



New Trends in Training .. From the Dog's Point of View by Milo D. Pearsall

Each and every dog, in all fields, must receive some training. For a good many years there has been a lack of understanding among the different groups .. field, conformation showing, obedience and general companionship.

An obedience-trained dog was seldom accepted in field or breed competition. There were certain "signs" by which obedience-trained dogs could be spotted. Some were timid or cowed, afraid to leave the master's side. Most sat automatically whenever coming to a halt. Another sure sign was a worn "ring" around the neck, due to the collar, or the tail carriage was not what it should be. Breeders were warning buyers of their puppies to stay away from obedience training unless they wanted to ruin their chances of wins in conformation, though they would recommend it for pet stock.

I had a desire to handle dogs for all three .. obedience, show and field .. but I knew a great many changes would have to be made in our training methods before obedience would be accepted. As proof of what could be done, some 18 years ago our son's Keeshond bitch "Dutchie" was trained for obedience and breed ring. The day she earned her 3rd qualifying score for C.D. and was highest scoring dog in trial, she also won a 5-point major in breed, bringing her within two points of her championship. When leaving the ring, the judge cautioned me not to spoil her by giving her obedience training!

In 1950 I turned in my handler's license so I could judge obedience at all shows and about this time started the Pearsall Obedience Training Clinics. Analyzing problems that people faced and suggesting solutions, using easier and more satisfactory training methods, and getting people to have more fun in their training, led to organization of the 5-day instructors' schools.

Progress in new methods has to be slow but correct, using our imagination to put ourselves in the dog's situation. The disdain the breed people had for obedience was prompted by the dog's coat being ruined at the neck, cut or stained by a heavy metal training collar, the lack of attention, not the right expression nor the desired freedom of movement in gaiting. The chief culprit in resentment to obedience training was the chain collar. It not only cut or pulled the hair but was heavy and uncomfortable, hot or cold, according to the weather, and the noise created when a correction was made was disconcerting to extra-sensitive ears. The slightest noise from the collar meant that a correction was coming, causing an undesirable expression and change in gait.

We started experimenting with the single cord, woven nylon training collar and the results were astonishing. However, the change was not complete in all the dogs, and this was pinpointed as coming from heavy bolt snaps, collars, even the nylon ones that were fitted too loosely; leads that were too large, and handlers on the other end that were using brute strength to force their dogs into doing an exercise. When the collar was drawn up for a correction, the snap would strike the dog, usually alongside the head, and the dog would lag or go wide to avoid it, causing many to become shy or timid.

By changing to lighter weight leads and smaller snaps, paying stricter attention to the fit of the collar and studying the tone of voice used in the commands, we found the dogs enjoying their work and making a real effort to please their owners. But we still had a lot to conquer in the frequency of shy, sharp and just plain nasty dogs being registered for training classes. It was difficult to understand why. The ages of these dogs for beginners



training was usually close to a year or year and a half, sometimes older. Upon questioning the owners, we found that in most cases, the breeders had told them they should not train the dog before it was nine months old, many limiting it to "at least a year old."

We decided the best approach to this problem would be a program for teaching puppies, striving for an education that would benefit the breeders and all fields of training, giving a basic foundation for later specialized training and good behavior in general.

Many people turned thumbs down on the idea of obedience training for young puppies. Others tried regular methods of obedience on young puppies and defeated the whole purpose. We drew up a guide for instructors - an eight week course of half-hour lessons - and called it Kindergarten Puppy Training or K.P.T., directed to puppies aged two to five months.

Using the K.P.T. as a guide and inspired by what they saw in the training clinics, many clubs in various parts of the country, breed as well as obedience clubs, started puppy classes, the first ones organized in 1966. Reports of fabulous results have been coming in ever since. The progress of a two - or three - month old puppy over an eight weeks' period is almost unbelievably gratifying.

