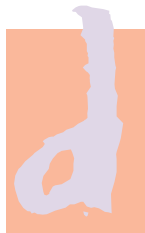


Dogs of Distinction



Dogs seem to be very much in the news lately. Not that the peccadilloes of Hollywood and sports figures are in any danger of being supplanted, but we take this as a healthy trend because dogs are guileless and what the world needs now is a moratorium on guile.

Unlike humans, for whom duplicity is a way of life, dogs such as Lassie, for example, have nothing to gain financially by demonstrating forthrightness and integrity in their daily lives. Timmy was rescued interminably from wells, quicksand and other adolescent katzenjammers, including death by chocolate. Lassie's innocence was never compromised, even though she kvetched between pants that the kid must surely be retarded. A little extra kibble and an ear

scratch was all she craved.

That's why it is refreshing to read of doggy news such as this item out of Corbin, Ky. It seems 6-year-old Scooby loses his cool during a thunderstorm and bolts across a highway, where he is hit by a car, injuring his tail and leg. According to Dr. Gerald Majors of the Corbin Animal Clinic, what happens next is nothing short of amazing. Scooby instantly realizes his predicament will not be cured by licking, so he hobbles, limps and drags himself through subdivisions, minimalls, and three lanes of traffic and presents himself at the doorstep of the clinic. He is then refused admittance because being hit by anything less than a Mercedes Benz is not a covered benefit —

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just kidding — of course he is cared for and is recovering nicely, thank you. The staff is still amazed that Scooby did the right thing without referring to a Global Positioning System or obtaining a specialty referral from his primary care vet.

Just south of Miami, the brain-child of Elena de Mesa is flourishing, according to the *National Enquirer*, that last bastion of journalistic integrity. Elena is a professional dog trainer and certified canine behavior specialist whose five-acre Totally Dog Daycamp nestled among the palm trees is a pooch paradise. It features a bone-shaped swimming pool, sundeck and a doggie nap house. Each morning, the Doggie Bus corrals the eager tailwaggers for a day of swimming, socializing and indulging in indescribable delights of olfactory scanning. Snoopy never had it so good.

From Orange, Calif., comes the announcement that a Labrador retriever named Novella has just been inducted into the Kiwanis Club, the first such nonhuman member of Kiwanis International. Novella just graduated from seeing-eye training school and now proudly wears the white Kiwanis medallion with the blue capital K around her neck.

Naturally, this has members of the Lions Club figuring on ways to top this media-grabbing event by inducting a full-grown king of the jungle without running afoul of various local laws or endangering the lives of other members. Elsewhere it is rumored that a gorilla named Cyril from an unnamed zoo has been proposed for membership by a Rotarian from Weehawken, N.J. There is a hang-up in the application hinging upon Cyril's interpretation of

the club's motto "Service Above Self." He thinks it could possibly be a threat to his banana interests.

Dentistry may be on the verge of a breakthrough that could see the acquisition of high-tech curing lights and digital X-rays being put on the back burner. Enter Sophie, an 8-year-old poodle weighing in at about 20 pounds. Sophie resides in Memphis, Tenn., where a local dentist has found a viable substitute for Xanax. Sophie's official job designation is that of dental assistant, but instead of being proficient at taking X-rays and mixing cement, she has expanded her natural inclination to be a lap dog to that of being an animate sedative.

A patient arrives, as apprehensive as a cat six miles from sand. He or she reclines hesitantly in the chair, whereupon Sophie leaps nimbly into the patient's lap, describes a couple of circles like dogs do, and settles down for the duration of the dental procedure.

Why this would have a calming effect on a nervous patient is not clear, but apparently it does. Sophie is OK with a little ear scratching and head patting, but the dentist has had to rule out tummy rubbing and tickling a particular spot that causes the hind leg to oscillate vigorously for fear of jiggling the whole chair.

Something about an animal in the lap snoozing benignly without a care in the world, a small rivulet of drool moistening her dewlaps, apparently induces a similar effect in the patient. That the dog has canine teeth 2 cm long and might use them if disturbed, or that she possesses a bladder with finite capacity, has no relevancy if you can believe this dentist's clientele. Sophie's payoff is a dog biscuit, a stipend bound to incur favor with overhead-obsessed dentists contem-

plating the bottom line.

If, in addition, Sophie can be taught CPR and basic accounting, so much the better. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to anticipate canine assistants who can sniff out missing charts or alert staff to deadbeat patients.

Give this some serious thought, is our recommendation. Ask yourself how many of your present staff can be motivated by a Milk Bone. Should you be a cat person, forget the whole thing. **CDA**