



CAMP GONE TO THE DOGS

NEWSWIRE

Volume 6, Issue 4



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The Editor Barks Out



The Ghost of Winters' Past

I don't know about your dogs, but my dogs simply love snow. When the ground turns white, we rush outdoors. But our winters of this century do not resemble those of years past. Gone are the days of digging paths in the yard to prevent the dogs from walking *over* the fence into the street. Gone are the igloos and the tubing hills. Even backyard skijoring adventures have almost disappeared. We could travel to partake in these and other snow activities, but somehow it just wouldn't be the same. The ice-covered snow currently on the ground works well for human sledding but presents hazards for my canine companions, who love to race alongside. So instead of

playing in the snow, I'm sitting here staring at this computer screen, readying another issue of the *Newswire*.

This issue contains a few rather lengthy articles (located in "True Tails," "Divine Tails," and "Bow Wow"). Despite the length, each article is quite good and entertaining to the end. Of course, this issue also contains Jeanne's updates on Zuni, camp dogs and people, Mary T's battle with poopsicles, and a creative look at sleeping dogs. So whether you live in the snow belt or in a warmer climate, please kick back and enjoy this issue of the *Camp Gone to the Dogs Newswire*.

♥ Love those wagging tails ♥

— Valerie Steinman
NewsWire Editor
CGTID Camper

CAMPERS: please send us your dog-related stories, poetry, jokes, etc., so we can share them with all who read the *Camp Gone to the Dogs Newswire*. Forward your material via e-mail to campnewswire@hotmail.com. In the subject line of your e-mail, please type the word, **newswire**. If you are submitting another person's story, please tell us the author's name or where you got the story (e.g., internet/e-mail). We reserve the right to edit your stories for content, grammar, space, etc. You must be a current or past camper to contribute to the NewsWire. Thank you for your cooperation.

RICHTER'S RAMBLINGS

Jeanne Richter
CGTTD Director



Hi Campers!

The last time I wrote a column I was leaving the next day to pick up the Zuni Princess in Florida. I flew to Orlando and met Merrilee, her breeder, at a local hotel. The second I looked into her eyes I knew she was going to be a wonderful addition to our family. Zorro adores her and has become her "Manny." He watches out for her at all times and sleeps next to her crate. Zuni and Zeta love to be outside together and chase each other and watch for squirrels and deer.

We have started Puppy Kindergarten through St. Hubert's, and she is responding very well to learning. I am looking forward to seeing her in the herding pen at Summer Camp.

Last weekend Zorro and I attended a Tricks Class in South Jersey. The class was taught by Sassie and Celine Joiris who teach at Summer Camp. The class was a lot of fun, and Zorro learned how to crawl.



Camper's New Book

Big News! Fall 1 Camper Kim Saunders has written a book, [*The Adopted Dog Bible*](#), that has everything you need to know about your rescued dog, including the following:

- where to find the perfect dog
- what to ask shelter staff
- all about breeds and mixes
- what to expect the first day
- how to change bad behaviors

... and much more. It's in stores now and can be ordered at www.petfinder.com. Kim was a guest on the Today show to discuss her book. She will do a book signing at Fall 1.



Camp Updates



The Camp Web site has been updated with photos from the 2008 Camps. Check out the home page intro photos and click on 2008 in the Gallery Photos.

I have started working on the Summer Camp Mailing. If you have any news that you would like to share with fellow Campers, please email me at campnewswire@hotmail.com.



WOW! It has been really cold in New Jersey, and we are expecting another storm this week [as of 1-26-09]. I keep looking at Camp photos, and they are keeping me warm. I hope you and your dogs are having a wonderful New Year, and I look forward to seeing you in Vermont.

*Warmest regards,
Jeanne*



MARY'S TIPS

Mary Thompson
CGTID Instructor/Staff



Mean Cuisine

What do Pineapple juice, Vitamin B Complex, Dis-Taste, Papaya Juice, SeaMeal, Adolph's Meat Tenderizer, Spinach, Missing Link, Tabasco Sauce, Deter, Everyday Health, and For-Bid all have in common – besides adding up to money, money, money – all things I have tried to stop a very “Nasty Habit” (actual name of next product I will be trying): stool eating!

Why do dogs do this? I can personally say that one of my dogs started it after having a litter of puppies. Up until then, she had never helped me pick up the yard. I would have to leave her in the house, pick up the yard and then let her out. Another one of my Labs did it as she felt she was helping me. A friend's dogs eat the stools of the dogs who go to shows. She thinks that they are getting a boost to their immune system. Most dogs try it in the winter time when the stools are frozen; we call them "poopsicles."

I had a pup who would turn around and eat his own as soon as it hit the ground. After months and bags of different dog foods, I finally found one that stopped the behavior – one of the reasons I fed Bil-Jac for so many years! Even when I make my own dog food, I still seem to have a dog who will clean up the yard. It only takes one dog to start the habit. Right now, I have three Irish Water Spaniels (IWS) and one Papillon. Everyone leaves the little guy's alone and they go after the larger ones.

