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COVER

Michell Evans wins Best In Show at Groom Expo 2010, with PETSMArt Sponsor Connie Bailey.

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Off the Top of My Head by Todd Shelly

Spinning the News



We have all seen news stories about Groomers who have injured dogs. Grooming, just like any profession, has its share of people that don't live up to the standards that we would like. We cringe every time we hear of a dog dying in a cage dryer or having a body part cut. We know it is not that common, but when it happens, it apparently is always "newsworthy".

I've heard it said many times, "Why can't they do stories on the good groomers?" My response has always been that, "Customer drops off dog, groomer does nice job grooming, and then returns dog safely" is not a news story.

I then started to notice the interest that pet owners have in the grooming process. Contests at shows like SuperZoo and H.H. Backer often draw as much or more of their crowd from non-groomers. Every groomer knows that a good portion of their customers are curious about watching the grooming process. Most pet owners trust their groomer more than anyone else that comes in contact with their pet.

It occurred to me that we actually can put groomers in the spotlight. Who better to represent the health, welfare and maintenance of pets than the people that have the most time invested in the care of those pets? The groomers should be ambassadors for the pet industry.

I am going to start by promoting the winners of our events. For example, most local media would love to feature a local groomer that wins big at a national show. I'm sure there are even a few national media outlets that might find a \$30,000 Winner's Circle Jackpot interesting.

Next, I want to promote our top competitors and experts to the media. The pet industry is so big right now that any interesting pet story should be appealing. I would like to see these groomers on morning shows, in magazines and featured in newspapers talking about subjects such as pet health, safety, etc. Personally, I'd take a pet segment over a cooking segment any day.

In a few weeks we are going to launch BarkTV.com. This is our follow-up to BarkleighTV.com. It will contain original educational content geared towards the pet owner. This will be an opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge and professionalism of the groomers as well as promote good pet ownership. In addition to our website, most of the content will be available for groomers to use on their own websites and marketing.

My goal is for pet groomers to get the respect they deserve while promoting the industry as a whole. When a groomer is in the news, I want it to be because of the great things they are doing.


todd@barkleigh.com



Check the oil and the wiper fluid, and while you're at it, look around for fleas and ticks!

"OLIVER TWIST MEETS MARY POPPINS"

By Emily Rupe

Since endeavoring on my mobile grooming mission, Ms. Daisy (my mobile unit) and I have formed a special bond. My beloved Sprinter is my Mr. Spock; always faithful and true. So you can imagine how shocked I was to one morning hop into the captain's chair, turn the key over and find her entire dash lighted up like a Christmas tree. Akin to the old war movies, where the submarine has suffered a decisive blow, I half expected red lights flashing overhead and warning sirens. Trying to frantically save Ms. Daisy and assess the damage, there was only one solution: call my boss and limp the fallen hero into our local Sprinter dealership's service department.

While driving slow, like you might expect from a 95 year-old grandma, I gingerly pulled into the dealership and handed my baby over to our personal service tech, Andy or *Oliver Twist*, as we sometimes refer to him.

Oliver is about six feet tall, British, a good helping of tattoos and the kind of guy with a twinkle in his eye but could easily be pictured in a throw down at a local pub. I proceeded to describe the ailments plaguing Ms. Daisy to *Oliver Twist*.

A couple of the other techs were scoping out the waiting area. Then, resembling his namesake requesting an additional bowl of gruel, *Oliver* managed to timidly pose the question on the entire department's mind, "Is SHE stopping by as well?" The SHE of course was referring to my boss.

Eerily ironic, at that exact moment a hot chocolate Mini Cooper pulls up. Out pops a 5'3" perfectly quaffed southern belle, accent and all. With her *Coach* purse slung over her arm she happily jotted up the walkway, gave me a big hug and issued her traditional "good morning sunshine," in a melodic tone.

Oliver went pale, and the room full of other techs instantly cleared. Apparently, *Mary Poppins'* reputation had preceded her arrival. She's practically perfect in every way... till you either fail to follow through (with returning calls, being professional, etc.) or try to mess with one of her groomers, then she's gonna take that spoon full of sugar and ram it down your throat. Of course all the while, donning an adorable outfit and giving the illusion that the music number may be up at any moment. My *Mary Poppins* is priceless social entertainment.

As soon as *Mary's* attention turned toward the department, the other techs scattered like roaches when the lights are suddenly flicked on. Fleeing to the safety of the garage or personal offices, they left *Oliver Twist* standing alone to face the *Poppins*. Never actually making eye contact and with the presence of a scolded child, he assured *Mary* the van would be repaired by the end of the day and a call would be placed directly to her when the estimate was determined.

Then slightly bold, like the street wise Brit that he is, a suggestion to enjoy the local shopping and perhaps lunch was made. Mentally, I thought, "Well played *Oliver*, well played," and suddenly found myself being issued into the Mini Cooper for a shopping trip. So far so good and hopefully, *Oliver* would avoid the POP from the Poppins today.

With the Mini Cooper crammed with the day's prizes, lunch was to be had at the local sandwich joint. As we savored the somewhat posh atmosphere, *Mary* noticed it had been quite some time and no update had been made on Daisy. She was just going to have to "check up on it" herself. Filled with the slow draw of "ya'lls" and "huns" befitting a

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southern lady, the call was pleasant despite being told that *Oliver* was tied up at the moment and would promptly return her call ASAP. For his sake, I prayed he would.

An hour passed and still no word on Daisy's condition, method of treatment and the cost. *Mary* was getting a little heated under the bustle. Someone was going to get a beat down with a parrot handled umbrella if they weren't careful.

Another call placed, and yet again another excuse. However, this time she just abruptly ended the conversation and informed them that she'll be down in just a few to speak with Conrad (the owner of the dealership and a personal friend, whom I've always pictured as some *Bond* villain sitting at a desk with a Himalayan cat perched in his lap, striking terror by the mere mention of his name) about the future of our four van's service needs... Then she hung up and allowed them to

squirm. Frantically, the cell rang numerous times, but the opportunity had been missed and now a lesson was to be taught.

Zippping around town in the peppy Cooper, we returned to the dealership promptly. Daisy was parked up front and center, fixed, detailed and *Oliver* trying to bail water out of the sinking ship. This time he ran to greet *Mary*, apologizing constantly, pleading that everything is under control and Conrad need not be informed of our miscommunication. Then he procured the ace in his back pocket, the invoice. He'd managed to get everything covered under our warranty, so no charge today. *Mary* held back a song and dance number, and made sure to convey that although this instance was forgiven, it wasn't forgotten. With all parties satisfied, Daisy and I headed home.

On our return journey, I dwelled on the social entertainment

An hour passed and still no word on Daisy's condition, method of treatment and the cost.

I witnessed today. I have to say I don't blame *Mary* for getting miffed. All she wanted was a return call in a prompt manner. Our client's demand the same from us, and we manage to accomplish this basic function of customer service. The more a client spends on a service or good the greater customer service and quality they expect. It helps them rationalize the additional cost and value the service or good you provide. You don't have to be the greatest groomer ever to walk the Earth, as long as you make your clients feel important and valued.

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CANINE OBESITY

An Ever Enlarging Problem

by Dr. Boyd Harrell

Obesity is the number one nutritional problem and number one health threat of pets today. According to the third annual National Pet Obesity Awareness Day Study conducted by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention and reported in October 2009 over 45% of dogs and 58% of cats in the US are now estimated to be overweight or obese. As the percentage of overweight pets has increased, so has the perception of what a normal weight pet looks like. Increasingly owners will judge their overweight pets as normal or ideal. Even worse, when an informed pet professional identifies these pets as overweight, the owners are offended and entrench themselves in a state of denial. So many pet owners will both need to be educated several times and maybe by several different people before they are ready to take corrective action. Patience, persistence, visual aids, handouts and repetition are often needed in concert to convince an owner to reduce their overweight pet.

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Body Condition Scoring (BCS)

is one way to assess a dog's weight. Here are some comparison guidelines as described by veterinarians from Ohio State University.



Emaciated

Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones and all body prominences evident from a distance. No discernible body fat. Obvious absence of muscle mass.



Thin

Ribs easily palpated and may be visible with no palpable fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible. Pelvic bones less prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.



Ideal

Ribs palpable without excess fat covering. Abdomen tucked up when viewed from side.



Stout

General fleshy appearance. Ribs palpable with difficulty. Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar spine and tail base. Abdominal tuck may be absent.



Obese

Large fat deposits over chest, spine and tail base. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Fat deposits on neck and limbs. Abdomen distended.

