

## Sandy Ewen trains dogs and their owners

By ANNEGRET LAMURE  
CLAREMONT

"There's no such thing as an untrainable dog," says Sandy Ewen flatly. "It's simply a matter of training the owner."

Sandy who has raised and trained dogs for as long as she can remember ought to know.

She operates Wimberway Kennels in Claremont, conducts obedience classes in Richmond Hill and has dogs that are so well trained that they are often sought out for film and TV work.

Her beautiful yellow labrador retrievers can be admired in two different Molson's commercials, a (soon to be released) Wrigley's Spearmint gum commercial, a Dr. Ballard's beef stew commercial, the Canadian production of Swiss Family Robinson series as well as in a Nabisco Shredded Wheat commercial with Tommy Hunter. Hunter, Sandy recalls, immediately fell in love with the dog. "We did the commercial in the morning and he came by to buy a dog from me that night," she reported.

The director of Swiss Family also had nothing but admiration for his canine star. It was necessary to have 25 takes for one particular scene before it was right, but the dog never flagged. "Rocks would fall, or the kids would be in the wrong place, but the dog didn't blow it once in 25 shots," said Sandy proudly. "he was perfect every time." She said at the end of the day the director wanted to send the kids home with her

(presumably for further training) and keep the dog.

She finds TV work with puppies a bit more complicated, and once spent a whole day at the filming of what amounted to a 15 second episode in the Dr. Ballard's dog food commercial.

Only three puppies appeared in the final production, but Sandy

actually brought eight for the filming. The main problem was that the pups had to be photographed eating beef stew, and even a hungry pup can only eat so much.

Having eight that looked alike helped, but eventually the cameras would grind to a halt. "The puppies got full and we'd have to wait for the food to go through," Sandy laughed. Another difficulty was the young puppies clumsiness.

"They'd get all gucked up because they'd fall in the food," she explained, "and we'd have to take time out to clean them up."

Despite the TV work and the time-consuming business of running a kennel, Sandy still finds time to train other people's dogs. Apparently most people take their

dogs to obedience training because they don't behave. "Either the dog is not a problem but they think it may become one, or the dog's a problem already," she stated, "and sometimes we get dogs where it's a case of either they mind or they'll be put down."

Since success of training generally depends on the owner, Sandy is a firm believer in both dog and

master attending obedience classes together.

"I like to take a dog and show the owner what he's doing wrong," she said. "Sometimes people do something a little wrong and every time they do it, it gets a little more wrong." Because of this, she is understanding when bewildered dog owners call her on the phone between classes. Her pupils, both canine and human, are expected to do homework every day.

She estimates it takes about 10 weeks to train a dog to heel on a lead, sit when stopped, sit stay, down stay and come when called from a sit stay, but cautions that all dogs learn at a different rate. Sandy will also board a dog and teach it and figures that the same training would then take about a month, although the dog will soon forget all its learning if the owner doesn't continue the routine. "There's no point training a dog and then it goes home and is allowed to go wild," she explained.

Sandy has taught all shapes and sizes of dogs and most give her no trouble, but she remembers a giant St. Bernard that gave her some uneasy moments. "He tried to eat you," she explained, "every time you touched his collar, he lunged," "and he'd always try to get around and get your backside." Sandy said that once you had him by the collar he was fine, but that it wasn't easy to reach over his head. "Two hundred pounds of St. Bernard

saying 'I don't want to' she laughed shaking her head "you just had to have a heavy jacket on."

Heavy jacket aside, Sandy considers patience and consistency most important during training sessions.

She feels that ideally training should start as soon as a dog has some of the puppy high jinks out of it, usually somewhere around the age of six months. Before that the dog's attention span is too short, although a younger pup can be taught to 'come' and 'sit'.

As to the upper age limit, she's not too sure. "Older dogs are more set in their ways and harder to train," she remarked thoughtfully, "ideally they should probably be under three years." But then she remembered an 11 year old untrained dog she was given at one time, and she became doubtful. "It all depends on the dog," she concluded finally.

The one thing she is very sure about is the question of breed. "Labs, of course," she laughed while hugging two of her favorites, "there isn't any other breed, is there?"

Anyone watching her dogs on TV would probably be hard put to disagree with her.