My 12-year-old IWS has always left stools alone. Instead she digs down until she finds grass or dirt and eats that. My four-year-old IWS started with the poopsicles this winter. They all receive the same supplements and food. The only difference is that Kirby [Papillon] eats Evo Small Bites and the IWS's eat Evo Large Bites, so the next order of food will be for all small bites! I have now started to use Vitamin B complex (has to have 100% Biotin to be absorbed

enough), For-Bid, SeaMeal, Missing Link and Everyday Health all together in hopes of stopping this behavior.

Today is the first day I can see stools in the snow. What a thing to be soooooo excited about! It's the unexpected kisses that get me. If this all does not make a difference, then I'll wait until spring and invest in Remote Control Citronella collars (They freeze up in winter and don't work on warmer days in deep snow.). Since I know I am not the only one battling this problem, I will keep you informed as to the outcome of the war.

If any of you have managed to stop your dog from eating poop,

please let me know as I am conferring almost daily with at least five other campers about this issue! You can reach me at frshstrt@maine.rr.com.



Pain-Induced Chewing



My almost 13-year-old IWS (who eats the dirt/grass) at age 11 chewed up my son's PlayStation and remotes. She has since chewed up four remotes and many, many pieces of cardboard. I check my son's room daily, yet

she still manages to snag something when she really wants to. At first I attributed her sudden desire to chew to boredom. And I really feel that was the answer at that time. Now she is chewing when she is in pain. I have noticed a correlation to her chewing when I forget to give her an NSAID with each meal. If she only does quick trips outside, I sometimes think that she doesn't need something each meal, but I have realized that she is telling me she does. Maybe your older dog is

getting into trouble for something he/she never used to do. Maybe he/she is also in some discomfort. Rimadyl has a pain reliever in it, so some dogs do better on that than Deramaxx or Metacam. But it can cause liver problems, so blood tests should be done every 6 months. Labs have had more problems with it than other breeds. Deramaxx has sulphur in it, and some dogs can't tolerate it for that reason. I

can't give it to my IWS as the breed as a whole is sensitive to sulphur. Metacam is a liquid and easier to use. You don't have to break tablets for smaller dogs, and you can give smaller doses when your dog is not really bad but just needs a little help. Metacam has come out with a tablet form that is more economical than the liquid. It is called Meloxicam.



Remember – if your dog can make you laugh or at least bring a smile to your face, then it's not such a bad day after all!

Mary T.



TRUE TAILS

The Truth About Dog Sports....Herding

By Laurie Leach

It is amazing but true that the sport of herding was popularized by a pig. Ask any tyke who's seen the movie "Babe" and they can describe an imaginary world in which dogs or a precocious piglet move livestock in an orderly fashion through pastures and gates. As you might expect, the real world of herding is not so simple or tidy. Herding is, in fact, a very complex world with a long and rich history. For the neophyte, it is difficult to even

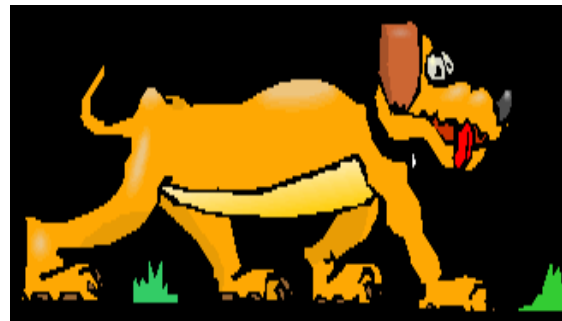
learn about herding for reasons that I will explain. Despite the challenge, I have managed to permeate this world. As a result of my foray into this arena, I am going to discourage those of you who have not yet started this sport. Toss some Frisbees to that pup. Dabble in the benign sport of agility. Get anal in obedience. Let me explain why these activities are better and safer choices.



HERDING IS NERVOUS MAKING. Dog sports are supposed to be fun. With herding, there is always an underlying tension. This tension is easily understood when one examines the origin of this activity. Centuries ago, in the wild, dogs pursued herds of animals and singled them out to be killed and eaten. In some cases the dogs chased the herds until a weak member dropped out. In other cases, they turned

the herd back into the jaws of their waiting pack members. Today's herding dogs still reflect one of these two approaches, preferring to either drive or gather stock. Somehow early man convinced dogs to round up the stock, rather than eat them, and then wait for a bowl of leftovers. This is one of the great mysteries of canine history. Without benefit of clicker, tennis ball, or food stuffed toys, this early dog trainer worked miracles.

Despite this history, herding dogs are not supposed to grab a sheep thigh like a smoked turkey leg. Out on the ranch, they may nip, heel, or nose to move reluctant stock, but in public, biting is a serious no-no. However, one can never forget that herding is a partnership that stops the dog just one click short of bringing in his dinner.