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Overweight pets are often uncomfortable; it may be hard to breath, hard to walk, they are low on energy and interact less with family and housemates. As they become less and less active their me-

tabolism slows and it becomes even easier to gain weight and tougher to lose weight. The body creates a set point and it acts like an elastic tether, as the metabolic rate changes from the set point the body will attempt to "correct it" by pulling it back to the set point. The good news is that the set point can be changed, it can be set at a new level. The bad news is that the body will accept the new set point only after the metabolism has consistently been at a given level for an extended time.

Let's look at some simplified yet practical examples of how the metabolic set point affects weight control. (Note: Genetics and hormonal status are examples of set point influences that are difficult and maybe impossible to alter) Let's say we have an overweight dog and we have decided to cut back on the pet's calories to take off a couple of pounds. As we reduce the calories the body's first response is to go

into starvation mode. This is a survival mechanism to conserve body energy reserves which are primarily fat so that when food is in short supply the dog will pace the release of energy stores until food is again in better supply.

So, what was the immediate effect of cutting back the dog's food? The body lowered the metabolic rate which means the body will now be able to maintain the original weight with even fewer calories and the net effect may be no weight loss and a less active pet. If the restricted calorie intake is for a short period or occurs intermittently, then the body will try to get back to the original metabolic set point. If the restricted calorie intake is consistent and lasts for several weeks or a few months, then the body will adjust to a new slower metabolic set point in an attempt to maintain status quo so the dog winds up eating less than before

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and experiences limited weight control.

This is one reason that diets, as the only means of weight control, cause a lot of frustration and little if any long term weight loss. In addition any treats or extras given to a pet on a diet and whose body has gone into starvation mode will have a much greater effect. So by feeling sorry for a dieting pet and

sneaking that extra "little bit" of food, we compound the problem due to the pet's exaggerated metabolic response to conserve and store energy (fat).

In a nutshell this is why dieting alone is such an uphill battle. Diets don't work very well unless they are combined with exercise, which will both burn more energy and cause the metabolism to speed up. As the

metabolism increases, more calories are burned - even when the pet is resting. This can, however, be temporary because the body will want to quickly return to its original set point unless the new level of activity and the new higher set point is sustained long enough for the body to reset at the new level.

Diet combined with exercise is the best way to burn calories and lose weight and it needs to be a long term lifestyle change to avoid the "yo-yo" effect of weight loss and weight gain.

Just like people, an overweight pet should get a good physical exam and have the doctor's blessing before starting an exercise program. Some heavy dogs have an under active thyroid gland (hypothyroidism) which can slow metabolism, so some lab tests may be in order. Hypothyroid dogs can

Continued on page 17



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be treated easily by giving an oral thyroid replacement drug on a daily basis.

Additionally the exercise program should start slowly so that the heart, lungs and joints are not overly burdened or injured. Swimming is great exercise for an overweight dog because it burns calories and does not stress the joints. For dogs that are overweight and have good joints and muscle strength, walking or jogging is good exercise so long as the program is started slowly and gradually increased. Exercise doesn't have to be work either. A game of fetch or just romping with children in the back yard burns calories too! Whatever you do, do it on a regular sustained basis.

Dr. Harrell recently authored a book titled "Groomers Guide To First Aid, Injuries and Health" published by Barkleigh (Request Reader Service Card #7352).

He is a former multi-veterinary practice owner and current business coach to the pet industry and pet health advisor for Oxyfresh Worldwide. He also presently serves as Medical Director for the SPCA Animal Medical Center in Lakeland, Florida. He has been speaking internationally and coaching others to succeed in business for over twelve years. He is a certified Human Behavior

Specialist and helps people to understand themselves, how others tend to perceive them and how personalities affect team building, performance and harmony in the workplace.

Dr. Harrell can be reached at drbharrell@gmail.com.



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Sally's Success Tips

by Sally Liddick



Some things just ring true. Business wisdom is always refreshing and there are some unusual sources at times. I am a fan of Gene Simmons, of KISS fame. Not a fan of KISS per se but I do enjoy his reality show, *Family Jewels*. He is an exceptional entrepreneur, if nothing else.

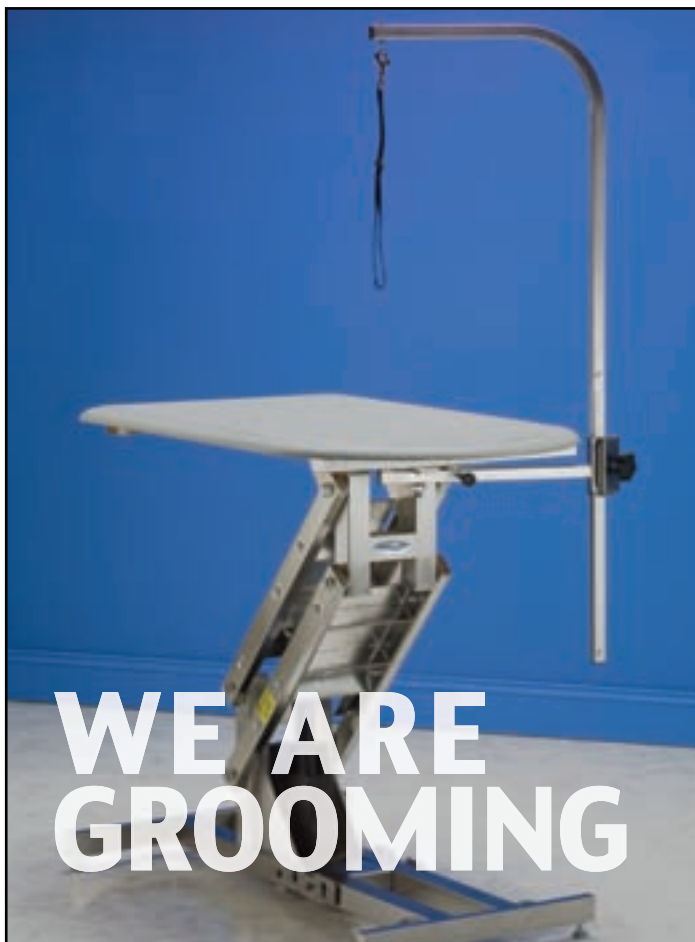
On this particular show, his daughter Sophie had a business idea as a part of her college studies, after seeing an overweight plumber working under her sink. *Hunks with Hammers*. The premise was that customers would rather not like to see butt cleavage on their plumbers. I thought it was hysterical and actually a good idea. So did Gene, and he began helping her until one of the hunks busted a client's dishwasher.

The client's husband was not enamored by the shirtless hunk either... Cleavage or not. So to keep from having a lawsuit, Gene went to the home of the disgruntled husband to solve the problem. Though nobody agreed, he said the customer was always right. And he brought in the old overweight plumber, with the butt crack, to fix the situation to the customer's satisfaction.

Gene's wife, Shannon asked Gene. "Is the customer always right?"

"Every time," said Gene. "Here's why... if you disagree with the customer, you don't get paid."

Bottom-line. When you are faced with an issue of a disgruntled client the best thing is to give in and satisfy them as best you can. As a matter of fact, this reminds me of one of my favorite Proverbs and here is a paraphrase. *Give the angry man a gift. Proverbs 21:14* A simple bit of wisdom that we can use in our daily business and a wee bit of advice to remember. Either that is the moral or this is... Beauty isn't all it's cracked up to be.



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By Christein Sertzel

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Continued on page 22

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and knowledge with our grooming clientele.

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of all, we affect our professional stance by integrating veterinarian referrals, thereby opening of the door to professional courtesy and interaction with veterinarians. It can bring our businesses into a different light. And will help us work with more passion, pride and satisfaction by being noticed by other professionals.

I have always felt that there is a

lot of good that can be done for our clients by offering a natural, stress free care during their visits, and by remembering that we are an important part. Educating pet owners about issues we see with their pet has never had anything to do with trends or profit. What it has at its core is compassion and a sense of the bigger picture.

Helping address issues in our salons and helping educate and care for the needs of pet owners ensures patronage and longevity for your business. It stimulates a better professional relationship with your clients, more consideration of your ability, referrals from happy clients, and gained confidence of self. When we know we care about animals we are better to care for them.

Be it personality or training concerns, nutrition, health and longevity, skin and coat, medical issues, supportive grooming for geriatric clients, or referral services that you cannot offer; are opportunities for us to support the life quality of our pet clients and their families.