Photos and story by  
Annegret Lamure

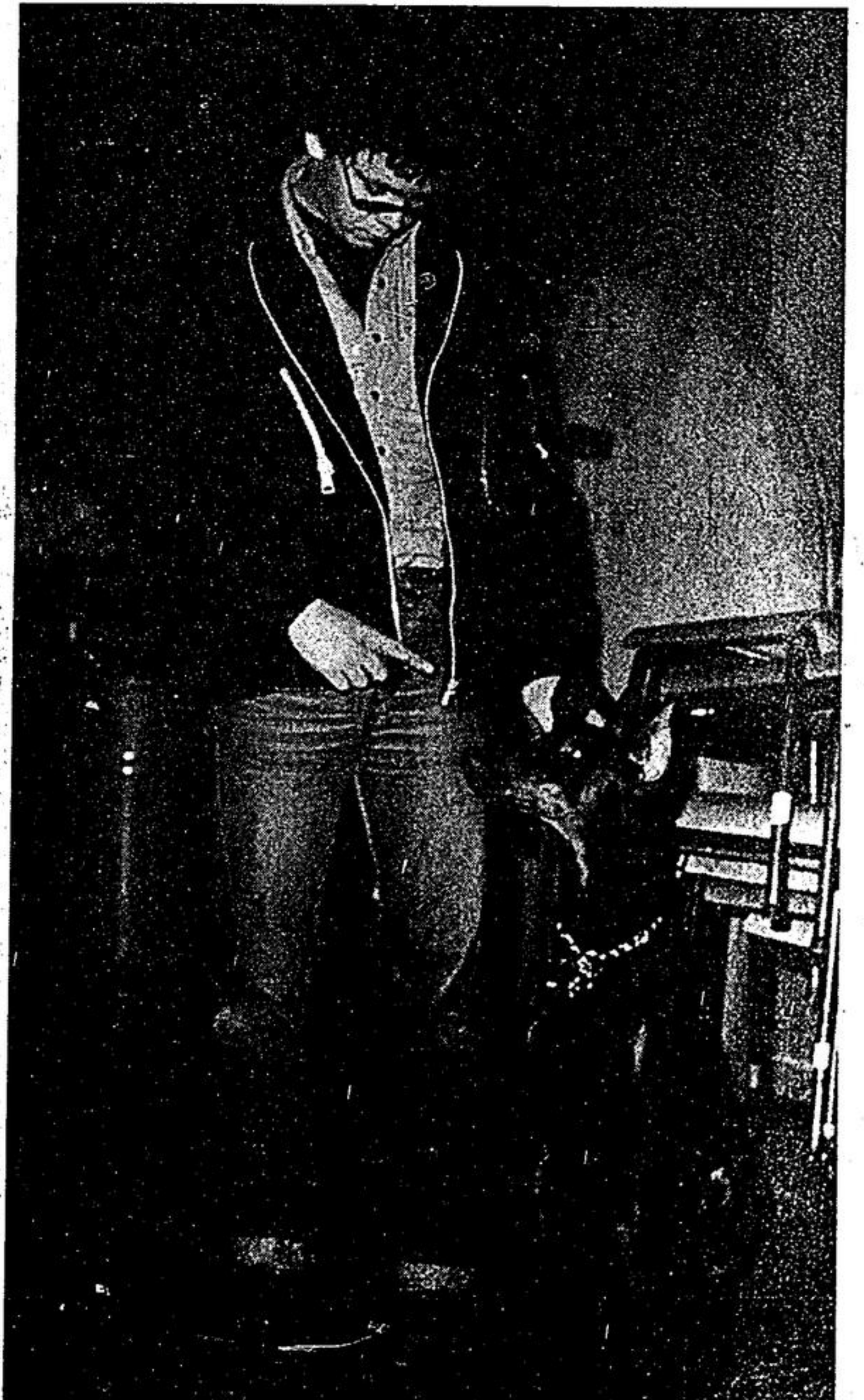


Sandy Ewen, who runs Wimberway kennels in Claremont, has been raising and training dogs all her life. She founded the Labrador owner's club and is club trainer.

