue the Keystone Cops, Laurel and Hardy and a Chinese Fire Drill.

The regular FedEx driver, who spends more time petting my dogs on the porch than delivering my packages, must have the day off. The sub driver was likely afraid of my guest, an overly friendly, hairy, red Alaskan Malamute one-dog-welcoming-committee resting on my completely fenced porch. So, he tied the envelope from the credit card company to a toolbox on the bed of a truck parked near my house. Who does that!?

Why is there a large, hairy, happy dog on my porch you may ask? I am dog sitting, and in my defense, the Malamute is a counter surfer and can't be left unattended. Some of his antics include downing an entire bag of greenies, half a 37 lb. bag of dog food—not his—and some sour dough baked goods, although not all in the same sitting. It would be comedic if I didn't have to clean up the aftermath. Most people think trowels are just for gardening. But, since I've been watching this dog, I've learned they're also good as pooper scoopers.

Since I had to make a garbage run (there is no collection here) I left him next to a Malamute-sized bucket of ice water, in the shade, on the porch, while I made the 20-minute round trip loop. And of course, that's when FedEx arrived. I know this because they sent me an email, proudly proclaiming, “Your new card has been delivered!”

I searched the 5 homes, including porches and mailboxes, in my little community and it was nowhere to be found, despite the email. I called the credit card company and ordered a second replacement card.

Yes, I have more than one credit card. But this one is tied to my online shopping and, barring a 12-step program that offers rewards for good behavior that include copious amounts of



Merrie Meyers  
with Sunny (L)  
and Danny (R)

See FROM THE EDITOR pg 36 ►





BRYN NOWELL

# QUINCY BEAN

She was born in September. A Virgo like me. A date was set to meet some puppies and one brown pup fit perfectly in the palm of my hand and she promptly fell asleep under the watchful eye of her mother. It was her, I knew it, my Quincy Bean.

Q

QUINCY WAS FOUR POUNDS. Four whole pounds is all it takes for a dog to completely unearth everything you thought you knew about love.

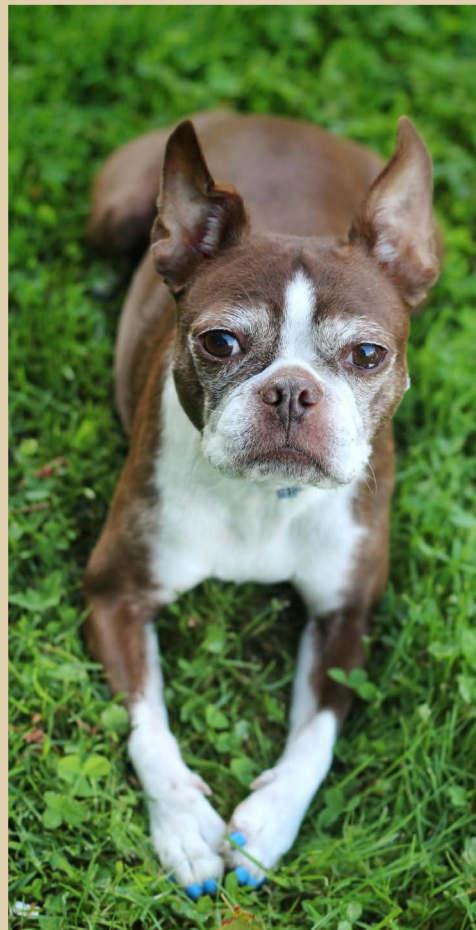
I had a firm rule. NO DOGS ON THE FURNITURE and I was prepared to enforce it. After some time playing, and some pee on the floor, I could tell she was sleepy. No more than fifteen minutes after her being home, we abandoned the NO DOGS ON THE FURNITURE rule. Dogs know how to break rules that need to be broken.

One ear flopped back, one ear eventually stood up, both were softer than velvet 'til the end. Her tail was crooked, like a right angle, so when she wiggled it, it looked like a comma swaying back and forth.

Licking was her love language. I think it soothed her as much as it soothed us. She would find any exposed toe for some licking, damp legs as you got out of the shower, inner ear canals if you were sitting next to her, and directly down your throat if you didn't fully close your mouth.

It was apparent early on that one of her superpowers was snuggling. Under the covers, curled into a ball. Always the little spoon to my big spoon. She slept with me, each night, for the remainder of her twelve years. Not waking up next to her has been the hardest adjustment so far.

She was always curious, and her little front paws would bounce up and down like she was prancing. If you looked down at her, she'd smile

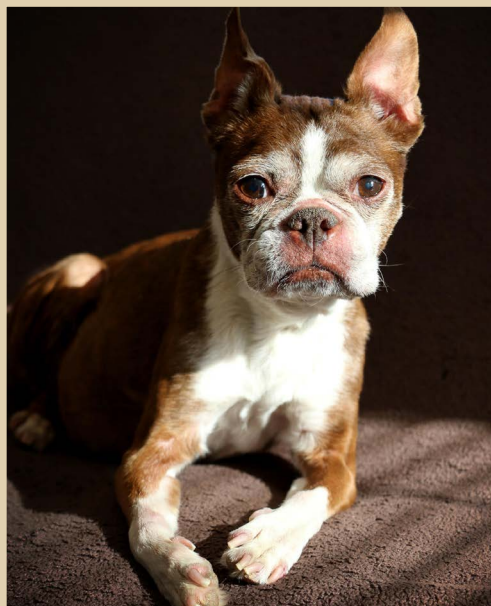


back, tongue sticking out the side of her mouth. As with all things she did, she was joy in dog form.

She was our one and only for four years. In that time, we experienced the excitement of pregnancy. We daydreamed about Bean helping our child grow up. We also experienced the crushing loss of the pregnancy and were comforted by Bean's snuggles and kisses. She was our family, and we embraced the love she had to give in our time of suffering and loss.

After four years of our tiny family, we decided Bean would like a dog companion. Shortly after making that decision, Yoda entered our lives. They weren't best friends, but they established their own routine and eventually respected each other's boundaries.

Yoda is round and Bean was his cleaner. Each day, she'd lick his ears, clean face wrinkles, and wash away eye crusties. I, for the first time since we've had him, needed to clean his face because Bean wasn't around to do it for him. It's those little signs of loss and absence that hit me in the gut the hardest.



For most of her life, she would enthusiastically do an army crawl sprawl across the only carpeted room's floor in the house, which is the upstairs guest bedroom/office. While she did the army crawl, she'd wiggle her kinky little tail. It was my favorite thing she would do because she looked so gleeful as she did it. For the last year, she no longer did the army crawl, she no longer wiggled her little tail. It was one of the first signs I noticed and realized it probably meant she was in pain. It was then that I began to steel myself for the prospect of her departure. When a dog loses its telltale wiggle, it's a sign.

It may sound silly, but I wanted to vocalize my thanks to her. After all, if Bean hadn't come into my life, literally every aspect would be different.

If it weren't for Bean, I wouldn't obsessively take photos of my dog.

If it weren't for Bean, I wouldn't have started to enter those photos into dog-related contests.

If it weren't for Bean, I wouldn't have won and donated over \$20,000 worth of money, supplies, food and treats.

If it weren't for Bean, I wouldn't have amassed a large network of pet blogging contacts who are some of my closest and most cherished friends.

If it weren't for Bean, I wouldn't have started a dog blog.

If it weren't for Bean, I wouldn't have had the confidence or opportunity to apply for a job outside of Higher Education and in the pet space.

How do you tell one little dog that you owe everything you are in your *right now* to her? The short answer is you don't. The longer answer is,

Bean never cared about any of that. She just loved and wanted to be loved. It was in that simple act, all those other doors opened. What a special gift. What an honor to be her parent. What a pleasure to have felt such unbridled love.

Bean was an empath. She knew when something was off and she somehow always found a way to be a little bit closer, and affectionate. She would lick away tears and force you to hold her until you started to forget why you were sad in the first place. That's one of the hardest things about her absence. I know, if she were with us right now, she would be licking away tears and climbing on us to be held, like a tiny, weighted blanket for the soul. I know, deep down, she would *never* want us to be sad over her and I'm trying to hold onto her joy because of that.

Thank you, sweet little Bean. Thank you for your joy, your snuggles, your love, and your companionship. Thank you for being the most amazing guardian angel a person could ask for. We love and miss you. We wish we could still be with you. ■

*In loving memory of  
Quincy Bean Nowell.*

CHEYENNE LORD

# Enjoying Agility When Age *is Just a Number*



— Originally Written For —

USDA\* OVERVIEW, USED WITH PERMISSION.

▲  
Grandson John  
Heller and Polly

**A**LICE GERRARD of Durham, NC, bluegrass artist and tireless advocate of traditional music, has appeared on more than 20 recordings and produced or written lines for over a dozen more. Her musical honors include an International Bluegrass Music Association Distinguished Achievement Award and induction into the IBMA (International Bluegrass Music Association) Hall of Fame. But perhaps her most impressive accomplishment has been competing in agility with her rescue dog, Polly, throughout her performances and tours.

“My music sometimes interferes with our training, but I am trying to tour less and less,” Alice said. “COVID put something of a crimp in touring with everything being postponed, canceled, or going virtual, but I prefer staying home and working with my dog anyway. As I age, touring becomes harder and more tedious, and I hate to leave Polly. Now I’m limiting my performances more to local or weekend events.”

Alice, 87, got started in agility only eight years ago when it became clear that Polly, the 11-month-old mixed breed dog she adopted from



Wake County Animal Shelter in 2011, needed an extra challenge beyond obedience. While Polly is very dog reactive, they have journeyed through the sport not to win at trials, but simply for the enjoyment of it.

“Winning a trial is just gravy on the biscuit,” Alice said. “I love the feeling of being a team with your dog, and I know Polly loves the sport as much as I do. We’re currently at the master’s level, and Polly, now between 10 and 11, is slowing down a bit. She still loves agility and has lots of energy – people don’t believe she is that old.”