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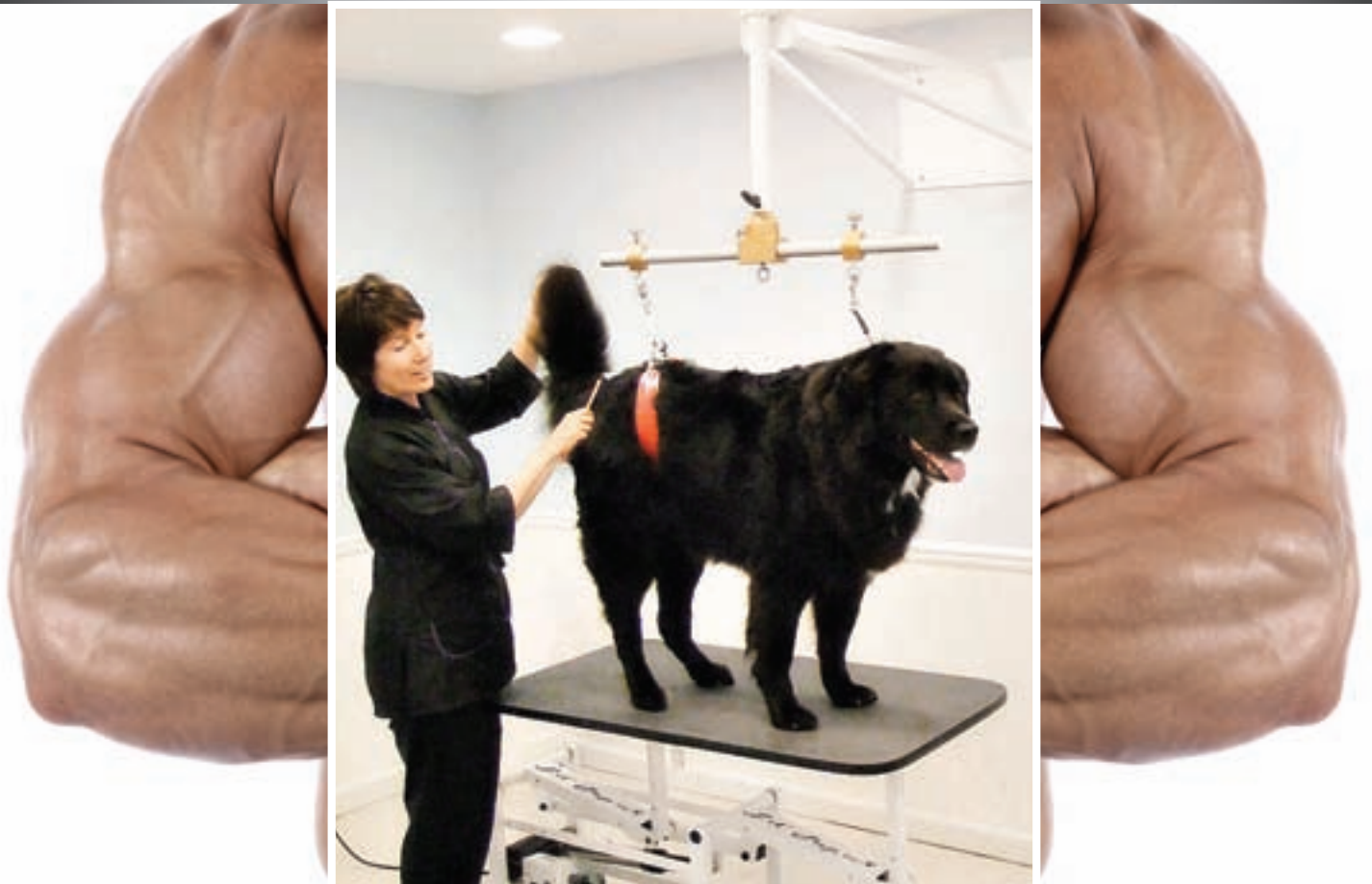
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of services and products you are recommending. Anyone knows that grooming fewer dogs a day and making just as much, is not only a great reward for your efforts, but a release as well. You will find yourself at the helm of your business with confidence, pride and satisfaction. And you will feel more relaxed as well.

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that we can make a difference and start positive change. And even if the added care goes no further than to the pet that we care for, well, there still is no real loss there.

This past two years has seen the loss of some of our long standing industry people and my personal friends. While talking with several of them, they made reference to how far this industry has come in their careers. And of how much has developed by way of equipment and tools. We need to care for ourselves in order to care for our businesses. So take it from those who have been grooming a lifetime, do all that you can to add time to your career, and make it an enjoyable one.

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“This is been one industry that has been lacking a large resource of good educational materials and Barkleigh hopes to change that in the future.”

Books are needed in all aspects of grooming, boarding and pet business... pet styling, pet spa, animal behavior in the grooming salon or boarding facility, ergonomic aspects, groomer health, pet massage, add-on services and more are being accepted.

If you have a book idea, send it with one sample chapter to Sally@Barkleigh.com. If you already have a printed book, and would like consideration on republishing it, please send a copy to: Sally Liddick, 49 Longwood Drive, Mechanicsburg PA 17050

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Meet Valerie Khoo

by Dawn Omboy



While spending time on Facebook one evening on the *Creative Grooming* fan page, I came across these beautiful photographs and had to meet their creator. Valerie Khoo is no stranger to the pet industry in Malaysia where she and her husband founded *Pets Icon* a one stop Pet & Show Salon, state of the art spa and massage center, pet hotel and day care center as well as *Professional Grooming Academy* located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur.

Among her many accomplishments Valerie is a *National Certified Master Groomer* with the NDGAA making her one of the first in Malaysia, Valerie then traveled to Thailand to *Starwood Arts of Dog Grooming School* for a *Professional Creative Dog Coloring* course. Under her strict supervision and training, Valerie has produced more than 100

Continued on page 26

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professional groomers from her academy now working all over Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Hong Kong.

Valerie now shares with us how she created this lovely masterpiece on *Shino* the white Miniature Schnauzer.

Step 1: First she drew out the whole idea and used colored pencils to visualize her creation.

Step 2: Create the Pet Mohawk Schnauzer Trim with either #10 or #7Fc blades, leave the Mohawk starting from the skull along the spine and stop at the last rib, make the width 2 to 3 inches depending on the coat volume. She left the tail long and clipped an inverted "V".

Step 3: Separate the Mohawk into 3 equal parts lengthwise. Color the middle section according to the combination chosen on the drawing. Valerie used vivid color to create a fantasy and fairy-tale feel for her design then wrapped with foil.

Step 4: Color the other 2 parts of the Mohawk, she used turquoise and dark gray to enhance the colorful part. To create a more 3-D effect, tone it gradually with water while the color is still wet to create a flowing finish.

Step 5: Color the tail, tone it gradually with water to create a soft finish.

Step 6: Color front and back legs with good toning then wrap with foil, use a warm blow dryer to gently heat set all the colored areas.

Step 7: Rinse and wash dog after 20-30 minutes and fluff dry.

Finishing: Groom and style the dog and then spray up the Mohawk.

I did want to mention that Valerie starts with a clean dry coat. She shampoo's twice thoroughly, does not use conditioner, then fluff dries. The color will penetrate the coat better on a clean dry coat.

Valerie, I enjoyed your artwork. Thank you for sharing. See you on Creative Grooming on Facebook!

For more about Creative Grooming visit www.klippers.com and Creative Grooming on Facebook.



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Behavior CLIPS

by Gary Wilkes



SIT, GOOD SIT.

If you have ever investigated books about dog training, you may have run into some concepts that appear to defy common sense and logic – and you would be absolutely correct. In the world of dog training, there is as much superstition as there is solid knowledge. For instance, a common practice among dog trainers is to give a command, wait for the behavior to happen and then offer praise that includes the command word. An example would sound like

Continued on page 30

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this – the trainer says “Sit” – the dog sits --- the trainer then says “Good Sit.” Trainers who attempt to explain this practice claim that it helps the dog connect the praise to the proper behavior. I hate to burst the bubble, but that is highly unlikely. To solve the puzzle, the dog is expected to understand that the word “good” is an adjective modifying the verb “sit” and that “sit” is used both as a verb in the imperative mood and a noun. Huh?

It is far more likely that the trailing “sit” is simply ignored by the dog. In reality, the words don’t control the behavior, anyway. The consequence of responding to the first “sit” is what determines whether the dog solves the puzzle or simply remains puzzled.

If that sounds a little odd, don’t be surprised. It is common for people to assume that words or “commands” cause behaviors to happen and that we can willy-nilly

say things and our dog will somehow understand. From that perspective, it makes sense that it is the end result of a behavior that determines how, when and where a behavior will happen again.

For instance, if we give a dog a treat every time it sits, the overall behavior of sitting will become more likely – whether we say anything or not. If we decide to stop reinforcing “sits” the behavior will decrease in its likelihood – regardless of what we say. In essence, the words we say are signposts along the road that point to a destination – they can indicate the way to travel, but inevitably it is the destination that “causes” the journey.

