



# Ruff Notes

June, 2001

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**Editor: Marilyn Runyan**  
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## What's Happening in June?

- 4 Board Meeting, Santa Cruz Title Company, Watsonville, 7:00 p.m.
- 16 Agility Trial, Monte Vista Christian School, Watsonville
- 16 Agility Dinner, Green Valley Grill, Watsonville; 5:30 cocktails; 6:00 dinner
- 17 Agility Trial, Monte Vista Christian School, Watsonville
- 19 Ruff Notes deadline
- 26 Watsonville final classes
- 26 CGC Test, Watsonville
- 27 Pet Pals, Soquel AM final classes
- 28 Capitola PM & Salinas final classes



## Waggin' Tails

Dennis



As co-chair of our up-coming Obedience Workshop, I am going to use my space this month, to urge you to step forward and volunteer, for any of the needs listed below:

Help with set-up and/or take down  
Registration  
Morning Hospitality: Make coffee and bring morning snacks  
Ring Stewards  
Judges  
Anything else you would like to help with

I am particularly urging our newer members to get involved with this event. It's a great way to sharpen every aspect of your event skills. Naturally, anyone volunteering can also work their dogs. Also, you will get a free gourmet lunch cooked and served by our own chefs. You will also already be at our Annual Meeting as it will be held directly after the Workshop. A better deal can't be found anywhere on Saturday July 7, 2001.

Please give me a call at 688-1326 or e-mail vierravista@hotmail.com.

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## Membership Renewal Information

Current memberships expire on June 30. Although there is a grace period until July 31, we would very much appreciate your cooperation in completing renewals early. The earlier we complete this process, the earlier we will be able to get the Directory out to you. If you do not plan to renew, we would appreciate knowing that also.

**Renewal:** Send your check to **Dani Nelson** (\$24 for a single membership; \$36 for a family membership; \$12 for a junior membership).

**Committee Preference Sheets:** Turn these in to **Dani Nelson**. These are very important so that we can function as a club, covering all our bases with activities ranging from events to class operation and other club functions.

**Doggie Birthday Sheets:** These need to be reverified each year so that new dogs are included, new titles are included, and dogs we no longer have are deleted. Turn these in to **Dani Nelson**.

**Demonstrating Responsible Dog Ownership**

# Bragg

## Pam Fugitt-Hetrick:

*Jasmine* in Bay Team USDAA Novice Jumper Championship Class earned fifth place and in Novice Snooker scored 27 points for second place. In Novice Standard Championship she earned a second place and in Novice Jumpers got second place in pairs relay. At the Belgian Tervuren trial *Jasmine* got Double Q number 2 in really hot temperatures in Excellent B Standard and Jumpers. Owned and operated by Jessica, age 9, *Bojest Bye N Away an Angel* at the USDAA Bay Team trial took a sixth place in Novice Jumpers and second place in Novice Standard. At the Belgian Tervuren trial *Tess* for first place in Open Standard for leg number 1 and in Open Jumpers got a first place leg number 1.

## Crissy Hastings-Baugh:

*Logan* at Davis DTC trial (April 8) in Excellent B Standard scored 100 for fourth place and in Excellent B JWW scored 100 for a double Q; and *Gracie* in Open Standard scored 100 for first place. In Open JWW *Gracie* scored 100 for first place. At Tri Valley Sheltie Club in March *Gracie* scored 95 in Open Standard for third place and scored 89 in Open JWW for second place. At ASSA Nationals *Gracie* in Herding Ducks qualified; in Open Standard agility she scored 100 and in Open JWW scored 100 for third place. She finished seventh in Best All Around Sheltie competition (2 years younger than all other entries). Also at ASSA Nationals, *Logan* scored 100 in Excellent B Standard, qualified in Novice B obedience and took third place in Obedience Brace with **Carol Meyer's Morgan**.

## Fred Jones (trainee):

*Fox* scored 188 in Novice B at the Corgi Specialty for second place and a first leg.

## Debbie Nelson:

*Kara* is the number 3 Newf in Novice B in AKC trials.



## Carol Meyer:

*Morgan* at Davis DTC in Excellent A JWW got a first place to complete an AXJ title.