Alice and Polly started training with **Whole Dog Institute** in Durham under Elizabeth Carlton and Lisa Brockmeier, and later met Cindy Hensley when the facility hosted her for a class. Since 2019, Alice has worked with Cindy at **Fast & Furry-ous Agility**, focusing on positive reinforcement training after realizing Polly shuts down on course when hearing negative comments. They are also training for more distance work so Alice won’t have to run as much at trials.

“What I love most about agility is the challenge of remembering a course, and especially that feeling you get from working together and communicating as a team with your dog,” Alice said. “It’s a lot like learning and remembering a song. You have to practice it together to get it right.

“For others looking to get into the sport, just do it!” she added. “It may not be for every dog or every person, but if you find that you enjoy it and your dog enjoys it, stick with it! And always reward your dog positively, and make sure your teachers have this philosophy, too.”

Polly’s excellence with verbal commands also comes in handy around the house, outside of training and competitions. In this video, see Polly retrieve a beer from the fridge for Alice: <https://youtu.be/QloJxIBBLvM> ■



▶  
Alice Gerrard,  
photo by  
Irene Young

“

**COVID put something of a crimp in touring with everything being postponed, canceled, or going virtual, but I prefer staying home and working with my dog anyway. As I age, touring becomes harder and more tedious, and I hate to leave Polly. Now I’m limiting my performances more to local or weekend events.**

**ALICE GERRARD**

TONI EAMES

# ESCORT

## My Toy Boy

F

FROM THE FIRST MINUTE THE LEASH was turned over to me and a large silky Golden Retriever head poked into my chest, an instant magic bond formed which was not broken until the day Escort died. He became my beloved partner in independence!

Although Escort was a gentle guide, he was passionate about his work. When I picked up his work clothes, he would eagerly thrust his head into the harness, letting me know he was ready for an adventure. And boy, did we share adventures! In our nine years together, Escort guided me throughout the U.S., Mexico, Canada, the Caribbean and South Africa.

As our partnership blossomed, I realized Escort functioned in three modes--work, sleep and play.

Escort's work was steady and focused. However, his philosophy was, when not in motion, sleep! Lines at airports were daunting experiences, because every time we stopped, he wanted to lie down. When shopping for clothing, his constant naps were a nuisance, so I would leave him on a DOWN STAY under a rack and only disturb him when I was several racks away.

Guide dogs have the ability to maintain dual personalities, but Escort was extreme in this. His concentration on his job was legendary. Off duty, he was persistent, pesky and playful.

My Golden's greatest claim to fame was his passion for toys, particularly those used in tugging games. He loved stuffed, rubber squeaky and tug toys. Grabbing each one from my hand, he raced around with the exuberance and vitality that was his trademark! However, when it was time to work as a guide dog, he would drop his toy and instantly switch modes.

Escort's passion for toys earned him the nickname Looney Tunes. He could be laying quietly on the floor while a volunteer read to me, but as soon as I got up to use the restroom, pushy

Escort would bring a toy to the reader and demand attention. As soon as I returned to my seat, the attention-seeking ceased and he would return to sleep mode.

Escort pitted his strength against anyone who would engage in a tug game. He always won the tug when I was his rival, despite popular thinking among dog trainers never to let a dog win. But at a conference in San Antonio in 2002, keynote speaker Dr. Marty Becker outlasted him. We were amazed to see Escort let go and retire to another part of the hotel room after a 20 minute stand off!

But there was a soft side to my cuddly giant. Engaged in a tug game with service dog Bubba, a 7-pound Yorkshire Terrier, Escort put just enough pressure on the toy to keep Bubba on his hind feet, holding on for dear life.

A hide-and-find-the-toy game was always greeted with zestful energy. Escort was put on a DOWN STAY until released to find the toy. He would determinedly launch himself into the game until the item was located. At that point, he would joyously thrust it at me, begging to do it all over again!

Escort usually followed me around. He would race me to the top of the stairs, toy in mouth, insisting that I toss it a few times before going about my business. With no fenced yard to exercise him, games of throwing toys down the stairs were good substitutes for energy release. Even into his 11th year, Escort was strong, powerful and well-muscled.

Escort's spirited vitality made everything into a game. He hurdled around the house with a basketball, kicking the ball, emitting frustrating grunts and growls when he couldn't pick it up! Friends said he looked like he was preparing to join a local soccer team!

Loving animals is a circle of love and loss, but dealing with Escort's short illness and death was excruciatingly hard. Realizing the repeated

accumulation of fluid in Escort's chest did not bode well, I took him to see Dr. Helen Hamilton, an internal medicine veterinarian in Fremont, California. Escort carefully guided me into the hospital. A cardiologist was to ultrasound Escort and offer a possible diagnosis and reason for the fluid build-up. Unfortunately, the ultrasound was not conclusive although both doctors strongly suspected cancer. Several terrible options were presented, the most awful was to euthanize him that day. They agreed there was a very small chance it was not cancer and if so open heart surgery could continue giving him a good quality working life.

The surgery was scheduled for the next day so fluid was drained from Escort's chest to make him comfortable overnight. My loyal Golden then masterfully guided me to our hotel room and out to dinner and was almost himself. However, back in the hotel room, he was not interested in toys and immediately went to sleep.

The next morning, Escort was bright and alert. He retrieved my shoes and found the door to the grass area for relief. I had not wavered in my decision to give him the chance to beat the odds and continue to do what he most loved, guiding me. It was inconceivable he was dying from the inside out!

Dr. Hamilton is an extraordinary person, brilliant, caring and decisive. Her staff radiates competence and kindness. Shelly, the veterinary nurse took time to make friends with Escort before taking him out of the room. When I gave him a final hug and kiss, I knew I might never see him again. Walking out of that office carrying his empty harness, leash and collar, was one of the hardest things I ever did.

When the call came, Dr. Hamilton broke the news that Escort's heart was covered in nodules and there was no doubt in her mind, it was mesothelioma. Shelly promised to give him that final hug and kiss and I now had to face life without my toy boy!

Arriving home I realized never again would Looney Tunes guide me up those steps, then, undressed from his work clothes, dart into the living room to retrieve a favorite toy. Never again would he shriek in

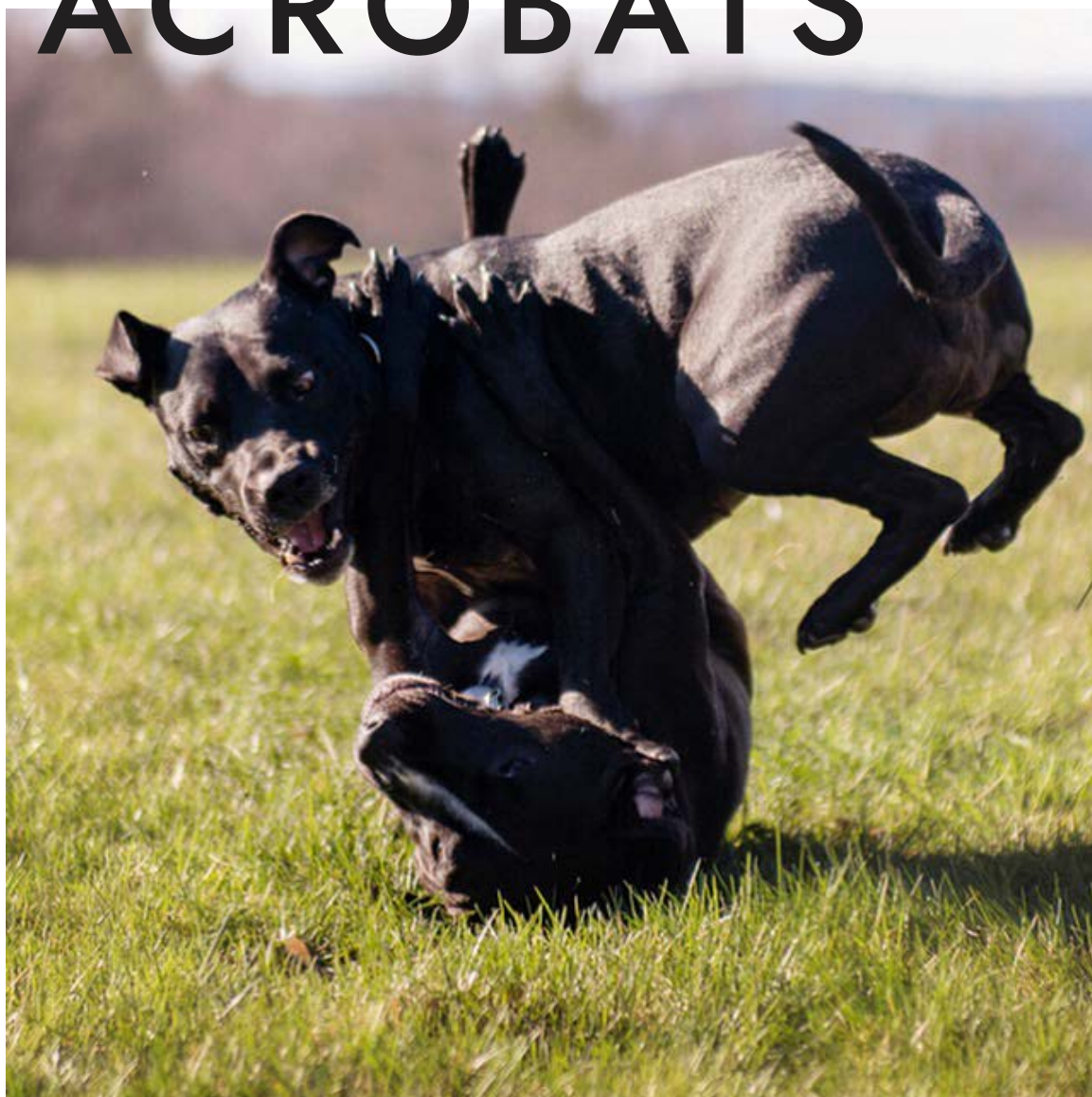
delight when a special friend rang the bell. Never again would he race up the stairs with a toy, encouraging me to play when I reached the top of the flight. The energy in the house seemed deflated.

Applying for Escort's successor was a difficult and emotional task, but when Keebler entered my life, I knew the torch had been passed! ■





# *the* ACROBATS



"They were rescued from a dogfighting ring in Auburn, Alabama and I adopted them from Out of the Pits. They adored each other."