Once we realize that results control behavior, we can sweep some of the superstition from our training program. For instance, it is also common for people to chant, growl and yell commands at a dog in expectation that the tone will some-

...IT IS THE END
RESULT OF A
BEHAVIOR THAT
DETERMINES
HOW, WHEN
AND WHERE A
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how cause the behavior to happen. This is usually an open admission that the trainer has failed to provide tangible consequences for good performance. Remember, the average dog can hear the crinkle of a

Continued on page 32

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IF THE DOG SITS, SAY "GOOD" AND OFFER THE TREAT. IF THE DOG DOESN'T SIT, SAY "WRONG" ... AND TRY IT AGAIN

potato chip bag from three rooms away. Hearing that sound triggers instantaneous and enthusiastic response. If a faint sound can cause a dog to race at full speed to get a potato chip, but must be screamed at in order to "sit", the problem is not with the command, it's with the payoff.

To test our theory of "behavior by consequences" is really very simple. Go get a shallow bowl and some palatable food treats. Touch

a treat to your dog's nose and then move the treat back toward the dog's forehead. Hold the treat about an inch above the dog's nose, so the easiest way for the dog to get the treat is from a sitting position. If the dog sits, say "Good" (bite your tongue and do not add the word "sit") and offer a treat. Now repeat the sequence about 15 times. On repetition number 16, don't lift the treat over the dog's head, merely say "sit" in a soft tone of voice. If the dog sits, say "good" and offer the treat. If the dog doesn't sit, say "wrong" in a normal tone of voice and try it again. After a five minute session, put the treats away and take a break.

Later in the day, stash a couple of treats in your pocket and go about your business. At some point, when your dog is relatively close to you, say the word "sit" in a normal tone of voice. If the dog does, say "good" and offer a treat. If the dog doesn't sit, say "wrong" and go back to what you were doing. Wait a couple hours and try another training session.

Now we get to the fun part. After creating a pretty consistent "sit" in response to a normal tone

of voice, we are going to test the sit-good sit theory. In your next training session, say "bad sit" in a normal tone of voice. If the dog sits, say "good" and give the dog a treat. If the dog doesn't sit, move the treat over the dog's nose and lead the dog into a sitting position. Do this about 10 times, so that the term "bad sit" becomes the cue for sitting.

After you have created the "bad sit" cue, it's time to flip the coin and screw up the phrase "good sit." On your next session, say "good sit" in a normal tone of voice and see what happens. If the dog sits, say "wrong" and walk away and ignore the dog for 30 seconds. Continue with this until saying "good sit" causes the dog to just stand there and do nothing. Your goal is to have the dog respond to two different patterns. When you say "good sit" the dog doesn't sit and when you say "bad sit", the dog sits, every time.

Continued on page 34

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Now, here's the point of this nonsense. After teaching your dog to sit in response to the words "bad sit" you have made something plainly obvious. Your dog doesn't care a fig about the words you use to describe behaviors as long as the words predictably point to an opportunity for a reward. So, the factor most responsible for "causing" a behavior to happen is whatever consequence comes from doing that behavior. To put this more simply, behaviors that "pay off" are likely to be repeated.

To be a better trainer requires that we understand the simple mechanisms that create and maintain behavior. Within the basic rules of behavior is the concept that usually, the results of your behavior will affect your future behavior. For instance, if you happen to say "sit" while

TO BE A BETTER TRAINER REQUIRES THAT WE UNDERSTAND SIMPLE MECHANISMS THAT CREATE AND MAINTAIN BEHAVIOR.

leaning forward and your dog sits, the chance that you will lean forward the next time you say "sit" increases. Likewise, if you are in the habit of saying "sit, good sit" as the cue to make your dog sit, your dog's behavior will reinforce your

superstition. The secret to cleaning up this misuse of commands is to start listening to what you say and immediately following the word "Sit"; stop. Good stop.

Gary is an internationally acclaimed behaviorist, trainer, author, columnist and lecturer. He has more than 30 years experience working with dogs, including eight years of shelter work. Gary Wilkes is responsible for the innovation and development of clicker training as a practical methodology for dogs and with his former colleague, Karen Pryor, introduced this method in 1992. He currently has a full-time, veterinary referral based behavior practice in Phoenix, Arizona and is an author and columnist.

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READER SERVICE CARD #7398

The Groomer's Roundtable

Roundtable Question:

- What Do You Do To Grow Your Client Base?

Advertising in the local movie theater guides. *Joy Bonehill, Barking Lot, San Francisco CA*

Advertising - launched T.O.G.S. for dogs on Facebook. Joining the local Chamber of Commerce - networking. *Wendie Patrick, T.O.G.S. for Dogs, Bridgewater CN*

Great work. All my customers

are referrals. *Teresa Clark, Bonnie's Grooming, El Cajon, CA*

Web and print advertising, coupons at all the shelters, dog parks and adoptions facilities. *Lisa Drake, Epi-Pet, Bradenton FL*

New business is something that just finds its way to my door based upon my focusing on doing the best

job with the clients I already have. Everyone knows that a good, kind groomer gets business via word of mouth. Do a good job with the client base that you already have and you will never want for business. *Tracie Bailey, Dog Pawse, Attleboro MA*

Free nail trims. *Ilona Haydon, Best n Show, Manistee MI*

Continued on page 36

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READER SERVICE CARD #7399

All of my clients are word of mouth recommended by friends and family of my clients. They are always passing out my business cards. *Valerie Polychronopoulos, VIP Pet Grooming, Homer Glen IL*

I offer contests and promotions, I send out surveys via e-mail and all people who respond get their name put in a drawing for a free groom, or a product. *Lisa Kerr, Out Of The Dog House Grooming Service, Borden-Carleton CN*

Ads in newspaper. *Krystal Isings, Doggy Wash, Buckeye AZ*

Just joined the *Better Business Bureau*. *Vicki Graves, Rover's Makeover, Silverton OR*

Radio advertising. *Joyce Rinehart, The Spaw, Eureka CA*

Doing a commercial on the radio and an ugliest dog contest on that same radio station. *Kerri Wagner, Bark Avenue Day Spa, Lafayette IN*

We advertise in the local papers and *Yellowbook*, I have our

salon name, phone and website on my vehicle, but our best advertising continues to be word of mouth. *Julia Kurdt, Shampooochies, Charlotte Court House VA*

Advertising in local magazines and newspapers. *Tina Price, Muna Show Kennels, Shandon CA*

Mailing out postcards with \$5 off coupons. *Nikki Elie, Backyard Bubble, South Grafton MA*

Offering specials through the *Chamber of Commerce*. *Jennifer Glassford, Puppy's Breath Pet Grooming, New Liskeard CN*

Free 5 x 7 pictures of the pets, and articles mailed out to clients to let them know what's new at the shop. *Amanda Fusco, Mandar's Mutt Cuts, Virginia Beach VA*

Networking, networking! *Kim Raisanen, Professional Cat Groomers Association Of America, Fairview Park OH*

A good job!! *Erin Dooley, Go Dog Go Mobile Pet Grooming, San Diego CA*

Word of mouth has always been the best advertising for us. *Susan Farrell, Pawformance Grooming Salon LLC, Greenville MI*

Giving \$5.00 off to my customers that refer people. *Dog Splash, Chicago IL*

Giving good personalized customer service with special attention to educating the customer and promoting discounted prices for weekly and biweekly visits. *Suzanne Uzoff, Bunker Hill Groomer, Houston TX*

Facebook has helped me and my website too. *Cheryl Wyrick, Pampered Paws Grooming, Kansas City MO*

Advertise monthly in the local newspaper. *Charlina Graham, Grand Paws Grooming, Kokomo IN*

Coupons (direct mail) offering 10% off, you'd be surprised at the amount of previous customers that have come back using their coupon. *Gretchen Schultz, Gretchen Schultz, Bethel Island CA*

Handing out business cards like crazy, word of mouth. *Laryssa Pugh, Hound N' Mouser, Creston CN*

We have extended hours, an "afternoon shift" so to speak, and we are doing more coupon advertising in local papers and client reminder

Continued on next page

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cards with a discount for timely grooming sessions. We did add a VIP discount card for a FREE grooming after 10 full grooms, also doing a referral program where the client gets a free full grooming if they refer 3 new clients to us. *Suzanne Hentschel, Posh Paws Pet Salon, Macomb MI*

Joining Chamber of Commerce, sandwich signs, newspaper ads, flyers. *Ginger Pepple, Dog Pet Grooming, Jefferson City MO*

Almost every month there is a holiday of some sort, and we capitalize on the idea by offering a 10-20% discount per groom, it may only add up to \$2 or \$3 off, which doesn't hurt our business, but people are more likely to come in with the economy like it is, and it helps get long time customers. *Corella Hernandez, Plush Pups Pet Grooming, Minford OH*

Sending out referral cards on my card system. *Dana McPherson, Dog Designs By Dana Pet Salon, Sebring FL*

