



Fellowship in the Interest **FIDO** of Dogs and their Owners
 in Prospect Park **SPEAKS**



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www.fidobrooklyn.org

The ALPHA DESK Something to Bark About

by Mary McInerney

Congratulations, everyone! We have scored 2 for 2 so far in the struggle to save offleash recreation in New York City. First, the courts ruled against the suit brought by the Juniper Park Civic Association to make the City enforce the Health Code regarding unleashed dogs, and then the Board of Health voted unanimously to amend that section of the Health Code to accommodate offleash recreation.

This came about through an outstanding organizing effort by the dog owners of New York (that would be us!) Spearheaded by the New York Council of Dog Owner Groups (NYCDOG), of which FIDO is a charter member, dog owners from all over the City collected signatures on petitions, wrote letters, and turned out for the hearings. There were over 13,000 "items of public comment" submitted to the Board of Health; of these thousands, just over 200 were in opposition to the amendment. A special tip of the hat goes to NYCDOG President Bob Marino, legal mastermind Matt Greller, webmaster Matt Parker, and Juniper DOG President Terri Sullivan, and the marvelous City legal team, especially Paula van Meter.

But it wasn't just the active campaigning that tipped the scales. It was the consistently responsible behavior all of us, of the thousands of citizens who enjoy offleash, who train their dogs, keep track of their dogs, are courteous to other Parks

users, and respect the Parks themselves. Way to go, everybody! Give yourselves a big pat on the back! Through your efforts, we are about to accomplish what once would have been thought impossible: we, the dog owners of New York, are affecting a change in the City codes to make offleash a recognized form of recreation in the City's parks.

There's one more hurdle to go-actual approval from the Department of Parks and Recreation. That process will start in January, so that means another round of letters, petitions, hearings, etc. We will all need to pull together to win this last round.

Fortunately, Parks is on our side- a 180° change from even 5 years ago, when Parks and the dog groups were at loggerheads on a frequent basis. It has taken a lot of patience and politicking: helping by self-policing, following the current rules, organizing Park clean-ups and hole filling, helping raise funds for the Parks, reaching out to other Park user groups who have concerns about offleash dogs, sponsoring a Little League Team and bringing dogs to the Opening Day Parade, writing thank you letters to everyone who does *anything* for the Parks in general or dogs in specific... basically doing a major dance at every opportunity.

The master stroke, tho, was forming the City-wide group, NYCDOG, so that finally the Powers That Be could see us a coherent



Dr. Edgar R. Butts, Assistant Commissioner, Veterinary and Pest Control Services, NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene and NYCDOG's Legal Beagle outside the Health Commission hearing December 5. (Support for Legal Beagle courtesy of veteran dog walker Larissa Dougherty.)

force, not just a bunch of isolated nut jobs (we're *organized* nut jobs, by gosh!) They like it when there is just *one* force to deal with rather than a bunch of scattered clubs.

All this effort is not going to end, even with a victory. We have to be in this for the long haul to maintain the success, keeping up with the education, the outreach, the fundraising, etc. We have to stay on the radar screens of the non-dog owning public and of the Parks Department as a positive force in Parks.

NYCDOG has buttons that say: "At the Tail End of Every Leash is a Voter!" Now the City knows it's true. Thanks again.

Let's Get Lost

by Jana Martin

It's a blustery late-October afternoon and the sky is that bruised shade of gray that always makes me want to huddle inside. But I just sent my latest volunteer victim out to hide in the woods nearly a mile away, and Lee, my dog, is raring to go. 70 pounds of working-line German Shepherd trying to contain herself knowing that someone is out there, running through the fields, to hide behind a tree. Come on! She whines. There's someone to find! Don't you know that? She points to the tracking harness hanging on the doorknob. She points to the long lead. She points to the door. Finally, she sits down with a huff. These humans, they are so slow.

This is actually an off-day; we're just doing a track to keep her sharp. But Lee doesn't know that. She couldn't care less. She wants to go. I give the victim ten minutes, then radio: he's ready. The bleep of the walkie-talkie is music to Lee; she sings at its sound. And then, finally, I reach for the wonderful objects that tell Lee we're going: bright orange jacket, waterproof hiking boots, warm hat, radio popped in the pocket. On goes Lee's tracking harness—an act which sends her into spasmodic hops and shakes, on goes the long lead. Outside, the wind's whipping the leaves into do si does all around us, gusting from the northeast. Wind can push scent, and a dog may not be off a trail if she's to the left or right, she's just following where the wind pushed it. It's getting colder. In an hour it will be pitch dark. None of this matters to Lee, who's already proven that dark or light doesn't matter: her nose doesn't care.