— ELIZABETH HESS  
PHOTO BY CHRISTINE NEELY

A true story about a night in a haunted house...  
becomes a life defining experience.

JAMES COLASANTI JR.

# LAST HOUSE *on* WILLOUGHBY WAY

I FIRST SAW THE HOUSE in 1956, when I was seven years old.

We drove past the dilapidated dwelling on the way to visit a relative.

My father warned me as we passed the decaying relic to never venture inside. It was not structurally sound, and the ghosts who remained there would not take kindly to trespassers.

It was this trepidation my father instilled in me that day that kept me away from this house for many years.

But it was also like being told to keep your hand out of the cookie jar. The prohibition made the act that much more appealing. Word had it that shadows would blur the windows even in broad daylight. Still, the thought of entering and exploring this scary edifice remained with me.

Finally, when I turned sixteen, I decided it was time to face my fears. As a rite of passage, I would spend the night in Willoughby Manor—ghosts or no ghosts.

I left with Pal, our three-year-old collie-shepherd mix, Thursday evening at dusk. Loaded down with snacks and a sleeping bag, we trekked across town toward the manor.

Pal loved me. She knew I was responsible for feeding her, and she would have protected me if necessary. But she was still my father's dog. He was the one who had rescued her from death row. It was something she would never forget and always appreciated.

By the time we reached our destination, darkness had enveloped the house. The beam from my flashlight created more indistinct

shapes and shadows than it removed. Things scattered all around us that were not actually there. It gave us the chilling sensation that we were not alone and that we were being watched. And yet, no one seemed to be nearby.

We entered the house. We were alone: all alone, except for the tattered furniture and bric-a-brac strewn in a random manner. Cobwebs laced in the corners hung low enough to brush my face.

Pal stayed right by my side, sniffing the air, as we explored. She showed no sign that anything was amiss—nothing living, nothing dead.

We climbed the steps to the upper floor of the house. Outlines of my shoes and Pal's paws remained behind us deeply imprinted in the layers of dust.

In the attic we came across oldish bedclothes used by someone who had spent the night here in the not-too-distant past.

I spread the sleeping bag on the wooden floor, crawled in, and within minutes had drifted off to sleep. Pal rested on a blanket with her head right next to mine.

That night there were probably many unexplained creaking sounds in the manor house. Outside, branches most likely scraped against the broken window panes. But I heard none of it. I was dead to the world until Pal's low guttural growls awoke me with a start.

Footsteps—heavy, pronounced footsteps—ascended the stairs, then turned toward the room we were in.

I grabbed for the flashlight and aimed it toward the doorway.

"Who's there? Is someone there?"



► There was no answer except for the even louder sound of footsteps. I could tell that they were getting closer, but no one appeared. The flashlight flickered: once, twice, three times, and then died. Moonlight filtering in through the windows at opposite ends dimly illuminated the room.

Pal bristled and got between me and the door, but she didn't growl. In the opening stood a very tall, thin man.

As he entered he said, "Hello, I'm Marvin, Marvin Watson Montgomery III, and this is my room."

After this introduction, Marvin sat down and began to eat his sandwich. He had offered to share it with us but I had declined. I learned that he was a World War II veteran and, being homeless, always slept in Willoughby Manor when he was in town. I could see Marvin's dog tags half-in and half-out of his shirt.

I also learned that Marvin liked to talk, and that he had a world of knowledge at his disposal. He had been everywhere, and what a story he had to tell. Marvin created an experience for me just by being himself.

"James," he said to me as I sat watching him. I was thinking to myself, everyone, and I mean everyone, called me Jimmy. Only my parents called me James, and that's the way it was.

"James, I'm sure you have heard many an adult say 'Life's too short'. But there's a whole lot more to it that they're not telling you."

"Waking up each morning is your very first victory of the day. You must embrace it, and be thankful. You must make every minute count. You have to make time work for you instead of you working for it."

"And remember this: a man is never, ever without love if he has a dog. Even on the worst day of your life, your dog will not abandon you and will never let you down."

"You must realize it's not about the stuff. It's not about the material you own. It's about the quality of your life and you are the determining factor---the one who can make it all happen."

"And one more thing: a kindness shared without hesitation is another step up on your way to Heaven. Each good deed you do will reward you far more than you can ever imagine."

"Now let's call it a night. I need an early

start tomorrow." Marvin made his bed in the far corner of the room, and before long, we were all fast asleep.

The early morning sun snuck in through the window highlighting my sleeping face with its glow. My eyes cracked open to let in the daylight. It was early, and I was not eager to get myself up.

The room was deafeningly still. Marvin was gone. To be honest, I wasn't completely sure if he had really been there or not. I called his name, but there was no answer. Somehow I knew I would never see him again.

Pal was sitting in the doorway waiting. I gathered up my belongings and headed toward the stairs. Pal cocked her head, barked, and looked up at me.

On her collar twinkled a shiny new object. Marvin had left one of his dog tags for Pal and his words of wisdom for me. Both were a reminder of my night in the haunted house.

A chill went through me as we walked down the stairway. It was then I noticed there were only two sets of footprints in the dust: Pal's and mine. ■

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** James is a Maxwell Award winning author and a member of the Dog Writers Association of America. His stories have appeared in *Cesar's Way*, *New York Dog*, *O. Henry*, *Triad Happy Tails*, *News & Record*, and many other publications.



## POETRY

RALPH PROTSIK

**The Bulldog**

My Bulldog won't frolic or fetch  
 His face may cause others to kvetch  
 But he's gentle and sweet  
 With the kids on the street  
 And the ladies all think I'm a ketch

**The Jack Russell Terrier**

A packet of fizz the Jack Russell  
 Full of dashing and daring and bustle  
 With engine on race  
 And the world left to chase  
 Any wonder he makes such a fuzzle?

**The Labradoodle**

It's clear that the scamp is a poodle  
 By its frolicsome dabble and doodle  
 But add a big part  
 Of the Labrador's heart  
 And you've got the whole kit and caboodle

**The Leonberger (Leo)**

There are dogs that are bigger than these  
 Like Mastiffs and Great Pyrenees  
 But few are more stately  
 Or admired more greatly  
 For their grace and perpetual ease

**The Mutt**

A mutt may show up with a rat  
 Do some terrible things to your hat  
 But he's happy for sure  
 Just to roll in manure  
 And so grateful that he's not a cat

**The Old English Sheepdog**

I'm partial to dogs that are shaggy  
 That are goofy and sweet and not naggy  
 They only see good  
 From their eyes under hood  
 Which explains why their tails would be waggy

**The Pomeranian (Pom)**

The Pom is a kind of a spitz  
 A Chihuahua with fur in a ditz  
 The type of a pooch  
 You can cuddle and smooch  
 Or show off with a date at the Ritz

**The Pug**

Behold the repug-a-nant Pug  
 With a mug that resembles a thug  
 Though their owners observe  
 What they really deserve  
 Is not scorn but a cuddling hug

**The Saint Bernard**

Though not in his nature to beg  
 He would flip for a sip from the keg  
 Of the rum or the brandy  
 That dangles so handy  
 His lips near the tips of the peg

**The Vizsla**

The Vizsla is one of those breeds  
 That's packaged in binary speeds  
 When off it will sleep  
 Like your average sheep  
 But when on will do mischievous deeds

NEIL S. PLAKCY



## Dog's Honest Truth

*13th in Neil S. Plakcy's fan-favorite  
Golden Retriever mystery series*

**Steve and Rochester seek the truth about a neighbor's murder**

Author Neil S. Plakcy has penned another page turner. Amateur sleuth Steve Levitan and his clue-sniffing Golden Retriever Rochester are back in the 13th full-length novel in this long-running series.

With over 25,000 trade paperbacks and e-books sold, and hundreds of glowing reader reviews, it's clear that Rochester, the canine hero this series, has captured the hearts of dog lovers and mystery fans.

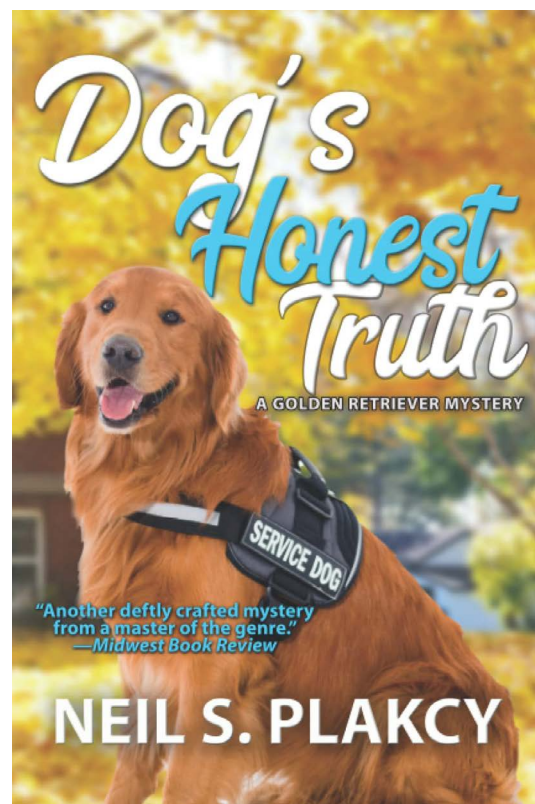
There's a new dog in town—a Golden Retriever named Luke, in training to be a seeing eye dog. He and Rochester immediately bond, but there's something odd about Luke's human, Ben Ji. How can someone so young afford an expensive townhouse on Sarajevo Way? When Ben is shot, Steve begins to discover the lies he has been telling.

Steve's also forced to tell the truth about his past, when he deals with a student plagiarist at Eastern College, a professor locked in the stone age, a climate activist with dangerous habits, an angry bartender—and a rifle-wielding assassin.

Will he and Rochester be able to dig up the clues to all these mysteries? Or will a deadly killer go unpunished? It will be up to Rochester to solve the crime in this new mystery with heart—and fur. *Dog's Honest Truth* was published May 15, 2022.