We are currently working on our website and improving search engine results. Our goal is to increase new business via our web presence rather than rely on word of mouth and a costly yellow page ad. *Terrie Crawford, TLC Pet Grooming, Hamilton CN*

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READER SERVICE CARD #7402

Two biggies: phone calls to customers who have not been to the shop in a while and sending post-cards to customers who have not been in the shop in a while. Post-card offers a \$5 discount on grooming services. *Lydia Boesch, Lydia Boesch, Pinehurst NC*

Advertising on Craigslist, Yellow-Pages.com, Google, and PetFinder. *Alyssa Forss, D'Tails Dog Grooming, Wausau WI*

Advertise in neighborhood newsletters. *Stephanie Gray, Guardian Angel Dog Grooming, Dallas GA*

Penetrating the self-wash business. Meeting with pet-friendly hotels, holding in-house seminars with pet experts, rewarding referral business. *Terri Garretson, Red Dog Spa & Boutique, Chantilly VA*

Offering new services like spa therapy and teeth cleaning. *Jennifer Howard, The Pawty Palace, Katy TX*

Excellent customer service!!
Terri Wene, The Foxy Hound Grooming Salon, Ephrata PA

Advertising. Offering five dollars

off a full service. *Melissa Longazel, The Lazy Dog Salon, Minesville PA*

A referral program, I have 3 per client right now, it works like a dream! *Colleen Hainsworth, Angel Paws Dog Grooming & Spa, Branford CT*

Currently accepting new clients strictly by word of mouth referrals. I could use some more clients, but not so much that it is worth spending money on advertising to get them. I have two vets that refer to me, my website, my listing on *Petgroomer.com* and the wonderful reviews from my current clients; that is working pretty well for me. *Carol Harvey, Lorac's Mobile Pet Spa, Aubrey TX*

I am sending postcards out with a 10% coupon. *Patti ILG, Patti ILG The Groomer, Aurora OH*

Networking, adoption events, fostering for *Second Chance Dog Rescue*, online advertising, upgrading my website, constant contact newsletters with monthly coupons and of course, referral discounts! *Michelle, Bow Wow Beauty Shop, San Diego CA*

Continued on page 38

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Lots of new advertising in the free publications in our area, there are at least four different magazines/papers that print weekly and biweekly and their ad prices are very reasonable...I have an ad running in every magazine, staggered month to month. *Valerie Attrill, Barking Beauties, Walnutport PA*

My clients put me on *Angie's* list and I have been amazed with the amount of business I have been getting. Free advertising!! *Jennifer Lavelle, Kool Klips, Brookhaven PA*

We are sending out a newsletter to all our clients. This doesn't necessarily mean we get "new" business. It just helps up keep our existing clients coming back in more regularly. *Tracy Spokes, Blue Ribbon Grooming, Prince George CN*

Nothing. I am a very shy person and getting "out there" is not in my make up so I just keep my website, brochures and pictures up to date. *Deena Holeman, D'Tails Dog Salon, Portland OR*

We have actually been not so bad lately, we are slow but not dead like in recent years. I did do a local

trade show health fair. Teamed up with a friend of mine who owns a dog cookie business, we sold cookies at the fair and gave coupons to every customer in my area, with a free winter spa package to add to the pets groom, expiring April 1. The winter spa package is simply, nail grinding, paw scrub, blueberry facial and polish of their choice. Simple things that don't take much time for a groomer to do. *Sara Fincham, Shirley's K-9 Klipperly, Whitby CN*

I am offering area pet professionals my business cards and samples of my pet foods lines. *Susan Potts, Spotts Grooming Parlor, Painesville OH*

Computerized, direct mail cards are being sent out using a demographic map. *Karen Cantner, Li'l Doggy Salon, Evansville IN*

Joined forces with the *Humane Society* providing free or discounted grooms for dogs that are adoptable. *Pam Crump, Gilmer Girlz Petwear & Grooming, Gilmer TX*

Advertising more on the internet with photos. *Lisa Calderon, Barks N Bubbles, Ahsoskie NC*

Newspaper ads have proven helpful, and going the extra mile for my regulars has brought me a lot of referral business. Having a web site which answers questions keeps the phone calls to bookings only. *Jacki McNally, Hairy Hobby Dog Grooming, Rosetown CN*

I did a three drop direct mailer through *Cox Publishing* (RSC #7359). The 6 x 11 cards were absolutely beautifully designed and targeted specific demographics that I requested (they even cross referenced my database and removed my current customers from their list). It was incredibly successful. We got about 160 new clients over a three month period. Cost \$4300.00 which cost me roughly \$27.00 per new client to get. I charge \$37.50 for small haircuts (Poodle, Schnauzer, Shih Tzu) meaning I only profited \$5.50 because I offered a \$5.00 off new client coupon on the mailers.... on the initial groom (which isn't even enough to pay a groomer), but the annual increase that I expect from these new customers is greater than \$24,000.00 (and that's shooting low... assuming they each only come four times this year, are all small dogs, and don't buy any extra services. *Amy Howard, Groomingdale's, Beaver creek OH*

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30 MINUTE TRIM: WESTIE



By Cheryl A Purcell

So you know the type of day, we all have them. Over-booked, phone ringing off the hook and every client wants you to be the one that grooms their dog.

In order to combat this daily occurrence I developed an easy to follow step by step procedure for each groomer in my salon to follow. It not only ensures a consistent groom every time, but it also allows us to groom certain breeds in thirty minutes or less.

In this issue we will discuss how to put a Westie in a pet trim in 30 minutes or less. This is actual "table time" – not bathing and drying time.

First bath your dog before you attempt any trimming. Not only are clean dogs easier to work with, they are much more enjoyable to work on as a pet stylist and you will save tons on your sharpening fees.

The number one thing to remember in order to pick up speed is to groom each pet the same way every time. This will create a consistency in your performance and leave less room for error. I start with the right rear leg and

work my way around the dog counter clockwise. What ever works best for you, but be consistent about it.

LET'S GET STARTED

After shampooing and conditioning with your favorite product, use a high velocity blower like the K-9 (RSC #7353) to remove excess water, then cage dry to about 90%. If your dog does dry completely you

can take some water and conditioner to mist the coat to help straighten it out. I like to use 1 oz. of *Nature's Specialties Remoisturizer* (RSC #7354) with 32 oz of water in a spray bottle. Move the dog to the table and use the high velocity blower to blow through the entire coat, making sure it is completely dry. I don't brush at this point unless the

Continued on page 40



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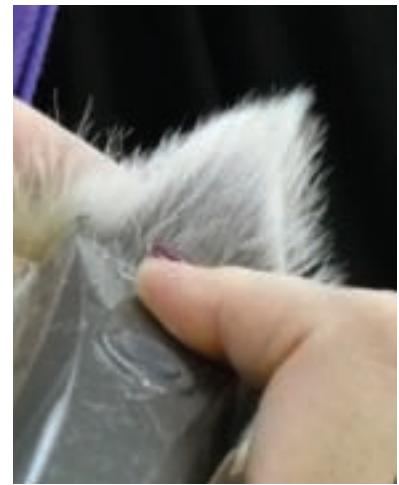
READER SERVICE CARD #7405



Comb all hair to one side and trim off what is hanging below the pad line.



Trim off what is hanging below the pad line.



Trim the top 1/3 of the inside of the ear with a 30 blade.

dog is matted. You will brush out as you go along.

FEET

Step 1. Do nails, pads, and trim feet all at the same time, so you only have to lift each leg once. This will lessen the stress on the dog and you will feel like you're handling the animal less because you will be.

Step 2. Brush out the legs and the body as you move around the dog. To trim feet quickly and evenly, brush all the hair to one side and

trim off what is hanging below the pad line.

After you complete all four feet move on to the sanitary areas using a 10 blade.

Next we are going to trim the head. Now I know that this will seem foreign to some of you, but I've always found it easier to finish working on the body of a pet rather than the head if a client should arrive for pick up before I'm finished. Also, please note that I used a Vac system when trimming this head. If you don't have a Vac system change

the length of the clipper combs from an A comb to an O comb and from a C comb to an A comb.

HEAD

Step 1. Trim the top 1/3 of the inside of the ear with a 30 blade.

Continued on page 42

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READER SERVICE CARD #7407

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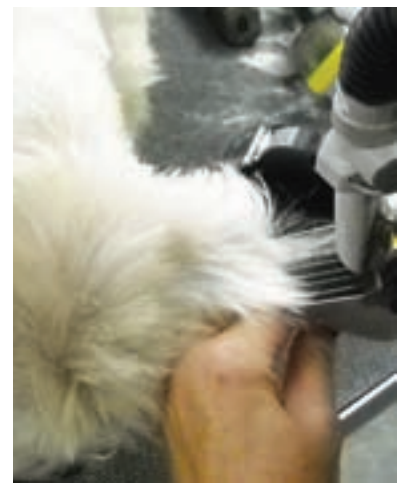
READER SERVICE CARD #7409



Trimming top of the head with C comb.



