



fall 2004

SPEAKS!

FELLOWSHIP FOR THE INTERESTS OF DOGS
and their owners!

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Barking Up The Family Tree

by Maureen Sanders

I write during the dog days of summer. Some 50 trillion miles away in the constellation Canis Major, Sirius – the dog star – is generating more heat than our sun. The ancient Egyptians, who named the star after the dog-headed god Osiris, believed (erroneously) that this extra heat, combined with that from our sun, caused high temperatures when Sirius shined on Egypt in July and August.

Appropriately Sirius is one of the brightest stars in the sky, just as our dogs are some of the brightest lights in our lives. Some of us might say this of cats as well. And, as it turns out, dogs and cats are distant relatives. In the nomenclature of the biologists, the suborder Canioidea accompanies the suborder Feloidea in the order Carnivora. In plain English, the dogs and the cats and their respective kin are all flesh-eaters. Some of these animals eat other things as well, but all eat meat.

The dogs in our lives would not understand our wasting precious newsletter space on cats. And we must, as always, keep them happy. So let me introduce you to the dog family and its closest neighbors:

The Canidae Family has 37 species, only 9 of which inhabit North America; and one of those, the red wolf, is almost extinct. The others are the grey fox, the North American red fox, the European red fox, the beach fox, the Arctic fox, the grey wolf, the coyote, and our beloved dogs – the only canids with a worldwide distribution.

The grey fox is considered the most primitive canid alive today. Like its cousins, the North American red fox and the somewhat larger European red fox, the grey fox is an anatomically catlike canid. The grey fox can even climb trees. Other catlike features of both the grey and red foxes include elliptical eyes and highly sensitive long whiskers. These traits enable the foxes (and the cats) to hunt in the dark.

In spite of their shared catlike features, the grey and red foxes belong to different genera within the canidae family. Both the North American and the European red foxes belong to the genus *Vulpes*, while the grey fox belongs to the genus *Urocyon*. Another member of *Urocyon* is the beach fox of California's Channel Islands. This fox has been separated from mainland grey foxes for 16,000 years, and has evolved a little differently, being smaller and having fewer vertebrae in its tail.

The remaining North American fox, the Arctic fox, belongs to a third genus, *Alopex*, but is likely to be reclassified as *Vulpes* in the near future. The Arctic fox is a wanderer. Though no bigger than the average house cat, it has been known to travel more than a thousand miles over land and ice in search of food. It is also extremely tolerant of cold, and doesn't even shiver until the temperature hits -94°F.

Crafty as ever, the foxes got themselves in before the members of genus *Canis*, both in this article and in an evolutionary sense. Estimates vary, but it seems safe to say that the family Canidae was in situ on earth some 40 million years ago. By contrast, modern *Canis* species (wolves, coyotes, and domestic dogs) did not begin to appear in North America until some time during the Pleistocene epoch, which began 1.6 million years ago.

North American wolves, coyotes, and dogs can mate with each other and produce fertile offspring. This suggests ancestral linkage, and indeed, DNA sequencing has shown that the wolf is the closest wild relative to the domestic dog. Wolves and coyotes share a common ancestor, but diverged as distinct species about a million years ago. The domestic dog diverged as a distinct species about

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Barking Up The Family Tree

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14,000 years ago. Some authorities, however, consider dogs to be tame variants of the wolf, and refer to them as *Canis lupus familiaris* instead of simply *Canis familiaris*. ('Lupus' is the wolf's species name.)

Eastern coyotes are thought to be descendants of western coyotes who mated with wolves, perhaps the now rare red wolf. Coydogs, the product of coyote-dog matings, exist; and there is at least one outfit that breeds and sells them – with the caveat that raising a coydog is much more demanding than raising a domestic dog. Interbreeding between wolves and domestic dogs has occurred, but there is little hard evidence of an extensive past for the wolfdog. Fossils from Native American sites have produced bones that are ambiguous as to origin.

More recently, northern Native American trappers have been known to use wolfdogs for their sleds. Most often these animals can be controlled by no one but their master.