## Stacey Thompson:

*Noah* at the Sacramento DTC trial in Excellent A Standard got a first leg with a third place, and *Zoe* in Novice A Standard got a first leg with a second place.

## Linda Lang:

*Amber* in Open JWW got a second place with 95 points and in Open Standard scored 100 for fourth place and an OA title at the Redwood Belgian Tervuren Fanciers show. *Phoenix* (Amber's puppy) took Group I in Adults at a match.

## Charlotte Gaynor (trainee):

*Trumpet's Blonde Burlap* CD, MH, NA completed a Master Hunter Title at the Wasatch Retrievers Club.

## Paul Powers (trainee):

*Merlin* represented San Francisco Samoyed Rescue in the San Carlos Hometown Dog Parade by helping pull a cart in the parade.

## Jennifer Slater:

*Keeper* finished her NAC and NJC titles at Bay Team NADAC trial with four Qs with a first, second, and two thirds. *Dutchess* qualified in a standard agility run with zero faults. At the Sacramento DTC trial, *Dutchess* qualified and came in fourth in JWW with a score of 100, and *Keeper* also qualified in JWW and came in second. At the Bay Team USDAA trial *Keeper* qualified with zero faults and came in second in both her standard runs.

## Deanna Gardiner:

*Traivis* at ASSA Nationals in 12-18 Month Puppy Dogs took first place in his first big show—groomed by **Pam Strametz**.



**Keeper NAC**

**Keeper NJC**

**Morgan AXJ**

**Amber OA**

**Trumpet's Blonde Burlap MH**



This month's Hot Dog Awards run from April 18 through May 22.

*Trial Hot Dog*—This month no trial scores were reported.

*Match Hot Dog*—This month no match scores were reported.

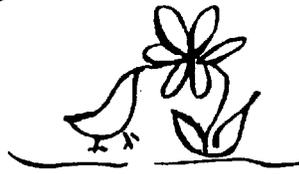
*Agility Trial Hot Dog*—This month the Agility Trial Hot Dog Award goes to **Linda Lang** and *Amber* for their score at Redwood Belgian Tervuren Fanciers show.

*Note:* Agility Hot Dog Awards are based on the score earned. In case of a tie, the dog who completed the course in the fastest time relative to the time allowed will be selected.

When reporting agility scores, please *include the time allotted for the course and the time in which your dog completed the course.*

**Watch for the AOCNC flyer coming out soon for the July 29 interclub competition. Plan to participate. It's fun and great fellowship.**

## Poking Around



## With Luane

Summer's here and the dogs are yapping to get out and about. In Santa Cruz County these are the places you can go with your dogs.

**On leash Trails:** Henry Cowell State Park (Felton) dogs are allowed on certain trails: Meadow Trail, Pipeline Road, Graham Hill Trail. (10 miles round trip). Nisene Marks State Park on Aptos Creek Road up to Porter Picnic Area ...otherwise restricted to picnic areas only.

**On leash SC City Parks:** Pogonip City Park, DeLaveaga City Park

**On leash Watsonville City Parks:** All  
**Off leash Watsonville City Parks:** None

**On leash On the sand:** Rio Del Mar State Beach (South of Soquel River Bridge), Manresa State Beach, Palm State Beach. (South of Seacliff State Beach), Seabright State Beach (north side of Yacht Harbor, Twin Lakes State Beach (South side of Yacht Harbor), New Brighton and Seacliff have been added.

**Off Leash:** (if under immediate and effective voice/noise control) It's Beach (West Lighthouse Beach), Lighthouse Field (Interior), Mitchell's Cove Beach (near West Cliff Drive & Swift St.).

Owners are required to pick up all dog droppings in all of these areas. So don't forget to have your baggy in prominent

display. And since doggy things change at a moment's notice, feel free to check with park personnel to see that all is okay for your dog.

Dogs aren't allowed at Capitola City Beach, Cowell Main City Beach, SC Muni Wharf, Rancho Del Oso, San Lorenzo City Park, San Lorenzo River, Sunset State Beach, UCSC campus, Wilder State Park.

And if you get going and support the effort that **Sandi Pensinger** has been mounting, perhaps you can also use Capitola Beach sometime in the future. Check her <http://www.capitola.com/dogs/index.html> site.