HERDING REQUIRES INTERACTING WITH ANIMALS THAT WOULD MAKE A GOOD STEW. Herding is an activity that requires not only the finest dog training skills but also requires a group of other animals known as "stock." Just that word should raise your red flag. Stock are big, dirty, and live in

muddy places. They have no qualms about running over you. They are much more interested in sticking together than avoiding what is in their path. They are the original gangs. They are very difficult to understand if you did not grow up with them. More on that later.



HERDING IS AS DIFFICULT AS PLAYING QUARTERBACK IN THE SUPER BOWL.

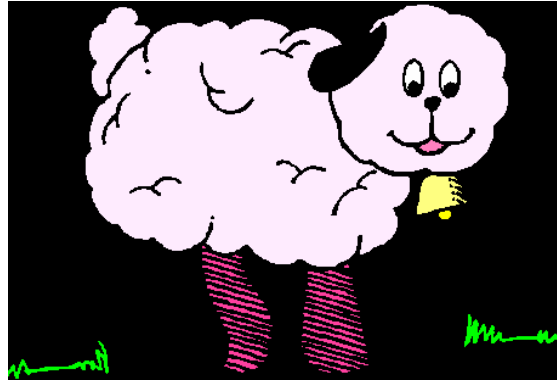
In other dog sports, events happen in one direction. In agility, dog and handler run toward the A-frame. In flyball, the dogs run straight to the box and back to the handler. Herding, on the other hand, is multi-dimensional, and chaos is always imminent. It is most accurate to imagine herding is like being dropped into the middle of a professional football scrimmage. The sheep scramble one direction. The dog flies the

the other to bring them back. The handler, like the quarterback, tries to orchestrate the movement by yelling or whistling. Covering one's eyes is always tempting, but it's not a good option. There is a real possibility of getting hurt while herding; if the dog gets a bit too wild, the sheep may charge toward the handler with considerable momentum. While they will not be screaming "SACK," the effect is the same. One must have quick reactions to prevent a crash.

HERDING REQUIRES AN ENTIRE NEW LANGUAGE. If you identify with either of those novice handlers above, there is another hurdle to successfully entering the world of herding. In addition to being able to think like a sheep, you must learn to speak a different language. Here is a typical quote: Once the dog is trained on the rake, we need to make sure the dog will move off your body pressure (Billy Bob, 2001). My feeling is that if you can get the dogs to rake, you should get them going with the lawn mower

too. However, if you insist on herding rather than getting that yard work done, you must be prepared to acquire an entire new language as you would French or Italian. Make sure to consider that learning *c'est la vie* and *Je suis heureuse* could take you to Paris. The language of herding will take you to slippery, muddy pastures. Think this through! If you are still determined to forge forward, you might as well get started on some key terms that you must internalize:

Bad Sheep: These are woolies that are not committed to the club. They tend to break away from the others. This makes a dog look bad. They may even turn and fight. This is smart in my mind, but shepherds want docile sheep that hang together. You might think of the rebellious sheep as "Sheep that are going to be lamb chops."



Good Sheep: Officially these are the sheep that let themselves be herded and stick together. In my experience, these are sheep that keep trying to climb up on your shoulders to get away from the dog. This is not attractive because they have pointy hooves. However, they are highly prized in the herding world. I refer to this group as "Sheep that are not going to be lamb chops."

Outrun: This is the action when the dog runs out past the sheep to begin gathering them. For advanced dogs, this outrun is hundreds of yards long. Herding books say that the ideal outrun is shaped like a pear. Are these people kidding? Who cares about fruit when your dog is racing away from you at top speed and becomes a speck on the horizon? I have had several dogs do an outrun, but they were hot on the heels of a bunny. In my mind, the outrun is synonymous with the unhappy phrase, "My dog has run off."

Lift: This term refers to time that the dog moves toward the sheep initially in order to get them moving. I refer to this as the "short moment before all hell breaks loose."

Way to Me and Go Bye: These are the traditional Scottish

commands for sending the dog around the sheep in either a counterclockwise or clockwise direction. There are musical sounding phrases that suggest they were lifted from Rodgers and Hammerstein. Using these lilting phrases is a nice idea if one could freeze the sheep and dog for a moment to figure out which way is counterclockwise. As I suggested in my article on Border Collies, these phrases are often replaced in real situations by "Quit biting that sheep, you little sh*t."

These terms are merely the tip of the iceberg. From here you need to learn to string words like grip and flank together without getting arrested. You will know you have arrived when you can lean against the fence in your Wranglers and drawl, "After you pick up the sheep with a short outrun, you wear the sheep

around the perimeter of the fence." But really, who wants to say that when you could be learning to say, "Je beux le creme brulee."

HERDING DOGS MUST HAVE THE RIGHT STUFF. Although you may want to participate in this dog sport, herding requires instinct on the part of your dog. The movement of sheep screams "DO SOMETHING" to dogs with the right genes. Dogs without these genes just stand around and munch sheep doo. The reality is that the best herding dogs will herd alone for days at a time. In addition to the instinctual ability to read stock, the dog must have the physical ability to react to the movements of stock and enough speed to affect those movements.