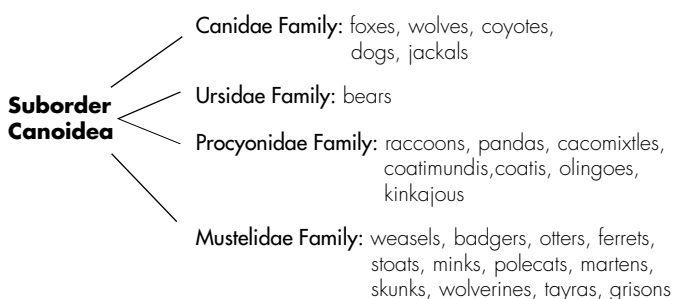
THE BIG QUESTION:

How did the dogs that share our homes, our lives, and our hearts come to us from a species that is relatively intolerant of humans? Two possibilities are suggested in the literature.

First, a niche might have opened for scavengers when Paleo- or Neolithic humans began to live in permanent settlements. Those wolves willing to risk proximity to people came for food and, since successful, stuck around. Natural selection did the rest. 'Proto-dogs' evolved. People found advantages, such as personal safety and livestock protection, in having them close by. And, through years of selection for tameness, today's domestic dogs evolved. If they look like big babies compared to adult wolves, it's because pedomorphism occurred. The selection for tameness also selected for less adrenal hormone activity and more serotonin activity, the physiological bases of both tameness and juvenile characteristics. Today's dogs are more like juvenile wolves than adult wolves.

Secondly, artificial selection, which is rampant among today's breeders, might have occurred in Paleo- or Neolithic times. This would have had to involve the conscious breeding of dogs for specific traits. It is doubtful that primitive humans would have had the time and equipment to do this successfully, but some researchers still consider it a viable option.

Take a moment. Give your Fido a big hug. And be thankful that among all the animals, (s)he—and (s)he alone—totally relinquished a free and wild existence to become (wo)man's best friend.



Coins For Canines

Holly Hallmark

While housecleaning this summer, my husband and I came across a hefty stash of spaghetti sauce-sized jars filled with pennies. We'd been saving them for years, always thinking about that 'rainy day.' Finally, after finding them again, they seemed unmanageable. The jars, themselves, weighed at least thirty to forty pounds. In the accelerated life style of 2004, we just couldn't find the time to roll some 125,000 pennies. So, we called Hearts and Homes and asked if they were interested in picking up our jars of pennies. 'Yes,' they said, they were. Tod of Hearts and Homes came by with a car, loaded the bags of money into the trunk and drove away. We were glad to have those heavy, clutery jars gone and we estimate that Hearts and Homes got more than \$100 in the bargain.

Perhaps Hearts and Homes or an organization of your choice is a good place to invest those coins and pennies that collect dust at your house. For more information about Hearts & Homes: www.heartsandhomes.org or 718 216-2364

FALL CALENDAR

Coffee Barks...

October - December

First Saturday of each month. Free coffee, dog biscuits and more: 7am-9am in the Long Meadow in front of the Picnic House (see www.fidobrooklyn.org/events)

Blessing Of The Animals

October 2, at the Coffee Bark

It might rub off on you too!

Halloween Parade

October 31st (Starts 7pm; 12th - Union)

Meet at the parade starting point (7th Avenue around 12th Street) Look for the "Grey Wolf". Prepare your dog for spooky encounters - please use common sense!

Bark The Herald Angels Sing

Saturday, December 18, 2004,

8am-10am

Annual Howl-a-day Sing Along. Talent not required; sense of humor a must! Musical instruments welcome! (Doggies on-leash after 9am, please)

FIDO Steering Committee Meeting:

2nd Monday of the month. Floating location so call first.

All welcome. Call the FIDO voicemail 1-888-604-3422

or email fidobrooklyn@att.net.

A Terrible Mercy:

When you must put your dog to sleep

Condensed from: Who Moved My Bone:

A guide for the multi dog home by Theresa Mancuso.

Everything in our lives will leave us one day. No one is exempt from parting and loss, all of us together, caught up in the ebb and flow of existence. Our lives are measured moments that finally go down to death for everything that lives must die and loss is a journey every heart must make.

Our dogs, like everything else, are only with us for a little while. Often our best and dearest companions, dogs dwell in the deepest intimacy with their human families, knowing our secrets, sharing our joys and sorrows, wrapping us in their unconditional love. Dogs give us unfailing loyalty and absolute devotion no matter what. Dogs make play an act of worship, and every movement, a choreography of love, enchanting us with their charm and good nature, taking us just the way we are and finding us quite wonderful, thank you, gods and goddesses in their sight. To love a dog is one of life's special gifts and parting with them is not easy.