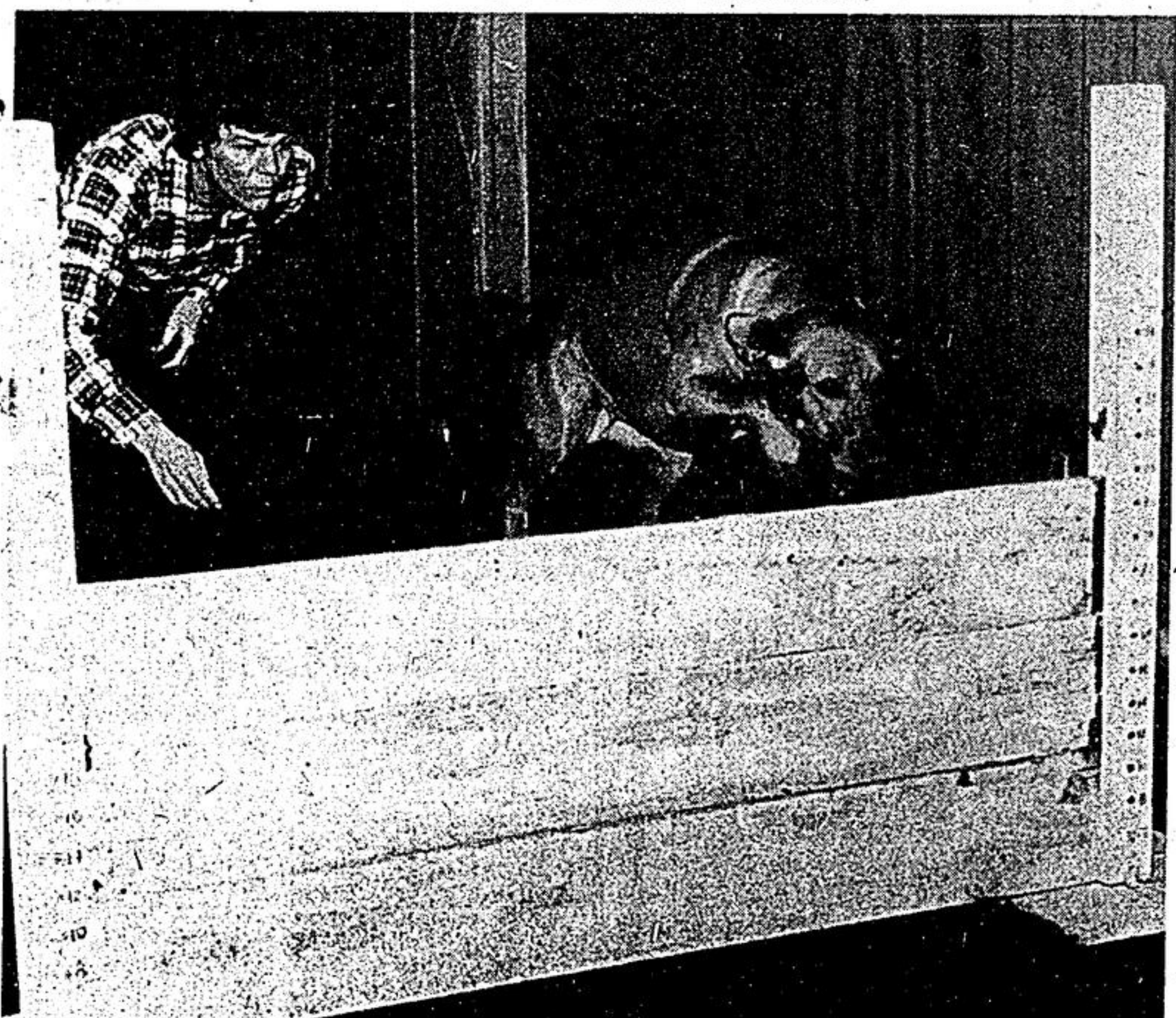
Several of her dogs have starred on T.V. and she also teaches obedience classes in Richmond Hill.



