

RUFFDRAFTS

the DOG WRITERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA

FALL 2024



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Ruff Drafts

Send all material to Merrie Meyers
at: rdeditor@dogwriters.org

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Summer, May 17
Fall, August 16
Winter, November 15

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way.

JOHN C. MAXWELL

I've been involved with dogs for almost seventy years. Showing, breeding, training, grooming, protecting, and writing about them have always been a priority for me.

Now, I wonder what I am doing. I certainly don't feel that I've done enough.

A few years ago, a neighbor's dog grabbed my Chihuahua through our adjoining fence and killed her. I didn't sue that neighbor, nor did I demand that the neighbor's dog be euthanized. Instead, I insisted that my contrite neighbor install stockade fencing in their yard. After that, I felt that my dogs were safe. Not so.



◀
Therese Backowski
and her dogs, Lucy
and Hank

A few days ago, a Pit Bull who resides a street away from me climbed my chain-link fenced and attacked Hank, the Standard Poodle that you've seen pictured with me. Hank is still alive, but gravely injured. It's been tough.

I feel guilty. Because I am a writer, I wonder if I've penned enough to educate the people around me about the nature of dogs. Teaching people about dog care and management is a challenge that isn't necessarily fun. Writing about it can be less entertaining, because it is easier to write articles and books that will readily sell. Cute and heart-warming sells, being a good dog neighbor doesn't always.

Dog obedience classes accomplish much, but those caretakers have chosen to be educated. What can we, as writers, do about all the others?

It is so much easier to write about the joys of canine companionship, or even, heaven forbid, the sorrow of losing our companions. That isn't the total of dog ownership though, and we, as the writer, need to say more, more often.

So, to summarize, I am begging you as fellow authors to write about the responsibilities and methods that are involved in dog care. Please, slip it in, whenever you can. Tell your readers about the mechanics of dog care, so that people understand that being a caregiver involves more than just feeding and snuggling their dogs?

We are the experts, so let's use as much of that knowledge as we can get into words, and lead. Hank and I thank you.

Therese Backowski

Therese Backowski

DWAA President

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Fall 2024

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PEACE & QUIET, COURTESY OF ELIZABETH JOHNSON

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

As Ruff Drafts editor, chief cook and bottle washer, I am keenly aware of the deadlines involved in putting out our quarterly publication. To “walk the walk,” I usually create my column on the same day we send out the call for submissions. But this month was different, for a couple of reasons. My time has been filled up with another volunteer job. I’ve been working on getting the 2024 Writing Competition ready. And here it is!

**Contest entries
are accepted from
September 1, 2024,
until the witching hour
of 9:00 p.m. EST on
October 31, 2024.**

We’ve made some changes to the structure of the contest categories, combining print and online entries, creating more opportunities for young writers and realigning the children’s book categories to meet industry classifications. Because the entire contest is housed on a digital platform, every change leads to a cascading number of changes in programming and links between sections of the site.

Revisions started about a month after the conclusion of the 2023 competition. We surveyed judges and entrants to get feedback on what worked and where improvements should be made. Your input was vital to this process. For those who responded, we thank you. We were also lucky enough to have some of our members raise their electronic hands and offer to help with some of the tasks. Finally, our committee met and kicked around ideas and sent me back to the think pad to figure out how to make it all happen. Many thanks go to our webmaster and graphic designer, **ANGELA CAPODANNO**, who asked pointed questions that were designed to drill down to definitive answers (I can be very

squishy with my ideas) and ultimately, what you see posted online is the result of those efforts.

We hope you enjoy participating in the contest as an entrant, a judge or just a reader of the submissions. If you have a question about your entry or encounter a stumbling block, please reach out to our contest email, 2024dwacontestchair@gmail.com.

Merrie Meyers

Merrie Meyers, Ph.D. APR, Fellow PRSA

Ruff Drafts Editor



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



2024

CONTEST NEWS

MERRIE MEYERS

— 2024 Contest Chair —

DWAA Writing Competition *is* Open September 1, 2024

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN, when writers, illustrators, poets and photographers submit their entries into the Dog Writers Association of America's annual writing contest. Last year's contest had more than 500 judged entries. Entries will be accepted until October 31, 2024. Each entry must be an original work published between September 1, 2023, and August 31, 2024.

When preparing entries for this year's contest, you'll notice that print and online categories have been combined and are listed by content area. In addition to a sponsored special category for young writers, more opportunities for youth entries have been created in the regular categories, including the Articles section (print/online), Graphics (print/online) and Other Media.

Special awards offer cash prizes. There are one or two new opportunities for recognition this year. Check out the listing to see which works best for your content.

Members will receive a \$10 discount on each entry once they log in to the DWAA website to enter. Make sure to log in or the discount won't appear. As in prior years, individual entries must be entered in a regular category before entering contest special awards. All entries must be submitted electronically, either as a link or a digital file. Book authors can also provide an excerpt of their work for display on the Contest website after judging concludes, giving a reader a taste of the complete book.

Detailed information about regular and special award categories is listed on the DWAA's website. If you have problems entering the contest, please contact me at 2024dwacontestchair@gmail.com so that we can help with any kinks.



dogwriters.org



Email Contest Chair

TONI EAMES

My Adora

ADORA JOINED THE FAMILY in October, 2013. She was a Golden Retriever crossed with a yellow Lab, but she was fully coated and looked like a Golden.

Words to describe Adora: Loving, cuddly, always interested, loving contacts, great with other animals, enthusiastic eater, thick coat, heavy shedder, not much of a retriever, no interest in swimming, bones not stuffed toys, head in lap, giving paws, pushy nose.

If I were to design my successor guide dog, Adora would fit the bill. She was very calm and responsive to commands, and above all, she was extremely affectionate. She got along with the resident animals, and Latrell, my late husband Ed's retired guide, was beyond thrilled to have a girl Golden to play with!

My training was in Fresno and the instructor, Jim Power, coincidentally trained my former guide, Escort, 20 years earlier when he was employed at Leader Dogs. Adora was trained at Guide Dogs for the Blind, Keebler and Latrell's Alma Mata. The sidewalks in this beautiful neighborhood are dreadful, broken up by tree roots and providing far from a smooth walking path. Adora had to learn to alert me to these cracks and upturns, and she did a masterful job in the 10 days Jim worked with me.

Jim was a calming force for me, since I am tense and nervous when walking in broken-up areas. I enjoyed working with him and was sad when the ten days of training ended.

No matter how many times a hole is put in my heart, it doesn't get easier to say goodbye to the animals I love. Adora was battling a series of urinary tract infections, but the weekend of June 21-24, 2024, her kidneys were failing and she was basically nonfunctioning. James, Charity, Tommie and Sonia were beyond loving and helpful in carrying Adora outside to pee. We tried to get her interested in food, but she shut down and would barely lick it. As you can imagine, a Retriever not interested in food is a heartbreaker.

On June 24, Dr. Todd Conlan gently euthanized my partner of 10 years. Phyllis and Sonia visited the girl before James, Linda and I arrived for the final goodbyes. Adora was 12 years, eight months old. At age 12, she officially retired from guide work to let Bennett take on the guiding role, but she was still joyous with visitors, and shared her loving affection with them. I will miss her barking at the door to welcome whoever was coming. Those who didn't know her were a bit wary until they saw that wagging tale.

I have dozens of memories of Adora and me. What will be emotionally healing is if you send me your memories or special times you spent with Adora. As I did with Escort, I will put together an album for me to reminisce and linger in the Adora garden. ■

ANNE MARIE DUQUETTE

MEAN DOG'S STORY



D

OGS HAVE ALWAYS LOVED ME. I'm one of those lucky people—a dog magnet. Before I sold my first book, I was a mailman (letter carrier). As “low man” on the union totem pole, I didn't have a regular route, but subbed different routes when others were off. I had to go into strange front fenced yards with large and small dogs to deliver the mail, and usually they didn't bother me, even the houses that were red flagged “DANGEROUS DOG” back at the post office.

Only one dog SERIOUSLY went after me. It was a huge St. Bernard. He charged from out of nowhere, and I ran like the wind and climbed up onto the roof of the owner's car, a little old VW Beetle parked on the street. I balanced there, trapped and terrified, while this dog tried to kill me. I yelled out dog commands, which he ignored, then I just plain yelled!