### Author Bio

Neil Plakcy's Golden Retriever mysteries were inspired by his own golden, Samwise, who was just as sweet as Rochester, though not quite as smart. And fortunately he didn't have Roch-



ester's talent for finding dead bodies. Now that Sam has gone on to his big, comfy bed in heaven, his place by Neil's side has been taken by Brody and Griffin, a pair of English Cream goldens with a penchant for mischief.

A native of Bucks County, PA, where the Golden Retriever mysteries are set, Neil is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University and Florida International University, where he received his MFA in creative writing. A professor of English at Broward College's South Campus, he has written and edited many other books; details can be found at his website, <http://www.mahubooks.com>. He is also past president of the Florida chapter of Mystery Writers of America.

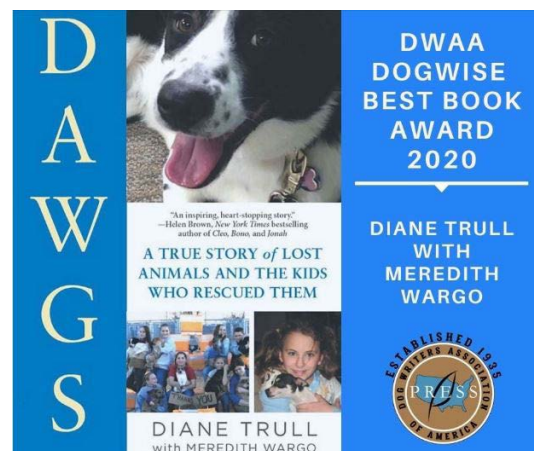
Review copies are available upon request.

## • MEMBER NEWS •

## MEREDITH WARGO



*DAWGS: A True Story of Lost Animals and the Kids Who Rescued Them*, authored by DWAA member Meredith Wargo, has received several awards. Selected by our own organization as a Best Book in 2020, the non-fiction book earned the 2021 Harten Grand Prize Winner, Chanticleer International Book Awards – for Uplifting & Inspiring Non-Fiction, and the 2021 Best Book Awards sponsored by American Book Fest in the Animals/Pets: Narrative Nonfiction category. Diane Trull's passion for rescuing animals was the inspiration for DAWGS and years later, she continues to teach about the importance that compassion and community service play in improving the lives of homeless animals.



Good News and Congratulations Meredith!

## SHERRY WARSHAUER



## Who Doesn't Love a Hero?

Not all dogs become guide dogs. Like people, each dog has its own personality that makes it good at different jobs. Well, here are seven dogs—all heroes. They range from guide, narcotics detection, autism support, police, veteran support, search and rescue, and a release dog. See how these dogs work to help others.

Sherry Warshauer's *The Adventures of K9 Shayne* is a fun and educational children's book about service dogs, that can be found in the section of the bookstore devoted to "Good Night Stories" and "Storytime Collections."







# TIPS & TACTICS

## Self-Publishing Hat Trick

It seems pretty straightforward. Self-publishing is easy and accessible. Just create a document, find a platform, upload your story and wait for the clicks and payment to roll your way. Not!

Anyone who has written and posted a story on Amazon, or some other publishing platform, knows that to gain a readership, the process starts when you upload that file. Hopefully, you've put together a strategic plan before you uploaded your work that identifies your goals and outlines the ways you hope to achieve them.

To successfully create a healthy following of readers, today's authors must view self-publishing as a strategic business enterprise. This requires one to wear many hats: Editor, Accountant, Marketing Maven, Sales Person, Publicist, IT Guru, Artist/Designer, and even Legal Eagle/Watch Dog.

You'll need to ask yourself, "How many of those roles do I feel comfortable with?" Some platforms offer assistance with various aspects of the publishing process. Ultimately, the responsibility for getting all everything lined up and ready to roll will lie with you.

Perhaps a little pre-planning is in order before you determine which self-publishing pathway is best for you. Consider these questions:

- What am I selling?
  - What is the format? E-book, Audio Book, Podcast?
- What is the genre?
  - Romance, Comedy, RomCom, Thriller, Crime, Non-Fiction, Young Adult, Sci-Fi, History or Historical Fiction?
- Who is my audience?
  - Age group, Ethnic Group, Lifestyle or Specific Interest Groups?
- Are there strategic partners I can work with to promote my work?
- Are there activities or event tie-ins I can use to promote my work?

Once you have answers to some or most of these questions, you may have a better understanding of which platform best serves your needs and which offers supplemental resources that can shore up areas where you need help.

**Keep reading to learn how you can contribute  
to our Tips & Tactics program!**



# Sharing is Caring

One of the best things about DWAA's members is the diverse areas of expertise that are represented across the roster. Some members create compelling fiction. Some compose poetry. Still others are journalists, covering scientific breakthroughs, current events and even pending legislation.

Our diversity is our strength. DWAA is interested in creating a platform where members can discuss challenges they faced, opportunities they seized, and solutions they've used.

We are looking for members willing to discuss tips and tactics specific to their area of experience. Conversations will be hosted on social media platform in a 30 minute webinar format. Sessions will stream live and be recorded for member access.

## TOPICS WILL BE MEMBER DRIVEN.

### Possible topics:

- Key strategies for translating highly technical information into consumer read/viewed publications.
- Pros and cons of self-publishing
- Building your "brand" using social media
- Style Guide: transitioning from print to broadcast writing
- Interview Techniques: Finding quotable experts, asking for comment, organizing the interview
- Research: How to synthesize massive data sets, such as the US Census, to build a "case" for fund raising, questions for scientific research or narratives for consumer publications

**Are you interested in sharing what you know? Are you interested in logging in to learn more?**

If you've got an idea you want to share, we will work with you to structure a 30 minute presentation that is informative, a benefit for other members and a great addition to your resume. Please contact Merrie Meyers via email at [merrie.meyers@gmail.com](mailto:merrie.meyers@gmail.com) for more information.



## ELECTION NEWS

**DWAA is looking for members interested in serving on the bi-annual nominating committee. In 2023, DWAA will hold elections for new officers. According to our bylaws, three members must be selected to prepare a slate of Governors for the following year.**

### FROM THE BY-LAWS:

Article V, Section 5. Nominating Committee: the Board shall elect a Nominating Committee consisting of three (3) members to prepare and submit a slate of Governors for the ensuing year.

- The Nominating Committee shall be named before August 1.
- The Report of the Nominating Committee shall be received by the Secretary in time to be published in the October Newsletter.
- Any Member in good standing may petition to run for a specific office if he or she sends to the Secretary, before November 1, a petition signed by ten (10) members in good standing. (Adopted 1997)
- On or about December 1, the Secretary will mail a ballot to each member in good standing. If feasible, the Newsletter can be used to contain the ballot.
- All ballots received by the Secretary before December 31 will be delivered unopened to the Annual Meeting where three (3) tellers appointed by the President will count them.
- Those nominees, receiving the highest number of votes will be declared elected.
- If the election is uncontested, no ballots need be mailed.

**If you are interested in filling this role for our organization, please cut and paste the form below into an email and send it to [theresbackowski1@gmail.com](mailto:theresbackowski1@gmail.com) by August 1, 2022.**

## PLEASE CONSIDER ME FOR THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE.

NAME	
PHONE NUMBER	
EMAIL ADDRESS	

MARGARET M. DUXBURY, DVM, DACVB

## SCOOTER

*"We don't want him anymore! He pees all over the house and we're getting new carpet tomorrow."*



A

LOUSY SALES pitch, but exactly the one that ushered in the homely 8-year-old dachshund into our lives. "He is old," we thought, considering his unappealing coat of peach with gray. "We will give him a

home for as long a time as he has left."

Unconcerned about his less-than-stellar resume, Scooter strutted into our living room and lifted his leg on the sofa leg; he was home.

When you are both small-town veterinarians, you control the surgery schedule. We neutered Scooter, pronto. His remaining equipment loomed large for the rest of his life, leaving a telltale 5th track in the snow and adding new meaning to the term "wiener dog".

Neutering helped a great deal with his urination problem, but Scooter had been intact for a long time. Old habits die hard. A year later, when our big dog Jenny went into heat, Scooter's hormonal memories lit him up like a flare. He pursued her relentlessly. Launching himself off the couch as she walked by, his short legs gripped her from behind until he'd lose his grip and slide slowly forward, Jenny shooting him dirty looks over her shoulder. If Jenny lay down, it was game-on until we separated them with kindness. We knew exactly how big dachshund puppies become real!

Scooter was 8 when we got him — no spring chicken. He didn't play with toys, or get the zoomies, or like to go on long walks. He had two goals in life: to eat and to sleep. He made naps a contagious sport. If no one joined him, he'd burrow beneath the couch pillows with only the tip of his nose or tail visible to the discerning eye. Like a Where's Waldo puzzle, if you looked hard enough,





you could find some tiny piece of him in every family photograph.

Scooter loved to eat; the prospect of food egging him out of the deepest of naps. He was an Olympic beggar. He could balance upright on his bum for 30 minutes at a time, his short front legs folded over his chest, oversized ears pricked, and that remaining piece of equipment completing the comic picture. Occasionally he fell sound asleep mid-beg, toppling over like a statue in an earth tremor.

Scooter loved a party. One hot August afternoon, we hosted a softball game in our hayfield. The innings were short and the keg was cold. By the 4th inning, Scooter was weaving through the crowd, his front legs heading southwest, his back legs headed east. I ran to him to see what was wrong, just as the outfield came in. "Who drank my beer?" yelled a player. "Yeah, mine's gone too!" said another. Yep, Scooter was smashed.

I picked him up and carried him to the quiet of the house. He hung limp in my arms, stubby legs flopped over his chest, his number 5 appendage full-montied in the air. Head lolled back, he gazed at the upside-down scenery, like "wow, far out man". Inside, I tucked him under his favorite couch cushion to sleep it off, which he did, snoring like a truck

driver. I checked on him often, but he was soon back to his normal self. We kept him away from the keg!

Scooter loved everyone, including our two daughters. He was most patient with them, yet the day arrived when a loud growl erupted from the couch cushions. I raced to the scene to find our 4-year-old daughter hard at work. One hand gripped Scooter's small tail like a joy stick, the other hand was encased in one of her veterinarian father's blue plastic palpation sleeves, pushed against Scooter's backside. Just like dad did on farm calls, she was going in for the subterranean tour. It was never dull at our house.