Trimming under the jaw line with C comb.



Hold the ear while using C Comb. Force the hair behind the ear to center of the head.

Step 2. Trim the top 1/3 of the outside of the ear with a 10 blade.

Step 3. Trim the corners of the eyes using a 10 blade.

Step 4. Use a *Wahl A* comb

(RSC #7355) over a 9 blade and trim from the back to the front in three strokes. One in the middle and one on each side of the first stroke making sure to overlap each stroke and just touch the outside of the ear.

Step 5. Change to a *Wahl C*

comb and trim from under the jaw line to the top of the head. Complete this on both sides.

Step 6. Using the C comb still, force the hair behind the ear to the center of the head. Be sure to hold the ear in your hand while doing this, so not to nick the ear.

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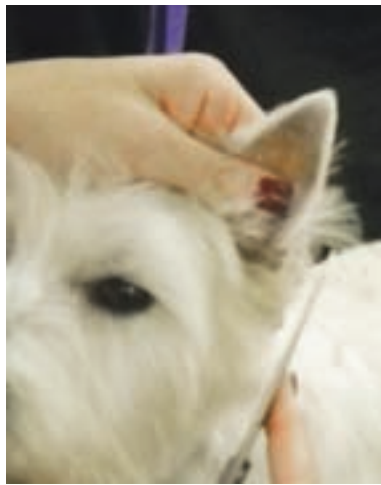
READER SERVICE CARD #7411



Using the C comb again under the chin.

Step 7. Using the C comb again, trim under the chin.

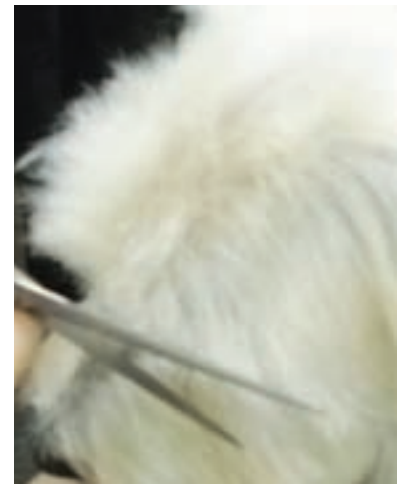
Step 8. Take the ear and hold it in your hand and trim off the hair that hangs over the leather.



Take ear and trim off the hair that hangs over the leather.

Step 9. Fold the ear in half and trim off the hair that is hanging over.

Step 10. Comb the hair on the jaw line down and trim off the strays.



Comb the hair over the eye forwards and trim.

Step 11. Comb the hair under the chin back toward the neck and trim the strays.

Step 12. Comb the hair behind the ears towards the back of the dog and trim it even.

Continued on page 44

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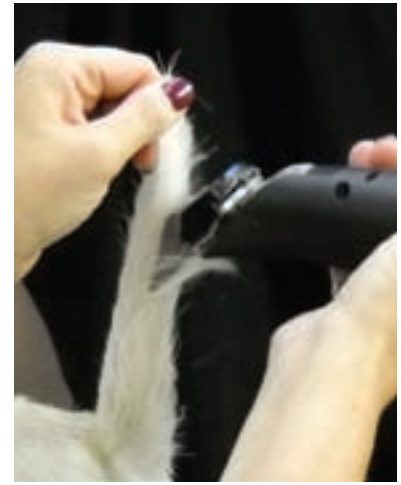
READER SERVICE CARD #7413



Start behind the head and trim down the neck.



Continue along the back to the tail.



Trim either side of tail with the 2 comb.

Step 13. Comb the hair over the eye forwards and trim.

When clipping the body you can use any blade from a 7 to a 1 comb depending on the area you live in, the time of year and most of all, what your client's wishes are. I like

my dogs not to look clipped, so I use a Wahl 2 comb.

Body

Step 1. Using a Wahl 2 comb over a 9 blade, start behind the head and trim down the neck around the side of the neck to the

front of the throat. Now continue along the back to the tail. Follow it off the side and clip out the V on the rear.

Step 2. Trim rear off pin bone toward legs, so that the rear is flat.

Step 3. Trim either side of the tail with the 2 comb from rear to tip

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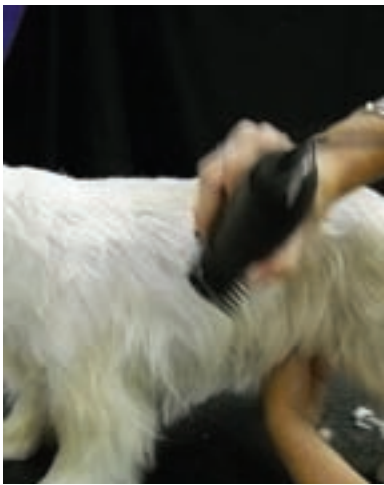
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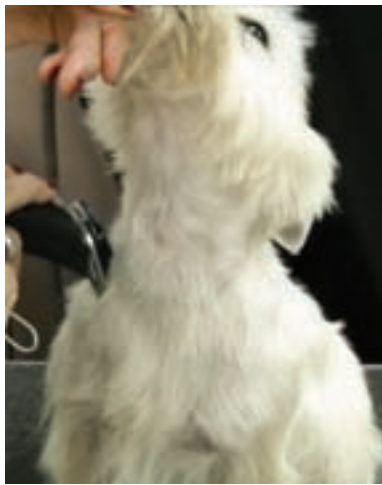
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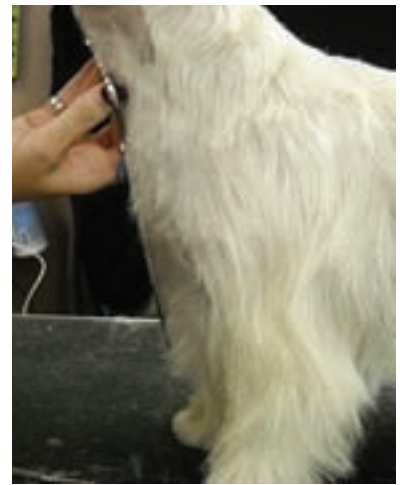
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Skim off the rib cage coming away from the body.



Trim front of chest off shoulders towards legs.



Trim Chest bib so the front is straight.

then trim the underside of the tail going from tip to rear

Step 4. Skim off the rib cage coming away from the body just before the barrel of the chest rolls under.

Step 5. Next clip out the V on

the front shoulder.

Step 6. Trim front of chest off shoulders towards legs.

Step 7. Comb the hair on the top side of the tail to either side and trim off the excess so that the tail

now resembles a carrot.

Step 8. Trim chest bib so the front is straight.

Step 9. Trim underline to clients preferred length so that it is in

Continued on page 61

Playgroups
 Can't We All Just Get Along?
 Featuring Sarah Wilson

Sarah explores breed and temperament combinations!

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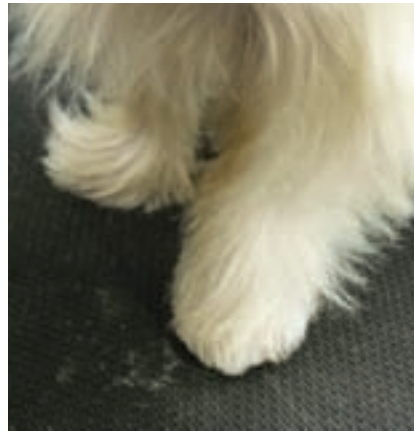
Head before.



Feet before.



Head After.



Feet After.

an arch and not a straight underline.

That's it, you're finished! Most Westie's can be done in less than 30 minutes from table to scarf using this method.

Cheryl Purcell is a Nationally Certified Master Groomer. She started her grooming career in 1991 when she opened a salon with her mother, Pooch Paws in Hanover, MA. She now operates that same salon with her husband, Ron and daughter, Krystal. A Groom Team USA Member from 2002 to 2007 and five time Cardinal Crystal nominee, Cheryl also helped develop a state of the art pet grooming certificate program in conjunction with a local community college.

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Getting Down to BUSINESS

BY TERI DIMARINO

Buying Retail 101

OMG! It's October! It seems like I've been looking at Halloween decorations for the past month and now that I actually need a costume, I go to the store to look around only to find that most of the Halloween stuff has been replaced with Christmas and Holiday accessories. These things have actually been creeping onto store shelves since August. Although you just may not have noticed. Or, maybe you have noticed and simply choose to ignore them, knowing that you will inevitably have to face the trees, lights, packages, long hours and longer lines.

