

IACP

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CANINE PROFESSIONALS

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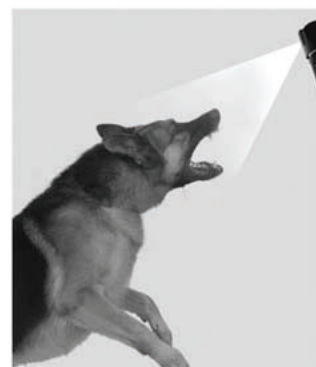
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President's Letter

by Karen Laws

The annual IACP Conference is over for another year – and what a memorable event it was! The Conference is always a time to renew old acquaintances and make new friends. The first day of the four-day event is similar to the first day of college - a whirlwind of activity with participant registration, studying the agenda to see what is coming, planning your time to take in every possible thing, meeting new people, and re-connecting with old friends.

This year's Conference returned to the Starmark Behavior Academy (formerly Triple Crown Training Academy) in Hutto, Texas. I would like to extend a special thank you to Starmark for their donation of this exceptional venue for our Conference. In addition to the venue and sponsorship, thank you to Starmark for their informative exhibit as well as the substantial product discount provided to IACP conference attendees. The exceptional service of their friendly staff was much appreciated and contributed to keeping things running smoothly. Many conference attendees remarked that returning to Starmark "felt like coming home." This year marked the return after a two-year absence. At one time, the Conference was held there every year.

I'd like to thank the sponsors and vendors who contributed generously to make this conference a success. Thank you to the Kong Company for their continuous support and generous contribution. It is always a pleasure to visit with Mark Hines and catch up – this year Mark is pleased to report that he has a new German Shepherd puppy that will soon be joining his family – Congratulations, Mark! Business Insurers of the Carolinas generously sponsored the conference lunches in addition to providing

premium insurance options for IACP members. I would like to extend a huge IACP welcome and a special thank you to new sponsors /exhibitors Einstein Collars and Big Leash Remote Collars by Dog Watch. Thank you to exhibitor Daphne Lewis of Chalo Sulky for educating conference attendees on the art of teaching your dog to pull a cart. It was a treat to learn from Daphne and to watch her dogs pulling of various type of carts.

The format was comprised of speakers each evening, and half-day workshops that repeated two times over four days so that people could attend every session if desired. Each speaker and presenter did an amazing job, in spite of the intense heat that persisted for the entire Conference. Thank you to Debby Kay, Camilla Gray-Nelson, Cyndy Douan, Mary Mazzerri, Marc Goldberg and Martin Deeley for your excellent workshops. Thank you to George Cockrell for a light-hearted talk on Thursday evening. The entire IACP Board of Directors and membership extend best wishes and a sincere get well message to Dody Dunning who was stopped by a personal medical emergency during her journey to the Conference. On behalf of all members of the IACP, I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Brother Christopher who stepped in at the last minute on Friday evening to deliver an inspiring talk on Balance in Life. I believe that his message hit home with many in the room, as evidenced by the comments afterward that "he was speaking directly to me."

The awards banquet was a ton of fun, as always. Congratulations to the following award recipients: Pat Trichter and Aimee Sadler, elected to the Member Hall of Fame for their long standing contributions to the IACP



and their commitment to improve the lives of dogs; Mailey McLaughlin and Evelyn Albertson as members of the year for their dedication and exceptional work for IACP as editor and graphic designer of the *Safe Hands Journal*. President's awards were given to Stephen Joubert for his contribution to build and maintain the IACP website for the past nine years, and to Cyndi Graham for her exceptional service as Secretary to the Board of Directors and as Conference manager for this year's event. All of this year's award winners have continuously gone above and beyond the call of duty to make the IACP a premier organization. These awards are only a very small token of our appreciation for their contributions.

Following the awards presentation and wonderful dinner, Texas Barbeque style, a professional line dance instructor got people foot stomping and moving in synchronized fashion. The disc jockey kept things alive and jumping with great music, including many requests for old (and new) favorites. The highlight of the evening was an impromptu performance by Cyndy Douan and her dog Seven. Flowing together as one, they presented a very moving Canine Freestyle rendition of *Over the Rainbow*. "WOW!" doesn't begin to explain the graceful elegance and emotional impact of this team's performance. The entire crowd was deeply moved. Thank you Cyndy and Seven!