It was winter with high snowbanks all over, and the owner finally heard me. He ran to the front door buck naked and dripping from the shower, with just a little washcloth held over his privates. He was screaming at his pet from the wide-open doorway and I was screaming at him to call off his dog. He seemed hesitant to leave and go back inside to put on some clothes. As the dog tried to climb up onto the hood to get at me, his owner came out and grabbed the dog's collar. But that New England snow was knee deep and he was in his birthday suit. The dog was so big and the car was so small! I never saw where the St. Bernard came from. There was no warning. I didn't know why he was loose, but I freaked seeing this barking mountain of dog teeth barreling toward me, and I headed for the roof of the car! I precariously balanced myself on a snow-covered, tiny convex

roof with a 30-pound mail bag on my shoulder and prayed.

The weather saved me from that savaging. If the car hadn't been covered with inches of snow, the dog wouldn't have kept slipping every time he tried to jump on the hood. He certainly was tall enough to do the jump. Heck, he was so massive he could have walked on it.. And that old VW Beetle roof was buckling under my feet. Yet it didn't dent and collapse—not that I cared at this point—to throw me off balance. After ten minutes of terror, the dog finally obeyed his owner and went into the house.

I told my supervisor I was “booting” the whole street for the week, as I was handling the vacationing regular mailman's route, and notify everyone who lived there as to why. No one got their mail. Not the owner of the dog or anyone on either side of the whole block. Along with my issued human pepper spray, which I never used on dogs or people. It was the main defense we had for our safety and the union always backed us up. Everyone on the street had to collect their mail in person at the post office during the whole time I was assigned there. I'm sure the irate neighbors had a word with the dog's owner about locking up his dog! The next week the regular mailman came back for normal home mail delivery. I hope he was friends with the St. Bernard, because that beast wanted me for dinner! Just like Cujo or the Hound of the Baskervilles!

You couldn't make up something like this! To this day I smile whenever I think of that skinny, naked, dripping wet man in the doorway, holding this tiny washrag, trying to call off his “vicious” dog who was “simply protecting his territory.”

Yes, I understand. I've had big dogs all my life. But if a dog won't obey, then there's a problem with the owner too. My experience was frightening at the time. It wasn't good for me, the neighborhood or the dog. If I had called animal control, which I was entitled to do but didn't, that man could have lost his dog forever. However, he cared enough about my safety to help in his “birthday suit” in the dead of winter. So, as a dog lover and “owner” myself, I gave him the benefit of the doubt.

Maybe the dog escaped from an accidentally unlatched gate or door? It happens. I don't know. But I do know he paid for his dog's crimes with irate neighbors. They were all informed they weren't getting their mail delivery because of the dog. It was punishment enough. I hope the poor owner didn't get frostbite on any of his—umm—“extremities.” And FYI, the mailman can “boot” the route where a dangerous dog lives for whatever amount of time, they deem safe—even permanently. The moral to this story?

If your beloved dog DOES NOT OBEY A RECALL COMMAND, keep your companion fenced, housed, or leashed. It is for the dog's safety as well as others! (And it won't ruin your love life, either!) ■

WKC

BARBARA E. MAGERA

Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show (WKC) 2024

EXHIBITOR *and* OWNER PERSPECTIVES



In May, at the 148th WKC show, Judge Lee Grogan (Vanistica kennels, Belfast, Ireland) evaluated 27 Cavaliers. His top choices were:

Best of Breed:

GCHG CH Sheeba Ladies Man, owners Karin Ostmann, Idelle Cahn & Danna Robinson-Saathof, breeders Jasmin Becker & Karin Ostmann Best of Opposite Sex: GCHS CH Sorella Here Comes Chloe, owner/breeder Susan Savage Green Select Dog: GCHS CH Bonitos Companeros Orinoco BCAT CGC TKN, owner Christine Meager, breeder Markus Kirschbaum Select Bitch: GCHS CH Onthemark Whoopsie Daisy, owners/breeders Joanne Chan & Paul Mitchell

Awards of Merit:

GCHB CH Chadwick Hot Pursuit at Hudsonview, owners Laura Glynn & Anne Eckersley, breeder C. Anne Eckersley; GCHS CH Forestcreek Just Right, owners Joshua Marshall & Dr. Kevin Cline, breeder Dr. Kevin Cline; GCH CH Promontory Here Comes Hudson, owners Mary Orns & Christine Solomon, breeder Christine Solomon

WKC

WKC



While the results are published and the winners are lauded, I wondered about the insiders' perspective on the judging, so I asked some of the participants for feedback.

Candid comments from the owners/exhibitors include:

KARIN OSTMANN: "It was a lot of fun watching Romeo win WKC and then see him looking beautiful with Tabatha in the group ring."

IDELLE CAHN: "When Judge Lee Grogan pointed to Romeo for BOB, I was so emotional that tears started running down my face. It was a dream come true."

SUSAN SAVAGE GREEN: "I've been to Westminster 3 times with Chloe's father, but an owner handled win on a bitch that I bred and adore was the thrill of a lifetime!"

MARY ORNS: "I was in complete and utter shock. It was truly a dream come true just to be an owner/handler showing on the green carpet amongst a beautiful line up of Cavaliers."

CHRIS MEAGER: "I am so grateful to be part of Team Ori. It was so gratifying to see this lovely boy receive recognition on the world stage."

PAMELA GOGOL: "It was a fabulous event and a joy to share it with my wonderful friends and fellow exhibitors."

FRAN HELLMAN: "I felt an enormous sense of pride and excitement as Nora gave it her all on the lush green carpet."

STEPHANIE HICKEY, DVM: "Being at WKC was a dream of a lifetime! The venue was gorgeous and the other exhibitors very accommodating. It was such an honor to be there!"

KATHI OGLE: "What a dream come true walking the carpets of WKC with many friends in the Cavalier ring. It was truly spell binding."

CAROLYN POWELL: "My Cavalier was the only tricolor there. It was an exhilarating experience complete with feelings of pride and gratitude!"

▲
Team Romeo (left to right) , Owners Idelle Cahn, Danna Robinson-Saathof, Handler Tabatha Bettis, Owner Karin Ostmann



▲
GCHB CH
Kendallcastle
Love Is In the Heir
shown by breeder
owner handler
Kathi Ogle



▼
CH Tassajara Some
Bunny Loves Me,
Breeder/Owner/
Handler Jamie
Seidman

WKC

GAYLE REARDON, DDS: "It's really the 'Oscars' of the dog world and it's really a thrill to be present!"

JAMIE & ELLEN SEIDMAN: "Jamie and I very much appreciated the opportunity to compete at WKC. The judging was well run and very well thought through."

HOLLY YOUNG-MAY: "What an honor it was to show two beautiful, accomplished littermates in a field of quality Cavaliers, with both sexes well represented."

CHARLIE WEIDIG: "As my granddaughter & I wheeled our boy into the stadium, we knew that this was something special. We enjoyed the honor of being a part of WKC."

JUDGE LEE GROGAN: "My Cavalier King Charles Spaniel entry will live in my mind forever, and will always give me goosebumps whenever I think of the powerhouse of quality dogs that filled the ring."

Others who also exhibited in the WKC Cavalier class include:

Brittany Chambers, Karen Chandor & Cheryl Black, Heather Donahue, Pamela Gogol, Barbara Hunt, Marilyn Mayfield, Linda McFarland, Elizabeth O'Brien, Dr. Leslie & Roger Slusher, Dr. Angela Thibodeaux, DVM, Erica & Rachel Venier, Katie Kennedy & Alyssa McLaughlin and Janet York.

To compete against Champions in the Cavalier breed class is an honor. Congratulations to all who participated in the WKC.

The WKC 149th show returns to Madison Square Garden during February 8, 10, and 11, 2025. In the recent past, the Westminster staff successfully organized WKC shows in picturesque but temporary venues. For those of us who attended past WKC shows at the Garden, return of the most grandiose American dog show in the city rekindles the true "magic" of Westminster. Hope to see you in the Big Apple in 2025. "There's only one. Come catch the magic." ■

Barbara E. Magera, MD, PharmD, MMM (Caracaleeb) is a Cavalier fancier, exhibitor, breeder, photographer and writer (Canine Scribbles) who lives and practices medicine in Charleston, SC.

JAMES COLASANTI JR.