Lee is training for a battery of SAR certifications, as am I. She's a lot farther along. I have to learn rappelling and how to pack my go-bag, and memorize acronyms that stand for military-style lists and rules. None of this would be hap-



Lee relaxing with her friend, Baron, on a visit to Prospect Park.

pening were it not for Lee. She's a rare one: a female with the nonstop, let's go, do this all day drive of a male. (Although I told a baffled K-9 officer, in my family, that's the way women are). Serious search and rescue ops don't normally like deploying females for deep searches, but a few people see promise in Lee who, back in her Prospect Park days, acted as macho as a big-balled pit. Up here, she's evolved into a confident, at times arrogant, trying her heart out, working machine. So as we set on the trail of this latest victim, heading straight up hill, I dig my gore-tex boots into the slope and try to keep up. I have a basic idea where we're going, but this track I'm trusting my dog.

There are a few ways to start a good search and rescue dog. No matter what, you have to find out if the dog's got that kind of drive. Will she want to follow a person's scent, old or fresh, through all sorts of terrain—roadway, hardpacked dirt, swamp, the rocks and rubble so common on these Ulster County slopes—rushing, icy streams—for miles, hours at a time? What can I use to motivate my dog to work that hard?

In Prospect Park, we did the hot dog track—drop hot dogs into footsteps, the dog learns to methodically deepen her nose into every footstep, calmly inhaling the scent and those treats. Lee seemed to enjoy it well enough. Up here, I met people

who were doing something different—not for sport, but for function. People get lost in these hills, and sometimes a dog can find them. The first time Lee did a track, she turned into a new dog. She'd found her instrument, you might say.

Because Lee carries herself low to the ground, and since we'd already started tracking, I decided to train her to be a trailing, not an air scenting dog. A trailing dog follows a scent path wherever it goes, has to discriminate between a cross-track of someone else and the designated scent, has to be able to find stale, hours-old scent, has to know how to circle back until she picks up a ray of that odor and then zoom back onto it, has to have the stamina—mental and physical—to keep going, keep problem solving, keep scrambling. So far, she's only done positive searches: there is always someone, or something, at the end. Rewards are critical in SAR training: dogs get discouraged just like people, lose their confidence, lose their nerve. Lee's reward is her tug: a battered jute tube stuffed with fiber about the diameter of a man's forearm. All her drive and focus is released onto that tug, which she attacks ferociously for three minutes, then shakes vigorously, then gives back and replays the track as we traipse happily home.

Today's victim was actually my husband—how amusing to be able to tell him to get lost. We didn't let

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Guaranteed Results but Not Miracles

An Interview with dog trainer, Tyril Frith

by Jennifer Rose Kagan

Tyril Frith is well known in the park. And it's no wonder. The results he gets are indisputable. There are different theories of dog training and different kinds of dog trainers. Many people in Prospect Park swear by Tyril's logical and honest approach. Tyril has 40 years of experience including a degree from DeCosta's K-9 School of Control and Obedience. He has titled his own dogs in Shutzhund and trained owners in a variety of obedience titles. Recently, I sat down with Tyril to ask him about his philosophy of dog training.

TF: First and foremost, you must consider what I call the Big 5 of training. They are **Genetics, Breed, Disposition** (which in this context includes all of the facets of temperament and character), **Respect and Laying the Foundation**.



John Felman and Max are ready to work.



Tyril Frith

First, if there is a genetic issue, it may make training harder, but not impossible. Secondly, while there are individual differences, breeds do have specific characteristics that will affect your approach to training. Your dog's breed affects its disposition so you must modify your approach accordingly. You want your dog to respect you, so you must establish yourself as the leader. Now the first step of training is to lay the foundation. A house will collapse without a foundation and so will dog training. Obedience training is the cement at the foundation of all dog work. Without that foundation your dog won't understand what you want. Remember that training varies depending on the breed and disposition of the dog and also depending on what you yourself want. You must establish the rules of your house and then hold the dog accountable to these rules.

JK: Tyril, when is the best time to begin laying the foundation?

TF: Immediately. Let's say that you bring a new dog home. You take off a week from work to acclimate your new dog to

your home. You spend the whole week, making sure he feels loved. Then Monday arrives and you say "Goodbye. I'll be home after work," and you walk out the door. The dog starts to cry. You didn't expect this to happen. So you run back to her and tell her that everything is ok and that you really do love her, you aren't leaving forever and you leave again. Guess what? The dog starts to cry again. No amount of hugs, kisses and assurances will stop the crying. Ok, let's discuss what is happening. During that week you didn't lay the foundation.

