

****this was feature article in the Dec 03 issue.**

Take A Moment

It's difficult at times, when doing this column, to realize that what is being written in September is being read in December. Most of us are in our "down time" when it comes to showing and the focus now is more on the holidays and family time. A time for those with dog show burnout to rejuvenate after months and months of hectic show schedules. I'm sure everyone will be chomping at the bit about mid-January to get back out there, but take a moment for yourself. Many are housebound due to weather and eager to get their young or new dogs out to handling classes to get them prepared for the shows that are just around the corner. The "buzz" pretty soon will be about "who" is going to Westminster in 2004. So let me take a moment and say that I'm excited for all of you who will be there to represent your breed. And seeing you there gives us all a thrill!

Of course there will be that usual increase in last minute phone calls to breeders from people who are looking for a puppy for Christmas or those people to want to "surprise" someone with a puppy under the tree! Take a moment to be kind and generous in your counseling to those potential pet homes, as you have tremendous influence in shaping their future perspective on responsible pet ownership.

Take a moment to "really" look at your senior dogs and the ones not currently being shown. They are so grateful for that extra time with mom and dad, and those extra few moments you spend doing a tummy rub, or cuddling on the couch or bed. Are they really getting enough of your special time? Seven years ago I placed two retired half-sisters in the same home and for me it was emotionally devastating. Dolly is still there, spoiled rotten and self-centered at age 11, and Sari, now 10 came back to me almost 4 years ago when I most needed her after her mother "Lucy", my foundation bitch passed away, and she immediately settled back in and assumed the "matriarch" roll amongst the other min pins. Ten years old and reed slim, I have to remind myself when I see her springing onto an extra high bed and bouncing like she is on a trampoline and then coyly posing on her back, that she is the "senior" here. Please pay close attention to their mouths, as a cracked or abscessed tooth is very painful and some dogs are so stoic that they mask the pain until it is too late and their face has swollen. A visual for you, comes after days or weeks of suffering for them.

Take a moment to treasure your friends. One can never have too many friends. Those that you trampled upon on your climb to the top won't be there to cushion you when you fall. Be gracious in your winning. It is the respect of your peers that will make you a "legend in your own time" as opposed to being a "legend in your own mind."

Take a moment to make a contribution and support your breed rescue group. Breed responsibly and take responsibility for your breed. I've been doing "ride alongs" with the animal control officer in a neighboring town, and each time I go home my dogs become even more precious to me. But I know that they take for granted the mounds of clean fluffy sherpas they sleep on, and the seemingly never ending supply of food and water, their safely enclosed yard, and that they've never seen a flea. Must be nice to have a personal maid to clean up after them and do wash for them. NOW I understand how my mother felt when she had three children at home!

My wish for you is good health for this New Year. With good health, everything else you wish for is attainable. And when all is said and done, no matter how much money you have, or how fancy the house you live in, the car you drive or the number of Best in Show and group wins under your belt, the only thing we all have of any value, is our reputation. And that is not something you will find under the Christmas tree, it's something you have to earn.

Keep safe everyone! Take a moment and make sure you have road side assistance insurance and a cell phone for your protection when driving all those hours to the dog shows. Take a moment to hug your family, friends and dogs, and tell them you love them as they can be gone all too soon. Good night Irene, I'm a better person for having known you.

Merry Christmas everyone and Happy New Year!

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