Speaking of “moving,” Martin Deeley has announced his decision to step aside as Executive Director of the IACP. Fourteen years ago, long before the exponential impact of social media, Martin and his wife Pat Trichter had a vision to bring together canine professionals from all over the world to share, network and provide a better world for dogs. They created the International Association of Canine Professionals. Their mentorship and the Association that they created have influenced canine professionals across the globe. They have given their hearts and souls (and their home) to this organization. Lifelong friendships and successful businesses can be attributed directly to their determination and to their wisdom and experience in the canine profession. It is safe to say that nearly every person at each Conference has been touched by their vision, compassion and commitment to the success of all canine professionals.

Thank you to Martin and Pat from the bottom of my heart and from the IACP, for everything that you have given to our beloved profession and to the IACP – most of it from “behind the scenes.” You have made this organization happen, through



thick and thin. Martin will remain as a valued advisor to the Board and will no doubt have ideas and other projects that will help the IACP continue to grow and prosper.

This Conference was noticeably different from previous events. The influence of social media--notably Facebook--combined with the naturally welcome nature of IACP'ers was a major contributor to this year's success. The time involved for people to get to know each other was almost immediate as 'virtual associations' very quickly became real friendships, and the 'buzz' continues even after the final chairs have been put away, the curtains closed and people have returned home. Let's keep talking – bigger and better for Conference 2014!!

Thanks to the Conference Committee – Cyndi Graham, Martin Deeley and Pat Trichter, and to the volunteers – particularly Melanie Benware, Amanda Nepomuceno and James Hamm for jumping in to make Conference 2013. The Conference Committee has posted an online survey to learn from you if this year's approach

was appealing and what you would like to see changed for 2014. The Conference committee and Board of Directors work hard to bring you what you want and to create a memorable and enjoyable Conference experience. Your input is valued and considered in the development of every Conference. Please complete the survey so that with your help, the Committee can strive to make Conference 2014 the best yet!

Are you excited about next year's Conference? Do you want to help with the planning, set up and other activities to make Conference 2014 even more informative, interactive and fun?! Contact any of the Conference organizers and be sure to keep checking your monthly "Something to Bark About E-Newsletter" to learn how you can get involved to make next year's Conference everything that you want it to be. See you there!

Pawsitively Yours,

Karen Laws,
President, IACP




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Understanding Pressure and Release

by Chad Mackin

All movement is induced by pressure. Once we understand the nature of pressure, we will see clearly there is no exception to this law.

Pressure may be internal or external. It may wear the disguise of curiosity or hunger. Pressure may come from the environment or from the prompting of the body. Pressure may be real or imagined, but without some form of pressure, no being moves.

Pressure creates a desire to change one's circumstance. All desire is then the result of some form of pressure.

This is the fundamental law of behavior that cannot be circumvented or altered. If a being is to move, it will move in response to pressure.

For every pressure, there is a perceived relief of pressure. It is this release that is sought by all actions taken. If I am hungry, eating is the release of that pressure. If I itch, I scratch in an effort to relieve that pressure. If I am bored, I seek mental stimulation to end that pressure.

Every man, dog or snail lives by the code of pressure and release.

Understanding this fundamental fact seems to be the most startling answer to the endless arguments about dog training methods and methodology. There is no such thing as reward-based or compulsion-based training.

Withholding a treat or favorite toy is an application of pressure. The reward is the release of pressure.

So it could be said that every effective training method creates in the dog a desire to change his circumstance, and allows him to find the way to do that. Any method that fails to accomplish both of these goals is a failure as a training methodology, at least in that particular instance.

This principle survives the confines of strict behaviorism and operant conditioning, the theories of ethology, and as the broad vistas of cognitivism. No theory of behavior offers a reason to dispute this simple truth.

I desire change, therefore I seek change. One does not seek change when one does not desire change. When one feels no pressure, one desires no change. An animal at rest is then content. An animal in constant motion is not content. Such an animal seeks to resolve some pressure and is aimlessly seeking that release.

Sometimes, paradoxically, that release comes in the form of increased pressure. The key to understanding this phenomenon lies in understanding adrenaline addiction.