JK: But isn't it important to establish trust before you start training?

TF: Sure, the dog needs all that loving and kissing but the dog also needs training. You don't want her to cry every time you leave the house? She trusts that you love her but she doesn't trust that you aren't going to leave her. So you



Dr. Lee Crespi and her Labrador, Brooklyn, listen to instructions.

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Results Not Miracles *Con't. from pg. 3*

have to train her and it begins the minute you bring the dog home. What to do? Leave the dog for short periods of time during that very first week. In that way, you are laying the foundation that you will leave for periods of time but that you will return. Animals are creatures of habit. You teach the dog the habits you want. And don't wait until your dog is outside to train. You can do many exercises indoors to lay the foundation and establish respect where there are fewer distractions. If you wait to train you will cause problems.

JK: What would you say is the biggest mistake you see?

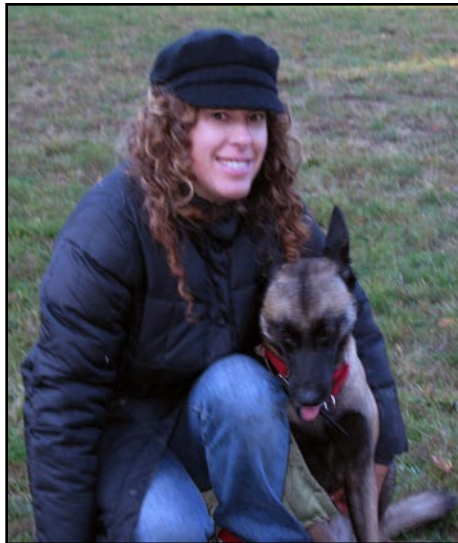
TF: In my 40 years of experience, I see that people aren't able to accept the reality of the situation. Denial is a big problem in life. I always say, see things as they are and not how you want them to be. When you can do that we are ready to begin the training.

JK: There are many theories and philosophies about dog training out there. What is your technique or method for training?

TF: Yes, there are. I believe in a three level approach and in terms of method, you do what is necessary for the dog to understand the concept. This is very important. The three-step program is **The Learning, The Correction and The Proofing phase.**

The Learning Phase

In the learning phase, the dog must feel comfortable. If the dog is nervous, it is harder for him to learn. In order to make the dog comfortable we use inducement, which is something to motivate the dog such as food or a ball. In this phase, you are getting the dog to understand the concept of what you want and you use the food in order to reward dog when he does what you want. This is where you have to be very consistent and clear. You must say what you mean and mean what you say. You must teach your dog the mean-



Author Jennifer Kagan takes a break from training to give her Malinois, Mika, a well-deserved hug.

ing of your words. I see this all the time. A dog is doing something that the owner doesn't like or want. You hear "No. No. Don't do that. Come Here. Good Dog." But the dog is still doing the same behavior. So which one is it? No, Don't Do that, Come Here or Good Dog? If you mean no why don't you say no? Why do you say good dog when the dog is doing the unwanted behavior? The dog is going nowhere with this type of training. You are only confusing the dog and confus-

ing yourself. Remember a dog is going by instinct not intelligence. He doesn't know what you expect of him if the words or rules keep changing. He wants to know who is in charge and what to do to get your respect. Don't we all like to know what is expected of us? We wouldn't want to work in a place where the rules were constantly changing. Right?

The key to training is this. Repetition and Consistency! You want to set up the learning experience so that the dog has success and can get the concept. This is very important.

JK: What if I don't mind the behavior?

TF: Then don't change it. But be honest with yourself as to whether you accept it 100% of the time. And also it's not just you. Your dog's behavior affects other people. You might like it but I'm sorry to say, someone else might not. Some people let their dog do something four, five, or ten times before they address the behavior.

Maybe the behavior wasn't so bad in the beginning or you thought it was cute or you didn't know how to stop it. But now for whatever reason, it's driving you nuts and your family is at its wit's end. You

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Barbara Conn sends her dog, Simone, over the hurdle.