Dancing *in the* Rain

A TRUE STORY

ZAK, OR ZACHARY as we called him when he was bad, was dog number 4. Considering that I have had over 53 dogs during my time here, it was often easier to remember them by number, as to when they joined our pack. He was a medium-sized dog, white with brown on his face and long black ears, a possible Basset Hound-Labrador retriever mix. He had been returned to the pound three times, and was scheduled to be put down when they called me. He was basically a good dog, but he often had a bad disposition. My vet recommended a daily dose of Prozac to mellow him out.

He was my dog, always hanging out with me and sleeping on my right side with his head on my chest. It was something the dog I grew up with, Butchy, always did—sleep with her head on my chest. So, because of that, I figured, deep down he was a good old boy. We kept him and maintained peace in our dog family.

We had Zak for 19 years when it was finally time to let him go. But because I found it difficult, I actually waited too long. Since his veins were collapsing, they would have to inject him directly in his heart, and they would not let me stay with him. He was only 1 of 2 dogs that I had not been by their side at the end. The tears would not stop, and I do not remember how I was able to drive home that day.

A few years later, I had a major medical experience—a surprise heart bypass. I had not been sick, had no family history of heart disease, did not smoke, and did not eat a lot of red meat. But I was having a slight pressure problem that went away when I sat down for a few minutes.

My GP did an EKG and said it was basically normal, but because he was not a heart specialist,

he got me an appointment with someone else right away. The heart doctor determined that I had three veins with over 90% blockage. He later told me that he never expected me to leave the hospital alive.

During my surgery, the very next morning it went from a triple bypass to a quintuple. When the surgeon completed his work, he tried to revive me with no luck. I had a reaction to the anesthesia. For thirty minutes they could not bring me back, alternating between the bypass machine and the paddles trying to get my heart beating.

I distinctly remember getting up off the operating table and going out into the hospital hallway where it was raining. Zak (now deceased) and Shep (currently alive) were waiting there for me. Zak jumped up and put his paws on my shoulders and started dancing with me in the falling rain. He said, “You know, you really need to go back. You can’t stay here because you have more dogs to take care of. Thank you for taking care of me, and for giving me a home when no one else would. I’m glad I got to see you even for a little while. I am going to send you back with Shep.”

The cold rain continued spraying on my face. I was dizzy, and I could hear a nurse say, “He’s coming around.”

I still have Zak’s ashes, and he will always have a home with me, especially in my heart. ■

ELIZABETH ANNE JOHNSON

WILBUR *to the* RESCUE



Wilbur came to me in a dream—three vivid lucid dreams, actually—my first dreams in seven months, after a severe head and spinal injury caused by a horse, changed my life.

S

IX DAYS AFTER THE INJURY, I lost Luna, my sweet older water dog, following a long, hard bout with an aggressive mast cell tumor. I was dogless for the first time in 40 years, and if I ever needed a dog to give me courage and a will to heal, it was then.

As soon as I was able, I began searching for a dog on the internet. It was the summer of 2020 and the pandemic was raging across the country. Everyone was working from home and adopting dogs like crazy. As soon as a young dog came up on an adoption site, it was gone. Forlorn, needy, and lonely, I kept trying, while visualizing daily to manifest “my best dog ever”—a tall order, as I have lived with so many amazing ones. I said many prayers asking the Creator to help me out. Turns out, someone was listening...

One night, in my dreams, a mature male yellow lab appeared, saying he would be here soon to help. I told him I was looking for a puppy, but he persisted, dream after dream. As an animal healer, I have a lot of animals visit me in my dreams, some passing through to the Beyond, some just wondering when I’m coming back to see them (their mom usually calls the next day), and some just visiting

to thank me for helping them. This was different—purposeful and aimed right at my heart. This unknown yellow lab was for real, and somehow I knew that.

The morning after the three nights of dreams, I was on the phone consulting for a Texas horse and dog rescue center and jokingly asked if they had a yellow lab puppy. “No,” she said, “but we have six-year-old Wilbur! He’s perfect for you! He’s a mess!”

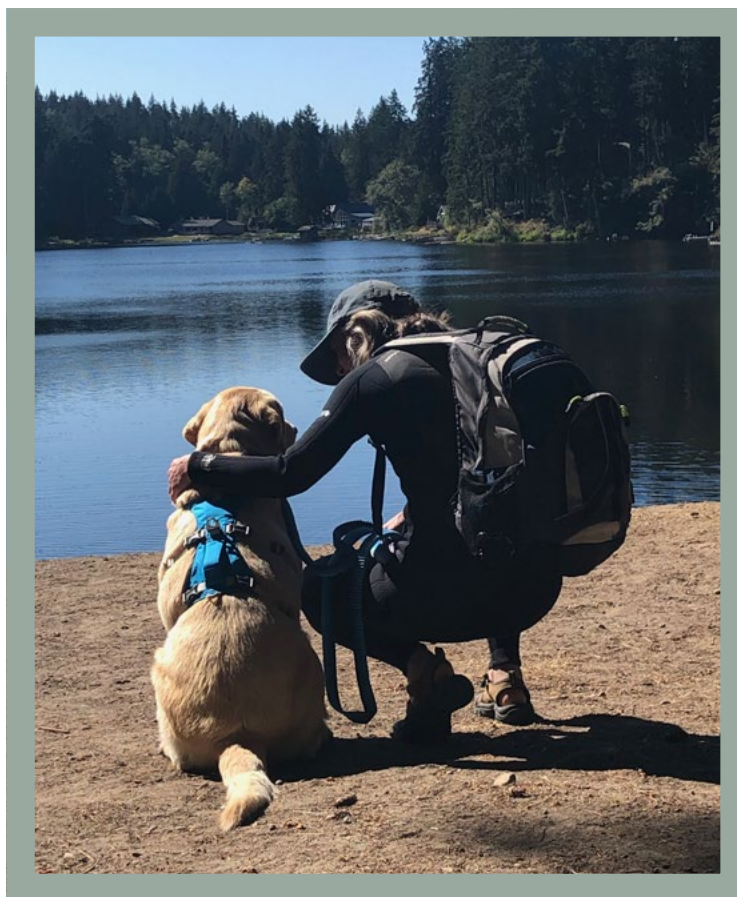
Wilbur, a male yellow lab, was picked up by the rescue organization that same morning, the day he was slated to be euthanized by a kill shelter. He had been dropped off at the shelter by a disheveled, broken man, Wilbur’s former owner, who could no longer care for him. In a hazy flash I suddenly realized this was the dog visiting in my dreams.

Wilbur then made the crazy long trek from Texas to the Pacific Northwest in a Sprinter van, along with 34 rescued chihuahuas. The harried and weary yellow lab from my dreams was here.

Wilbur arrived nearly hairless, starved, very ill, wild-eyed with worry, and almost unmanageable. He had clearly been extracted from a life of

Swim Therapy

Handsome Wilbur
2024



love, fun, and family. He whined, wagged, and cried when he saw a young child or a teenage boy, as if searching for the family he left behind. Yet, under all that chaos was a kind, sweet, loving family dog with a gentle nature, who had been traumatized by the stress of change. Our wounds immediately bonded us, our sorrows, our major life changes, our broken hearts. Considering my injury, physical condition, and emotional state, it was not surprising that a nurturing Earth element dog came to my rescue.

Recognizing him as a Five Element Earth Dog, I found my purpose and partner again, who facilitated healing for both of us. With that purpose, we healed each other. I stabilized routines for him, gave him oodles of praise for the smallest things, let him help me when I needed it, and of course made sure there were plenty of "Earth Dog security snacks" to re-channel his worry and obsessiveness. In return, he gave me pure devotion, laughter, a purpose to move when it was hard, gentle kindness, snuggly protection, and a warm, loving presence that is hard to describe, but I'll try...

When one is wounded deeply in body, mind, heart, and spirit, having a kindred and knowing

furry being watch over you, protect you, hold your tears, wag when you need it most, and just be there when you need someone, is a profound gift. Wilbur is brave, strong, and gentle, and carries that presence with grace, ease, and a little chubbiness... just like an Earth element should.

Earth Element Dogs are the quintessential caregiver, nurturer, and foodie. They, like the Earth, are solid and always here for us. Sometimes we just have to ask, keep our feet on the ground and click our heels together. They come into our life like a gentle breeze on a hot day, a rainbow when you need a smile. They live and breathe comfort, and are as good at giving it as they are finding it. Feed them comfort treats and give them snuggles and they will love you forever.

