

Owners beware

Guard dogs need expert, professional training

by Jeff Andrew

The name guard dog breeds security in the minds of some property owners. Prowlers avoid them like the plague and the toothsome beasts can make short work of any thieves who make the unfortunate decision to knock over the dog owner's home.

But what happens if that prowler in the back yard happens to be a neighborhood child playing hide and seek?

And is it really necessary to protect a new stereo with an animal trained to snap a man's arm with one bite of its crushing jaw?

If sense outweighs paranoia, probably not.

But two area dog trainers are worried that more and more people are bringing such dogs home, little suspecting the risk they are taking. Equally as bad, some dog owners are sending their animals to trainers with little expertise in developing security dogs.

Virginia Hansford, operator of Winfield Kennels in Georgetown, says she gets 10-15 calls a week from people who want her to train a guard dog for them or asking about other trainers to whom they have been referred.

"She won't train dogs to do protection work and finds that these people are being referred to trainers who aren't qualified. 'I've been in this business for 20 years and I don't feel I am qualified,' she stressed.

"People are out there training these things without any prior experience," she explained. "A lot of these trainers will take anything."

Hansford said that at one time people were satisfied with owning a dog from a species with a popular reputation for

ferocity, such as a Doberman. Now they are asking for a dog who can play the part as well, a dog that will bite.

"Any fool can teach a dog to bite," she said.

But she added, "Once you teach a dog to bite; Wow, it's dangerous."

Hansford refers people who want a guard dog to Erin dog trainer Paul Cipparone who operates Wellington County School for Dogs and Security Dog Services Ltd.

Cipparone says part of his business is to retrain dogs which have been mishandled by inexperienced trainers.

"I get many dogs, trained elsewhere, who have been messed up and have to be retrained," he said. "In many cases the dog has been disturbed mentally."

Dogs have very individual traits, he explained, and some are not by nature aggressive, regardless of their breed. If they are pushed too hard or are not taught how to channel aggression properly the dogs can become mentally impaired. The danger is that they will become "fear biters" he said.

To avoid difficulty Cipparone said dog owners should examine what they need a security dog for and be discriminating in their choice of a trainer.

With his customers he said he first examines why they want the dog trained

for protection and the level of training required to meet their needs.

"I think a lot of people just need a dog that looks the part," he said.

The dog may be as playful as any other canine but will ward off nervous prowlers simply because it is a Doberman or a German Shepherd.

The dog can also be trained as an alarm dog, one that will bark when strangers approach simply to warn its master.

The next step up is what Cipparone calls a threat dog. It is trained to be ferocious but not to attack. They are taught to stick close to an intruder, bark, bare their fangs and generally strike fear into a man's heart.

But they will only bite if they are attacked or cornered, otherwise getting no closer than six feet from an intruder.

"In many cases that's enough," he said. "People want a dog to put on a good show."

The final step is a dog trained for full protection duties, one that will attack an intruder on command or when provoked, and pin him.

A dog such as this undergoes upwards of a year's intense and careful training and it is very expensive. The owners tend to be people with valuables or who face a potential threat to their safety.

These animals are trained to be extremely obedient and have what Cipparone calls a built-in safety factor. They don't attack in a frenzy, rather they bite to bring an intruder down and let go when he lies still.

Cipparone is careful to point out that he screens his customers to assure himself they truly need a guard dog like this and are responsible enough to handle one.

A dog that is trained intensely needs to be worked out regularly with its owner to keep its skills and obedience sharp. He also insists that the owner bring the animal back occasionally for what he calls "a tune-up." Cipparone says he has turned down thousands of dollars from individuals whom he didn't trust to handle one of these animals properly or he didn't think required one.

Cipparone has some tips on selecting a trainer. He says they are often willing to spend some money on advertising their services in dog magazines rather than simply newspaper classified sections.

They will readily talk about their experience and the instructor's courses they have taken.

Most importantly they will let you watch them train dogs for protection work on a number of occasions and with different animals.

Region passes on Bilingualism

Concerned about the cost of providing its services in two languages, Halton region has taken no action on an appeal to Premier William Davis to proclaim Ontario bilingual.

A resolution circulated among all Ontario municipalities by the city of Vanier, near Ottawa, notes that Franco-Ontarians have sought official recognition of their language in this province for 117 years and that several Ontario cities have already been designated bilingual.

Halton chief administrative officer Dennis Perlin reported last week that 4,735 of the region's 253,885 residents—about eight per cent—claim French as their mother tongue.

He advised caution in any move to bilingualize the province, however, pointing out that offering regional services in both languages would entail a "substantial" cost.

"At the present time," he added, "the definition of a 'sizeable French presence' is not determined."

Perlin also described the situation in Sudbury, which is designated a bilingual city with 30 per cent of its population French-speaking. Despite the large Francophone presence, he said, the public demand for municipal documents in French is "minimal".

Sudbury relies heavily on provincial grants initiated about four years ago to help finance dual-language services, Perlin reported, but the grants expire in another year, leaving the city and others like it to fund their own services.

Statistics gathered by Perlin from the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture indicate Halton Hills has 725 French-speaking residents and another 2,255 who speak both languages.

Seniors Week now a month

Senior Citizens Week has blossomed this year into Senior Citizens Month, and Ontario's Secretariat for Social Development has some big plans for June.

In conjunction with the province's bicentennial, the Secretariat is promoting "Partners '84—Looking Back Ontario", encouraging seniors to meet with young people through local schools to share their thoughts and recollections about the province's past.

Seniors' Week has been celebrated in Ontario for the past 23 years with a variety of special events. The Secretariat is planning a roster of activities to fill the month of June this year.

Meanderings

by Mabel Barkman

I imagine the modern mother is very thankful for the invention of peanut butter. Children and peanut butter seem to go together in North America. In Europe and Asia it is unheard of and people who come here cannot understand why we like it. It was never a household staple in my husband's family and consequently he has never liked it. In India the children are raised on a type of soup called dahl made from lentils and it certainly is a cavity fighter as most Indians have perfect teeth even as adults. Since peanut butter sticks to the teeth, I imagine it can produce cavities especially when the sandwich also contains jelly. No one doubts its good nutrition but its effect on the teeth is questionable.

Ballinafad

Church honors Shortill family

A special Mother's Day service was held in the church on Sunday, May 13. The young folk assisted in part of the Service with the Junior Choir contributing with a musical selection.

During this service there was a dedication and a christening, connected with the Shortill family. The Dedication was in memory of Harry Shortill, son of Rita Shortill and the late Richard Shortill. A plaque was put up and dedicated as the glass windows above the new door at the entrance of the church were donated by his widow and family. The dedication ceremony was beautiful as Rev. Bandy paid tribute to the Shortill family, long time residents of the Community, who have given their services, not only to the church, but other worthwhile projects as well.

Rev. Bandy called the children to the front of the Sanctuary just as the sacred ceremony of Baptism was bestowed.

Mr. and Mrs. Gary Murr now residing in Guelph but formerly of Ballinafad, presented their children, infant son Zachary Matthew Shortill and older (daughter) Corrina Dawn Shortill. A large crowd of relatives and friends filled the church for the occasion.

Mrs. Frank Smith joined other relatives, in the nearby community church on Mothers' Day to witness the Baptismal service of her grand nephew "Christopher Alexander Waldie, 4 month old son of Patricia and David Waldie. Joan and Pat Waldie are his proud grandparents from Acton and Nora and Bert Tuck from Georgetown.

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