The bottom line is that your dog either has it or it doesn't. A dog that will only circle in one direction or whose interest in sheep lasts less than thirty seconds is a candidate for a different activity. Be relieved. Try something simple like teaching your dog to skydive.

ALL HERDING BREEDS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL. Reading about the characteristics of different herding breeds is much like reading real estate ads. For example, we all know that an ad that says "Doll House" means the roof is six feet high and the rooms are the size of postage stamps. Similar interpretation is required when reading about the herding breeds. For example,



experts might say something like, "Training this breed requires the handler to be extremely upbeat and enthusiastic." What this really means is that, unless you have professional cheerleading experience, these dogs may seriously try your patience.

In general, herding breeds can be grouped in four general categories. At one end of the spectrum, there are those breeds that are less than enthusiastic about herding. They have a lobby in Washington that is working to move them from the herding group to the couch potato group. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the high-drive, herd-until-they-drop dogs. These dogs may even become so mesmerized by the stock that they may go into a trance. In between, there are two groups. First, there are the dogs that try to bark the sheep to death. Lastly, there are the breeds that approach herding like bureaucrats. With briefcase in hand, these dogs move the sheep

without much fuss. They may lack a little flash, but they rarely have a grievance filed by the sheep union.

IN CONCLUSION. The point is if you don't have exactly the right kind of dog, you have your work cut out for you. Then again, if you do have exactly the right kind of dog, you have your work cut out for you. If you have been thinking about trying herding, put it to bed with a simple

"That'll do" and go on with a nice hike with your pup. If you have already gotten involved, consider spending the next herding trial in the bleachers with a cold beer. Wow the spectators sitting around you by saying something like, "He's using a 'banana' line. It looks good and straight and the entrance to the gates is lined up with the handler's post." Then take a nice hike with your pup.

From CampGonetotheDogs@yahoo.com



CREATIVE TAILS

Sleeps With Dogs
Author Unknown



WHOEVER SAID "LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE" DIDN'T SLEEP WITH DOGS. The first thing you discover when you bring a dog onto your bed is the striking difference in weight between an alert, awake dog and a dog at rest.

RULE #1: THE DEEPER THE SLEEP THE HEAVIER THE DOG. Most people

who sleep with dogs develop spinal deformities rather than rent the heavy equipment necessary to move their snoring canines to a more appropriate part of the bed. Cunning canines steal precious space in tiny increments until they have achieved the center position on the bed – with all covers carefully tucked under them for

safekeeping. The stretch and roll method is very effective in gaining territory. Less subtle tactics are sometimes preferred. A jealous dog can worm his way between a sleeping couple and, with the proper spring action from all four legs, shove a sleeping human to the floor.



RULE #2: DOGS POSSESS SUPER-HUMAN STRENGTH WHILE ON A BED. As you cling to the edge of the bed, wishing you had covers, your sweet pup begins to snore at a volume you would not have thought possible. Once that quiets down, the “dog dreams” begin. Yipping, growling, running, kicking – your bed becomes a battlefield and playground of canine fantasy. It starts out with a bit of "sleep running," lots of eye movement, and then suddenly a shrieking howl blasts through the night like a banshee wail. The horror of this wake-up call haunts you for years. It's particularly devastating when your pup insists on sleeping curled around your head like a demented Daniel Boone cap.

RULE #3: THE DEEPER THE SLEEP, THE LOUDER THE DOG. The night creeps on and you fall asleep in

the three inches of bed not claimed by a dog. The “dog dreams” quiet slightly and the heap of dog flesh sleeps – breathing heavily and passing wind. Then too soon, it's dawn and the heap stirs. Each dog has a distinctive and unpleasant method of waking the pack. One may position itself centimeters from a face and stare until you wake. The clever dog obtains excellent results by simply sneezing on your face – or they could romp all over your sleeping bodies – or the ever-loving insertion of a tongue in an unsuspecting ear.

RULE #4: WHEN THE DOG WAKES - YOU WAKE. So why do we put up with this? There's no sane reason. Perhaps it's just that we're a pack, and a pack heaps together at night – safe, contented, heavy and loud.

Contributor: Nan Marks
CGTTD Camper



DIVINE TAILS

The Love of a Friend

Author Unknown



“Watch out! You nearly broadsided that car!” My Father yelled at me. “Can’t you do anything right?!”

Those words hurt worse than blows. I turned my head toward the elderly man in the seat beside me, daring me to challenge him. A lump rose in my throat as I averted my eyes. I wasn’t prepared for another battle.

“I saw the car, Dad. Please don’t yell at me when I’m driving.” My voice was measured and steady, sounding far calmer than I really felt.

Dad glared at me, then turned away and settled back. At home I left Dad in front of the television and went outside to collect my thoughts. Dark, heavy clouds hung in the air with a promise of rain. The rumble of distant

thunder seemed to echo my inner turmoil.

What could I do about him?

