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Dog trainer extraordinaire

BY TASHA KNOWLTON



Potter and Cary Voorhees.

Originally from Buffalo, New York, Cary Voorhees, dog trainer extraordinaire always dreamed of moving to Oregon. In 1984 she did just that making her home in Ruch. How very fortunate we all are.

Cary has been training dogs in obedience and behavior for about 25 years. Additionally for the last 12 years she has been training dogs in agility, (running through tunnels, jumping over ramps, etc.). She also teaches classes in agility and obedience and offers private in-home training.

Cary's interest in animals began when she was just a child. She was raised with animals and learned to love them at a very young age. Her first commitment toward her goals was to receive degrees in zoology and animal behavior. Cary didn't always know that she was going to be a dog trainer; she thought that she would eventually live somewhere in Africa studying monkeys and other interesting animals.

As it happened, Cary's first job here in Oregon was working with Dogs for the Deaf. This is when her real interest in dog training began. She was employed with Dogs for the Deaf for seven or eight years, beginning as a Certified Audio Canine Trainer and then became a behavior consultant. After Dogs for the Deaf, Cary worked at the Jackson County Animal Shelter and at the Humane Society, placing dogs with people whose personalities were compatible.

For a while, Cary volunteered for the American Humane Society to make sure that animals on movie sets and commercials were treated humanely, she made sure that there was sufficient food and water and the animals were not over-worked. Cary worked with a yellow lab used in the movie River Wild, filmed here in southern Oregon. In a National Geographic documentary she was able to work with tigers. Both of these she says were fantastic experiences. She also has trained dogs for use in international movies and commercials.

Currently the Voorhees household has five dogs, three horses, two cats, and a parrot. One of her dogs,

a border collie named Potter, she has trained in agility trails. He also does "nosework" which is similar to searching for items used in search and rescue. Cary is also in the process of training a small Papillon rescue dog named Timmy.

Cary enjoys training canines so much because every dog, every owner and every situation is unique. Each dog has a special personality. Cary has the uncanny ability to figure who is who, and who needs what. When working with the unique behaviors of a dog, she prefers being at the owner's house, where the dog is familiar and comfortable. She is also able to see how the animal acts in its own environment, thereby teaching to individual needs.

The seminars and classes she hosts, taught by visiting trainers, are usually fully booked months in advance. The most popular class is by the world-renowned trainer from England, John Rogerson. Rogerson teaches tracking and searching in a four-day seminar called "Crime Scene CSI." To add excitement and interest to the training class for the canines and handlers alike, the class has a murder theme. After two days of training, suddenly there is a "murder" and the dogs and handlers need to look for clues to solve the murder. To cover the crime scene the dogs and handlers roam over acres of land, looking for many clues. "It is so much fun and very motivating," Cary says.

Having expanded her horizons into the wilds of nature, Cary's interests always reflect back to her animals. Two years ago she completed a nine-month study in herbology. Her new passion is wildcrafting, medicinal gardening and making medicine, which often benefits her animals. Because of her committed interest in an



Looking for crime-scene clues.

animal's well being, Cary has been learning about better animal nutrition and has witnessed incredible positive results due to dietary changes. Cary looks at animals holistically, with an eye to their physical, emotional and nutritional balance. Kinesiology, a method of muscle testing which gives feedback about the status of the functional state of the body, has also been integrated into Cary's realm of knowledge and practice. Through the use of muscle testing she has helped an animal's owner determine the benefits of particular foods and herbs. This testing sometimes works when dealing with behavior modification as well.

Cary says all this training keeps her young because she gets to spend each day playing with dogs, while training them at the same time. For her this isn't just a job, it is also a hobby of love.

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