Wilbur is sitting next to me as I write this, a warm sweet presence leaning against my leg with his head on the edge of the laptop pillow. We are feeling our deep connection, remembering our challenges, and embracing our many moments together. A dream can be a reality, a second chance at life, a gift... and a tiny tear of gratitude, precious. ■

HAZEL CHRISTIANSEN

MAKE *a* JOYFUL SOUND

I

KNOW FIRST HAND that depression can be deadly and realized I was in trouble. Being aware and being able to address it aren't the same thing. I'd lost four family members in three years, and then my husband's therapy dog died. I retreated to the bedroom, shrouded myself in blankets and hoped the world would just go away. Sleep became an escape.

The ringing phone jarred me awake from a daze. After the conversation, I sat on the bed to scroll through photos posted by my friends. A video of a frolicking Papillon pup made me smile. I'd wanted this breed for years and was smitten. The breeder was outstanding, but that pup wasn't for sale. It felt like another crushing blow.

It was on the first anniversary of my daughter's breast cancer death that I learned the dog I'd wanted was available after all. I named her "Joy" because there was hope she could help me put some joy back into my life.

This dog filled a void, gave me reason to get out of bed, go for walks, and learn to play again. After two years, I wanted someone else to receive the same enrichment Joy provided to me, so I bred a litter. My cousin Betty wanted a pup, but when they were ready, her daughter was killed instantly by a drunk driver who rammed the car and drove it into a tree. The timing wasn't right.

A year passed. Betty called three times on the same day. She struggled to speak.

"I've been on a crying jag again. It's the anniversary of Linda's death and I'm alone now. Do you still have a dog to place?"

"No, I placed her. I'm so sorry."

"Well, I called you because you've been into dogs for so long. Will you help me find an adult dog? I'm ready now and need one so much."

"I'll check for you, okay? I promise."

"Well, maybe bring Joy for a visit. Will you?"

"I planned to come see you anyway. Yes, I can do that. We'll see you later today."

After that conversation, I called the local rescue organizations and checked the shelter to see what dogs were available. However, my search for a suitable dog on such short notice was unsuccessful.

Afterward, a freshly groomed Joy snuggled into her carrier for the journey to Betty's. It was normal for Joy to fuss a bit on a trip, but today she was quiet for the entire drive.

At our destination, Betty answered the door, still in her nightgown at three in the afternoon, her hair undone, and her face lined and nearly colorless, except for swollen red eyes. She led me to the dining room and offered to make tea. We chatted while we waited for the whistle of the kettle.

I sat in one of the carved chairs with my dog on my lap. In minutes, the cups rattled against the hardwood table. The scent of peppermint escaped from the kettle. Betty stopped to stroke Joy's head and coo to her in soft tones. I took a sip of tea. Joy looked up at me and wiggled as if asking permission to get down. Then she leaped from my lap, trotted around the table, and placed her paws on Betty's knees, and waited to be picked up. Invitation accepted. Joy folded herself into a willing place and curled up there, as if she planned to be a permanent fixture.

After conversation and tea, I stood up to leave.

"Do you think I could just keep her for tonight"? Betty's voice quivered.

The word "No" disappeared from my vocabulary.

"But she'll need food," I said, buying time for a better response or plausible excuse.

"I'll pay for it."

"No. I'll get it. I know the brand she eats and it shouldn't take long."

I closed the door, took a deep breath and said a silent prayer. I hadn't been fully prepared. Betty's mental condition concerned me.

The first store didn't carry the right brand and at the next, they were out of stock. By the time I got the food and returned to Betty's, Joy was following her new found friend around the house and looked up each time they stopped. Betty, now fully dressed, had fixed her hair and it was as if a magic eraser had removed the wrinkles from her face. My little miracle worker had cast her spell again.

"I haven't stopped smiling since you left. She stays right beside me. Look, I put a footstool by the bed so she can get up when she wants."

"She'll like that, I bet. Let's see if she's hungry." Never to turn down a meal, Joy sauntered over to the bowl and began to crunch. When I returned the next day, Joy was still playing Velcro dog with Betty.

"We could co-own her, how about that? I'll buy her from you. Even her bark, which irritates you, works for me because my eyesight isn't good. She tells me if someone's at the door. It'll break my heart to see her go. She's just perfect!"

"She's not for sale." It seemed like the lump in my throat got bigger. I brushed my sleeve over my eyes and turned my head. I struggled and rationalized. I still had dogs at home. What should I say or do and why wasn't I more prepared?

"Okay, but do you promise that she'll be returned to me should anything happen to you?"

"Oh, yes. I promise! You know I'll take good care of her. How much do I owe you?"

"You're not buying her. She's my gift to you

as she was God's gift to me." The words escaped without conscious thought."

Joy changed two lives who shared tragic loss by listening without comment and giving a warm touch on a cold night. She's serving her greater purpose, seemingly born to fulfill. Few of the human species are so adequately prepared. I miss her still. ■

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I haven't stopped smiling since you left. She stays right beside me. Look, I put a footstool by the bed so she can get up when she wants.

MEMBER NEWS



ANNE MARIE FARAGE-SMITH

New DWAA member, Anne Marie Farage-Smith, recently released her debut book, *Healing Wisdom for Pet Loss: An Animal Lover's Guide to Grief*.

She is a lifelong animal lover, an advocate for all animals, and volunteers for a local pet welfare organization. She holds a Master of Science degree in mental health counseling from St. John Fisher University and a Master of Science degree in education from Nazareth University. Anne Marie is a Pet Loss Grief Counseling Trained Professional and a Certified Grief Educator. As a licensed mental health counselor and educator in private practice in Rochester, she has offered clinical guidance to many individuals and groups, including grief and loss concerns. She is the founder of the **Rochester Center for Pet Grief and Loss**, offering individual and group support for those experiencing the loss of a beloved pet. She currently resides in Rochester, NY, where she enjoys spending time with her family, visiting local park trails with her dog, Jazzy, traveling, and pursuing creative activities. You can learn more about her work by visiting <https://farage-smith.com>.



farage-smith.com



MELISSA VIERA

Melissa Viera opened her business MJ's Pet Training Academy, LLC in 2013 at the age of 23. Since then, she has worked with thousands of dogs and people through group classes, private training and day school training. Melissa often incorporates elements of trick training into everyday skills, calling this combination trickovation. In addition to operating her business, Melissa is the host of "The Pet Care Report," a podcast by Pet Summits. In her free time, she enjoys taking her dogs on adventures and writing about dogs and training.



mjspettrainingacademy.com

IN MEMORIAM

Remembering Deborah Wood

The DWAA mourns the loss of one of our Hall of Fame members, Deborah Wood, who passed away on July 11, 2024 after a long illness. Deborah Wood's career was a testament to the power of a writer to create, shape, and change a community. She was an excellent interviewer, and the articles she developed from those interviews won numerous Maxwell Medallions and special awards. For many years she was an informative and entertaining pet columnist for The Oregonian newspaper. Her column created a base of knowledge throughout the Portland area, which reinforced the value of a compassionate, rewarding relationship with animals.

Deborah's 11 books, and a cat training book, spread this message nationwide. She became manager of Animal Services for the second-largest county in Oregon. Her communications skills were instrumental in reducing euthanasia in the Portland area, making it one of the safest places in America for a homeless pet. Deborah's writing always shined with the profound sense of joy she felt about the extraordinary bond between humans and the dogs at our sides.



ELECTIONS UPDATE

It's that time again, when we ask you, the members to elect new leaders. The nominating process is being led by DWAA Board Member, Pat Cruz. If you are interested in serving the membership (positions are listed in the front of the newsletter), we want to hear from you. Please send a brief description of your current role in the organization and/or other organizations in which you have held leadership positions, your years of membership in DWAA, and your best contact information to lacruz928@optonline.net. Please title the email Nominating Committee. We want to hear from you on or before October 1, 2024.

PATTI ANDERSON

LIONS, TIGERS & BEARS, *Oh My!*

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TENACIOUS LITTLE terrier was the canine hero in the movie “The Wizard of Oz”. With his behaviors of fight, flight, or freeze, he faced down every nemesis with a lot of fearless spunk!

Charlie, a four-year-old Siberian Husky, started a new canine category for dealing with stressful situations. He ingested everything and anything as his “go to” strategy.

A classic black and white furry husky with crystal blue eyes, Charlie was rehomed to me due to his pet parents having their first baby (there is some irony here).