When I owned my salon I dreaded this time of year. It seemed like I always waited until the last minute to prepare my business for the holidays and I never had any time for myself; or my family. I had to send out holiday cards to clients, decorate the salon and then buy holiday related retail items for the salon, hoping that I would "pick a winner" and not something I would still be looking at in the spring, covered with dust. Then, of course, there are the seemingly endless hours tethered to the grooming table. All this does not leave a whole lot of time for personal celebrating. "Ho ho ho" quickly turns into "No no no!"

One year I had an epiphany. If the big stores can go into the fall all prepared for the holidays, why can't I? They do all their buying well ahead of time and probably get some



real good deals for buying it early. Sometimes storage can be an issue but if it's clean and well packaged I price it, put it back in a tightly sealed box, mark the box with the contents and put it on a shelf. When the time comes to put it out all I had to do was open the box and put the stuff out for sale. Duh! This process just got TOO easy! Until one year I got a little lazy and didn't mark my boxes correctly. I ended up finding some "misplaced" boxes of Christmas toys right after the Holidays one year. Those were boxes of "money" that ended up taking up space until

Continued on page 48

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the following year. A plan is only good if it's properly executed.

How do we plan for the Holidays? How do we know what to buy or what is going to be the new "hot" item this year? That's what all these advertised trade shows are for. They want people like you and me to come and see what is new and

exciting and they want to sell it to you NOW; well in advance of the holiday crunch. It's frustrating when you place an order for Holiday toys and goodies only to be told by the suppliers that they are "out of stock" on so much of the good stuff the closer it gets to the dreaded December dates.

Most of the groomers who are reading Groomer to Groomer are small business people: many of who feel they are constantly doing battle with the superstores, especially on the retail front. Retail is a four letter word to many pet stylists. They feel it takes up too much of their time and ties up too much of their cash in merchandise they may not be able to sell or that the customer can buy the same item for less at one of the "box stores". They don't like taking time away from the pets they are grooming to make a small sale.

If you are one of my regular readers then you know one of my

favorite mantras: "retail is your silent partner." Well thought out product selection coupled with good, albeit simple, merchandising can pay your rent, your electric bill and so much more, leaving the grooming money for you! I don't like leaving my grooming table to sell product any more than the next groomer, but if you use what you sell and sell what you use, your passion for a product helps it sell itself. For the boutique salons there are plenty of specialty products available that cannot be found in the superstores. These items will also "sell themselves." You just have to know where to look.

As I mentioned previously, trade shows are a veritable candy store for retail buyers. Barkleigh Productions is host to two of the largest grooming industry trade shows in the US: GroomExpo held in Hershey, PA in September and Groom & Kennel Expo in Pasadena, CA in February.

While these are aimed at the grooming industry there are plenty of companies exhibiting retail items specifically geared toward the small salon. This is the October issue of Groomer to Groomer and it is obviously too late to attend the Hershey show to shop for your Holiday retail items, but there are still several trade shows left to shop at. The Backer Christmas Show in Chicago is a huge all-industry trade show. While they are quite grooming oriented, with a full-blown GroomTeam USA Sanctioned competition, there are products on display for fins, furs and feathers. Just because it is not an all grooming show does not mean that you won't find something you need, or want to add to your salon. And the show specials are where we can save additional dollars, making our profit margins even larger.

While I am an ardent retail fan, I realize that there are people that will never become overly enthusiastic about it. These professionals want to take care of their grooming clients and nothing more. Period! Don't

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Continued on page 50



Noted Trainer and Animal Behaviorist, Martin Deeley, will be Pet Pro Cruise Speaker

A world renowned dog trainer, Martin Deeley, is scheduled for **January 15-23, 2011**. The *Carnival Freedom* will set sail from Ft. Lauderdale, FL on a 9 day/8 night cruise to Cozumel,



Mexico; Limon, Costa Rica; and Colon, Panama (near the Panama Canal).

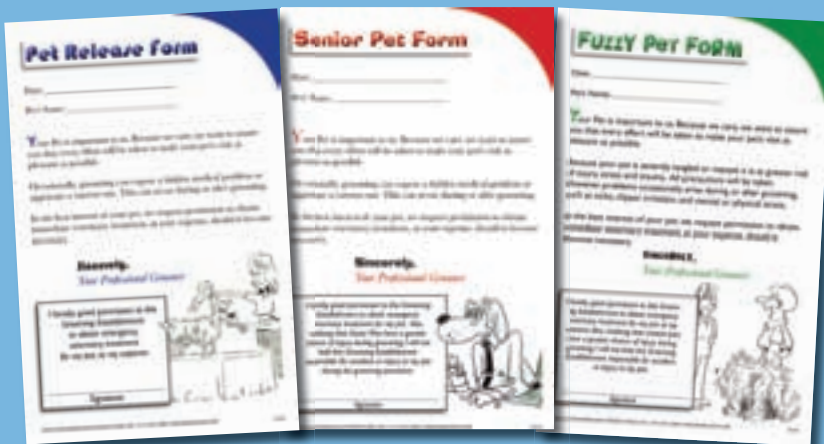
Martin Deeley will host various educational seminars for dog trainers throughout the voyage. This is a vacation for those who wish to learn more about animal behavior all the while enjoying beautiful ports of call on one amazing fun ship.

For more information, please visit www.BarkleighEvents.com or call (717) 691-3388.

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talk to them about selling anything. They don't want to hear it. Well what about selling yourself? Isn't your service something you want to sell? Getting new customers in your store is one thing. I feel keeping the customers we have is even more important. We already had their pet in our salon at least once and it is within our power to keep them or lose them. What do we do to get them back in

the salon? How do we get them to book early for those Holiday appointments?

Appointment reminder cards are just one of those things we can pick up at good prices at trade shows. Years ago I would stock up on them whenever I would attend a Barkleigh Productions show. In fact, you can find them if you turn to the back pages of this magazine. I would purchase reminder cards and send them out periodically throughout the year but, when it came to Holiday cards, I altered my technique a bit.

I would address cards for several months before Christmas, doing a small stack every day. Now with computers, we can print out client mailing labels just a few key strokes. Come Thanksgiving all the cards would be addressed, stamped and ready to put in the mailbox the next day. I liked to be sure my salon's card was the first one the customer received. Oh, did I mention that I always addressed it to the pet, not

the owner? And it was always signed with the salon stamp and phone number.

One year I purchased a lot of Holiday cards on sale at a trade show earlier in the year. I stored them in a box in the back of the salon but the box was not sealed very well. Unbeknownst to me, it filled with dog hair that had wafted through the air, as hair does. We dusted them off, addressed them and mailed them as usual. Within three days of mailing the cards, our phone started ringing off the wall.

Customers were calling with hilarious stories of how their dogs were drawn to the cards and how the dog just "knew the card was for them." The dogs were carrying the cards around the house, hiding them in their beds or tearing them up. One even peed on it. And while they had me on the phone, could they book their Holiday appointment now?

We realized that these cards had been in the salon for quite a while and, with the floating hair that had accumulated in the box, had picked up the scent of the salon. We all know that a dog's sense of smell is their best tool and it sure worked well for us! It was one of the easiest Holiday seasons we ever had, as everything was nicely paced, we were not overbooked and all of our good clients were taken care of.

In ensuing years I would purchase reminder and Holiday cards (on sale) and put them in a large plastic bag along with some hair from the floor of the salon. Every year we would get the same reaction from the customers. The dogs looked forward to getting their card, the customer got a kick out of the dog's reaction and we looked forward to booking those appointments early.

Now go order your Holiday retail items before the distributor is out of stock. And don't forget the cards! There's still enough time to permeate them with the smell of your salon. And what smells like hair to them smells like dollars to me!

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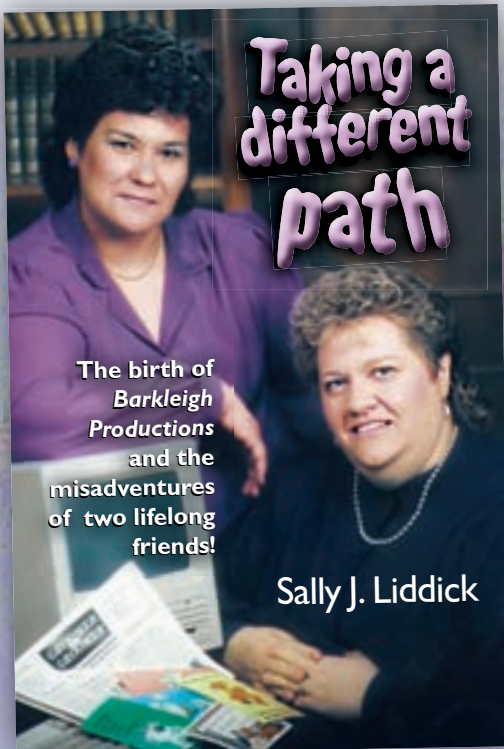
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TAKING A DIFFERENT PATH by Sally J. Liddick

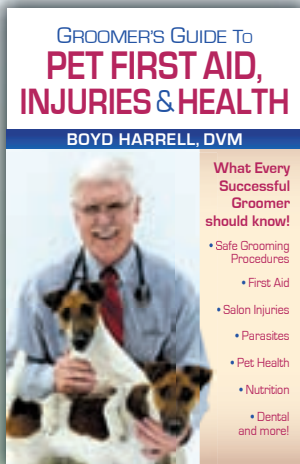
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DOG GROOMING QUICK TIPS By Lauren Osborne, CMG

This publication contains tips and practical advice to help improve your grooming techniques. Certified Master Groomer and author, Lauren Osborne, has compiled over 13 years of experience into the pages of this handy reference guide.