Dogs who lack appropriate mental stimulation or clarity in their role in their society often learn that when they reach a certain level of anxiety they start to feel less stressed by their circumstance. This is because when their adrenaline reaches a certain level, the cognitive portions of their brain (the parts needing mental stimulation) shut down. Moreover, the adrenaline converts in the system to dopamine which creates a euphoric effect in the dog. The result of this is that many dogs create within themselves a highly developed adrenaline loading routine. They take minor stressors and focus on them, usually performing repetitive behaviors, such as rhythmic barking or whining, pacing, chewing or any of a number of other patterns. They will often stare at an object or place that represents the source of their stress. For a case of separation anxiety, this may mean fixating on the door through which their owner just left. For a "dog aggressive" dog, this may mean staring at the strange dog who is walking by on the sidewalk across the street. In both of these cases, it is likely that this fixation will be accompanied by a rhythmic "loading" behavior as well, but not always.



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Once the dog's adrenaline levels reach the critical point, the dog feels less pressure, but his body is under incredible pressure nonetheless. No doubt he is happier than before he anesthetized himself, but "happier" does not mean "happy." It means he has found the best compromise he can to make his life bearable. I believe we owe our dogs more than this. I also believe that we can readily help the dog out of these situations if we choose to do so. It's not even particularly difficult once we make up our mind to help him out.

There is another reason to help the dog out of adrenaline. Aside from house training and medical related issues, I'm hard pressed to come up with any common behavior problems that occur outside of that highly adrenalized state.

Excessive barking, whining, leash pulling, jumping up, destruction, charging through doors, charging up or down stairs and nearly every form of aggressive behavior, to name a few, can be linked to, and in many cases are dependent upon, heightened adrenaline states.

The causes of these heightened states are typically fear, anxiety, excitement, frustration, boredom, confusion, and habit. Of these causes, habit is the most difficult to deal with. It is also the most prevalent.

In this state, the dog is running in a severely diminished capacity. He is incapable of making good choices, because he is incapable of making choices in the first place. In this state, the dog is merely responding to stimuli, absent any deliberation. He is not reflective, but purely reactive.

For some training applications, this state of mind is highly desirable (largely in competitive and working applications), but I see little value for the average dog owner.

If we take as our primary objective a dog who is happy, well-mannered, emotionally and psychologically healthy, and reliable at liberty, it should be easy to see that this type of adrenalized lifestyle presents a clear obstacle to that end.

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For me, any training technique or exercise that increases the dog's adrenaline response is contrary to my goals. An exception might be made in the case of an exercise that increases adrenaline but also teaches the dog how to shut that adrenaline off. Even so, I am slow to recommend any such exercises to the average dog owner.

The further into adrenaline the dog gets, the more pressure will need to be applied to get him out. A "red zone" dog is nothing more than a dog who has been allowed to get so far into adrenaline that his cognitive and impulse control functions have been completely shut down. Being able to see the signs of increased adrenaline and acting to interrupt the adrenaline loading process should be in the primary skill set of any trainer.

The key to solving the adrenaline issue is also pressure/release. I have a video I show in my workshops of a boxer using spatial pressure and release to bring a golden retriever out of adrenaline. When the dog gets too amped up, he moves into the dog, and when he starts to relax, he backs

off. It takes about 12 minutes to complete the process. Timing is important here.

It bears repeating: the common thread running through all training methodologies is pressure and release. Mastering the pressure/release paradigm and learning to interrupt the adrenaline cycle effectively and early will allow you to quickly solve many training puzzles that leave many other trainers uncertain and confused.

If you start looking for it, you'll see it everywhere. Happy training!

Chad Mackin has been training professionally since 1993. He created the Pack to Basics system of socializing difficult dogs and teaches workshops around the country. Chad is a past President of IACP.

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Developing Thorough Assessment Skills

by Guy Kantak

The week before Memorial Day, my mother began having dizzy spells. Four days later, she passed out twice; fortunately, she didn't hurt herself. At the local ER she was admitted and the doctors ran a battery of tests for 3 days. She was discharged with a diagnosis of orthostatic hypotension (blood pressure dropping from getting up too quickly). I told the doctors at the time their diagnosis didn't fit the history of her black outs, both occurring after she had been up and moving about for considerable time. They insisted.

One week later, my mother passed out again while sitting in a chair. We returned to the hospital for another week of tests. She was discharged a 2nd time with the same diagnosis, but this time the doctors did prescribe 1 week of cardiac monitoring. The monitoring finally found a heart block that was causing her symptoms. After receiving a pacemaker, my mother was discharged a final time and all has been well. Because the specialists failed to acquire a detailed history, or listen to important details being offered by family members, they missed important information which would have provided an accurate diagnosis on her 1st admission weeks earlier.