It was love at first sight for me and our resident husky too. Up until now, Charlie lived on five acres, running free each day, and kenneled at night. He had never been inside a house and only ridden in a car to a vet appointment once a year. I was confident that merging this dog into our household would be a “tiptoe through the poppy fields,” so to speak.

Fast forward six months. Charlie perceived his world as having “lions, tigers and bears” hiding behind every new bush, oh my! He

◀
Ballad, aka Toto,
Patti and Charlie



had landed in an alternate universe, experiencing many environmental triggers.

Charlie loved people, excelled in obedience classes, responded well to other dogs, and on the surface seemed very well adjusted to his new life. However, after many months of interventions, he would still ingest anything, from a patio umbrella to the skirt on our sofa. We almost invited the ER vet over for Thanksgiving dinner that year!

The dog folks reading this article might now be thinking of offering a litany of advice covering the “woulda, shoulda, couldas” that might have helped. Trust me. There was a long intervention list checked off for Charlie’s issues that we tried and applied.

It was when Charlie swallowed half of the webbing and many metal rings from an old sled dog racing harness, high up on a hook OUTSIDE his kennel—and survived—that I knew the clock was ticking for him. Cat like, Charlie must have reached through the door and pawed it down. Why would he do that?

I hugged Charlie tight in the lobby of the ER, sobbing and mumbling into his fuzzy neck that I didn’t know how to help him anymore. Maybe our boy was really a reincarnated cat with nine lives? If so, he was testing his fate, and I was in deep despair. We weren’t in Kansas anymore, that was for sure.

This story continues the next day, when I was at the local Starbucks, sipping a foamy cup of coffee with a friend. A flier posted on the community board near us heralded a two-day Tellington TTouch® workshop focusing on positive and effective ways to support anxious dogs.

As I was jotting down the info to register for the workshop, the door opened with a whoosh, causing the flier to flutter a little. It was like a magic wand had just passed over it, pointing the way to a road less traveled.

Charlie’s indomitable spirit shone through during the TTouch workshop we attended. For many months after that, we explored the theory and techniques we learned, deepening the bond between us.

TTouch has been applied to many species, including equines, zoo animals, wild cat sanctuaries; even “Keiko” the Orca whale who starred in the

movie “Free Willy.” At the heart of this work are specific circular touches that impact the nervous system. If this method worked on a whale, the hope was that it might help a husky too.

Some of you may remember those widely used older holiday lights with individual bulbs. When one of the bulbs burned out, the entire string of lights shut down. When that bulb was replaced, they all lit up again. With a lot of patience, I embraced the TTouch® mantra of “moments not minutes,” observing subtle changes with the methods I applied to Charlie over time.

I persevered with these unique touches until one day the string of lights all connected within him, and he just lit up! I like to say that from that point on Charlie was “sofa free” for the rest of his life, never ingesting anything taboo again.

If Charlie could talk, he would now enthusiastically declare that:

“There is no place like home (or being rehomed)!” ■

ROBERT RONNING

DOG BENEATH *the* HAIR

When introduced to a 10-pound Chihuahua mix that Saving Animals from Euthanasia (SAFE) rescue group was offering for adoption, we could hardly see his face. He needed grooming so badly he appeared to be hiding his personality behind that coat of long black and white hair. The white trim extended down his chest and front legs, with a flair of white circling his neck. He proved a lively little fella with breezy tufts of top hair, a white muzzle, and big dark eyes.



H, THAT FACE AND THOSE BIG EYES! Think Yoda... the shaggy years. How could we resist?

He arrived at the rescue with no name. When my wife, Kathy, named him Henry, he answered to his new name at once. For dogs, the name itself is not so important—it's the love and affection they hear in your voice that they respond to.

Henry's vet figured he was about five, but his history was nonexistent, though we could see he'd been trained in the basics. He stood on your left side when taking walks. And while kennel trained, when we put him in the back-seat kennel for car trips, he often tried to jump into the front seat. In his past life we suspect he might have been the copilot from the driver's lap.

Henry has proven an adorable, perfect package. Well, less than perfect in those first days. The poor little guy needed grooming just to see his true self. Grooming was easy, as the before and after pictures show. But his breath was quite foul and required another visit to the vet and the removal of seventeen tiny decaying teeth, after which he had the sweet breath of a baby.

Kathy was delighted to discover Henry is a total lap dog. When this Velcro fellow isn't on her lap or sharing her easy chair, he jumps up and down on spindly legs, begging to be picked up. When no one else is willing, I often cart him around in one arm like a loaf of bread.

We canine lovers know how our dogs thrive on routine: meals, walks, and playtimes come at regular intervals. Like dog parents in bedrooms all around the country, Henry insists on sleeping with us, same as our previous dog, Jake.

There's his own little bed between us, at our feet. But for Henry, sharing the bed means as soon as the light goes out, he quietly snuggles right up against Kathy for the whole night. Hogger Henry has resulted in Kathy sliding right out of the bed a few times. We're still working on his not-so-cute snuggles.

I still wonder about Henry's past life. When we had him microchipped, the vet found a second chip but it was blank. He couldn't be traced back to a past owner. Not that we would ever consider giving him up after being a member of our family for years.



▲
Henry before grooming



▶
Henry after grooming

Early on, Kathy sent off a saliva sample for Henry's DNA test. It turns out he's over a third Chihuahua, plus a mix of Shih Tzu, Maltese, and Poodle.

I'm thankful to know his pedigree, but I wish for some real backstory. After all, he spent his early-to-middle years with another family. Why would such an adorable, well-trained, lovable dog ever be given up? For whatever reason, I can't help thinking it was a sad situation: his owner died or went into assisted living (no pets allowed). Or, in some ways worse, a job change and Henry couldn't come along. I try not to fixate on heartbreaking scenarios that are painful to contemplate.

As determined as we are to share joy with Henry in his new home, life continues to be filled with surprises and misfortunes. As I write, Kathy is recovering from a hip break. Henry and I are ever-vigilant that she does not fall again. For Henry's part, he seems to have adapted his exuberant habits. Though he won't let her out of his sight for long, he has a talent for staying clear when she's on the move. Yet he keeps close company with her 24 hours a day, as if he's a trained comfort canine. I suspect it's no sacrifice for Henry since he's always happy to nap away the day with his pack leader, no matter where she is in the house.

In a recent walk with Henry through our neighborhood, I mulled over scenarios about his past life. His condition indicates he could have faced some risks and dangers to survive on his own before the rescue group got him for adoption.

As we follow our regular morning route, I feel confident he could find his way home on his own. But there are many distractions for a curious dog. Henry has shown he will beg to be picked up in the arms of total strangers! Our neighbors are always telling him how adorable he is, with that wisp of white hair at his crown.

Assuming good fortune, would he arrive at our front door and bark to be let in? Henry isn't much of a barker, except when he's on his perch atop the loveseat and he spots a dog walker passing by.

How long would he wait at the front door until he barked for me to open the door . . . and there he is, waiting to be let in to his forever home.

SUSAN BULANDA

My Pal



THERE ARE MANY WAYS a dog can provide comfort; sometimes it's just by being there. I owe so much to all the dogs in my life who helped me through the trials that I faced, the many times I buried my face in the fluffy coat of my dog and cried my eyes out. Even though I cannot recall what upset me so much, I still remember holding my dog close.

I grew up with a significant hearing impairment, which got worse with age. Because of that I did not have many friends, but I had my dogs. The dog that helped me the most through Junior High and High School was Pal. He was a German Shepherd Collie cross that helped me learn how to be a dog trainer. I taught Pal everything I could dream up. He jumped through fire hoops (a wire mesh with a thin coating of sterno) and paper covered hoops. He climbed up a specially made ladder that had steps on both sides and sang on cue to "How Much Is That Doggie in The Window." He also jumped over high and broad jumps, plus a host of other tricks.

Being hearing impaired, I was very shy, but Pal forced me to get on stage in front of the whole school for the ninth-grade talent show. He had won the trick dog category in the local kid's dog shows for a couple of years, and my teachers and some of the students knew about him. Having an article about him in the local newspaper also spread the word. Therefore, when they were looking for acts for the talent show, I was talked into performing with Pal.

His act was to jump through a paper hoop, climb his special ladder and sing "How Much is

That Doggie in The Window," in that order. Other than being terrified of being on stage, I knew Pal could pull it off with no problem. I did not give him credit for deciding to turn our act into something I never imagined.