## WARNING

from the internet via **Ron Cole**, SFDTC

Cocoa mulch, which is sold by Home Depot, Foremans Garden Supply and other garden supply stores, contains a lethal ingredient called "theobromine", which is lethal to dogs and cats. It smells like chocolate. It really attracts dogs, and they will ingest this stuff and die. Several deaths have already occurred in the last 2-3 weeks.

Just a word of caution. Check what you are using in your gardens, and beware of what your gardeners are using in your gardens.

## With Special Thanks to Vicki Dudley

Luane Vidak

**Vicki** has chosen to give up her position as Delegate to the AKC for MB. On behalf of the club and myself, I want her to know that we appreciated the time and personal finances that she offered in taking on that position.

When we voted to submit our application to join membership of the AKC, we made an important decision to support purebred dogs in yet another way. Fortunately for us, **Vicki** stepped forward to act as Delegate to get us started on the right foot. We are fortunate to have **Vicki** as a resource who's been there and done that! Thanks again, **Vicki**.

## Memo from Luane

Doesn't seem possible that **Mary, Nancy**, I and four of our former members received our Articles of Incorporation from the State of California thirty-five years ago this month setting up our organization.

Our official date is May of 1966; making this month our official 35th year.

Happy anniversary to all of us, new and old, who have worked really hard to make this an enduring organization.



# Happy Birthday



June	2	Stacey Thompson
	6	Linda Harbertson
	8	Nancy Lewis
	18	Lynn Schmitt
	24	Michael Bashista
	27	Carolyn Meyer
	28	Vicki Dudley
	30	Denise Panzich

and to all our furry friends born in June

1	Chance Fenoglio (Mixed Breed)	age 5
1	Kiska Lambert CD, CGC, TDI (Keeshound Mix)	age 14
1	Rosita Lambert (Chihuahua)	age 12
6	Hoshi Howton (Akita)	age 5
6	Ch Weege Mangels CDX, CGC, ITC (Bloodhound)	age 7
7	Abby Sutherland (Old English Sheepdog)	age 3
11	Buddy Root-Strametz CD, NA, NAJ (Shetland Sheepdog)	age 5
20	Hailey Griffith CD (Corgi)	age 8
24	Chelsea Nelson CDX, WD, TP (Newfoundland)	age 10
25	Candy Terry CD (Labrador Retriever)	age 3
30	Sugar Davis UD (German Shepherd Dog)	age 7
30	Razz Root-Strametz (Shetland Sheepdog)	age 2
30	Fargo Root-Strametz (Shetland Sheepdog)	age 2

# Nose to the Ground Hound

Seedlings sprouting!!!...Fog hovering on the Bay!!!...May flowering!!!...**Marilyn Runyan** being certified by Mixed Breed Club of America to judge their dogs!!!...**Richard Torres** achieving Black Belt level in Martial Arts...and instructing classes several night a week!!!...**Bette Kuepfer** training newest pup with **Pam Strametz** in Castroville!!!...**Judy Nielsen** guiding seniors on tour of SF Flower and Garden show and lots of other places too!!!...**Denise & Tom Panzich** zeroing in on a new Pug puppy, **Jade**!!!...**Linda Lang** and **Bob Mangels** tracking with **Dave** along with **Pam Hetrick** and **Peg Martini**!!!...**Nancy Lewis** investing some time in golf!!!...**Mary Kodis** (Honored Friend) sending a generous contribution to Ruff Notes...many thanks for the thoughtful gesture!!!...**Lisa Barry** having some health concerns...Get feeling fine!!!...**Mary Bettencourt** setting up a fine lunch for the May meeting!!!...**Deanna & Don Gardiner** returning from a great trip abroad!!!...**Judy Force**, DVM checking out **Christo Vidak** on his sojourn to the vet-hospital!!!...**Betty Garcia** trekking up to visit former member **Louise Smith** in the Gold Country!!!...Forgetting to say that **Stacey Thompson** visited my favorite place a few months ago, Bainbridge Island in WashState!!!...**Silvia Holderman** helping **June Laman** with Leashes and Collars these past two weeks in Capitola!!!.....and on sad notes we are sorry to learn of the death of **Betty Gidding's** mother, **Marion Bashista's** mother, **Cindy Snow's** pups **Tobyko** and **Einstein**, and **June Laman's** **Maggie**...Representing MBDTc at **Dorothy Saldivar's** Memorial were **Sue Westover**, **Luane & Anita Vidak**.....Hoping that next month is happier for all.....til then... **Luane**



# Doggy Funny Bones

## Upgrade your dog

via Mount Diablo DTC's *Tales*

Having problems with your current dog??