In professions where assessments are required, many skills can make or break outcomes. For dog trainers, speaking, active listening, reading people, reading dogs, and reading between the lines can all play important roles. While it's important to develop these skills, it's equally important to develop routines that ensure they're used every time. In terms of assessments, routines can help a trainer avoid complacency and (just as importantly) prevent overlooking an important detail. We probably all have routines in place for taking information about dogs with which we'll work, but a good trainer should always be looking to make those routines as thorough, efficient, and

consistent as possible. I would like to offer some points for consideration.

A simple telephone call from a prospective client can provide a wealth of information. I'm sure we all provide information regarding our services to callers, and get some idea of what services a caller is seeking, but how often do we ask questions that develop an idea of whether our services are a good match for that caller's needs? Are you training to help or to make money? There's nothing wrong with either side, but a happy client is often more important than a rich one! Don't let making a sale get in the way of providing exemplary service which builds credibility, trust, and respect.

Other information that I'm assessing on an intake call includes a caller's communication skills (listener vs talker), demeanor (calm, energetic, anxious, personable), maturity, background noises (calm vs frantic home with kids and dogs barking), and details regarding any behavioral problems that are in play. If I schedule an appointment, their address may provide additional considerations regarding owner perceptions and goals for their pet (suburban dogs that may be humanized vs city dogs that may be desired for protection). While owner answers to my questions will vary, my questions are all focused on developing a preliminary picture of what I might see when I finally meet a dog and owner.

Since I do all in-home visits, my assessment resumes when I'm later pulling up to an address. The number of cars in a driveway may give clues about how many family members are interested in working with the dog. General housekeeping (inside and out) may reflect an owner's physical abilities, time availability, or budgetary limitations. These can often correlate with how able the owners are to work with their dogs, how much time they may have for assigned homework, or their financial resources available for training.



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When the doorbell rings, the dog's response can tell me a great deal about whether the dog is anxious, hyper, friendly, confident and/or protective. If I asked good questions when taking the initial call, I should be prepared for any potentially problematic dogs. In those cases I will already have given the owner(s) clear handling instructions regarding how I will come into their house and eventually meet the dog. If you're meeting a dog and owner at a facility, you will lose some of these subtle but informative observations.

Once I sit down with an owner I'll ask questions for about 10 minutes. At the same time I'll be observing the dog's interaction with me, and the dog's interaction with its own family. I want to understand an owner's most important goals, their past experience with other dogs (have they had other dogs with similar behaviors?), their household make-up (pets and humans). If I'm

there for a behavioral problem, I want as many details as possible regarding significant behavioral incidents that have brought me to their home. Timelines can be very important in suggesting whether behaviors may be developmental or health related.

Additional questions will help me to understand what daily life is like for the dog – toys, routines, time with, and away from, the family. Good questioning here can often turn up factors that might be contributing to behavioral issues. Many owners fail to connect how some behaviors they don't mind may create or contribute to other behaviors they *do* mind. The general energy level in a home can also hasten or impede progress in many cases. I take it all in.

After questions and observations, I will take the dog out for a brief walk. You can tell a lot about most dogs in 5 minutes if you're paying attention. How

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focused/distracted is the dog? How interested is it in working with humans? Is the dog anxious away from its owners, with strangers, around unusual items outdoors? How hard is it to get the dog's attention around distractions, and how does the dog respond to a correction? What does the dog already know in terms of positions? In terms of obedience? What is his/her general demeanor? Does he/she appear healthy? How comfortable am I around the dog, and how comfortable is the dog around me?

All of this information can typically be harvested in under 20 minutes if you hone your assessment skills. To me, a thorough assessment is a great investment of time. If this seems a bit onerous to you, all the more reason to develop a routine to improve efficiency. Becoming proficient with histories and assessments assures important details will not be missed through assumptions or complacency. While an owner's answers may lead

you down various paths of inquiry, always return to your routine to assure you do not miss anything important. Being good at gathering information also means making certain all questions have a purpose! Make your questions count and don't take all day gathering required information – you need to get to work.

For those working with dogs in a facility, some of these items may not be readily available. I personally feel strongly that a dog's overall success relies heavily on its owners. Assessing all pieces of a dog's environment will provide extremely useful information if you know how to look. If information about a dog's environment is not available, assessing the owner(s) is still important in all cases. Owners are the dog's most important environmental influence! What are their expectations, attitudes, listening and learning skills? Reading people is easy for some, not so easy for others. If you're challenged here, develop

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your interpersonal skills, and develop habits that help you observe people in more detail. If I'm challenged by an owner that is "hard to read," simply asking a few pertinent questions can be very helpful. "What do you think," "how do you feel about this," or even "is this behavior better than what you usually expect from your dog?" can all provide quick insights.