#6372 Dog Grooming Quick Tips \$12.95

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SuperGroom

Summit is coming to the Nash Academy - Kentucky!

This year the SuperGroom Summit will be held at the Nash Academy in Lexington, KY on **November 12 - 14, 2010**. This event is a high level international grooming conference, IJA and GroomTeam USA sanctioned tournament and judges summit dedicated to the art of exquisite grooming! There will be grooming contests in the following classes: Poodle, Mixed and Other Purebreds and Sporting/Terrier. The contests will offer a one on one experience with personal and group reviews after each competition.

The deadline for contest registration is Friday, Nov. 5. Grooming tables and bathing facilities will be provided.

Educational opportunities include seminars by Vivian Nash, Kathy Rose, Sasha Reiss, Karla Addington-Smith, Sarah Hawks and Tim Prior. Lunch will be provided daily between contests and seminars.

If you love to compete and appreciate high-end grooming, then this is the event for you! *For additional information, visit www.SuperGroom.net.*



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Get Ready for Groom and Kennel Expo 2011!



Attention Pet Pros - It's time to head out west! Groom & Kennel Expo will be held **February 10-13** at the Pasadena Convention Center in beautiful California. Last year, **Groom & Kennel Expo** welcomed nearly 2,500 attendees and featured 95 exhibitor booths. We anticipate an even more amazing show this year!

Groom & Kennel Expo 2011 will feature the educational seminars you need to expand your professional skills. Leading industry experts and well known speakers will present a wide variety of topics to help you advance your business and enhance your knowledge!

Of course, all of your favorite grooming contests will be presented. The Winner's Circle Tournament, World Cup Grooming Games and Creative Styling Contest will entertain attendees throughout the weekend. A Silent Auction featuring hundreds of pet themed items will be held daily with the proceeds being donated to Gifts of Love International.

For more information on Groom & Kennel Expo 2011 visit www.GroomExpo.com or request Reader Service Card #7349.

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MARTIN DEELEY

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For more information, visit www.NWgroom.com or request Reader Service Card #7357.

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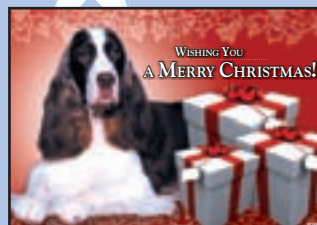
NEW!



#CC-10 (Back)
"and a Ter-RUFF-ic New Year!"



#CC-96 (Back) "... and a Paw-fect New Year!"



#CC-09 (Back)
"... and a Yappy New Year!"



#CC-02 (Back) "And YOU are on it for being soooo nice! Have a Purr-fect Christmas and a Happy New Year!"

Call (717) 691-3388 or go online at Barkleigh.com to **Order Now!**



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#CC-91 (Back) "Have a Purr-fect Christmas and a Paws-itively Wonderful New Year!"



#CC-90 (Back) "Have a Happy Hanukkah!"



#CC-00 (Back) "Have a Purr-fect Holiday!"



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#CC-93 (Back) "Have a Merry Christmas and a Paw-fect New Year!"



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The Last Word

by Sally Liddick



Quality Control

Sometimes I think only the dumb stuff happens to me... and I am my own worst enemy. This one took a whole lifetime to get through.

My father was a cemetery lot salesman at one point in his life. It was a new idea, a memorial park. No headstones, just beautiful bronzes laid flat on the ground. It was called Rolling Green Memorial Park. Nowadays, there are many of these cemeteries, but at that time, it was a new idea. Actually, they had even broader and wider ideas for their cemeteries at that time. This progressive company wanted the memorial park to be a beautiful place that people would come for a picnic, or a wedding.

Seeing that my father was a young man, and had a lovely young woman to wed, an idea must have popped into the company heads.

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Let's have the wedding in the memorial park for this lovely young couple and get some news publicity. Dad and mom were delighted with them picking up the tab. It was right after the great depression and they had no money for a wedding. They were thrilled apparently with the prospect of nuptials in the cemetery, surrounded by lovely Greek statuary.

The wedding took place in a beautiful little chapel on the grounds in White Marsh, Pennsylvania, and the company even placed yellow singing canaries in the chapel windows, to offer even more ambience. The idea never really caught on, but my parents had lovely pictures to show for it that appeared in the newspaper. Dad purchased four plots for the family, at some time during his employment, or perhaps they were just a wedding gift from the company. I'll never know.

Time passed and my grandparents passed away, using the plots. My mother placed a small \$35 deposit on bronzes for the couple. A tidy sum in 1952, but not enough to buy them. The records do not indicate any more deposits but I know it was her desire to get those markers. Mother was always the one to visit graves and place flowers, so I know it was important to her.

In time, Dad and Mom passed away. And my sister, as well. Mother remarried, so her grave was in Chambersburg with her new husband. I bought a tomb-

stone for mom in the traditional old Catholic cemetery. Headstones were much cheaper than bronzes, and I couldn't possibly let my mother's grave go unmarked. She would never forgive me.

Time passed, but the unmarked graves of my grandparents, father, and sister remained silent under the towering elms and it was always necessary to remember names on other markers to locate my family members. It bothered me. But every time I would check the cost it was so out of reach, that I would put it off for another day. There was always something that needed to be bought for \$2800, \$3200, or \$3800. These were the costs every time I checked on prices at various times in my life. Oh, inflation... you are a nasty taskmaster.

My niece came to visit and told me about the unmarked graves. She and her sister recently visited the memorial garden. She reminded me that her mother's grave was still not marked. I felt badly about this, especially for my father and grandfather. Now that I was a senior, I decided it was now or never.

I called a local memorial service company, and a lovely gentleman came out to give me the prices. \$4800. Wow. He offered a payment plan and would charge my credit card monthly for two years. We selected the style, added wonderful attached plaques of love and caring, and I gave him the spellings of

my loved ones... my father, sister, grandmother and grandfather *Alfred Edward Breach*. The memorial guy would get the dates from the cemetery.

The bronzes were ordered and were to be placed in the spring when the ground could be dug. I felt very good about having done this after all the many years. I guess I was looking for someone else to do this task, but as the only surviving child, it had become my job. I breathed easier, and slept better knowing that they would be properly marked.

In the spring, my husband and I went to look at the memorial bronze markers. They looked lovely and were replaced properly. Their shiny new exterior was in marked contrast to all the older weathered bronzes. But nonetheless, I had the internal reward of a job well done.

Months after looking at these bronzes, a thought popped in my mind. Oh no, I didn't even want to

entertain the idea. I don't think my grandfather's name was Alfred, I think it was Albert. *Albert Breach*. How could I have made such a terrible mistake? I looked it up in online genealogy. *Albert Breach*. Not Alfred. Now what? Do I leave it go? Yes, after all it was marked. And the dates were right. And the grandmother was right. Albert was gone. He would never know. Or at least he would forgive me. But the idea haunted me. What if some relative, 100 years hence, came looking for their great, great, great, grandfather and found Alfred? It would skew things for posterity.

I called the memorial guy back and told him my dilemma. He offered to redo the bronze for a portion of the original price. I was so grateful that he would do this for me. It was ordered, we double checked the spelling, and he said it would be placed again in the spring. Again charges went on my

credit card, and I awaited the news that they had been placed. The call came, and I was satisfied. All was right with the world.

A year later my niece revisited the gravesites. "Aunt Sally," she said on the phone, "Do you realize that there are two grave markers, one with *Alfred Breach*, and one for *Albert Breach*."

What! How could they make such a stupid mistake? They took the good one, the one for my father and sister, instead of the one with the bad spelling. I immediately called the memorial guy fearing that the good marker had been melted down for scrap. Fortunately it had not, and he was so embarrassed that the wrong one was removed. Immediately a task force was sent with the proper bronzes, and they all were mounted correctly. We checked it out this time.

Todd always says that no good deed goes unpunished. I think he is right.

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