Here is your chance to upgrade!

Are you experiencing too many reserves and second places to inferior animals in the dog show ring? In the obedience ring, does your dog forget his/her own name?

Well, this simple chain letter is meant to bring relief and happiness to you. Unlike most chain letters, it doesn't cost money.

Simply send a copy of this letter to six other dog owners who are dissatisfied with the way their dogs are working and showing.

Also, bundle up your dog and send him/her to the dog owner at the top of this list and add your name to the bottom of the list. Do not use a return address or the post office may try to contact you.

In one week you will receive 16,436 dogs, and one of them should be a real winner. Have faith in this letter and do not break the chain.

One owner broke the chain and got her own dog back.

"We have not to gain his confidence or his friendship: He is born our friend; while his eyes are still closed, already he believes in us; even before his birth he has given himself to man."

—Maurice Maeterlinck

"Dog. A kind of additional or subsidiary deity designed to catch the overflow and surplus of the world's worship."

—Ambrose Bierce

# AOCNC

Luane Vidak

AOCNC is celebrating its 50th anniversary as an organization. A celebration is planned in conjunction with the Interclub Competition scheduled to be held on July 29, 2001 at Cal State Hayward. This event is a competition and not a workshop. All of our scores Q & NQ count toward the club awards, which are numerous.

Coming along soon in Ruff Notes will be your copy of the premium flier. The entry will need to be returned to our club representative (to be named) who will forward all our entries to the Competition Director under one cover.

The rules for the competition will be found on the flier as it regards eligibility for classes. Exhibitors wishing to have their score count in the selection of the AOCNC WIOC team need to agree to continue on in the competition should they qualify for the AOCNC team. WIOC will be held in Peoria, Arizona on Thursday and Friday, October 25-26, 2001 (Two AKC all-breed obed trials follow on the weekend.) A generous stipend for travel and expenses is provided by AOCNC for the six team members going on to the WIOC Competition.

At Interclub a potluck luncheon is provided by our members attending...so be checking the recipes for something extra special.

Monterey Bay is in charge of the Team Ring. We need to provide five stewards and a table. The rest is provided by AOCNC.

Speaking of the team ring,...let me know if you will be willing to compete (even if it is warm)...and if you'd like, we could gather and practice on Tuesday nights. The class exercises are listed in the AKC Obed Regs. (novice + drop on recall). We are allowed only one team entry. We could all practice and then draw lots, if need be, for the four slots with others preparing to act as alternates. You and your dog don't have to be Great...just willing!

It could be great fun to show your support for MB in this fashion and give everyone an equal opportunity to take part.

## The Litter Box

**Denise and Tom Panzich** proudly announce the adoption of Storybrook's Shades of Jade, aka *Jade*. She's a 9-week old Pug, and Denise says she is causing a lot of gray hair for *Monique* and all.

**Kim Sutherland** proudly announces the adoption of Old English Sheepdog *Annie*, 2 months old. I bet *Abby* will get a big kick out of being big sister.



## Very Short Jokes

Credited to Comedian Steven Wright

If Fed Ex and UPS were to merge, would they call it Fed UP?

What hair color do they put on the driver's licenses of bald men?

I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a whole lot more as they get older; then it dawned on me. They were cramming for their finals.

Isn't Disney World a people trap operated by a mouse?

Clones are people two.

# Trial Catalog Advertising

Dennis Vierra

Members get a special rate for either themselves or their employers to advertise in our 2001 Obedience Trial Catalogue.

The rates are: half page \$15; Full page \$30. Your advertising does not have to be animal related. Our exhibitors and members do have other lives. Hard to believe, I know.

If you or your employer would like to advertise you may send photo ready copy and check to: 3675 Redwood Dr., Aptos, CA 95003. Any questions call 688-1326.