Scooter lived to be 19, with most of his awake time spent underneath the couch cushions. Friends forgot we had him, but a growly "Hey, I'm h-e-re-," startled them from where they'd sat on him. "... you STILL have that dog?!" they'd exclaim.

We would have kept Scooter forever. Jilted by his first family, the funny little dachshund became a cornerstone of our life. He left us a million stories and a bridge to remember the irreplaceable freedom of youth, the sound of our children's laughter, and our enduring love for a clown of a sausage dog. ■

▲  
Scooter and Niky  
1983

◀  
Scooter begging



# National Dog Show NEWS

CASEY BLOOM

## Therapy Dogs *for* Kids *with* Disabilities

— submitted by —

STEVE GRIFFITH, NDS.NATIONALDOGSHOW.COM

### How Therapy Dogs Benefit Children with Disabilities

Therapy dogs bring comfort and can aid in the relaxation of a child's brain. Brain function can be boosted by having healthy personal relationships with those around you. Similarly, you may choose a therapy dog for your child.

The dog's presence can positively impact the neurotransmitters (the body's chemical messengers) released by the brain. One study showed that oxytocin and cortisol levels in dogs and their owners correlated with how owners engage with their pets and the behaviors that result from that contact<sup>(4)</sup>.

Also known as the cuddle chemical, oxytocin is a hormone associated with the formation of trust and relationship building<sup>(5)</sup>. This hormone soothes and calms the nervous system, boosting cognitive function in children.

Cortisol, on the other hand, is known as the stress hormone. Cortisol influences many elements of your body. However, it primarily regulates your body's stress response<sup>(6)</sup>.

Dogs from a certified therapy dog organization are caring and friendly. Spending time with these animals can be helpful and enjoyable for children with disabilities.

For example, Heel 2 Heal (H2H), a Florida-based therapy dog association, participated in the monthly Sensory Friendly Saturdays at Miami Children's Museum.

A Sensory Friendly Saturday provides a sensory-friendly experience for children with disabilities and their families. H2H therapy dogs could pro-

vide visitors with a therapeutic experience during this event as well.

### Which Children Can Benefit from Therapy Dogs?

Children with various physical, emotional, and mental problems may benefit from animal-assisted therapy. Due to its range of potential benefits, healthcare professionals frequently use AAT with other therapy or therapies.

Children with the following problems have found animal-assisted treatment to be beneficial<sup>(7)</sup>:

- Behavioral disorders
- Muscular dystrophy
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Developmental or cognitive disabilities
- Autism spectrum disorder

### How Therapy Dogs Boost Cognitive Function in Children with Disabilities

When a child has difficulty learning, reading and writing can be tricky. This limitation may frustrate and stress them, and as a result, carrying out daily tasks becomes even more challenging.

Therapeutic dogs, on the other hand, may relax and calm children. The child begins to feel less worried and more relaxed due to regular puppy therapy sessions. Dog therapy can benefit children with learning difficulties in a variety of ways.

One study showed that dog-assisted therapy could be a helpful addition to standard treatment methods for children with cerebral palsy and other physical and mental problems<sup>(8)</sup>. Studies also suggested that time spent with a therapy dog can



be highly beneficial for children on the autism spectrum<sup>(9)</sup>.

Reputable therapy dog organizations provide certified therapy dogs for AAT programs. These organizations can assist healthcare professionals by collaborating with parents and caregivers of disabled children to develop the best therapy dog programs for helping the child gain confidence. ■

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# National Dog Show NEWS

NICOLE ORONZIO

THE NATIONAL DOG SHOW/KENNEL CLUB OF PHILADELPHIA  
SUMMER INTERN (PENN STATE UNIVERSITY)

## FINDING MY BEST FRIEND: *My Journey with Simba*

— submitted by —

STEVE GRIFFITH, [NDS.NATIONALDOGSHOW.COM](http://NDS.NATIONALDOGSHOW.COM)

Children who want a dog always find the funniest ways to convince their parents when they realize that begging can only go so far.

My method of convincing my parents was a bit unconventional: I tied my mom's blue robe belt around the neck of my stuffed animal dog and walked her in front of my parents in every room of the house. I was only six years old!

I would conveniently get their attention when they were cooking, talking, watching TV and practically any time they could see me. It was to no avail. They were not convinced. However, I discovered one loophole through my grandmother, who I called Mom-Mom.

My grandparents had a Jack Russell Terrier named Rocky who my Mom-Mom loved with all her heart. Whenever my family and I would go to my grandparents' house, I would pull my Mom-Mom aside right before we left and ask her if I

could take Rocky home with me for a few days. Looking back on it, asking to take somebody else's dog home with you is a little odd. However, most of the time, my Mom-Mom said yes!

Then, for the next couple of days I was able to experience what it was like to have a dog. We would bathe him, play with him, and take him on long walks (during which he would jump and bark at any passing car). Rocky was an energetic and friendly dog who I adored, but not as much as my Mom-Mom. I was always so sad when we would have to give him back because I enjoyed Rocky's company.

Four years later, in the fall of 2012, my dream of getting a dog of my own was finally coming to fruition!

At this point, I was 10 years old and my parents were finally on board. After months of research, my dad decided that he wanted a Shiba



“

My journey with dogs has shown me how much an animal can add to my family, regardless of whether the pup lives with us or not. Dogs are such a loved and coveted animal that over 20 million people make it a tradition to spend two hours every Thanksgiving Day watching the National Dog Show presented by Purina on NBC.

I mention this because I'm lucky enough to be working on the National Dog Show this summer through my internship with Vizion Group Public Relations. The show takes place annually at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, PA, not far from my home in Aston, PA.

The most notable thing I love about the National Dog Show is how I get to see a vast variety breeds and their interactions with their owners and handlers. It's such a light-hearted, lovable show that really proves dogs are the best companions.

NICOLE ORONZIO



Inu. In what seemed like the ultimate luck, my mom knew a woman who had a whole litter of Shiba Inu puppies. The Shiba Inu is charming, faithful and protective, known in Japan as a police dog of choice.

By the time my mom reached out to the woman, she only had one puppy left. In November of 2012, that last puppy in the litter became a permanent part of my family. Now known as Simba, that puppy has grown into one of my greatest companions. Can you believe it? Simba is now 10 years old and healthy as ever.

When I was dreaming of getting a dog, I wanted one that cuddles with you, plays fetch and has lots of energy. Simba, however, does not fit that profile perfectly. Simba is a sleepy, goofy, and

▲  
Hiking with Simba

◀  
Selfie with Simba

affectionate (when he wants to be) type of dog. Despite that, Simba is everything I never knew I wanted and more.

Our ideal day together is hiking or walking on a paved trail and then going to Starbucks afterward. At Starbucks, Simba always requests a pup cup, which is a complimentary whipped cream treat for dogs. When traveling on these days, Simba enjoys sticking his head out the window with his tongue flying in the wind.

Ten years ago, I never would have thought that I would be calling a stubborn, intelligent, and adorable fox like dog my best friend, but here we are. I am so grateful that we waited until Simba to get a dog because Simba truly was worth the wait. As cheesy as it may sound, dogs truly are a human's best friend. ■

PAMELA S. DENNISON

## Leading *a* Life of Quiet Desperation

LATELY I'VE BEEN THINKING about how the average pet dog lives their life. In my classes, I talk quite a bit about dog body language and how important it is that we learn it to the best of our flawed human ability. After all, we expect them to learn our language, and I feel that it is only fair to learn theirs.

So many people who own dogs have no idea that dogs even have a language beyond tail wagging (which is more often than not mis-read). So, here are our dogs, trying everything in their power to communicate with us and we're not paying attention. Imagine how that must feel to them. They try and try and try to let you know they're uncomfortable, scared, nervous, anxious and no one is listening. Or getting punished when they try to explain in the only way they know how, and living in an environment that doesn't respect whatsoever their needs.

Most of the behavior problems we see are a result of that lack of understanding of canine body language or, worse, the misinterpretation of it. With all of the verbs I teach people to train, learning their body language is 90% of what it takes to train a dog properly and humanely.

We bring this completely different species into our homes, intact with different behavior and social patterns, and yet we don't take the time to learn how to truly care for them. We have a pre-conceived notion of what and who dogs are – the Lassie syndrome if you will. We are blinded by our ignorance and our dogs suffer the consequences. So now we have even more complex problems – our dogs don't know what is expected of them and here comes “Tom, Dick or Harry Dog Trainer” inflicting all sorts of bizarre and harmful punishment on our dogs... and we let them because “Tom, Dick and Harry” insist that helicoptering,



alpha rolling, kicking, shocking and other tools of torture is how one is supposed to “train” dogs. And yet again, the dog pays the penalty for our ignorance. We continually put them into situations they can't handle and punish them for being afraid. They try to tell us they are afraid and we punish them even more.

Before you get upset, I know firsthand that “We don't know what we don't know,” or as my mom always said, “You're not born knowing how to balance your checkbook,” however, there is a thing called “critical thinking,” which is defined as:

**OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS AND  
EVALUATION OF AN ISSUE IN  
ORDER TO FORM A JUDGMENT.**

**MAKING REASONED  
JUDGMENTS THAT ARE LOGICAL  
AND WELL-THOUGHT OUT.**

It is a way of thinking in which you don't simply accept all arguments and conclusions you are exposed to but rather have an attitude involving questioning such arguments and conclusions.

PATRICIA DALY-LIPE

# How Do *you* Measure Intelligence?

R

ECENTLY, I OVERHEARD someone comparing dogs to people. Their methodology of comparison used intelligence as the factor. My question, then, is how do you measure or define intelligence? Does compassion or empathy fit into this equation?

The other day, I heard a poignant tale. An older man was in the hospital and dying. His family received permission to have his companion dog allowed in the room for a last visit. The dog was ushered in, and the door was closed. Fifteen minutes later, the family came back, opened the door expecting to escort the dog out. The patient was still in his bed. His arm was around his dog who had jumped onto the bed. The man was dead, and his faithful dog had died beside him.

