

EDITOR'S LETTER

Another Milestone

Publishing a bimonthly magazine makes the months skip by at double-dutch speed—here we are with the next-to-the-last issue of 2008. Not only that—our September/October edition is golden number 50! Hard to believe that we have been chronicling the modern dog culture for 50 issues—adding it up, that's more than 5,000 pages and 1,500,000 words!



If we were asked to name the most significant change or movement we've witnessed during this decade, it wouldn't be the one on which many in the media seem to focus—that dog people have become “obsessed” with their dogs, spending millions on their care and “pampering.” No, to us, the most significant change is in the realm of animal welfare and rescue. In the 10 years we've been publishing, there has been amazing growth in the number of people and organizations who work to help dogs and to find homes for them. We've been tracking this throughout the decade, and it is a subject that deeply informs our mission. Case in point: Many of you have responded to our call for leads on breed rescue organizations—keep those leads coming! But in addition, we want to hear from you about rescue organizations in general—from the small and local to the large and national, from shelters to sanctuaries.

One of our readers, K.C. Bailey, exhorts us to do an in-depth article about what it would take to turn our country into a true no-kill nation (see her letter on p. 11). Clearly, this

is a topic that extends far beyond the scope of a single article. One of the first steps, we believe, is to provide people with the tools and incentives required to adopt, rather than purchase, dogs; it is simply unconscionable that so many healthy dogs (and other companion animals) are killed every year in this country. The web makes it easier to find the right dog, but there is still a need for reliable local information. As part of this project, one of the things on which we're working is a map of the nation's shelters (no-kill and otherwise) and sanctuaries to help you find out if there's one in your community, or nearby. Then, with your help, we would like to suggest ways to shrink the distances between them. That's just a start—we welcome your ideas on the subject as well.

On this, Katrina's third anniversary, we introduce you to Porchie, our cover dog contest winner. Bev and Andy Trushaw from western Massachusetts met Porchie while they were volunteering with the HSUS in Mississippi, and adopted him soon after. Porchie's lovely hound-dog face reminds us that, along with so much of what has been lost, many animals have found loving new homes with kind-hearted people like the Trushaws.

Also in this issue, we have a special triple-article feature about DNA and canine genealogy. Jane Brackman considers what's involved in identifying the roots of a mutt's family tree; Michael J. Rosen takes the plunge and has his dog's DNA tested; and Amy Young surveys the variety of genetic tests now on the market. **We have an excerpt from *Speaking for Spot*, a must-read new book by Nancy Kay, DVM,**

in which she guides us along the path to a successful partnership with our vets and becoming well-informed advocates for our dogs.

On the cultural front, we showcase a few of photographer Maude Schuyler Clay's lovely and haunting “Delta Dog” images; I met Clay a few years ago at a gallery exhibit, and have been looking forward to sharing her work with you. As Bark's editor, I feel a deep honor when I open my e-mail and find offerings from such highly acclaimed writers as Rick Bass and Stephen Kuusisto, whose work also graces this issue.

The nutrition team of Nestle and Nesheim takes on truth in pet food labeling—what really is natural, organic and human-grade? Then, we visit a supermarket and pick up 20 nutritious ingredients (10 in this issue, 10 in the next) that you might consider incorporating into your dog's diet. And our favorite behaviorist, Patricia McConnell, tells us that, no matter what others may say, comforting fearful dogs can actually be a good thing to do. All that, plus pooch-inspired pumpkin carving, a gridiron-loving dog, the scientific low-down on play, the best animal blessing service ever and more—for what we hope is an issue that lives up to its golden number.

Finally, don't forget to vote in November—let's do our country proud and come out in record numbers for what will surely be the most important election of this century.

CLAUDIA KAWCZYNSKA
editor@thebark.com

Amanda Jones