## Trial Catalog Memorial Page

Dennis Vierra

Honor your lost loved ones in our 2001 Obedience Trial Catalogue. Please include: YOUR NAME; DOG'S CALL AND REGISTERED NAMES; AGE AND BREED. Each entry is just \$1.

You may mail this info to me at 3675 Redwood Dr., Aptos, CA 95003 or phone 688-1326 or e-mail vierravista@hotmail.com or there are forms at Watsonville class.

If your listings are the same as last year, just let me know.



# A Dog Person's Dictionary

from the Internet via Vicki Dudley

**ANGULATION:** Degree to which dog handlers will bend over backwards to impress the judges.

**BALANCE:** How to arrange the check-book so your spouse won't know how much money you spent on dog shows last month. Usually done in the bathroom with the door locked.

**BITCH:**

a) Name for a lady dog.

b) Name often overheard at dog shows, not always to describe a lady dog.

**COAT:** The hairy covering of a dog that usually falls out about one week before the Specialty show.

**DAM:**

a) A lady dog with children.

b) Expression frequently overheard at dog shows as losers leave the ring.

**ELBOW:** Method of getting to ringside when late.

**EXPRESSION:** "Sweet" look adopted by dogs while staring ravenously at chunks of liver.

**FANCIER:** Degree to which some gentlemen handlers dress more than others.

**FEATHERING:** What winners are accused of doing to Judges' nests.

**FRONT:** Part of the dog often stacked toward the outside of the ring.

**HEEL:**

a) What you feel like when your dog beats the one you had just sold to an eager novice.

b) Expression often screamed to attract the attention of deaf dogs.



**HEIGHT:** As in "Maximum Allowed," a measurement which all champions fall under by AT LEAST 1/8 inch.

**HOCK:** A way of financing your dog shows by the use of jewelry such as wedding rings.

**KENNEL:** Where you go when the lads fight and your spouse yells at you.

**LITTER:** Trash left all over the building and parking lot after a dog show.

**MASK:** What to wear when you have to show the pet you sold six months ago.

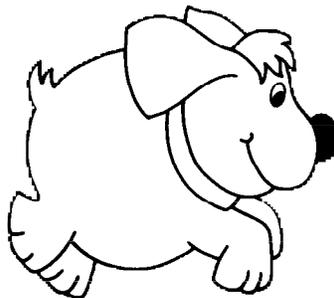
**MUZZLE:** What to put on your kids at a dog show to prevent them from calling your competition what they overheard you call him last night.

**NOSEPRINTS:** Cute marks left all over your French doors.

**OUTCROSSING:** What your spouse tells the minister you are doing out in the kennel with the dog and the bitch.

**POINTS:** Minute, invisible awards for winning which you cannot convince your spouse are more important than cash prizes.

**PUPPIES:** Small, dog-like food-processing machines with the ability to stink up an entire house and collectively deafen a band of magpies, (these creatures have not yet been perfected, as they come with a leaky system, and can also be dangerous to weak hearts and bank accounts).



# Why Dogs Are Better Than Kids

from the Internet via Vicki Dudley

\*It doesn't take 45 minutes to get a dog ready to go outside in the winter.

\*Dogs cannot lie.

\*Dogs never resist naptime.

\*You don't need extra phone lines for a dog.

\*Dogs don't pester you to get a kid.

\*Dogs don't care if the corn has been touched by the mashed potatoes.

\*Average cost of sending your dog to school: \$60. Average cost of sending your kid: \$103,000.

\*Dogs are housebroken by the time they are twelve weeks old.

\*Your dog isn't embarrassed if you sing in public.

\*If your dog is a bad seed, your genes cannot be blamed.

"The disposition of noble dogs is to be gentle with people they know and the opposite with people they don't know... How then can the dog be anything other than a lover of learning since it defines what's its own and what's alien?"

—Plato

"I love a dog. He does nothing for political reasons."

—Will Rogers

"A dog can express more with his tail in minutes than his owner can express with his tongue in hours."