From my fire service background, another point to consider is "never ignore your gut." People who assess things routinely will sometimes get situational impressions or feelings they can't fully explain. Even though it may be hard to verbalize or understand these "gut feelings," they are generally based on subconscious memories. If you have a bad feeling about a dog, owner, or situation, it's very likely due to something subtle you're observing that is similar to a forgotten previous experience. Even though you may not be able to consciously recognize a correlation, you should respect your instincts. More often than not, they're legitimate and good road guides.

Developing strong documentation routines goes beyond the scope of this article. However, any assessment information you obtain is worthless if you don't document it so that it is available in the future. This can be helpful as you work with a specific owner and dog over an initial training period (I know I won't remember every detail of a dog that I'm not seeing daily). It's also important should I need to review a file to speak intelligently with an owner should they call with questions or issues several months (or years) after we finish our visits together.

If you find something not going as expected, sometimes revisiting a dog's initial assessment notes can be helpful as well. There may be something you missed, or something you forgot as you work with the dog and owner. It never hurts to consider you may need to gather more information, ask for more details, or even ask something differently. Sometimes asking the same questions later and getting different or conflicting answers can be telling.

So having said all of this, professionals must also appreciate that assessments should be ongoing. While an initial assessment will provide a good starting point to formulate a plan for a given dog and owner, it's only a starting point! No matter how well you've honed your assessment skills, the best assessments never end. As you use collected information to formulate plans and strategies, you will also need to assess progress based on continuing observations. Good plans are flexible and allow for adjustments as needed.

Guy Kantak is a Certified Professional Trainer and owner-operator of "The K9 Guy," providing one-on-one visits in home for obedience, behavior modification, off-leash training, confidence building, puppy consultations and owner education throughout the Central Ohio area.



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We Have to K.I.S.S. First-- Keeping It Simple In Your Beginner Classes

By Camilla Gray-Nelson

We are not just dog trainers. To succeed in our profession, we must be business people, as well. The secret to business success is deceptively simple: give clients what they want. Yet many of us trainers miss that simple mark by giving clients what we think they need, and too much of it, at that. A desperate training client is already stressed. They don't care about the perfect sit or the quickest down or whether their dog can increase his vocabulary. They just want us to solve the dog issues that are wrecking their life and "keep it simple, stupid" (K.I.S.S.) In my experience, new clients want just two things:

1. Less chaos in their home
2. More control over their dog

When we are too eager to show the new client all that we know instead of just giving them what they asked for, it's like being too eager in any new relationship – we can scare them away. The clients' needs are simple, but we trainers -- so full of information and knowledge to share – over-teach, and in the process can overwhelm new students. A client on overload is doomed to fail. What is the most common complaint we have as trainers? Our clients fail to follow-through. Well, no wonder! Instead of giving them a simple fool-proof way to meet those simple goals above, we teach them sit, stay, wait, down, come, heel, leave it, off, place, watch me, quiet, touch.... Good grief! No wonder clients are overwhelmed. They are afraid to follow-through, lest they "do it wrong."

Here's my suggestion. Limit your beginner class to three points: Come here, Stay there and Don't Do That! The first two are easy. We can teach those in our sleep. But the third one is tricky. Eliminating Sit, Down, Heel and the rest from our beginner classes feels uncomfortable and strange. It may not seem right, but that's exactly what I'm proposing. Instead of our familiar litany of commands, just show your students how to stop all those naughty behaviors that are driving them crazy, whether it's with a collar and leash or a penny can or a vibration collar or a sonic frequency blaster or other technique. Resist the urge to teach "Sit" or any other command as a means to bring their dog under control. Show the client that if they just stop the behavior,

the dog will bring himself under control. Limit the commands you teach to the two most important ones for safety: Stay and Come. Now, there are only three things your new client needs to remember instead of fifteen or more: Come, Stay and Don't Do That!

This simplistic focus gets us back to Nature and that's why it works. Nature keeps it simple. There, dogs learn to use their brains by understanding boundaries instead of commands. It is "management by exception" in the dog pack, with the Top Dog as the C.E.O., simply stepping in when necessary to enforce policies and remind his group what he does not allow. The other dogs, in turn, are held responsible for figuring out what is allowed. It is this process of deductive reasoning in response to boundaries that engages a dog's brain, enabling him to make well-disciplined and thoughtful decisions. He learns "how to be," if you will. When we teach "Sit" to bring a dog under control instead of just disallowing the behavior, we are not only adding one more command for the client to remember, we are cheating dogs out of the opportunity to learn responsibility in the natural way.