Dad had been a lumberjack in Washington and Oregon. He had enjoyed being outdoors and had reveled in pitting his strength against the forces of nature. He had entered grueling lumberjack competitions and had placed often. The shelves in his house were filled with trophies that attested to his prowess.

The years marched on relentlessly. The first time he couldn’t lift a heavy log, he joked about it; but later that same day I saw him outside alone, straining to lift it. He became irritable whenever anyone teased him about his advancing age or when he couldn’t do something he had done as a younger man.

Four days after his sixty-seventh birthday, he had a heart attack. An ambulance sped him to the hospital while a paramedic administered CPR to keep blood and oxygen flowing. At the hospital Dad was rushed into an operating room. He was lucky he survived.

But something inside Dad died. His zest for life was gone. He obstinately refused to follow doctor's orders. Suggestions and offers of help were turned aside with sarcasm and insults. The number of visitors thinned, then finally stopped altogether. Dad was left alone.

My husband Dick and I asked Dad to come live with us on our small farm. We hoped the fresh air and rustic atmosphere would help him adjust. Within a week after he moved in, I regretted the invitation. It seemed nothing was satisfactory. He criticized everything I did. I became frustrated and moody. Soon I



was taking my pent-up anger out on Dick. We began to bicker and argue. Alarmed, Dick sought out our pastor and explained the situation. The clergyman set up weekly counseling appointments for us. At the close of each session he prayed, asking God to soothe Dad's troubled mind. But the months wore on, and God remained silent. Something had to be done, and it was up to me to do it.

The next day I sat down with the phone book and methodically called each of the mental health clinics listed in the Yellow Pages. I explained my problem to each of the sympathetic voices that answered – in vain. Just when I was giving up hope, one of the voices suddenly exclaimed, “I just read something that might help you! Let me go get the article.” I listened as she read. The article described a remarkable study done at a nursing home. All of the patients were under treatment for chronic depression. Yet their attitudes had improved dramatically when they were given responsibility for a dog.

I drove to the animal shelter that afternoon. After I filled out a questionnaire, a uniformed officer led me to the kennels. The odor of disinfectant stung my nostrils as I moved down the row of pens. Each contained five to seven dogs. Long-haired dogs, curly-haired dogs, black dogs, spotted dogs – all jumped up, trying to reach me. I studied each one but rejected one after

the other for various reasons: too big, too small, too much hair, etc. As I neared the last pen, a dog in the shadows of the far corner struggled to this feet, walked to the front of the run, and sat down. It was a Pointer, one of the dog world's aristocrats. But this was a caricature of the breed. Years had etched his face and muzzle with shades of gray. His hipbones jutted out in lopsided triangles. But it was his eyes that caught and held my attention. Calm and clear, they beheld me unwaveringly.



I pointed to the dog. “Can you tell me about him?” The officer looked, then shook his head in puzzlement.

“He’s a funny one. Appeared out of nowhere and sat in front of the gate. We brought him in, figuring someone would be right down to claim him. That was two weeks ago, and we’ve heard nothing. His time is up tomorrow.” He gestured helplessly.

I looked at the Pointer again. The calm brown eyes awaited my decision. “I’ll take him.”

I drove home with the dog on the front seat beside me. When I reached the house, I honked the horn twice. I was helping my prize out of the car when Dad shuffled onto the front porch.

“Ta-da! Look what I got for you, Dad!” I said excitedly.

Dad looked, then wrinkled his face in disgust. “If I had wanted a dog, I would have gotten one. And I would have picked out a better specimen than that bag of bones. Keep it! I don’t want it.” Dad waved his arm scornfully and turned back toward the house.

Anger rose inside me. It squeezed together my throat muscles and pounded into my temples. “You’d better get used to him, Dad. He’s staying!” Dad ignored me. “Did you hear me, Dad?” I screamed.

At those words, Dad whirled angrily, his hands clenched at his sides, his eyes narrowed, blazing with hate.

We stood glaring at each other like duelists, when suddenly the Pointer pulled free from my grasp. He wobbled toward Dad and sat down in front of him. Then slowly, carefully, he raised his paw.

Dad's lower jaw trembled as he stared at the uplifted paw. Confusion replaced the anger in his eyes. The Pointer waited patiently. Then Dad fell to his knees hugging the animal.

It was the beginning of a warm and intimate friendship. Dad named the Pointer, Cheyenne. Together he and Cheyenne explored the community. They spent long hours walking down dusty lanes. They spent reflective moments on the banks of streams, angling for tasty trout. They even started to attend Sunday services together, Dad sitting in a pew and Cheyenne lying quietly at his feet.



Dad and Cheyenne were inseparable throughout the next three years. Dad's bitterness faded, and he and Cheyenne made many friends. Then late one night I was startled to feel Cheyenne's cold nose burrowing through our bed covers. He had never before come into our bedroom at night. I woke Dick, put on my robe, and ran into my father's room. Dad lay in his bed, his face serene. But his spirit had left quietly sometime during the night.