—Anonymous

## New Member Welcome



Jane Devlin  
242 De Laveaga Drive  
Santa Cruz, CA 95065  
Home Phone: 454-0769  
Work Phone: 469-6442  
Birthday: March 11  
e-mail Address: wilddogs2@earthlink.net

Amanda Nie (junior member)  
7050 Freedom Blvd.  
Aptos, CA 95003  
Home Phone: 662-0146  
Birthday: November 22

Sandi Pensinger  
500 Oak Drive  
Capitola, CA 95010  
Home Phone: 476-9065  
Spouse: Edwin Mabie  
Birthday: August 3  
e-mail Address: sandi@capitola.com

## Breed Specific:

### American Cocker Spaniel

This affectionate and most popular of all American breeds descends from the working English Cocker Spaniel. Although attempts have been made to work the American, and it still retains hunting instincts, its popularity lies in the gentle companionship it offers. Its beauty and charm are appreciated throughout North, Central, and South America, and also in Japan. Unfortunately, the breed suffers from a range of health problems, including epilepsy, but its generous and affable personality makes up for any physical shortcomings.

**Breed History:** Legend has it that the first spaniel arrived in the United States in 1620, with the Pilgrims on the Mayflower. Originally, all spaniels were classified together, but eventually the American Cocker was bred for desired traits. In 1946 it was recognized as a separate breed.

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## Obedience Trial Dinner

Alverta Strametz

The Judges' Dinner for the Obedience Trial will be held Saturday, August 4 at the Green Valley Grill; it will be a *buffet*.

There will be three entrees:

Roasted Tri-Tip of Beef  
Wood Grilled Fresh Salmon  
for vegetarians: Cheese Filled Spinish Tortellini

Cost is \$23, including tax and tip.

Please help me by getting your reservation in early, as the closing date will be Monday, July 30. There will be *absolutely no reservations after that date*. No reservations accepted day of trial. Thank you.

There will be a complete menu in the July Ruff Notes.

Cocktails at 6:30 p.m. Dinner at 7:00 p.m.



### BREED Facts:

Country of Origin: United States  
Date of Origin: 1800s  
First Use: Small game retrieving  
Use Today: Companion  
Life Expectancy: 13-14 years  
Weight Range: 24-28 pounds  
Height Range: 14-15 inches

Data gathered from:  
*DOGS (Portraits of over 400 Pedigrees)*  
Bruce Fogle, DVM  
*A Darling Kindersley Book*  
First American Edition, 2000

*Editor's Note: Breed Specific is a column in which I will highlight a different breed in each issue. Some will be club breeds, some not.*

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"A dog is a dog except when he is facing you. Then he is Mr. Dog."  
—Haitian Farmer

"If people were superior to animals, they'd take better care of the world."  
—Winnie the Pooh

"A dog is one of the few remaining reasons why some people can be persuaded to go for a walk."  
—O. A. Battista

"I never knew a dog with sense enough to cease worshipping a human fool."  
—Albert Payson Terhune



# Agility Dinner—Saturday, June 16

Betty Garcia

# Directory Info; Doggie Birthdays

Marilyn Runyan

The Agility Dinner will be held at the Green Valley Grill, 60 Penny Lane, Watsonville on Saturday, June 16. Cocktails are at 5:30; dinner at 6:00.

Dinner prices include tax and tip:

Wood Grilled Breast of Chicken Balsamic wild mushroom sauce, fresh vegetables, saffron rice	\$22.75
Cedar Wood Plank Roasted Salmon Honey, lime and chipolte salsa fresca, fresh vegetables, saffron rice	\$22.75
Oven Roasted Prime Rib of Beef Housemade au jus, fresh vegetables, potatoes au gratin	\$27.45

Dinner includes fresh bread, baby field green salad, chocolate mousse, coffee, tea, and water.

Contact **Betty (BG) Garcia** at class on Tuesdays or call 722-1748 to make reservations. Deadline for reservations is Tuesday, June 12.

Let's all get together to have a great meal and a fun evening.

Included in this issue of Ruff Notes is a printout of the information currently shown in the updated Directory for this upcoming year. Also listed is your dog(s)' birthday information.