We had a few rehearsals before the big show and Pal performed flawlessly. I had instructed the student who was playing the piano to stop at the part where the dog barked and not to continue playing until he heard two barks. After all, that is how the song went. Pal was trained with spoken commands except for the singing part. I had taught him to bark when I raised my little finger and stop when I lowered it. I wanted it to look as if he knew the song himself.

The night of the talent show, I was almost frozen with fright. Finally, it was my time to go on stage. All my props were set up. I told Pal to 'sit-stay' at one end of the stage and then walked to the other end and held up the paper covered hoop. "Through the hoop," I commanded. Pal got up and ran top speed across the stage and darted under the hoop! The audience burst out laughing, I died a thousand deaths. What could I do? I looked at Pal and told him, "Go back and do it again," and yes, that is exactly what I said. Pal walked back to the end of the stage and stood there. Then I commanded him again, "Through the hoop." This time he sauntered across the stage, looking directly at the audience, walked up to the hoop, stood for a moment and then jumped through it. The audience roared and clapped.

RICHARD KROYER

Everyone Has *a* Story



EVERYONE HAS a story. Sometimes, the story has to do with a meteoric rise to fame, or maybe the story is a plummeting fall from grace. I've been examining my own story, and while it seems to have a little of that meteor and a bit of the plummet, it is primarily a story of being guided over those hills and valleys. Over the years, my journey has had many ups and downs, and looking back now, I wonder how I'm even here to write a single word, let alone live out the rest of my years. My only answer is that some healing force has guided me.

I don't wish to make my tale into something mystical or magical, and I don't know about you, but I've always shunned the magical because the answers were summed up with some sort of mumbo-jumbo that you basically just had to take for granted. Stories of Shamans affecting change

▲
Guru stares at me
quietly willing me
to epiphany

in this world simply by traveling into the dream-world or some other being having the supernatural power to guide others just seemed like some ruse to me. Heck, for the first forty years of my life, I knew spirit guides couldn't possibly exist. I explained to myself and others that I alone had affected the changes in my life and hadn't been assisted or guided to any conclusions. I'm still not sure how magic happens, but I know it does, and following the trail back to the one constant in my life, I found that magic and my guide.

For many, the guide comes in the shape of an angel on gossamer wings, dressed in a billowing sheet, but for me, it always came smelling like a dog. Over the years, I've had the privilege to be the caretaker of many dogs.

Perhaps dogs do have unconditional love, unwavering loyalty and are compassionate, but what's more important, and I see clearly now, they've guided me to witness those things existing in me. Before my dog, I simply saw love, loyalty and intuition as existing out-there. I can't imagine it could do people any good to simply observe these skills in others, but now I say maybe it does.

I know a lot of people have a picture of the Dalai Lama and I think that's awesome. Keeping a picture of someone who inspires you and guides you is great, but I wonder if they wouldn't be guided more often if these people had the Dalai Lama as a roommate, constantly pointing out opportunities to be compassionate or do unconditional love. Now I'm not saying my dog is the



SUSAN HARTZLER

Love *is* a Dog

A

S THE YOUNGEST OF THREE, I often felt overshadowed by my older siblings. Sometimes, Mom's praise seemed reserved for them. It felt like I was constantly trying to measure up to their achievements, wondering if I could ever earn the same level of love and admiration.

My one constant source of solace was Siesta, a funny-looking chihuahua-terrier mix. That small, gray, wire-haired dog sported a white tip on her tail, giving the impression that she'd dipped it into a paint bucket. Her tiny feet, with matching white "socks," had an unmistakable scent of corn chips. Every summer, Siesta suffered from severe allergies, scratching her back until it was raw and bloody. I didn't care. To me, she was the most beautiful creature in the world. And she loved me unconditionally.

Thank God that dog was around as I entered my teenage years. That's when my life in our mid-



The Author as a
Young Girl

dle class family spiraled out of control. While my sister and brother seemed to glide through puberty, I became the embodiment of teenage rebellion. Mom's constant comparisons didn't help. She proudly recounted their achievements to anyone who'd listen while sharing her expectations for my life—to "marry well."

One of the things that drove Mom crazy back then was my constant mood swings, especially when I cried. As a result, I learned to hide my emotions from her. Instead, I turned to Siesta for comfort, never Mom.

As an adult, I made it my mission to mend our relationship, and in response, Mom gifted me a rescue puppy—a gesture that felt like a giant step toward reconciliation. Ironically, Baldwin, a Puli mix with soft, black curls and a big personality, had the same brown eyes as Mom. He also sensed when I was upset and seemed just as averse as Mom to see me cry. When he spotted a single tear, the Muppet-looking dog would lick my face as if trying to chase away my sadness.

My renewed love for Mom took me back to my childhood when we bonded over her collection of old family photos. Siesta would curl up beside me as I sifted through Mom's bottom dresser drawer, pulling out pictures of relatives I'd never met. Among them were images of her and her brothers, my grandparents, and other ancestors from a bygone era.

"Who's this?" I asked, holding up a vintage black and white portrait of a couple, their faces captured on thick, sepia-toned paper from the late 1800s.

Mom smiled, her eyes softening. "That's my grandmother Sadie and my grandpa Robert, your great-grandparents. You remind me so much of Sadie. She managed the family farm in Quebec. There wasn't much she couldn't handle, just like you."

Shortly after Mom died, I was drawn to that drawer. I couldn't wait to see all the old familiar faces immortalized in photos, especially Mom's.

I sat cross-legged, just like I used to as a child, and opened the drawer to the past. Baldwin nestled beside me, mirroring the way Siesta used to curl up by my side.

I expected to see the old family photos, but they weren't there. The first thing I picked up was a plain white envelope with Mom's perfect handwriting spelling out my name, the capital S so elegantly curved that it looked like a work of art.

"Susan's first tooth," I read aloud, peeking inside to find a tiny white baby tooth.

"Look at this!" I held it for Baldwin to see. After giving it a good sniff, he sighed contentedly, rolling over for a belly rub. While scratching his tummy with one hand, I uncovered another envelope and held it with the other. Again, in her impressive cursive, the envelope was labeled "Susan's first haircut." A lock of my white-blond hair tied with a pink ribbon had been carefully placed inside. "I had no idea she saved all this stuff."

I pulled out my baby announcement and remembered how Mom told me that when I was an infant, she taped bows to my bald head so everyone would know I was a girl.

I found a picture of myself on grad night in 1976. My Farrah Fawcett hairstyle and white bell-bottom pantsuit epitomized the style of the era. A snug plaid cotton blouse completed the look. I remembered that Mom took me shopping for that outfit.

Baldwin yawned and stretched, then rolled over to snuggle even closer to me.

I fanned a stack of report cards—all mine—found pictures of me as a toddler, pictures of me in grade school, high school, and college. I uncovered announcements sent to Mom when I made the dean's list in junior high and again in college.

"It's me," I said, trembling as tears began to well up. "It's all me," my heart raced. "She knew I'd come here."

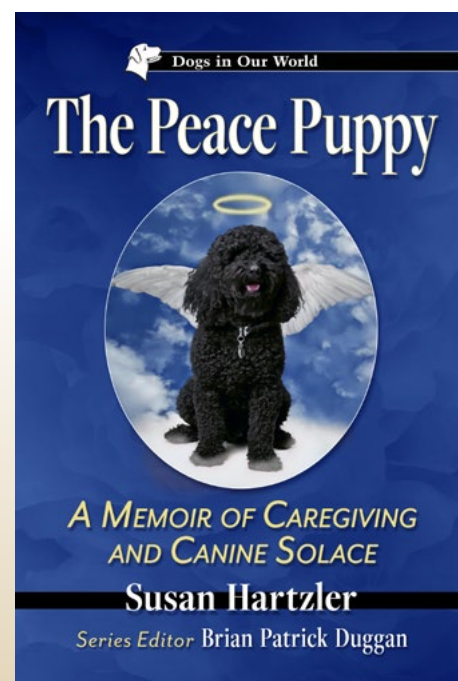
At that moment, all the painful memories of the tension between me and Mom faded away. The resentments I'd carried for so long disappeared. Right before me sat the proof of Mom's true feelings for her youngest daughter. She loved me.

I imagined Mom reaching out to do something I'd wanted from her for my entire life. She cradled me in her arms, rocked me back and forth, and let me cry. I saw myself as a child, sitting at her side, my arms wrapped around her leg, my head in her lap. She stroked my hair and whispered in my ear like mothers do.

