

Magic key between blind man and seeing-eye dog is love and training

by Shirley Whittington
One day last week, Don Roszmann crossed Penetanguishene's main intersection with his seeing eye dog, Adana. The traffic light was red, and a passer-by noticed.

"Hey?" he said. "Your dog made a mistake."
Don, who has been blind all his life, quickly corrected the stranger. "Adana didn't make a mistake. I did."

Adana, like all dogs, is colour blind. She is trained to stop at the curb, and Don makes the decision about whether or not to cross the street.

"I can tell," says Don, "from the sounds of traffic movement whether the light is red or green. On this occasion, I became confused and assumed the light was green. I gave Adana the signal to go ahead, and she obeyed me."

The relationship between a blind man and his dog is simple. The dog can see. The man cannot. But the man can reason, while the dog operates through instinct, and is trainable. The magic key to this combination is love and training.

When Adana is wearing her U-shaped harness, she is on duty and she and Don are a mutually sensitive unit. Don holds a leash, and the top of the harness, which is set at a precise angle. With verbal commands, ("Adana, left," "Adana, forward") and leash corrections where necessary, Don tells his dog in which direction he wishes to go.

If Don makes a mistake as he did last week, Adana obeys, but she'll stop if there is an obstacle in the path. And if she stops, Don stops too.

This mutual trust took Don and Adana safely through six lanes of traffic during their training course in Morristown, New Jersey.

The same trust saved Don's life at least once during the training course. According to a sighted observer, Adana had stopped at the curb, as she had been trained to do, and Don could hear a truck turning the corner in front of him. Suddenly, Adana moved back. Don did too. The truck was safely in the roadway, but as it turned the corner, the cargo box at the rear edged over on the sidewalk. It would have hit Don if Adana hadn't warned him to move back.

Adana is a handsome dog, intelligent and friendly, and this causes problems with well-meaning passers-by. When Adana is in harness she is on duty, and friendly overtures from strangers can distract her.

She is also on a carefully regulated diet, so tasty extra-curricular hand-outs are all a taboo.

Although she has been trained to resist the distraction of stray cats, frisking squirrels or dogs running at large, Don constantly reinforces the training. She is completely defenceless if another dog tries to attack her when she's on duty. She is not even allowed to growl if she is in harness.

Dogs running at large (contrary to town by-laws) make it difficult for Don and Adana at times.

She is never allowed to run loose, even though the Roszmann back yard is fenced. Exercise is no problem. She walks with Don almost a mile down town and



Don Roszmann, Adana and family play at home

back a couple of times a day. "When I'm working with Adana," says Don, "I have to concentrate totally on what I am doing because I have to be acutely sensitive to what's being transmitted through the handle of that harness. That means that when people greet me on the street, I am not always able to give them full attention right away."

Adana's training is constantly reinforced. Work well done is rewarded with lavish affection. Sometimes she makes a mistake, like leading Don up the wrong driveway on the way home, or yielding to some irresistible distraction.

When that happens, Don must reprove her, and this is usually done with a verbal "Pfu!" If stronger correction is needed, Don uses the leash, which is attached to a large linked collar.

"I love her so much," says Don, "that it is very hard for me to correct her this way, but it's absolutely necessary that I do it. And sometimes I wonder if people think I'm being cruel."

The trusting relationship is so strong now that Adana scarcely ever needs leash correction, but if it must be used Don always follows with a simple obedience exercise. The dog complies

and earns an affectionate caress as her reward. There are times when Don and Adana need and appreciate help from the public. "If I become disoriented or confused," says Don, "I'll stop and have Adana sit. If anyone on the street saw us in this position, they could be sure that I was mixed up and needed a hand."

Don was matched with Adana at The Seeing Eye, Incorporated, in Morristown New Jersey. "They first determined my capabilities — how fast I could walk, how well I could orient myself, how self-confident I was — and then I was assigned a

dog that suited my personal characteristics."

The dog has already had three months of training, and follows with an additional month with his new master.

All Seeing Eye dogs cost \$150. Additional expenses are managed from the interest on a trust fund established by donations to The Seeing Eye Incorporated, which has existed since 1929.

Adana sat at Don's feet on the way home in the airplane, and with their basic training behind them they were on their own in Penetanguishene.

"She was trained for sidewalks," says Don, "and I had to teach her to stop at walks where there is no curb. Actually, before I got Adana, I was losing my courage in Penetanguishene because of the lack of sidewalks, and if the ground was covered in snow, I really became disoriented. Now Adana can pick out the walk, snow or not, and in fact, if we are going to a store, I direct her to the shop I want, and she lines me up with the door."

Having Adana has made a 100 per cent difference in Don Roszmann's life. "For years," he says, "I was too proud to consider having a dog. I got around very well with a cane. Since then, I've clearly concluded that I have

more independence and freedom than I would ever have without her."

Don says he can't think of a place where he couldn't take Adana. In Ontario, the Public Health Act is amended to allow dog guides to enter restaurants with their masters.

Part of Don's new freedom is the thrill of a Saturday shopping excursion. Daughter Kimberley Ann rides along in a back pack and chats happily with her dad, but she is not allowed to point out where the streets are. That's up to Don and Adana.

Don takes Adana with him to church on Sunday, and is training her to take him up to the altar rail so he can receive communion. "She sits under the pew, and nobody would even know she was there."

Don is a social worker at the Oak Ridge division of the Mental Health Centre, and Adana is with him constantly at the office. "The first week, she directed me to sit in a chair that was already occupied by a young female staff member. Which leads me to the conclusion that that dog is pretty darn

smart," grins Don. The Roszmann household is a completely normal one, complete with the happy bustle provided by Kimberley Ann (four) and Sandra Lyn (two). There are no special concessions for Don's handicap, and he doesn't want any. Adana is very much part of

the family. She romps with the children and will chew Joan Roszmann's slippers when she thinks she can get away with it.

But when Adana is in harness, she is more than part of the Roszmann family. She is Don Roszmann's link with an independent life.

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Ontario president to visit Midland

Gladys McLatchy, president of the Ontario Horticultural Society, arrives in Midland on Monday, January 27, to attend the 78th annual meeting of the local society. Significantly in this International Year of the Woman, Miss McLatchy will add a zestful final touch to the always popular pot-luck supper meeting to be held at 6:30 p.m. at the Orange Hall.

Members are invited to share in this feast of good food, music and provocative comment by Miss McLatchy. The pot luck suppers work this way — meat and beverages are supplied; members from the East side of town are asked to bring a

first course of a salad or casseroles for six while West siders will contribute desserts.

Diners are asked to bring their own cutlery. Following the dinner, officers for the upcoming year will be elected.

Musical Society ceases due to lack of interest

The Penetanguishene-Midland Musical Society has suspended operation because of lack of interest among the more than one hundred members.

After one year of operation during which the group sponsored a concert featuring the Huronia Symphony and the St. Paul's United Church choir, and a recital by David Cameron, the group decided by ballot to disband.

The accumulated funds of the organization will be divided evenly between the bands at Midland and Penetanguishene Secondary Schools.

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MINESING SWAMP Public Meeting

"Raymond Moriyama, Architects and Planners" consultants for the Ministry of Natural Resources on the Minesing Swamp, will host presentations on alternative plans for the Minesing Swamp, Saturday January 18, 1975 continuous from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Meet at the Community Centre, Village of Minesing. Take Highway 27 north of Barrie, then Highway 26 west, 4 miles to Minesing.

Your response will help direct the plan for the Minesing Swamp.

For further information, call Huronia District office, 728-2900.

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