When we face the last great question in a dog's life, it may well be one of the most difficult decisions in our own. I had a dog with heart disease and cancer. I had to let him go.

I had another with severe crippling hip dysplasia at an early age. I had to let her go. I had a third with kidney failure. I had to let him go. I lost another to cardiogenic shock after an accident. I had to let her go. Four times in too few years, great dogs made their exit from my life and the facing of each loss, each parting, was all over again, a terrible lesson in accepting reality. When their quality of life was no longer positive and good, as hard as it was, I had to face the facts.

It is unthinkable to prolong the life of a suffering animal just because we cannot bear the pain of separation. And yet, people do just that. I don't know why. I cannot see the love or wisdom in keeping a pet alive when it cannot stand, can barely eat, is nearly blind, fumbles and falls because its balance has gone, is so deteriorated that its life has no quality, but only the stark reality of sickness or old age, and insupportable suffering. Nevertheless, I know otherwise wonderful dog owners who just cannot face the decision to euthanize a beloved dog. Everyone who loves an animal should carefully prepare in mind and heart for the inevitable likelihood of euthanasia.

No one else can make the decision for you. The terrible mercy of euthanizing your pet may well be one of the greatest acts of love you ever give it. When you surrender its life back to

the Creator, realize that the only choice that makes sense is to eliminate continued suffering, to release our beloved canines (and other pets) into the spaceless, timeless and eternal beyond. The greater love and loyalty will enable us to put first not our own grief in the matter, but what is best for the pet.

If there are children in your family, and if it is at all possible before terminating the life of a pet, let them and other members of the family take part in the discussion. Give children the facts and help them understand that what is about to happen is not cruel or mean hearted, but an act of loving mercy for a beloved animal. Children might want to be present when their pet is put to sleep. If you feel that your child is able to go through this experience and if you are able yourself to provide support and comfort, it is not a bad idea at all to allow a child this opportunity to say goodbye and in a real sense, to make friends with death.

There are two options from which you can select the most compassionate way to handle the euthanasia of your dog. You can have your vet come to your home to put the animal to sleep, even in the presence of the other pets because animals deal with grief in a natural way. The sight and smell of the deceased makes it easier for pack members than when a dog is removed from the home and never returns. The dying pet is much more comfortable in its own environment, too, letting go of life among familiar sounds and smells, a sense of home and family comforting it as much as any dying creature can be comforted.

Another choice is to take your pet to the vet's office for euthanasia. Most likely, in the vet's office, your animal will be taken with you into a quiet room and you will be able to stand beside the examination table while it is tranquilized. Talk to your dog the whole time and give it reassurance. Continue to speak during its final moments. Tell the dog how much you love it and what a wonderful friend it has been to you their pack buddy is no longer there in the empty shell that lies before them.

After all these steps are taken, you must deal with loss and grief, the terrible void in your heart. Others should not dictate how you feel or what you feel or what you need to do about it. It's your pain just as it was your dog. It is wonderful when people close to us provide support and comfort during

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the seasons of our grieving, but don't blame them when they can't.

There are many other people who do understand what you're going through and many of them have already gone through it themselves, perhaps not once, but several times. This is the cycle of life, and unless we accept it, all the sufferings we encounter might become crushing defeats, including the devastation of losing a furry friend. Reaching out for another pet to love is a very healing opportunity that should be carefully considered. When you feel ready, go for it.

Let your heart speak to you; let your head decide, but take your time and don't be pressured. Life will not be the same as it was; that's a fact. But life goes on and as it does, we learn to live and laugh again, no matter how deep or agonizing our loss has been. Don't be ashamed to acknowledge your feelings and to face up to the real needs a pet's death might create in you. This is not a sign of weakness or cowardice in the face of reality. Instead, it is a sign of your deep love for the furry kid who shared your life, and nothing at all could be more honorable.

The important thing is to be patient with yourself. Creative projects that memorialize the deceased dog are useful for adults as well as youngsters. Maybe you could plant something in memory of the pet. Encourage your child to draw or write about the pet, perhaps to make up a poem in its memory. There are even sites on the Internet where beloved pets are memorialized by photos and dates of birth and death. These things bring closure and relief from grief.