Teach your beginning clients to lead their dog by channeling that Top Dog -- focusing on "Don't do that!" instead of commands. Keep their dogs safer by teaching Come and Stay. Even with this super-simplified class format, your client will naturally reduce chaos and increase control in their home. And isn't that just what the client wanted? Build your relationship with the client, and theirs with their dog, on a good foundation.

K.I.S.S-ing first (keeping it simple) will produce relaxed, happy and satisfied clients, eager to sign up for your next class...where you get to impress them with all that other stuff you know.

Camilla Gray-Nelson is the President and Director of Training at Dairydell Canine. She has trained, bred and shown dogs since 1989, and holds professional memberships in both IACP and NADOI.

iACP



What I.A.C.P. Represents to Me

by Eileen Balcom-Vetillo

I wasn't aware what IACP really meant. I mean, I knew what those four initials represented in words, but I wasn't aware until my recent trip to Hutto, Texas what IACP really stood for.

I'm A Creative Person. I'm a newer trainer. Not full time, just yet. My story is one that started a long time ago, but never really got going until 3 ½ years ago. In the largest part of my life, I am a professional artist. As a child, I had a keen imagination. So keen, that around age 5, I sincerely believed I would grow up to be a dog. My concerned mother actually contacted our family doctor when I refused to eat anything with utensils and instead mimicked eating as a dog would. He assured her I would outgrow this odd behavior, which I eventually did.

I'm A Curious Person. 3 ½ years ago, I was looking for a solution to improve the obedience, especially the recall, on my 3 dogs. I live in the country on 32 acres. Our road, once quiet and peaceful, had become more dangerous as more people moved out our way. Searching the Internet, I found a woman from Hazel Green, WI who taught remote collar training. I drove 3 hours to meet with Robin MacFarlane for a private demonstration. Up until my meeting Robin, I was a tad concerned about using a remote collar. Every book or magazine I could find warned about their misuse. My curiosity spurred me on.

I was instantly convinced. I saw an immediate transformation in my dogs. They were animated, yet seemed to quickly understand what was being asked of them. I found what I'd been looking many years for - a clear way to communicate with my dogs. I enrolled in Robin's E-Cademy that very same year.

I'm A Cautious Person. Robin invited me to attend her annual event E-Palooza. I thought long and hard about whether or not to attend. I knew NO ONE! These were all professional trainers. I was a novice. A newbie. How would I ever fit in?

Initial Anxiety Caused Problems, but I overcame them and went. I happened to sit next to a woman from Canada named Karen Laws. She was interesting and easy to talk with. She made me feel comfortable and welcomed. I shared my interest and desire to learn more about training. She suggested I contact a woman in my area, Mary Mazzeri.

It's A Cell Phone. I remember the feelings. I punched in all the numbers minus the last one and then paused. I rehearsed the conversation over and over in my head. What was the worst thing she could say? No? I reassured myself by thinking she wouldn't even know what I looked like. I could live through this rejection if it happened. I took a very deep breath and pressed the last digit. "Hello this is Mary Mazzeri." I took a deep breath and explained why I was calling. I invited her out to lunch. She accepted. We met at noon and talked until 4! I knew this woman was someone I needed to stay in contact with. Mary's husband had died suddenly 8 years previously. I proposed an idea. I asked Mary if she still had a "honey-dolist." (I was my father's 'son' in a family of 6 girls. My nickname is MacGyver.) We settled on trading services. I would fix that which needed fixing. She would teach me.

I'm A Caring Professional. Mary invited me to observe her class. She suggested I attend one of her puppy classes. I borrowed my neighbor's Dogue de Bordeaux and enrolled. I couldn't get enough. I was addicted. Mary suggested books to read.

I listened to Mary. I watched Mary. I was impressed with Mary. I laughed with Mary. I learned from Mary.

I remember Mary telling me that all of her assistants had titled a dog. I had no interest in competing with my dogs. Both are registered Therapy Dogs. I enjoy sharing them with the local

hospital's Healing Paws program as well as The Reading To Rover program at my local library. My path to training was focused on helping people build a better relationship with their pups. I had no desire to compete, so it was quite a compliment when Mary asked if I would assist with her class! Wow! That meant so much! She had confidence in me!