Two days later my shock and grief deepened when I discovered Cheyenne lying dead beside Dad's bed. I wrapped his still form in the rag rug he had slept on. As Dick and I buried him near a favorite fishing hole, I silently thanked the dog for the help he had given me in restoring Dad's peace of mind.

The morning of Dad's funeral dawned overcast and dreary. 'This day looks like the way I feel,' I thought, as I walked down the aisle to the pews reserved for family. I was surprised to see the many friends Dad and Cheyenne had made filling the church.

The pastor began his eulogy. It was a tribute to both Dad and the dog who had changed his life. And then the pastor turned to Hebrews 13:2 – *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers.* "I've often thanked God for sending that angel," he said.

For me, the past dropped into place, completing a puzzle that I had not seen before: the sympathetic voice that had just read the right article; Cheyenne's unexpected appearance at the animal shelter; his calm

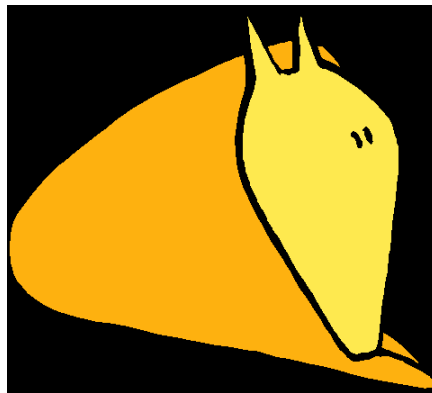
acceptance and complete devotion to my father; and the proximity of their deaths. And suddenly I understood. I knew that God had answered my prayers after all.



BOW WOW

A Tribute To Old Dogs

By *The Washington Post's* Gene Weingarten



They can be eccentric, slow afoot, even grouchy. But dogs live out their final days with a humility and grace we all could learn from.

Not long before his death, Harry and I headed out for a walk that proved eventful. He was nearly 13, old for a big dog. Walks were no longer the slap-happy Iditarods of his youth, frenzies of purposeless pulling in which we would cast madly off in all directions, fighting for command. Nor were they the

exuberant archaeological expeditions of his middle years, when every other tree or hydrant or blade of grass held tantalizing secrets about his neighbors. In his old age, Harry had transformed his walk into a simple process of elimination – a dutiful, utilitarian, head-down trudge. When finished, he would shuffle home to his ratty old bed, which graced our living room because Harry could no longer ascend the stairs. On these walks, Harry seemed oblivious to his surroundings,

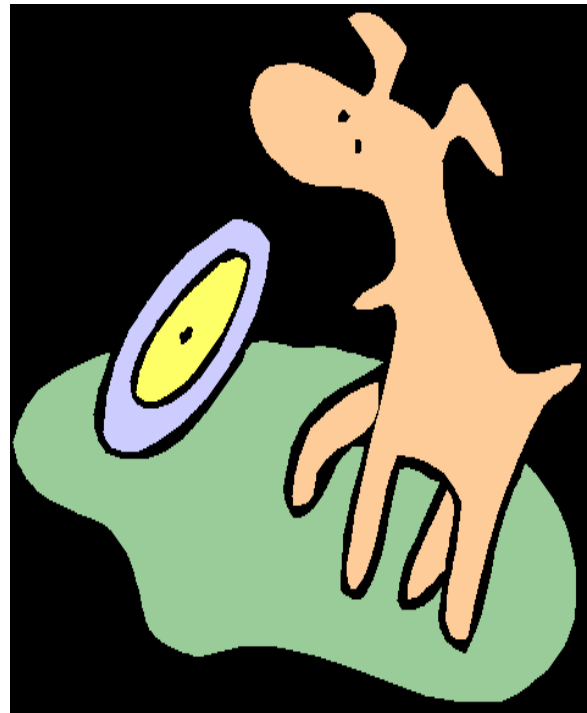
absorbed in the arduous responsibility of placing foot before foot before foot before foot. But this time, on the edge of a small urban park, he stopped to watch something. A man was throwing a Frisbee to his dog. The dog, about Harry's size, was tracking the flight expertly, as Harry had once done, anticipating hooks and slices by watching the pitch and roll and yaw of the disc, as Harry had done, then catching it with a joyful, punctuating leap, as Harry had once done, too.

Harry sat. For 10 minutes, he watched the fling and catch, fling and catch, his face contented, his eyes alight, his tail a-twitch. Our walk home was almost ... jaunty.

Some years ago, *The Washington Post* invited readers to come up with a midlife list of goals for an underachiever. The first-runner-up prize went to: "Win the admiration of my dog."

It's no big deal to love a dog; they make it so easy for you. They find you brilliant even if you are a witling. You fascinate them even if you are as dull as a butter knife. They are fond of you even if you are a genocidal maniac. Hitler loved his dogs, and they loved him.