Empathy and compassion.

Sweet William was my wonderful, faithful companion. An English black and white cocker, he was my shadow. One day, I noticed his stool was white. I made an appointment with the vet but, at the last minute, was not able to take him. My daughter took William to the doctor instead. They took a sample of the stool and sent it to a laboratory. This was on Friday. By the end of the following week, I had not heard from the vet, so I called. They had forgotten to send the sample, they said. Besides, the lab was closed for the weekend but no worry. William seemed fine now, didn't he? At that point he did. However, we had a trip to take. I had rented a U-Haul truck to deliver some furniture to my father's house in North Carolina. It was a long drive from Charlottesville, Virginia, to Spruce Pine, North Carolina. Of course, Sweet William was coming, but I also took along my daughter's Doberman. The whole drive down, William cuddled next to me on the seat. The Dobie stayed on the floor. We stopped twice at rest stops. Both times, William drank an entire bowl of water and seemed unwilling to saunter around the dog parks.

We arrived late, leaving the unloading until morning. William normally slept at the foot of my bed. That night, he chose not to and let the Dobie take his spot. In the morning, I woke up with a start. Something was wrong. I looked across the room and there was Sweet William leaning strangely against the wall. His eyes looked dazed, so I approached him very quietly and slowly, afraid of frightening him. He was postured as if being tied against the wall, almost rigid. Not a comfortable position. When I reached out to pat his side, he cringed. Immediately I knew he was in pain. I called the vet and got his emergency number. He would meet us at the clinic.

The Doberman was left at the house while I ran across the street to borrow the neighbor's car to take William. Taking the U-Haul would have been impossible since it was still full, and the cab was far too high for a pup in pain. Coming down the neighbor's walkway, there was William walking very slowly up the hill just to be with me. It was painful to watch. He would not let me carry him. It was difficult getting him into the car, but somehow, I did as the tears welled up in my eyes. Fortunately, the veterinary hospital was close. We arrived in minutes. William was immediately placed on the operating table and a tube was put in his side. He was dehydrated and in severe pain. The doctor said he could not determine the cause of his problem until the pain was under control. He had more to say but I did not hear him. I was focused on my brave little man lying on the cold steel table. He asked that William be left with him for the day and possibly the night so that he could do some tests. I had no choice. I went home to the Dobie and made myself busy unpacking the truck. In the afternoon, I made a visit to the vet. William



SHERRI TELENKO

# Camping, Canoeing *and* One Happy Canine

SACRIFICING CREATURE COMFORTS *for the PUP*

*I don't love camping. In fact, I've never camped longer than one night and that was on a three-day camping trip. Night two, I checked into a motel.*



B

UT MY DOG LOVES camping—at least, I'm convinced she will as I roll up my sleeping bag and head to Kejimikujik National Park in Nova Scotia, Canada with my pup in tow. My youthful half Cocker,

half Springer Spaniel has the energy of an entire Olympic rowing team and the hunting drive of... well, a bird dog. A heavily wooded environment filled with smelly stuff and moving critters? Likely, Spaniel heaven.

So, camping with my dog it was.

Kejimikujik National Park in Nova Scotia, Canada is popular in the province: first, because it's 400 square kilometers in size, and second, because of its unique cultural landmarks called petroglyphs carved into rocks by Mi'kmaq first nations hundreds of years ago. Kejimikujik was an interesting choice to cut our camping teeth on.

Fortunately, a dog-friendly oTENTik and some dog-embracing fellow campers made it easy. An oTENTik is a part tent, part cabin accommodation that is unique to Canadian National Parks. Many wouldn't even call it camping, but 'glamping'. If it means I don't run screaming to a motel waving a credit card, I don't care what you call it.

Exploring the entire park is almost impossible in a weekend, so we prioritized. We skipped the 5-kilometer hike through a forest of ancient Hemlocks but opted instead for a picnic lunch along the waterfalls, a dog beach frolic, and a two-hour canoe tour along the river. On-leash dogs are welcome almost everywhere in the park, including the welcome center, except on the petroglyph tour and inside the new spaceship-like camping pods.



The latter two are unique to this park: the camping pods are elevated above the ground and require climbing steps—not practical with the pooch, especially for late night and early morning bathroom runs.

However, leashed dogs are permitted on most of the 35 kilometers of trails through the park, some shared by cyclists. Did my dog love it? As a bird-loving dog, my crazy Spaniel couldn't have been more stimulated. New smells, birds and other creatures constantly darted through the brush, keeping my pup's eyes, ears, and nose perpetually active, and in classic Spaniel style, walks did not follow a straight line.

On the small dog beach, partitioned by a rope, Natasha the 8-month-old Springer had the beach to herself until my dog briefly joined her in a bit of Spaniel wrestling. This wasn't my dog's first shoreline or waves, but she's still afraid of them both.

Dogs can tent-camp in most areas of the park, but we stayed at the one oTENTik dedicated to glampers with dogs. Bring a tie-out, like I did, and your dog can easily sit outside with you enjoying the campfire or early morning visit from a trio of curious deer.

It was a weekend of firsts for us. My dog saw her first deer, heard her first harmonica, was frightened by her first campfire, rode in her first canoe, and ultimately experienced her first camping trip.

Did she love canoeing? Not really, but likely because I was nervous. Twice she tried to escape over the edge, but a stray water ripple heading her way kept her in the boat.

The weekend was a first for me too – it was the first time I camped for longer than one night. I beat my previous record by one day, and this time I didn't give up halfway through and head to a motel. Maybe it was the location. Maybe it was the warmer temperatures. Maybe it was the more comfortable bunk bed accommodations with my precious Sprocker curled up inside my sleeping bag.

Would I do it again? Yes, but not in a tent and not without my dog. ■



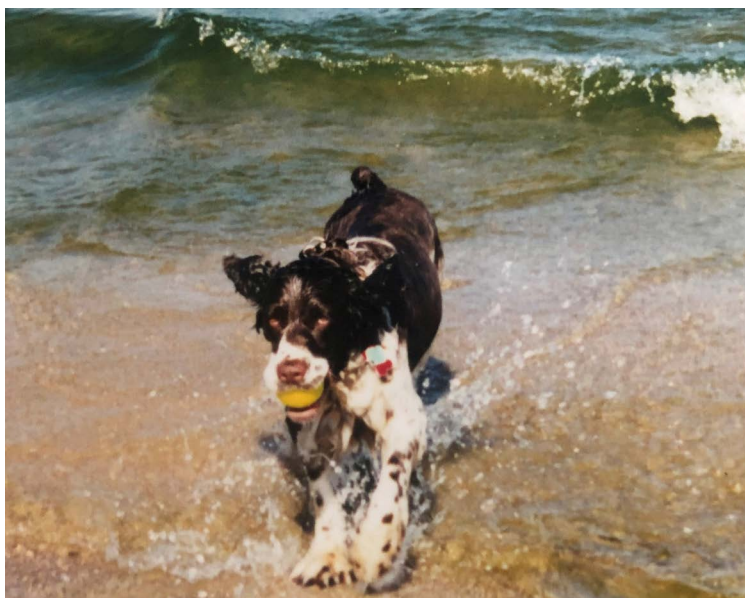
▲  
Glamping



▲  
On the shoreline

◀  
Can you canoe?

SANDY KUBILLUS

*a* WATER DOG *is* BORN

Kaylee the  
waterdog

**A** THICK WALL of dead cattails surrounded the mowed trail where Kaylee, my ten-week-old Springer Spaniel, plodded after me in the state park. Wearing my rubber, knee-high boots, I stopped at the edge of a 50-foot-long puddle covering the width of the trail. For my past few visits, I had carried Kaylee around it. The warm sun boosted the late April day to the mid-seventies, a perfect day for a hike.

I debated if Kaylee was ready to wade through the cold water. First impressions in young puppies could last a lifetime. With white-water canoeing as my favorite pastime, Kaylee had to enjoy water and swimming. My previous dog, Penny, hated every minute of it after my dad threw her into a pond figuring she would sink or swim. She hopped onto the shore at every opportunity, determined to stay on land, until I dragged her back into the canoe.

After a half-dozen steps, the water in the puddle reached the middle of my boots. Kaylee

followed me and then stopped. Cold water lapped at her elbows. The trail was far from roads and no people were in sight, so she was off-leash. She needed to learn to obey commands even at such an early age, since a leashed dog in a canoe could lead to disaster if the boat flipped.

“C’mon, Kaylee,” I called to her panicked face. She looked backwards. “You can do it, Kaylee, let’s go.” My mind debated if she was too young, or if she could get sick from the cold water.

I took a few steps deeper into the puddle, and then I turned and watched Kaylee inch closer to me with the water now up to the middle of her chest. She stopped and looked at me with a pitiful expression on her face. I hesitated, knowing if I pushed her too hard, she might grow to hate water, which meant she’d also hate swimming and canoeing.

Kaylee furrowed her brow, looking back and forth as if measuring the distance to safety and then to me.

“You can do it. C’mon Kaylee, trust me.”

She crept forward a few steps, looking very worried. Then the water became shallower, dropping down to her elbows. She splashed through the last part of the puddle, wiggling all over, a wide grin on her face.

“Kaylee, you did it!” I smiled while I rubbed her back. She jumped on my jeans, leaving large wet patches. Then she shook cold water all over me.

A week later, she followed me into a local creek, learning to swim at an early age.

After that day, Kaylee never hesitated around water, loving every minute of swimming and wading, often chasing a soggy tennis ball, a stick, or even blowing bubbles while she searched for rocks—a true water dog. ■

SUE OWENS WRIGHT

# The Annual Basset Hound Picnic



At Glenbrook Park in July of each year,  
basset hounds gather from far and near;  
one by one and in pairs they appear  
at the annual basset hound picnic.

Hounds of every size and color  
seem genuinely glad to see one another;  
some even greet a sister or brother  
at the annual basset hound picnic.

There's Noodles, Cruiser, Patti, and Maggie,  
Alex, and Dolly with the tail so waggy.  
All their suits are a little too baggy  
at the annual basset hound picnic.