Perhaps our dogs are here just to show us the simple truth of faithful love, uncomplicated by ego or attachment. "Dog people" are fortunate in having had great teachers, four-legged examples of fidelity and devotion. Perhaps to some, these are 'lesser beings' than ourselves, but if you can, keep in mind that our bond with them is truly beyond our power to comprehend - - - unless we come to realize that they are here with us to show the way, protectors in the night, fellow travelers in our journey to the Light.

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BOOKS: LOT'S OF BOOKS

Travels With Charlie by John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck, at the age of 58, sets out on a quest across America to rediscover the country he had been writing about for so many years. He leaves his Sag Harbor, Long Island home in 'Rocinante' - as he named his truck and self-contained camper - with Charley, a 10-year-old French Poodle as his only companion. We are introduced to Charley a bit at a time, in passages like this:

"Charley is a tall dog. As he sat in the seat beside me, his head was almost as high as mine. He put his nose close to my ear and said, "Fit." He is the only dog I ever knew who could pronounce the consonant F. This is because his front teeth are crooked, a tragedy which keeps him out of dog shows; because his upper front teeth slightly engage his lower lip Charley can pronounce F. The word "Fit" usually means he would like to salute a bush or a tree."

Steinbeck's observations of America in 1961 are well-chosen and telling. He stocks his camper with great coffee and abundant liquor so he can entertain new friends he meets along the way. Over after-dinner drinks with a farmer in the White Mountains of New Hampshire he learns that Khrushchev, while visiting the United Nations, took off his shoe and pounded it on a table to make a point.

His concerns are our own contemporary concerns but reflected back to us from a distant, simpler past. He has a knack of relating to people - those he meets as well as those who read him - which contributes to the success of this classic. He wins us dog people over by his descriptions of his typical Charley. How many of us can relate to the following early morning routine:

"Charley likes to get up early, and he likes me to get up early too. And why shouldn't he? Right after his breakfast he goes back to sleep. Over the years he has developed a number of innocent appearing ways to get me up. He can shake himself and his collar loud enough to wake the dead. If that doesn't work he gets a sneezing fit. But perhaps his most irritating method is to sit quietly beside the bed and stare into my face with a sweet and forgiving look on his face; I come out of deep sleep with the feeling of being looked at. But I have learned to keep my eyes tight shut. If I even blink he sneezes and stretches, and that night's sleep is over for me. Often the war of wills goes on for quite a time, I squinching my eyes shut and he forgiving me, but he nearly always wins."

Near the end of the trip, Steinbeck asks: "Who has not known a journey to be over and dead before the traveler returns?" He continues, "My own journey started long before I left, and was over before I returned."

One afternoon near Abington, VA, at 4:00 on a windy afternoon, the trip deserted him and left him stranded far from home. He writes: "The road became an endless stone ribbon." But he persevered and arrived home to write this memoir.

The following year he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

Holly Hallmark

"Who Moved My Bone" A Guide for Multi-Dog Households

By Theresa Mancuso

Adopting more than one? Is the Pack Life right for you? This book challenges your commitment as to time, financial responsibility, and your ability to make a multi-dog home work."

Park Slope's Theresa Mancuso tackles all the big issues: preventing feeding frenzy; when to travel, when to leave them at home, as well as establishing good street manners. She doesn't leave out the really hard questions either - see the condensed version of her chapter on euthanasia right here in the Fall Fido Newsletter entitled "A terrible Mercy".

A must read for single dog owners too!

Bob Ipcar

"The New Work of Dogs: Tending to Life, Love, and Family"

by Jon Katz

Jon Katz in "The New Work of Dogs" explores his thesis that we are living through a great change in the historic relationship between dogs and humans. Inspired by a German Shepherd named Rushmore's relationship with and role as "healer" for his owner Kate, whose husband died six months earlier from a heart attack at 44, Katz offers us a portrait of his local dog owning community of

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From the Alpha Desk

Well, the year is winding down; pretty soon we'll have the park mostly to ourselves again. Pity the poor souls who never get to see sunrise over the new-fallen snow in the meadows!