Puppies are incomparably cute and incomparably entertaining, and, best of all, they smell exactly like puppies. At middle age, a dog has settled into the



knuckleheaded matrix of behavior we find so appealing – his unquestioning loyalty, his irrepressible willingness to please, his infectious happiness. But it is not until a dog gets old that his most important virtues ripen and coalesce. Old dogs can be cloudy-eyed and grouchy, gray of muzzle, graceless of gait, odd of habit, hard of hearing, pimply, wheezy, lazy, and lumpy. But to anyone who has ever known an old dog, these flaws are of little consequence. Old dogs are vulnerable. They show exorbitant gratitude and limitless trust. They are without artifice. They are funny in new and unexpected ways. But, above all, they seem at peace.

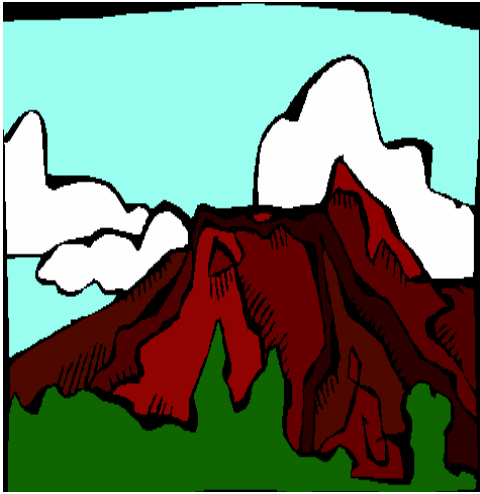
Kafka wrote that the meaning of life is that it ends. He meant that our lives are shaped and shaded by the existential terror of knowing that all is finite. This anxiety informs poetry, literature, the monuments we build, the wars we wage – all of it. Kafka was talking, of course, about people. Among animals, only humans are said to be self-aware enough to comprehend the passage of time and the grim truth of mortality. How, then, to explain old Harry at the edge of that park, gray and lame, just days from the end, experiencing what can only be called wistfulness and nostalgia? I have lived with eight dogs, watched six of them grow old and infirm with grace and dignity, and die with what seemed to be acceptance. I have seen old dogs grieve at the loss of their friends. I have come to believe that as they age, dogs comprehend the passage of time, and, if not the inevitability of death, certainly the relentlessness of the onset of their frailties. They understand that what's gone is gone.

What dogs do not have is an abstract sense of fear, or a feeling of injustice or entitlement. They do not see themselves, as we do, as tragic heroes, battling ceaselessly against the merciless onslaught of time. Unlike us, old



dogs lack the audacity to mythologize their lives. You've got to love them for that.

The product of a Kansas puppy mill, Harry was sold to us as a yellow Labrador retriever. I suppose it was technically true, but only in the sense that Tic Tacs are technically "food." Harry's lineage was suspect. He wasn't the square-headed, elegant type of Labrador you can envision in the wilds of Canada hunting for ducks. He was the shape of a baked potato, with the color and luster of an interoffice envelope. You could envision him in the wilds of suburban Toledo, hunting for nuggets of dried food in a carpet.



leading from a laptop to a wall socket – Harry would stop and refuse to proceed. To him, this barrier was as impassable as the Himalayas. He'd stand there, waiting for someone to move it. Also, he was afraid of wind.

While Harry lacked the wiliness and cunning of some dogs, I did watch one day as he figured out a basic principle of physics. He was playing with a water bottle in our backyard – it was one of those five-gallon cylindrical plastic jugs from the top of a water cooler. At one point, it rolled down a hill, which surprised and delighted him. He retrieved it, brought it back up and tried to make it go down again. It wouldn't. I watched him nudge it around until he discovered that for the bottle to roll, its long axis had to be perpendicular to the slope of the hill. You could see the understanding dawn on his face; it was Archimedes in his bath, Helen Keller at the water spigot.

That was probably the intellectual achievement of

His full name was Harry S Truman, and once he'd reached middle age, he had indeed developed the unassuming soul of a haberdasher. We sometimes called him Tru, which fit his loyalty but was in other ways a misnomer: Harry was a bit of an eccentric, a few bubbles off plumb. Though he had never experienced an electrical shock, whenever he encountered a wire on the floor – say, a power cord

Harry's life, tarnished only slightly by the fact that he spent the next two hours insipidly entranced, rolling the bottle down and hauling it back up. He did not come inside until it grew too dark for him to see.

I believe I know exactly when Harry became an old dog. He was about nine years old. It happened at 10:15 on the evening of June 21, 2001, the day my family moved from the suburbs to the city. The move took longer than we'd anticipated. Inexcusably, Harry had been left alone in the vacated house – eerie, echoing, empty of furniture and of all belongings except Harry and his bed – for eight hours. When I arrived to pick him up, he was beyond frantic.

He met me at the door and embraced me around the waist in a way that is not immediately reconcilable with the musculature and skeleton of a dog's front legs. I could not extricate myself from his grasp. We walked out of that house like a slow-dancing couple, and Harry did not let go until I opened the car door.

He wasn't barking at me in reprimand, as he once might have done. He hadn't fouled the house in spite. That night, Harry was simply scared and vulnerable, impossibly sweet and needy and grateful. He had lost something of himself, but he had gained something more touching and more valuable. He had entered old age.