Not one dog ever utters a growl,  
but cover your ears when they start to howl.  
Streams of slobber drip from each jowl  
at the annual basset hound picnic.

After they finish lunch there's a race;  
the contestants course at a staggering pace  
with ears a-flap and a smile on each face  
at the annual basset hound picnic.

For the winner, victory's always sweet;  
the prize is a box of a favorite treat.  
The fact that *any* dog wins is a feat  
at the annual basset hound picnic.

After the howl-off and race, they all nap  
on a comfy blanket or someone's soft lap;  
drifting to dreamland is always a snap  
at the annual basset hound picnic.

When finally it's time to say adieu  
one by one, or two by two  
everyone says, "We'll be seeing you  
at the annual basset hound picnic."



"When finally it's time to say adieu  
one by one, or two by two  
everyone says, "We'll be seeing you  
at the annual basset hound picnic."



BARBARA E. MAGERA

# Away from Home

WORK KEEPS ME OUT OF TOWN. After 72 hours away from home, I yearn for barking, wet smackaroos on the lips and little ones jumping all over me. I miss my Cavaliers. Viewing their photos or videos only intensifies my pain. My Bohemian lifestyle isn't going to survive. Maybe that's a good thing. Now I realize my priorities are "Cavaliers first." Everything else is unimportant. Absence truly does make the heart grow fonder.

My husband reports that when I am gone, life is total pandemonium. Our furry children search for me intently. They run up and down the stairs sniffing out rooms and corners hoping to find mom. Should they recognize my voice on his cell phone, a barking frenzy ensues. One attacks his cell phone. Another sits in front of him and whines. He reports it is a pretty emotional event.

In my absence, the youngest finds comfort by stealing my laundry and using several pieces as a headrest for sleep. Young children and puppies naturally sooth themselves with oral fixations. Kids chew on toys and puppies chew on everything. In honor of my absence, my puppy has destroyed two sets of sandals, one dining room chair, and just about every piece of clothing once safely housed in the laundry basket. She is rapidly depleting my underwear.

In our house, monotonous habits help maintain order. When rituals are disrupted, chaos ensues. The kids get all mixed up with deviations from their routines. Puddles of pee and gifts of poo show up in unexpected places. One Cavalier drools excessively to the point of soaking a dog bed. Guess everyone has their unique way of handling stress.

At the dinner table, I make a conscious effort not to feed unhappy faces with scraps from the table. My husband is a pushover, and a little coaxing from the kids will easily result in disappearance of his dinner. When I am gone, nobody wants to eat their doggy food. They hunt for whatever is present on my husband's plate. Of course, he gives in to their whims and whining. Abrupt dietary changes result in upset tummies and more chaos.

One truth is certain. I miss my Cavaliers. Yes, I think of my husband now and then, but I *really* miss the poochies.

Every time I drag out my suitcases and overnight gear, they get anxious. They clearly understand when I am preparing to leave. Packing sets them on "high alert". The last few hours before my departure is heart wrenching. Their sad eyes stare blankly at mine. They follow me everywhere. If I should sit or recline for a break they immediately maneuver to get in my lap. They jump to lick my face. Their noses touch my nose. They cover me with doggy kisses. One even grabs my leg with his front paws as I walk towards the door to depart. Through misty eyes I look hard into each of their faces as I nonverbally attempt to reassure them that everything will be "ok". I try to convey a sense of calm even though my heart aches.

When on assignment, I pull out photos and videos of my canine family. The hospital staff is genuinely interested. Their usual response is to pull out dog-eared photos of their family pet. Talking about our little bundles of love forms strong social bonds. Snippets of happy moments with the family dog lightens the burden of caring for the sick and dying. If no one recalls my name at least they remember me as the lady with beautiful Cavaliers.

On my last day of work, I anticipate our happy reunion. Seems like the ride home is faster, shorter and easier than the trip away from home. My mind is consumed with warm fuzzy thoughts of our reunion. As I drive into our garage, I hear their intense yet happy bark-voices. When I open the kitchen door, they storm me. They are all jumping to lick my face and rally for my attention.

As we finally settle in bed for sleep, each snuggles into their special place. One plops on the pillow next to me with his nose immediately next to mine. His breath warms my face. Another molds his body against mine. The youngest uses my toes as a headrest. Their rhythmic snoring is hypnotic for slumber. As I drift off to sleep, I realize these are the cherished moments that sustain me whenever I am away from home. ■

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





◀  
Brillo

▼  
Brillo and me



SUNNY WEBER

## Brillo's Not-So-Excellent Adventure

**S**HORTLY AFTER fostering and then adopting Brillo, my little Lhasa mix dog, I found him scooting on his rear end. Fearing an obstruction, I rushed him over to the vet where our technician, Michelle, placed him on the exam table. I stood behind Brillo reassuring him.

Michelle said, "His anal glands are probably full. Some dogs don't empty them well on their own." Another technician came in to hold Brillo while Michelle addressed the issue. "Don't stand there. Move to my side because I'm not sure where this stuff is going to land."

I giggled. I thought she was trying to be funny. A bit of humor in any hospital is a good thing. Compliantly, I moved next to her and asked what anal glands were for. "They secrete

the oily scent onto the dog's feces as they poop," she explained. "All canids have them, and many other mammals as well. They use the scent to mark their territory."

"I see..." Suddenly, I heard a fart and saw a black missile shoot across the room. It landed on the sunshiny yellow wall against which I had just been standing. Another missile shot and made contact an inch below the first one. Both began to ooze down the pretty wall. Then the reek of an indescribable odor hit my normally insensitive olfactory system. I gagged.

"Wow, he was really full," Michelle commented casually. I stood with my mouth open. Had those disgusting projectiles really just exited my adorable little pup's behind??? I was torn between embarrassment, uncon-

trollable laughter, and apologies about ruining the wall.

"Don't worry," laughed Michelle. "We paint with gloss, so it'll wipe right off." The second tech scrubbed the wall as Michelle cleaned Brillo's rear end and sprayed a baby-powder scent on his nether-region. We shared a box of Kleenex and dabbed at our watering eyes—it was as though an invisible skunk had cut loose in the room.

Ten years ago, little Brillo came to me as a foster to heal from a broken leg and a broken back. He had kennel cough, long ragged hair with knots tight against his skin. He was emaciated, frightened, but loving. It took three months before his hair grew out enough for me to cut all the mats out. He was

See BRILLO pg 38 ►

RON HEVENER

## HIS MASTER'S SMILE

H

E HAD WON.

He had done his master proud and he had won.

It wasn't that he understood exactly "what" he had done to make everyone so happy. It wasn't as if he had fought off a raging bear or saved a lost child. He hadn't run for help or chased a thief away from those he loved. He hadn't done any of those things. He hadn't done anything but be himself, standing before a crowd of strangers beside the one he loved. And, there it was, his master's hand on his shoulder, his master's voice at his ear, and his master's smile upon him.

It wasn't always like this. In the long-ago mists of Before, when he nudged his mother's breast and scrapped with his brothers and sisters, he was blind to the life that lay ahead of him, and blind to anything but himself. Listening to the night, his mother's breath comforted him in a world of what he could feel, hear, or sense around them. But, from his earliest awakening, he was aware of a presence around him; an intelligence. From as far back as he could think, there seemed to be a mysterious something watching over them, providing an order to things, a mysterious someone who seemed to care.

Day after day it was like this. Day after day, as he dozed in the manner of a newborn, he felt himself touched by something greater than himself, or seemed to be. It wasn't that he knew himself. It wasn't as if he knew he was any different from a rock or a tree or the flowers decorating his life. He only knew that his life was protected by something that could change anything around him.

It was a power that could change the bedding on which he lay. It could bring him food. It could bring water. It could take away his mother, making him wonder if she would ever return. It could fill the air with music all night long and calm him with a reassuring voice. From the time he could first remember, he knew he was important to this powerful someone. He knew it from the moment he felt his master's smile upon him.

As it is with all young dogs, there were ups and downs. There was the time he escaped and followed a yellow butterfly. Yes, it was true he could hear his name being called. It sounded nice, hearing his master shout out his name to the Heavens and fade into the distance. *But, a yellow butterfly!* Now that was something he had to know about. He had to know about all kinds of things in the Early Days. He had to know about powdery wings that fluttered and lifted a butterfly into the air. Did he have wings, too, he wondered? Where were his own wings? Where was he, he suddenly wondered, with a sinking feeling in his belly? Yellow butterflies melted into darkness as he learned the meaning of loneliness... and longing.

A light! The rustling, crunching sound of dry leaves and familiar footsteps! "There you are!" came the words that showed him all things are possible even when all is lost. "I've been looking for you," came the caress of love as they turned for home and he felt his master's smile upon him.

There were other times, many of them, when he tried new things. Some were praised and others were not. But through it all, through the good times and the bad, his spirit flourished and his spirit grew, so did the body in which it dwelled. He grew taller, stronger, and wiser with his master never far away, feeding him, watering him, turning on the radio and filling the night with music.

With his master's help, he grew to understand that collars, leashes and manners were important things to know about. He grew accustomed to riding in a car, accustomed to the slippery floor of a veterinarian's office and the bitter taste of medicine. He grew accustomed to many things to please the one he adored.

There were others like his master. As time went by, he saw many of these gods, for that's what they were to him. He heard them speaking and did not understand their words, he saw their eyebrows rising and falling, he saw the gesture of their hands

and felt their laughter. "Is that thing worth showing?" they asked.

"We'll see," came the answer from the one who mattered to him most. "His mother's great and his sire's a champion."

As spring burned into summer and summer leaves began to fall, they worked together, side by side, early in the morning. They roamed the pasture and fields, just the two of them, a master and his dog, a master and his dog sharing a secret. "You can do it," he was told. *"I know you can."*

After what seemed like endless mornings and endless nights, when it felt as if this would be his lot in life forever, something changed. "We've done enough now, my friend. It's time to show them."

Show them? Show them what? What are we going to show them?

"We're going to show them what you were born to be," came the answer, as he felt his master's smile upon him.