"There, there, baby girl; I love you no matter what."

For the first time in his puppy life, Baldwin didn't try to lick away my tears. Instead, he allowed them to fall onto his soft curls. When he looked up at me with those brown eyes, I thanked Mom for leaving me this bundle of unconditional love—a living reminder of her eternal love. ■

This story is adapted from a chapter of the author's debut memoir, *I'm Not Single, I Have a Dog: Dating Tales From the Bark Side*. Her second book, *The Peace Puppy: A Memoir of Caregiving and Canine Solace*, was released by McFarland in August. The book chronicles the three intense years she spent caring for her father—an experience that profoundly shaped her life. Hartzler writes, "During this challenging time, my steadfast companion, Baldwin, a loyal dog gifted to me by my late mother, was a constant source of support. His unwavering presence provided solace, emotional stability, and strength amidst familial discord. Baldwin's enduring companionship embodies the comforting gift that resonates deeply with dog lovers everywhere."



SUSAN LUCK

A Very, Very Good Dog

It was Thursday, a warm summer night. My black lab mix, Louie, had just qualified as a certified therapy dog, and it was our first solo assignment.



WE SAT in the front parlor of the Ronald McDonald house—me in a chair and Louie on his mat on the floor. Three young boys played around him, rolling LEGO cars between his front paws and beside him. Louie lay

there, head on paws, watching them.

The oldest of the three was about nine. He was stretched near Louie, propped up on an elbow. Tentatively, he touched Louie's paw. "Does this dog bite?"

Surprised, I said, "I wouldn't bring him here if he did."

"Black dogs in my neighborhood bite," he said flatly. Then he turned to the other boys. "Martin! Show her your back!"

The youngest boy raised his shirt. To my horror, I saw deep scars that indeed looked like they came from a dog bite. He put his shirt back down and continued to play. Louie lay there, watching them.

But the older boy was watching me, not Louie. He needs reassurance, I thought. Our training had focused on the dog, so I focused on the dog. I told the boy Louie was our family dog who was used to going everywhere with my kids. But now that they had grown up, he needed other

children around him. That's why he'd become a therapy dog.

The boy nodded his head slowly. He reached out slowly and touched Louie's paw again. Louie raised his head and looked at the boy, then lay back down. The boy looked back at me. "I can tell he's a good dog."

When Louie and I trained to take the therapy dog qualifying exam, I asked our trainer, "How will I know what to do in each situation?" He assured me that my worries were unfounded. "The dog will know what to do," he said. "You're just the other end of the leash."

Throughout that summer, I learned that while, yes, I was the other end of the leash, I, too, had a job to do. I learned to ask children or their parents if they had dogs at home. I asked them what their favorite subject in school was. I was not allowed to ask anything about their illnesses or families, so I would talk about a little girl's hair bow, which superhero a little boy liked best. As I did, they would move closer to Louie, gradually petting him and delighting in his warm friendliness.

Mostly, however, I just listened. Because our trainer was right: the dog knew what to do. And what he did was different for every person.

For the woman who had driven 12 straight hours to get there and whose car broke down just

as she pulled into the House's parking lot, he knew to put his whole head and shoulders in her lap as she sat cross legged on the floor in front of me. He snuggled deep into her. She told me about her life and how she followed the best surgeon her son could have to this hospital. Her hands opened and closed around Louie's front paws as he pushed more of himself next to her. By the time someone from the House came to tell her they found a mechanic to fix her car at no cost, nearly all 80 pounds of Louie was in her lap.

When one particular little girl would come into the parlor, he knew to roll over on his side. Every week she would run in, lie down behind him and pull him full length into her body. She never said a word, just held him tight and then, when something in her relaxed, she would run upstairs. The only time she spoke to me was the very last night I saw her. When she got up, she turned to me and said, "I'm going home tomorrow." Whatever was going on with her, holding Louie helped, and she knew it.

Louie would roll on his back and wiggle and act silly if he thought the people needed it or sit up as if he were competing at a dog show. He, the dog who would never let his family take a picture of him, posed for photos and hammed it up in many situations. He knew when to put his head in somebody's lap or lean into them. Often, he would just lie down and let them pet him.

The boy from our first night was there most of the summer. Each week he became more confident, kneeling next to Louie and stroking his back. He'd tell me about going with his mom to help learn how to change his baby sister's feeding tubes and diapers. He told me about someone taking him and his brothers to our local amusement park, something he had never been to before. One day when he lay down next to Louie, Louie sat up and licked his face. Instead of being scared, the boy laughed and petted Louie's head.

In early September, Louie and I were once again in the front parlor. It was a quiet night. Then the boy walked into the room. Behind him, I could see his mother and younger brother, waiting with suitcases.

"I wanted to say bye," he said. "We're going home." He looked me in the eye. "I'm the man of the family now."

With that, he bent down and hugged Louie. Then he stood back up and said, "He really is a very, very good dog."

Louie died last August at age 15. He retired from therapy work on the previous New Year's Eve; his body was just becoming too increasingly frail. Today I have Amos, a two-year-old mixed breed, in training to become a therapy dog. Being at the other end of the leash is one of the most worthwhile things I've ever done.

Louie really was a very, very good dog. ■



TIPS & TACTICS

MERRIE MEYERS

Developing Positive and Profitable Relationships *with* Editors

I RECENTLY READ a humorous article in Writer's Digest about how freelancers managed to mess up relationships with editors to the point that they lost chances for future assignments. Call it a gig economy or a sign of the times, but many—maybe most—publications, digital and print, rely on outside writers and visual artists for content. It's cheaper than hiring full-timers and paying those hefty health insurance premiums.

Some of the major faux pas included in the article:

- **Surprise!** Not telling an editor when the story went in another direction before turning it in. Editors have a certain balance they want in the publication and they have holes to fill. They are depending on the freelancer to deliver the agreed upon piece. A writer who decides that X is better than Y but hasn't shared that will likely not get future assignments and maybe not even see this effort in print either. If the story takes an unexpected turn or requires more research/digging than originally discussed, one editor said that, if informed, she'd try to bump up the writer's fee.
- **I changed my mind.** Sending a pitch, getting the assignment and then withdrawing it because another publication would pay more. Even if you are losing out on a major payday, sticking to a commitment is critical for being remembered fondly.

- **Sloppy work.** Missing deadlines, ignoring word counts, not spell checking, not fact checking or assuming the publication has someone to do that, and hounding editors for a response to your pitch were all cited in this article as big no-nos.

So, now that we know what doesn't work, what can freelancers do to capture an editor's heart and build their bank account?

- **Relationship building.** When asked for the secrets to their success, one freelancer said developing a relationship with the editor and the publication instead of just moving from one pitch, story and publication to the next. Developing an understanding of one publication's style and contracting process can be less time consuming than finding a lot of one-off assignments. Editors move across publications and industry sectors. It's common for an editor to rely on freelancers they've worked with in the past.
- **Staying in touch with past clients.** Update editors you've worked with in the past and let them know, in brief, what you've been up to. Include links so they can see the variety of work you've produced. Greeting cards wishing them well can also serve as a reminder.
- **Ask for work.** Let folks know that you've got room for them. If you don't ask, you don't always get.

- **Learning the editorial calendar.** Knowing what the publication will want and when helps you do some preliminary research to get that pitch ready and delivered. Becoming familiar with the publication's approval process is critical to setting expectations and success.
- **Developing trust.** Delivering good content, on time, will go a long way toward building an editor's trust in your ability to produce good work when they need it.
- **Networking with your success stories.** Ask editors you work with already to refer you to those you'd like to get to know.

Finally, you are your own best advertiser. Create a digital presence. A website serves as a reference point 24/7. List the logos of the publications you've worked with and some of your most important qualities. Answer the question; Why should they work with you? Do you have subject matter expertise? Let them know. What are other strong qualities are you known for?



LESLIE BROWN

— Assistant Editor, Ruff Drafts —

What Does *an* Editor Look For?

WITH EXPERIENCE EDITING A WIDE ARRAY OF WORK, WE ASKED LESLIE TO SHARE HER THOUGHTS ON WHAT AN EDITOR LOOKS FOR IN A MANUSCRIPT.

What Does an Editor Look For?

Editing is not just about fixing punctuation errors and misspelled words. An editor's job is to improve your writing, making it clearer and easier to understand.

There are four types of edits.