In the year after our move, Harry began to age visibly, and he did it the way most dogs do. First his muzzle began to whiten, and then the white slowly crept backward to swallow his entire head. As he became more sedentary, he thickened a bit, too.

On walks, he would no longer bother to scout and circle for a place to relieve himself. He would simply do it in mid-plod, like a horse, leaving the difficult logistics of drive-by cleanup to me. Sometimes, while crossing a busy street, with cars whizzing by, he would plop down to scratch his ear. Sometimes, he would forget where he was and why he was there. To the amusement of passersby, I would have to hunker down beside him and say, "Harry, we're on a walk, and we're going home now.



Home is this way, okay?" On these dutiful walks, Harry ignored almost everything he passed. The most notable exception was an old, barrel-chested female pit bull named Honey, whom he loved. This was surprising, both because other dogs had long ago ceased to interest Harry at all, and because even back when they did, Harry's tastes were for the guys.

Still, when we met Honey on walks, Harry perked up. Honey was younger by five years and heartier by a mile, but she liked Harry and slowed her gait when he was around. They waddled together for blocks, eyes forward, hardly interacting but content in each other's company. I will forever be grateful to Honey for sweetening Harry's last days.

Some people who seem unmoved by the deaths of tens of thousands through war or natural disaster will nonetheless grieve inconsolably over the loss of the family dog. People who find this behavior distasteful are often the ones without pets. It is hard to understand, in the abstract, the degree to which a companion animal, particularly after a long life, becomes a part of you. I believe I've figured out what this is all about. It is not as noble as I'd like it to be, but it is not anything of which to be ashamed, either.

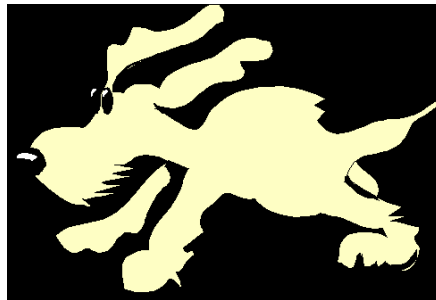
In our dogs, we see ourselves. Dogs exhibit almost all of our emotions; if you think a dog

cannot register envy or pity or pride or melancholia, you have never lived with one for any length of time. What dogs lack is our ability to dissimulate. They wear their emotions nakedly, and so, in watching them, we see ourselves as we would be if we were stripped of posture and pretense. Their innocence is enormously appealing. When we watch a dog progress from puppyhood to old age, we are watching our own lives in microcosm. Our dogs become old, frail, crotchety, and vulnerable, just as Grandma did, just as we surely will, come the day. When we grieve for them, we grieve for ourselves.

Contributor: Barb Davis
CGTTD Camper



NEW ADDITIONS



We look forward to meeting Chase at Camp.

Owner

Dog

Breed

Anne Cotton

Chase

Flat-Coated Retriever

The Rainbow Bridge

Because of its many colors, the bridge connecting Heaven and Earth has come to be known as the Rainbow Bridge.

Just this side of the Bridge, there is a land of meadows, hills and lush green valleys. When a Beloved pet dies, this wonderful place serves as their home. There is always an abundance of food and water and warm sunshine. Old and frail animals are young again, and those who have been maimed are made whole. They make new friends and play all day.

There is one thing missing from these carefree surroundings though, the

companionship of their loving masters. Time passes and soon another day comes when one of them is distracted by a familiar scent. With nose twitching, ears at attention and eyes staring in delight, this one runs from the group...

You have been seen.

As you embrace, your face is kissed again and again and again, and once more you look into the eyes of your loyal companion. You cross the Rainbow Bridge together, never again to be separated.



The following campers' dogs have crossed the Rainbow Bridge:

Merlin, Anne Cotton's beloved Flat-Coated Retriever

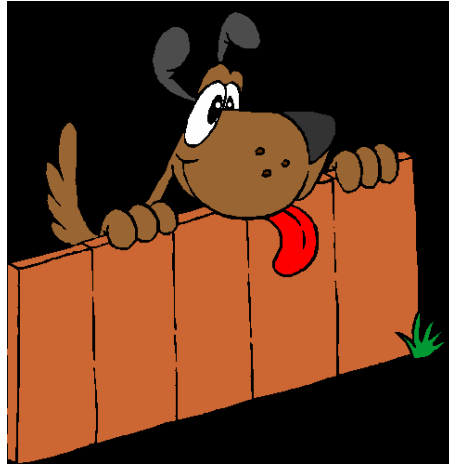
Banshee, Laura O'Donnell's beloved Samoyed

Beau, Cheryl Sanson's beloved Greyhound

Nickel, Lyn Ory's beloved Labrador Retriever

UNTIL TAILS UP

(As of January 31, 2009)



CAMP

TIME TO WAIT

Summer

May 31-June 6, 2009

4 Months

Fall

September 6-12, 2009

7 Months

September 13-19, 2009



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