Results Not Miracles *Con't. from pg. 4*

decide to do something about it when you are at the height of your frustration. The next time it happens, the dog will only stop when you are in a complete frenzy. That is what you just taught him. So, now you have to recondition your dog. It's not her fault. If a behavior is not wanted, you must address it immediately. You can't decide to address it only when it suits you. That confuses the dog. You can't accept the behavior one day or in one situation and not in the other. It's common sense. You must be consistent. That's the key to training a dog. Consistency and Repetition. Your dog's ability to learn depends upon the Big 5 and your ability to be consistent and clear.

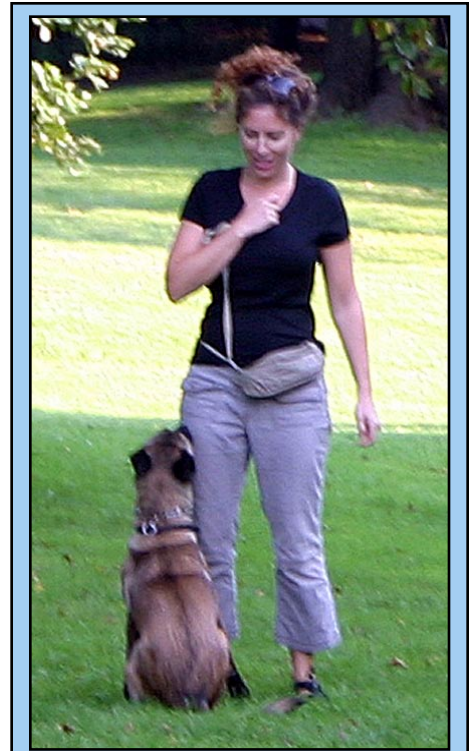
Once the dog understands the concept, we move to **The Correction Phase**. If you correct the dog when she doesn't understand the

concept, it's abuse. But if your dog knows what you want and still isn't doing it, you must ask yourself if you are clear and consistent and if you are using one word to command the dog. When your dog is not doing what you ask, say "NO" and give a correction. The dog now learns that "No" means "Stop whatever you're doing."

Consistency and repetition, along with appropriate correction, not an emotional outburst, but a calm and proper rational correction, enables your dog to learn.

There are many different breeds and many different dispositions. Remember the Big 5. It's very important to lay a foundation with the obedience training. Obedience is the concrete that builds your foundation for a well-trained dog.

...To be continued next issue



"She is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are her life, her love, her leader. She will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of her heart. You owe it to her to be worthy of such devotion." - Unknown



Jim and Rusty: Ingredients for a Perfect Team



Happ New Year, Folks!

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THE STORY OF SCOOTERFOOD

by Michelle Lewis

Scooter Mae, my beautiful 60-pound mutt from a Philadelphia shelter thrived on a natural diet for many years. She made me realize that the nose is everything! And that the more natural the ingredients the better the nutrition. That's pretty much what I had been practicing for myself but Scooter's excellent health and enthusiastic appetite made it clear that not only humans benefit from the "fresh is best" maxim. Dogs do, too.

So with Scooter as my inspiration I started ScooterFood LLC, a homemade canine cuisine business. It's been a fantastic learning experience. OK, maybe a few unpleasant experiences are mixed in. Specifically, it's not great to cut up raw beef heart at 6:00 in the morning. And scraping raw salmon off the bone for 6 hours results in very fishy fingers.

The cooked, not raw, end product is definitely worth the effort. ScooterFood's five formulas—chicken with vegetables, salmon with vegetables, chicken liver with quinoa and vegetables, beef heart with vegetables and tofu with vegetables—are all excellent sources of human-grade protein, vitamins and minerals. They are sold fresh or frozen and when fresh are perishable after 8 to 10 days.

The whole process, from creating each recipe while following AAFCO guidelines to registering each of them with the New York

State Department of Agriculture & Markets took nearly two and a half years. Luckily I had the assistance of a very experienced pet food consultant and the fabulous vets at Hope Veterinary Clinic, who endorse ScooterFood.

Finally, when you make the switch from canned wet foods to a natural diet your dog may go through a period of detoxification. Though it's unlikely your dog will feel any discomfort you can mitigate that possibility by introducing the new food gradually. Use it as a topping to their dry kibble and add more each day.

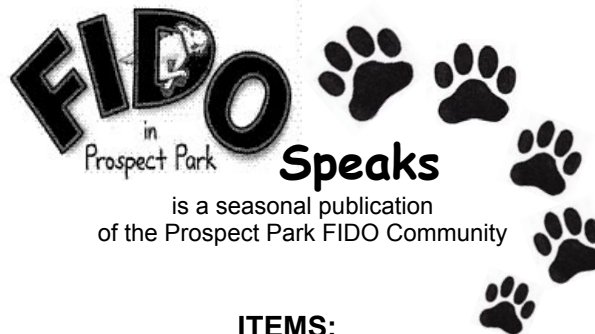
Also keep in mind that just as you wouldn't expect to get all the vitamins you need from one meal neither will your dog. Vary her diet and she'll get everything she needs.