Developmental edits

This is a big picture edit, where the editor reviews the overall piece for a clear structure with a well-defined beginning, middle, and end. It should grab the reader right from the start, with an opening paragraph that is engaging and sets the tone for the rest of your piece.

Line edits (or substantive edits)

This is a sentence-level edit that examines your text for clear, straightforward language. Line editors remove overly long or redundant sentences, spelling mistakes, misused punctuation, grammar errors, and unnecessary words.

Copy edits

This type of editing is about using effective voice and style. Voice means your ideas flow from one idea to the next, making the text easy to follow. Style relates to words and the way you put them together.

Proofreading

This is when editors read through your work and correct minor errors like typos, spacing issues, spelling mistakes, and punctuation inconsistencies.

Depending on the type of material, some edits are performed at the same time, while others are done in different passes. For example, a web editor often does all types of edits at once. But for book editing, different editors might perform different edits.

A few tips from your editor

Use active voice. It is stronger and more direct than passive voice. For example, "The dog caught the ball" is active voice. "The ball was caught by a dog" is passive.

Eliminate words and phrases that are vague and do not add value, such as the words things, stuff, kind of, and sort of.

Look for areas where you have included several ideas in one sentence and split them up to make them easier to read.

Following these and other editorial guidelines will make your editor's job easier.

Leslie Brown has been an editor for over 30 years. She has edited fiction and nonfiction stories, technical documents, and web content. She is a stickler for details and a fan of clarity.

BLOG NEWS

HAVE YOU HEARD? The DWAA blog now has a section for Flash Fiction.

Flash Fiction is a popular genre, known for expressing emotions in just a few short words or paragraphs.

Entries must be a *firm* **200 words** MAX, including the title and your words, not your photos, must tell a story. There must be a dog in the story.

This is a great way to get your fiction published for both your resumé and as a piece to enter in next year's writing contest.

Submissions are now being accepted. At the **top of the page**, please put your name with any titles, your address, phone and email. This is for the editor's use only. At the **end of the page**, please put whatever contact information you want the editor to have.

Send entries to Anne Marie Duquette at AMDQ1@yahoo.com. Please put **"Flash Fiction"** in the subject line. For security reasons, your email will **NOT** be opened without it.

Thank you, and let's get this ball rolling! Happy trails, tails, and tales.



Read the Blog



Email Anne Marie

My Pal

► Continued from pg 24

Next came the ladder. Of course, I was scared to death wondering what Pal would pull next. As he sat in front of the ladder like he was supposed to, I told him, "Climb the ladder," which he did without pulling anything special. However, he did pause at the top, stick his chest out a bit and looked at the audience. After that he climbed down. "Whew," we got through that I thought.

The last part of his act was to sing. We walked over to the piano which was on the floor next to the stage. The top of the piano was level with the stage floor, so everyone could see Pal and me. I was hoping that the sweat on my brow would not run down into my eyes because I needed to see clearly. I looked at the student sitting at the piano and nodded to start. The song went without a hitch, Pal barked as I raised my pinky and stopped when I lowered it, that is, until we got to the last two barks in the song. I raised my pinky and Pal barked once and stopped. The music stopped, the audience was silent, waiting and I was raising my pinky as hard as I could, I mean how

violently can you raise a pinky? No bark, and that brat just sat there looking at me. Finally, I said, "Pal, where's the other bark?" And with that he barked one more time. Again, the audience loved it, but I was ready to pass out. Later I learned that people thought that Pal's antics were part of the act and that I was the best dog trainer there was. If they only knew.

Because of Pal, I gained a little confidence. So much so that I was able to stand in front of the class to present my assignments in high school. Because of Pal and the many other dogs in my life, I went on to become a certified animal behavior consultant. I wouldn't trade the talent show experience for anything. ■

Everyone Has a Story

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Dalai Lama and neither one of us is a practicing Buddhist, but it seems that both my dog and the Dalai Lama teach compassion. Maybe they teach in different ways: one using words and the other using silence, but I think the lesson is the same. But I do get a little fuzzy because I've been trying to understand some of that philosophy for years.

It's challenging for me because when people use words to describe something it always points to that something as being *out-there* even if the something pointed to is *in-here*. You see how words can make something really complicated when it could be really simple.

Maybe it takes longer to teach something without using words, but a lot of things can't be expressed very well using words and this is precisely where my dog outdoes any long-winded philosophy. She simply does that something I was talking about, that, and that we humans try to understand using words like compassion and unconditional love. There are some that just spontaneously show compassion without bypassing any lecture and it's always been the dog.

Having someone go before me to kinda 'break the ice', makes it easier for me to what I think I should be done... like the other day, my

dog picked out a total stranger from the crowd and dragged me over to them so she could say hi. Naturally I struck up a conversation with that person and I soon discovered that they had just moved to town and were feeling very lonely because they had to leave their dog behind.

I have a new friend as of today and their dog will come and live with us for a while so my new friend can visit. There are many ways in which my dog makes my life so much better; this is one instance where she made not only my life better but another person's as well. I would have missed an opportunity to do compassion had it not been for my dog 'breaking the ice' for me. Maybe being compassionate is as easy as the Dalai Lama says, but seeing it in action is always awe-inspiring.

My story might be about trying to understand the teachings of the Dalai Lama and other gurus. I think I have the guide and teacher.

I obviously love my dog because she's super cute and snuggly and fun to walk with, but the overwhelming feeling of awe and respect runs very deep for my dog. However, that awe-inspiring feeling I have is the same for all dogs that seem to be here to guide humans to be the best they can be. ■

Henry

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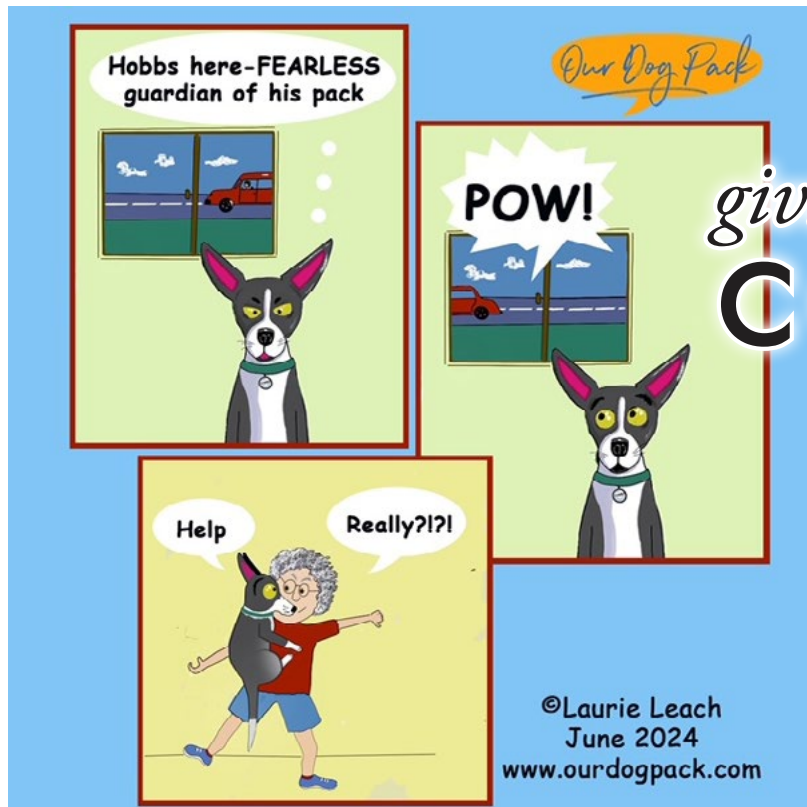
I do suffer from a kind of lost-dog syndrome, especially when I help rescue lost dogs. There are strong emotions connected with such events, and for dog parents, a missing pet is often as momentous as a missing child. And like all parents, dog rescuers get big hugs from dog parents.

Here's what I know for sure about Henry and his history: He is a lovable little smartie-pants. Though he's not perfect, his imperfect human companions often claim he is. It is, after all, what parents do. ■

Robert Ronning, a wildlife and conservation writer, published his adventure novel, *Wild Call to Boulder Field* in 2023, a fiction finalist in Dog Writers of America 2023 Contest. He and wife Kathleen live in Tucson and summer in a cabin in Arizona's White Mountains, a few minutes daily dog walk from National Forest and wildlife.



RobertRonningAuthor.com



giving
COMFORT
goes both ways



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