I'm A Confident Person. It's a little more than two years that I've been working with Mary. Sometimes when I'm working with clients, I hear myself saying something and make a mental note to myself. "You sound like Mary."

One day Mary asked if I would help assist at her presentation at the upcoming IACP conference. She was going to be presenting and really needed an assistant. I agreed, on the condition we rehearse her program so I would be comfortable in front of an audience.

Over the course of the next few months, my training skills were greatly enhanced with Mary showing me many subtle little things the average person would take for granted. I realized these were remarkable gifts she was willingly sharing with me. Sharing knowledge is something Mary loves to do. She has shared so much with me since our first meeting.

It's Assisting Conference People. Hutto, Texas. My first IACP conference! Here I would see all those names I've seen on Facebook or on the Safehands list. Wow. Breathe. I was lucky to be in the company of Mary as well as Marc Goldberg. We all travelled together from Chicago. (Marc, although wickedly funny, has a soft, sensitive side he shares intermittently.) Mary made sure to introduce me to everyone. She was making sure I would be comfortable and I was going to make sure I wouldn't disappoint her when she needed me.

When it was my time to demo working the dog on the long line, I felt my heart race. I took a long deep breath. I knew I could fake confidence for the audience, but the dog would rat me out instantly. It would be much later, on the ride home, that Mary and Marc would admit "this time neither one was nervous presenting as they had been in the past." I was normal! This is how it's supposed to be!

Individuals Are Considerably Pleasant in Hutto. I wanted to seek out more people at the conference. I introduced myself to anyone I came in contact with - at the dinner line, on a break between presentations, while observing an outside program in the heat of the day, or feeling a drop of rain and the person next to me assures me I haven't lost my mind. I met people like myself, just getting started. I met seasoned professionals, all willing to share with me and chat. I found a huge lack of ego and in its place, kind words, smiles, a handshake, an introduction and thoughtful sharing of words and stories. I felt welcomed. I felt relaxed. I felt encouraged and enthused. It was inspiring to be in a location with such a variety of skill levels in the company of living, breathing well-behaved dogs. I was delighted. What a wonderful collection of people and their dogs.

Saturday night, Brother Christopher spoke to all of us. What he spoke of resonated deeply with me. I'm starting on this new path later in my life. At this point, some people begin making plans of slowing down. I am just getting started. With my art, my greatest pleasure was fulfilling a request from a client; working together to take an idea and create a piece of art they would enjoy. With my dog training, I take pleasure helping someone create a better relationship with his or her dog.

Sunday morning, the IACP board held its scheduled meeting. IACP is in a flux period right now. Martin Deeley announced his retirement as Executive Director, promising to stay on for 6 months to help with this transition period. I listened to each board member speak and take questions from the attending members in the audience. There was significant talk of what ideas and beliefs originally created the IACP, as well as where it needs to grow in order to thrive. It was easy to feel the concern among everyone. This organization was created to preserve the freedom to train a dog using all methods. I realized I was in the company of many wonderful people. These people on the board, all volunteers, were giving a lot of their time to make this organization valuable. I realize how important IACP is to me. If it weren't for the IACP, I wouldn't have a Mary Mazzeri, Robin MacFarlane, Karen Laws and every other

member and trainer that has crossed my path and altered it.

Early Sunday morning, Brother Christopher led a pack walk. He used the term "Walking Meditation." I liked that. He began the walk with a short prayer after which we started our walk in silence. There wasn't a huge crowd and the few dogs that were along followed quietly. It was cooler that morning. The Texas sun had hidden behind an overcast sky. I remember walking and feeling the many thoughts racing in my mind gradually slow down. Soon they quieted as I became more aware of the landscapes surrounding me. I noticed the thick, tangled, out-of-control brush growing around the fencing and trees. I thought how often we can allow things to complicate our lives. As our pack started the journey back, I noticed the road ahead curved to the left. I couldn't see where it was going. I knew if I kept walking I'd eventually arrive at my destination. The more I walked, the more clear it became. IACP is a gift made from hard

work and a concern to protect all methods of training. Like any living thing, it needs to be cared for and nurtured. What you give you get back. These are, coincidentally, the same steps to creating great relationships and friendships. My life just wouldn't be the same without the IACP in it. Why would anyone attend an IACP conference? **I Am Certain Proof.**

Eileen and her husband, Mike, live in a really great 101-year-old farmhouse in rural Paw Paw, IL. They share the property with two horses, two mini donkeys, two dogs and one cool cat. Eileen works as a muralist and a decorative artist in addition to her dog training.