Here's the crux: it's not about feeding your dog or cat "human" food. It's feeding your pet good food.

Learn more about ScooterFood and find out where to buy it near you, visit www.scooterfood.com.



Scooter Lewis



ITEMS:

- (1) Dogs must be on leash at 9:00 a.m.
- (2) You can join/renew your membership online at our website using your credit card: www.fidobrooklyn.org

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Roamin' in Dog History

by Maureen Sanders

In Rome of old was a dog named 'Nero'.

In Rome of old was a dog named 'Zero'.

Nero was but on his own pleasure bent.

Zero was placid, bored, and content.

Nero chased bitches while Romantown burned.

Zero was totally unconcerned.

People were angry and yelled at Nero;

But no one was able to get to Zero.

Orphan Poop

by Holly Hallmark

I recently overheard Mary McInerney, FIDO's president, say that she routinely picks up 'orphan poop' on walks with her dogs, Scout and Angie. Her comment resounded with me because orphan poop is one of my pet peeves. Sometimes I pick it up too, but often I pass it by, privately fuming at the unknown culprit too lazy or too inconsiderate to pick up after his dog. But Mary reminded me that, even though preliminary off-leash rulings have been favorable, we still need all the positive PR we can get. We have to keep the rules!

Abandoned poop casts a shadow of suspicion on all of us who have dogs. So I'm taking an extra bag along, just



"Yuck! Orphan doggie poops! Argh!"

in case. If you consider following this example, be prepared for a surprise. Abandoned poop will mostly likely be a cold handful, not warm as we're used to picking up.

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Lee see him leave. Now that she knows it's not only a victim, it's one of her people, she's moving fast, hot on his trail, nose deep into the ground, covering distance. I can tell how fast he was going by how Lee covers the ground—where he slowed down and took shorter steps, she slows too, drinking in each step; where he leaped and ran, she scrambles. I also can tell where he turned—and how sharply his angle—because Lee's on those turns like a Hoover. Up above the slope he cut a diagonal through the sassafras trees, then jogged along the logging road into in the old cow pasture. He zig-zagged around the puddles and ruts in the old road, veered left, then right by the carcass of a 1960 volkswagen beetle (who knows how it got up here), then darted through a stand of pines to the right, headed north, loped through the high grass of the meadow, veered left through another stand of pines, leaped over a downed oak tree, cut east, and for a final trick, circled a giant old maple and raced for another old giant about 100 yards away.

Following behind the dog, who's completely absorbed in her work but still listens for any jerk on the line (a check that tells her to re-think her direction), there's always that

possibility that this time, she'll be completely off. Maybe she's following a bear, or a coyote, and we'll wind up in the middle of the dark woods all night. So far, it's never happened. Crows fly overhead, the wind gusts harder, the sky darkens. I could, in a moment of weakness, radio Danny for his position. If Lee's off the trail I could line check, let her circle, and hope she grabs onto the scent in her 360. But if I'm reading Lee right, she's on him: her ears are pricked forward and her gait is steady, and as she sweeps around the giant old maple she raises her head for a moment, having caught a whiff. Though trailing dogs have to keep their nose to the ground, there's nothing wrong with a dog who air-scents for a moment to problem-solve—at least according to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who are said to have the best search-dog program in the world. It's not like a tracking trial, where style and presentation are of the utmost. Lee can do that, but it doesn't thrill her like a good search through the woods.

At a slow canter, Lee follows the victim's last steps, nose deep again for 100, joyous yards. We pass a deer bone; though it's undoubtedly rich with scent she doesn't stop. We're close, Lee indicates,

going faster. And then, there he is, crouched behind the tree. We make a huge fuss and out comes the tug. There's lots of rabble-raising. Then the three of us head home, Lee ambling happily over everyone's scent, retracing the steps. She doesn't know this, but soon she's going to be evaluated by a ranger for suitability, and then she'll start an even harder phase. Having started only 6 months ago, she's progressed so fast that this kind of trail is gravy to her now. But dogs live in the moment, and the best thing to do is celebrate every good thing they do.

"Thank you for saving my life," Danny says to her, as she wags her tail, tired but happy.



Lee Martin

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