*Please check the Directory information carefully. Do not assume that everything is correct—though I do try! If there are any errors, you need to notify me right away so that I can make any needed corrections.*

*Please check the Doggie Birthday information carefully. Does your dog have a new title now shown? Do you have a dog not listed? Is there a dog listed you no longer have?*

*Doggie birthday lists must be updated every year. Doggie birthday acknowledgments will be made **ONLY** for those dogs for which I have received **confirmation**.*



**Monterey Bay Dog Training Club**  
P. O. Box 1022  
Watsonville, CA 95077

# The Journey

by Crystal Ward Kent

submitted by **Cindy Snow**

When you bring a pet into your life, you begin a journey—a journey that will bring you more love and devotion than you have ever known, yet also test your strength and courage.

If you allow, the journey will teach you many things, about life, about yourself, and most of all, about love. You will come away changed forever, for one soul cannot touch another without leaving its mark.

Along the way, you will learn much about savoring life's simple pleasures—jumping in leaves, snoozing in the sun, the joys of puddles, and even the satisfaction of a good scratch behind the ears.

If you spend much time outside, you will be taught how to truly experience every element, for no rock, leaf, or log will go unexamined, no rustling bush will be overlooked, and even the very air will be inhaled, pondered, and noted as being full of valuable information. Your pace may be slower—except when heading home to the food dish—but you will become a better naturalist, having been taught by an expert in the field.

Too many times we hike on automatic pilot, our goal being to complete the trail rather than enjoy the journey. We miss the details—the colorful mushrooms on the rotting log, the honeycomb in the old maple snag, the hawk feather caught on a twig. Once we walk as a dog does, we discover a whole new world. We stop, we browse the landscape, we kick over leaves, peek in tree holes, look up, down, all around. And we learn what any dog knows: that nature has created a marvelously complex world that is full of surprises, that each cycle of the seasons brings ever-changing wonders, each day an essence all its own.

Even from indoors you will find yourself more attuned to the world around you. You will find yourself watching summer insects collecting on a screen. How bizarre they are! (How many kinds there are!), or noting the flick and flash of fireflies through the dark. You will

stop to observe the swirling dance of windblown leaves, or sniff the air after a rain. It does not matter that there is no objective in this; the point is in the doing, in not letting life's most important details slip by.

You will find yourself doing silly things that your petless friends might not understand: spending thirty minutes in the grocery aisle looking for the catfood brand your feline must have, buying dog birthday treats, or driving around the block an extra time because your pet enjoys the ride.

You will roll in the snow, wrestle with chewie toys, bounce little rubber balls till your eyes cross, and even run around the house trailing your bathrobe tie—with a cat in hot pursuit—all in the name of love.

Your house will become muddier and hairier. You will wear less dark clothing and buy more lint rollers. You may find dog biscuits in your pocket or purse, and feel the need to explain that an old plastic shopping bag adorns your living room rug because your cat loves the crinkly sound.

You will learn the true measure of love—the steadfast, undying kind that says, "It doesn't matter where we are or what we do, or how life treats us as long as we are together." Respect this always. It is the most precious gift any living soul can give another. You will not find it often among the human race.

And you will learn humility. The look in my dog's eyes often made me feel ashamed. Such joy and love at my presence. She saw not some flawed human who could be cross and stubborn, moody or rude, but only her wonderful companion. Or maybe she saw those things and dismissed them as mere human foibles, not worth considering, and so chose to love me anyway.

If you pay attention and learn well, when the journey is done, you will be not just a better person, but the person your pet

always knew you to be—the one they were proud to call beloved friend.

I must caution you that this journey is not without pain. Like all paths of true love, the pain is part of loving. For as surely as the sun sets, one day your dear animal companion will follow a trail you cannot yet go down. And you will have to find the strength and love to let them go. A pet's time on earth is far too short—especially for those that love them. We borrow them, really, just for a while; and during these brief years they are generous enough to give us all their love, every inch of their spirit and heart, until one day there is nothing left.

The cat that only yesterday was a kitten is all too soon old and frail and sleeping in the sun. The young pup of boundless energy wakes up stiff and lame, the muzzle now gray. Deep down we somehow always knew that this journey would end. We knew that if we gave our hearts, they would be broken. But give them we must for it is all they ask in return. When the time comes, and the road curves ahead to a place we cannot see, we give one final gift and let them run on ahead—young and whole once more.

"Godspeed, good friend," we say, until our journey comes full circle and our paths cross again.

[Editor's Note: There are millions of cats and dogs dying for a home, please make room in your heart and adopt one or two from your local shelter or rescue.]