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Critical Thinking

by Mailey McLaughlin, M.Ed., CDT, Editor

“Be so good, they can’t ignore you.” ~Steve Martin

At what point did you feel comfortable in your skin as a dog trainer?

Some of us came to this profession earlier than others, so obviously we had a head start building what author Cal Newport calls “career capital.” In his book *So Good They Can’t Ignore You*, Newport echoes the previous writings of Malcom Gladwell, who posited in *Outliers* that it takes at least 10,000 hours in an endeavor to reach mastery level.

Newport’s position is that “skills trump passion in the quest to find work you love,” and he’s definitely floating against the tide, not to mention raining on a lot of parades. The “follow your passion” crowd has been topping the book charts and the Internet for a while now, and its influence seems to be showing no signs of waning. In this view, all it takes to have a career you love is to find the thing you are really good at, and follow your dream. But as Newport reports, research shows that the happiest and most passionate employees are those who have been around long enough to have become good at what they do. In other words, passion is a side effect of mastery—not the other way around!

Good trainers know that skill at reading dogs and helping them live well with their humans takes years to build, and cannot be learned solely by reading books and watching videos. It’s helpful to read to understand theory, and operant conditioning, of course. But one needs to get his or her hands on hundreds of dogs to become proficient at truly reading them and being able to help them. (The same is true for grooming, and other professions involving animals.)

The proliferation of online schools of dog training and the deep decline of apprenticeships, internships and mentoring possibilities doesn’t bode well for Gladwell’s 10,000 hours minimum.

Hands-on schools like Starmark Academy and National K-9 offer a more immersive curriculum, but are best utilized in conjunction with other methods of getting lots of hands-on.

The trend in dog training these days—and actually, in other areas of life—is to shorten the process by which one becomes proficient, because it’s a lot of work, and if it’s your passion, you don’t need all that mastery stuff. Just follow your passion, and it will all fall magically into place, right? For a lucky few, it actually does. But for the rest of us, it takes longer. And what is at stake during our learning curve? The human-animal bond between our clients, for one. Dogs’ lives, and quality of life, as well. And what about perfecting our skills in dealing with people?

In addition to really needing hundreds of dogs underneath one’s belt, most of us need extensive work in dealing with the other end of the leash. “Dogs are easy—it’s the people that are hard” is a common refrain in this business, and I agree with the second part. (Not all dogs are easy. Those of us who reject behaviorism know that dogs think, and to blithely cover this up in an attempt to minimize the skills one needs to train them is a cop-out. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, Miss pet-supply-store-clerk-who-was-promoted-to-pet-supply-store-dog-trainer-after-a-week-long-course.) So, do we actually need 10K hours of dog time and 10K hours of human psychology? If we want to be excellent, it would seem so.

The truth is that everyone has to start somewhere. Dog training as a second or third career is on a high trajectory right now. And while I bemoan the proliferation of “trainers” who have pretty much trained only their own dogs and maybe those of a few friends before having hung their shingles, I know full well that the arc of preparing for this profession is flattening. I get calls on almost a daily basis asking me how I became a trainer, and how

can they become one, too? Oh, and they cannot afford an actual school, or the 3, 6, or 12 weeks that school would require of their time, so what's the quickest way? "There is no quick way," I tell them, which they are none too happy to hear.

At this past conference, I met several "newbie" trainers who are just coming into the profession. I liked every single one of them, and one of the reasons I did was that they were humble. They were there to learn from some of the best in the business, and they know that they have a lot left to learn, so they are taking it slowly and continuing to build career capital. I'm very glad they came to our conference, and I think they will be a boon to the profession once they have more experience.

I think I felt comfortable in my own skin as a dog trainer finally after 10 years of training

professionally (I have 15 years before that at an amateur level). I have reached the 10k hours, but I continue to hone my craft, and I am passionate about learning. I truly hope to one day be "so good they can't ignore me."

Newport's book is an interesting read, and of course Malcolm Gladwell sparks my synapses with every new piece I encounter. Check them out, if you haven't already.

Mailey, The Pooch Professor, is Editor of SafeHands Journal. She has worked professionally with dogs and their people for nearly 30 years, holds a Masters in Education, is a CDT, and is Behavior and Training Manager for the Atlanta Humane Society. Read more at www.carpek9.blogspot.com.

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