

President's Corner

Love and Celebration

"Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all" (Alfred Lord Tennyson).....

With Valentine's Day just behind us, this phrase comes to mind. OK, we have all heard this dramatic proclamation at one time or another, and we certainly all have our own internalizations of such 'love' quotes, however, this one has stuck in my mind these past few weeks. And the reason? Most certainly, it is due to the recent loss of our Airedale, Brew. We knew the love and loyalty of this wonderful boy for nearly five years, but it feels like a lot longer. And as I reflect back through the fond memories I have of him, it becomes obvious to me that I wouldn't have traded a moment of the heartache that came with saying goodbye for the precious time that he was here to love us and be loved – to do his 'dog job'. So, absolutely, it **IS** better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all! In the greater scheme of things good for the soul, I think that a dog's love far exceeds the loss we feel upon his parting. To have a friend that loves you with as much unbridled enthusiasm and as unconditionally as a dog is a special gift and is really quite unimaginable from a human's perspective! For example, show me a human that:

- Is absolutely ecstatic to see you walk in the door – even though you just ran out for a minute to get the paper or take out the trash?
- Can't wait to sit in the parked car?
- Dotes on your every word and facial expression, just waiting for some small acknowledgement?
- Forgives the way a dog does (this one *really* amazes me)?
- Is simply content to be near you/see you/smell you while you check email, write out bills, read the paper - basically completely ignore them?

Often, we take this love for granted, like many of the best things in our lives. We get busy – we are torn in so many directions and have so many responsibilities these days. We are on call 24/7 – pagers, cell phones, blackberries, etc. We plug into our iPods and tune out the world. Through the loss of a canine friend, we are reminded of the simple but important role he or she played in making our life more fulfilled and happy; a parting gift to us, of sorts.

To this I say, it's time to reaffirm that our canine friends give us a really good reason to celebrate life! [And by the way – why is there never a 'Take Your Dog to Work' Day?? Sorry, I digress, but I've often fantasized about this ...] The weather is warming up, winter is finally behind us – get outside and enjoy watching your friend delight in that sunny place on the deck, chase the squirrels for fun and never actually eat them, stomp through every mud puddle in the yard with glee, or catch a new scent on a Spring breeze. These small pleasures can be so gratifying – we just need to see them, and we don't need to look far. Dogs live in the present, no regrets; they do what makes them happy, and, lucky for us, that includes loving their families with no strings attached. Enjoy this gift and privilege; further, share it with your non-dog friends. I have a girlfriend that used to be somewhat afraid of our 'pack'. Over time, through their Airedale humor and kindness, she has learned to trust and appreciate them, and I am glad to report that she now giggles as she asks our young male to down/stay for a cookie. Another Airedale convert – yea dogs!

Dogs are our precious gifts, to live with us here for a while, but in our hearts forever. Celebrate them, laugh with them, and love them for who they are and what they give us. In closing, I thought I'd share a few of my favorite dog quotes that I have filed away – I hope you enjoy them! Happy Spring, everyone!

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My goal in life is to be as good a person as my dog thinks I am.

-Unknown

Don't accept your dog's admiration as conclusive evidence that you are wonderful.

-Ann Landers

The average dog is a nicer person than the average person.

-Andy Rooney

We give dogs time we can spare, space we can spare and love we can spare. And in return, dogs give us their all. It's the best deal man has ever made.

-M. Acklam

There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face.

-Ben Williams

You can say any foolish thing to a dog, and the dog will give you a look that says, 'Wow, you're right! I never would've thought of that!'

- Dave Barry