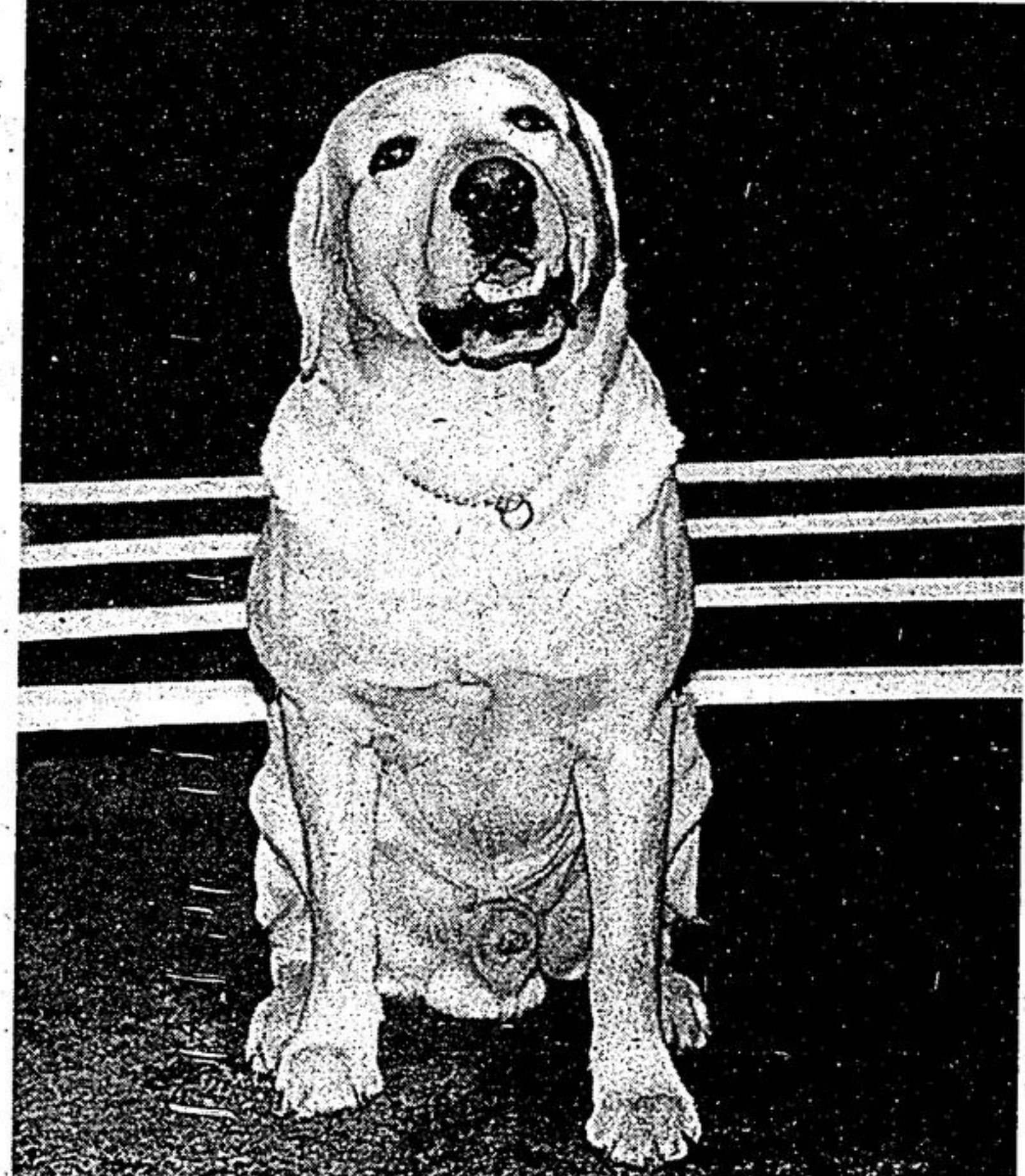
Obedience training requires effort for both dog and master. Here Barb Fletcher encourages her dog 'Rip' to clear a jump by leaping over it herself.



NOW YOU PAY ATTENTION- Owner Bill Studdy seems very serious about training his doberman, but 'Jake' looks a little doubtful about the whole thing.



Vermouth, an advanced pupil in Sandy's obedience class in Richmond Hill has no trouble jumping over the boards with the encouragement of his master, John Dale. The height of the obstacle is increased gradually until the dogs are jumping three feet or more to retrieve an object on the other side.



'You've got to be kidding' seems to be the attitude of Teddy a yellow lab, as he sits with his back firmly to the jumps. However he's really only waiting for his owner to call him.



THAT'S A GOOD DOG- Richard Nakonecny gives his Clumber Spaniel Chaucer a bear hug for good performance. The emphasis during training is placed on rewarding good behavior rather than on punishment.



Salome Carey seems to have some trouble controlling Major, the family's bull terrier. Major is in the beginner's obedience class and Salome, 5, says that "he's a heavy baby." She revealed that "when he bees good he just gets a piece of cheese" but admits that this is not

always the case. "When I take him for a walk he goes around and around me and tangles me really up in the leash," she explained. Hopefully obedience training will straighten him out.



The affection between dog and master is obviously mutual here. Brian Nadim rewards Apollo, his springer spaniel with a kiss after

the dog waited patiently in the same spot for five minutes without moving a muscle.