He was frightened that day. Was he good enough? Would he do the right thing or would he let his master down? What was ahead for him, he wondered, as he hopped into the car. Were they going to the vet's office? Please say they weren't going to the vet's office for shots or medicine. But, they weren't going to the vet. This time, they drove past the vet. He breathed a sigh of relief and fell asleep.

It was the sounds that woke him—sounds of barking, air compressors and excited chatter. The smell of sausage, French fries and hundreds of dogs, more dogs than he had ever seen in his life, all luring him to full attention. Where are we, he wondered, pressing his nose against the window. What's happening?

"Come on, fella," his master said, opening the door and snapping on a leash after they came to a stop. "Good boy!"

"Good" is what he always tried to be. Was it his imagination, or was his master standing extra tall today? Was his master brushing him with extra-careful attention? Were people looking at them in a different way than they used to?

"Where'd you get that one?" somebody with a poodle asked.

"Bred him myself," came the answer.

"Yeah? Who's he out of?"

"The best I ever had."

"Wait a minute," came a voice of disbelief. "That can't be the one I saw at your place. That was the scrawniest pup I ever saw!"

Nobody had ever told him he was scrawny. Nobody had ever told him he was any different from a flower or a cloud or a beautiful yellow butterfly. Nobody had ever told him anything, except that he was important and he was loved.

The class was called, the entries filed into the ring. Proudly, he stood as the judge ran her hands through his hair, over his back and down his legs. Down and back they trotted, and around the ring they went. He stood as still as a living statue, though every fiber of his being wanted to jump into his master's arms.

One by one the entries went through their paces. One by one, they went to the end of the line. One by one, they waited for the judge's brave decision.

"Around again, please," she directed. And, sure of herself, she pointed: "One! ... Two! ... Three! ... Four!" as the crowd clapped their approval.

No, it wasn't as if he understood exactly "what" he had done to make everyone so happy. It wasn't as if he had fought off a raging bear or saved a lost child. He hadn't run for help or chased away a thief. He hadn't done any of those things. He hadn't done anything but be himself, standing bravely before a crowd of strangers, standing beside the one he loved. There it was -- his master's hand on his shoulder, his master's voice at his ear, and his master's smile upon him. ■



MARILYN SINGER

## TWO POEMS FROM *EVERY DAY IS A DOG'S DAY: A YEAR IN POEMS*

(DIAL BOOKS, 2012)

### SUMMER VACATION

Hurry, hurry, throw the ball!  
 I've been waiting since the fall  
     to see it flash, to watch it skim,  
     to hear it splash, then plunge  
         and swim,  
     to grab it, bring it back and then—  
         to make you throw it in again!

### HOLE DIGGING DAY

I must dig a hole  
     to look for a mole,  
     to bury a bone,  
     to lie all alone,  
     to—who knows what for?  
 Then until it's a bore,  
     or my paws get too sore,  
 I must dig ten more.

Author of more than 120 books, Marilyn Singer is the two-time winner of the Dog Writers Association of America award for Best Children's Book for *Every Day Is a Dog's Day: A Year in Poems* (Dial, 2013) and *What Is Your Dog Doing?* (Atheneum, 2012).

## From the Editor

► CONTINUED from pg 5

wine and chocolate, I will continue to do my part to keep the retail industry afloat.

An hour later, the truck's owner stopped by and said, "Hey, this was tied to my toolbox." Again, it would be comedic if I wasn't so frustrated. I'd been waiting for the card since last week, but because of the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday, it took an extra three days to be delivered, except it wasn't, really. I immediately called the credit card company to stop the second replacement card, but they cheerfully informed me, it was already in process, and for security reasons they'd already cancelled replacement card number one. I guess I should applaud that.

Anyway, I'm sure the second card will arrive—and in fact I will wait to go out until it does. Because I don't want the dogs to sign for the card and place that order with Chewy.

*Merrie Meyers*

**Merrie Meyers, Ph.D. APR, Fellow PRSA**

Ruff Drafts Editor





## Desperation

► CONTINUED from pg 26

Without such critical thinking skills and the understanding of body language and how they learn (and it ain't from human punishment), dogs can live lives of quiet desperation. Or not so quiet if the punishment doled out creates an aggressive or reactive dog.

We punish our dogs for being dogs. The dogs with whom we share our lives today have been essentially "manufactured" by us. WE made them bark, WE made them scavenge, WE made them resource guard, WE made them reliant on us, and WE don't actually like any of it.

We view training and social interactions as bonuses to be given if and when we have the time. No one places the same importance on those as they do providing food, water and shelter.

In spite of our blunders, our dogs do try so hard to make sense of the life we gave them, and as Henry David Thoreau said, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."

From Psychology Today, an excerpt from Iddo Landau, Ph.D., "The line of thought seems to go more or less like this: the mass of people who lead lives of quiet desperation probably do so because they are afraid to be who they are."

And so our dogs can also be afraid to be who they are and no one should live such a life. Educate yourself! There are plenty of wonderful resources out there. If you aren't sure if a source is valid, please feel free to contact me to show you how to separate the wheat from the chaff. ■

## Intelligence

► CONTINUED from pg 27

was in a cage with an IV attached to his side. I spent about an hour on my knees talking to him through the bars. His sweet eyes focused on me and almost shifted back and forth as if to say, "I'm all right. Please don't worry." The other dogs in the clinic were respectfully silent. That evening, my son and a friend came from college to help unload the truck. We had no food in the house so we stopped to have pizza and then went to the hospital. It was locked. No visits possible with William until morning.

The boys chose sleeping bags to sleep by the fire in the living room. I retired to the bedroom with Jessie, the Dobie. The vet was supposed to call if there was any change that night when he went to check the animals. Nevertheless, even with Jessie at the foot of my bed, I found it very hard to go to sleep. The lights were off, leaving only flickers from the fire reflecting on the walls leading to the living room. Just as I was dozing off, Jessie leaped off the bed. She dashed into the living room and raced from one end to the other waking up the boys and terrifying me. Then, just as sudden, she came back to my room, jumped on the foot of the bed, curled up, and immediately fell fast asleep! Within seconds, the telephone rang. It was the veterinarian. William had just passed away.

When I told the doctor about Jesse's performance, he replied that he had heard of this kind of thing happening before. "You see," he said, "William just passed over to say goodbye."

The autopsy revealed that indeed the white stool had been a warning, though probably too late to do anything. The liver and kidney were practically non-existent. It was amazing he had lasted this long. We suspect he had raided a trash can in our Charlottesville neighborhood and a poison had been part of its contents. This poison had slowly eaten away his insides.

With the boys' help, we dug a grave on the hillside below the house. It was a lovely setting with overhanging trees and flowering bushes all around and a vista of the mountain peaks in the distance.

Although William's body is buried in North Carolina's Blue Ridge, we know his soul has moved on. Perhaps he'll come live with me again, but as another dog.

So, how do we measure intelligence? Empathy, compassion, endurance, and loyalty. With such standards, do you think people can measure up to dogs? ■

## Brillo

► CONTINUED from pg 33

eventually adopted by a remarkable young woman named Missy.

Missy had cystic fibrosis and he was the light of her life. Shortly after Brillo left me for her, she became ill, lapsed into a coma and, after fighting CF for 35 years, she passed away. Her parents told me she wished I would keep Brillo. I did.

Ever since Brillo came back to me, we have repeated his anal gland expressions, albeit with more prepared staff, a wiser owner, and humorous remembrances of our introductory experience with my usually cuddly little rescue dog. After each experience, Brillo dances a funny jig when he's returned to the floor and freed of human confinement.

In Brillo's tenth year we routinely faced our duty one morning. Michelle said, "I feel something in his left gland. Let's get the doctor in here." Prepared to laugh, I found my emotions instantly flipping to concern. I had learned that anal growths are often cancer, aggressive, and life-threatening.

The doctor examined Brillo. "I'd like to try to get a needle biopsy if you can wait." They took my boy to a back room and left me alone to worry. When everyone returned with Brillo the doc said, "I couldn't get it—it's the size of a BB and he's too wiggly. Let's watch this for a week. Come back and we'll see if it's gone or if it grows."

Brillo and I returned. The BB growth remained. The vet suggested a blood test to see if Brillo's calcium level was heightened, which could mean a specific form of cancer. The next day she told me, "Brillo's calcium was normal, and his test results were great. I suggest you have the mass removed."

I called my good friend and self-proclaimed anal area specialist, Dr. Dave. "I recommend we remove this gland ASAP." We discussed the pros and cons of taking out both glands, as preventative surgery as well as eliminating the current threat. Time spun in circles—my happy-go-lucky little clown faced serious surgery! Obviously, Brillo tore around the yard when we got home. The other dogs sniffed and avoided my "sissy-smelling" boy. Was he embarrassed? Like all miniature bullies, he trotted around arrogantly, ignoring their dog-taunts.

Surgery the next morning was intense and delicate. Three hours later Dr. Dave called. He had removed the miniscule mass but took only the one gland because Brillo's body temperature had fallen dangerously low during the surgery. He wanted to bring him out of the anesthesia as quickly as possible. "We have him on a heated waterbed with

hot water bottles all around him so he's stabilizing," Dave said. He explained the biopsy results would take up to ten days, but he had gotten clean margins and the cancer cells appeared to be encapsulated, making spread unlikely. Brillo returned home later in that afternoon.

It was difficult to keep bossy Brillo down during recovery. Brillo wanted to race the big dogs, zoom upstairs, and fly onto furniture, but he wasn't allowed. He did not take kindly to my supervision and his good humor metamorphosed into sneaky rebellion. I blocked stairs, the couch, and put up fences.

The biopsy finally came in and Brillo's tiny tumor was cancer. Early and sensitive human awareness, fast action, and advanced technology saved Brillo's life.

Brillo went on to stardom. He became a "mascot dog" for the shelter, appeared in TV and print advertising, entertained at special events, and could really "work a room" with kids at Critter Camp. Brillo's antics continue, even in his "retirement". Thanks to an astute technician, wise primary vet, and excellent surgeon, I have had five more years of my comedian's companionship. ■



**SOME DAYS YOU ARE THE HYDRANT**  
PHOTO BY BERND GUNTER



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