The Great Wheel keeps turning, tho, and the warm weather will be back before you know it, and with it all the garbage and rude fair-weather visitors. While the garbage situation this year has been *much* better than in recent seasons, there is room for improvement. And those crazy bike riders- oof!

In an effort to smooth out some of the difficulties, FIDO, along with Transportation Alternatives and other member groups of the Prospect Park Alliance Community Committee, will be organizing a letter-writing campaign to petition the City for more money for Park maintenance. We will also be working with TA on their Ambassador Project, which is aimed at informing bicyclists about the rules of the road. Just like the dog folk have guidelines, so do all the other various users- it's just that a lot of them don't realize it!

Also, we are working with Hearts and Homes for Homeless Pets to get their shelter off the ground. The FIDO Phone gets several calls a month about found strays; this is a chance to give those Found Hounds somewhere to go until they find their Forever Home. H&H will be holding several fund-raisers over the winter. As an added money-getter, we would like to suggest that anyone who has a penny jar (you know you do!) bring it to Coffee Bark. We will take the change to the bank and redeem it for cash. (If you *really* want to be a pal, take the coins to the bank and just bring the cash to Coffee Bark! Commerce Bank will do this for individuals.)

Enjoy the foliage!

Mary McInerney

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Books: Lot's of Books

Continued from page 5

Montclair, NJ, with Mills Reservation, a heavily wooded county park, as its focal point. Mills is the "unofficial headquarters for the town's thriving dog universe," much like Prospect Park is for ours.

After interviewing hundreds of dog owners, Katz, in "The New Work of Dogs" focuses on a handful of dogs and their owners who seemingly touched something within him. The new work of dogs in America is to tend to the emotional lives of their owners. Katz sees the evolution of dogs into emotional figures or surrogates, as partners as we deal with serious problems. Katz often refers to "disconnectedness" Americans feel and their need to fill holes of one sort or another in our lives.

There are the "divorce dogs", whom we meet through the Divorced Dogs Club, a club formed by five women who met in Mills Reservation- dogs acquired to help them through their marital troubles and the lonely aftermath. We meet Harry, a Welsh Corgi who supports his owner through terminal cancer when it was "hard even for my closest friends to talk to me about this, and my husband just cracked." We are also introduced to the dark underside of this new role through Betty Jean, the founder of a dog rescue group, and her daily work in the trenches of the shelter system. It is both heartbreaking and inspiring. The heart of the dog rescue subculture is described as follows: "Maybe we can't build a perfect world for ourselves, but we can try to create a perfect world for you."

Jon Katz sees dogs' new roles as a mirror of America. The new work of dogs seems to have been triggered by the great need Americans have for more meaningful attachments than life often provides. Their old work was to sit and fetch. Their new work is to ward off loneliness, provide activity and comfort, and to connect with the deepest part of a person, with one's heart and soul.

Adrian Lyss

"Dogs Of Babel"

By Carolyn Parkhurst

What a great book ! It's a mystery interwoven with a love story involving the three main characters- a man, a woman and a dog. Right away you will learn that the woman fell to her death, the dog, Lorelei, was the only witness, and the man is determined to find out what happened. The writing is superb, the plot is well developed and I found myself worrying about the well being of the man and the dog. The New York Times Book review written by M. Lord, might give greater insight as to what to expect. "I knew very little about Rhodesian Ridgebacks when I began reading..But her descriptions made me feel that I had grown up with them... To be moved by the Dogs of Babel you must surrender to its internal logic which is often at odds with the logic of the actual world."

It is a strange novel that has received lots of praise. It's a Booksense Top Ten Pick and a Main Selection of the Book of the Month Club.

Diane Johnson

Petition The Red Cross

In light of the recent (and ongoing) hurricane devastation in Florida, it is very important that we add our names to the attached petition requesting that the Red Cross set up emergency shelters that allow pets. Currently, residents of Florida are fleeing their homes, forced to leave their pets behind because no shelters will accept their four-legged companions. Many animals end up lost...starved...dead. PLEASE go to the url below and sign this today
Thank you!

Luiza Grunebaum
Coordinator, Public Information ASPCA
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Mail your information and a check made out to "Fido Brooklyn" to Bob Ipcar, FIDO Newsletter Ads, 342 16th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215. Deadline for Winter Newsletter Issue will be December 1st

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