If this approach to puppy training worked so well, why wouldn't it be a good idea to try applying it to older dogs in the regular classes? Again, we started with equipment, using well-fitted nylon collars, some single strands, some double. In dogs whose necks are much smaller than their heads, we are able to fit them better with a snap-around nylon collar which still works the same as a regular slip collar but doesn't have to go over the head. It is also more satisfactory for dogs with upright ears or those whose ears are especially sensitive. For the little toy dogs, we use the smallest type nylon collars with small, lightweight rings and matching leads with an almost weightless snap. For the average size dog, we still like a 4-to 6-foot-long lead, lightweight but strong, with a small but dependable snap.

When we started using some of the K.P.T. exercises in the beginners classes, that nightmare of the first night .. the barking, forging and lunging, dogs going for each other and "all thumbs" situation of green, inexperienced handlers, became a thing of the past. Some dogs are worked on a plain, buckled collar, as in K.P.T. Those with slip nylon collars are worked on the "dead" ring, no tightening. The first exercises taught are "stand, stay" and "sit, stay." Each handler works in a kneeling position on the right hand side of his dog, with the right hand through the collar and underneath the chin. The left hand is in front of the right hind leg, and exerts slight pressure upward against the belly of the dog, the back of the hand against the body* At the same time that the left hand presses up it is accompanied by the command "stand, stay."

Alternating with this exercise and to prevent monotony, the "sit, stay" is taught. For this, the right hand is placed behind the dog's head, and the left hand slides over the top of the hindquarters and tail to a position just above the hock. At this point, the left hand gently "tucks the dog under" and the right hand applies a slight backward pull on the collar, accompanied by the command "sit, stay." In most cases, the pressure and body contact with the left hand can be completely eliminated in one evening, controlling both the sit and the stand with the right hand on the collar and tone of voice in the commands.

Once the dog is responding well to the stand-stay, a stand for examination can be started. Again, with the right hand in the collar on the top of the dog's neck, place the flat of the left



hand on the dog's shoulder. As the examiner approaches, the right hand is raised slightly and at the same time the left hand presses down firmly, accompanied by the command, "stand." As the training progresses, the contact of the left hand on the shoulder is removed, a little at a time, until the dog is steady without the extra help.

Dog Attention

By starting with the stand and sit in the first class session, there is great 'benefit reaped in the rapport established between the dog and handler. This is the beginning of "dog attention" and it is absolutely necessary to have this attention before anything can be accomplished in motion. When motion or "heeling" is started, it should be for only three or four steps at a time between the sits and the stands. The dogs already know how to walk, and the people are supposed to, so why waste all the effort and time when it can be put to much better use?

The time that more moving is beneficial is when a dog is being taught to gait for the breed ring. Here, this requires rhythm in both handler and dog. The easiest way to accomplish this is with a record player and a good peppy march. One must work for smoothness on the turns, as well as when going straight ahead and the march beat helps with all sizes of dogs.

With the new training program, we found that more could be accomplished in three weeks than previously had been done in six. Dogs were quieter, happier and showed no resentment. There had been no unpleasant association with the training, and the dogs had confidence in their handlers and were giving them much better attention. Even inexperienced handlers who ordinarily tend toward over-correcting and jerking on the collar were now doing no damage for the collar, on the "dead" ring, was not tightening. It is extremely difficult to put across to the general public the logic of how senseless it is to "correct" a dog with a training collar when he has made no mistake. The time for a correction is only when he has made a mistake, after he has learned an exercise.

Of course, there are times when corrections are needed. This is accomplished on the slip ring by giving a quick snap and immediate release, keeping your voice happy and putting the dog to work immediately, not allowing him to sit and think about it. If a really severe correction is necessary, it is best done with the lead shortened in the left hand so the dog is under control, and a sharp slap given on the underside of the dog's mouth with the open hand, palm up, only the fingers making the contact, again keeping the voice happy and followed by putting the dog to work. Nothing is accomplished when a correction is accompanied by a lot of scolding. As soon as the correction has accomplished its purpose, the collar should be put back in the "dead" or non-working position.

The Transfer

Another problem worked on was a peculiar combination of shyness and curiosity that showed up in some dogs. The cause was soon pinpointed. The guilty party in each case was the dog's owner, although unaware of what he had been doing to contribute to the condition. The dogs had not been allowed to satisfy their curiosity and investigate things and people they were interested in. Instead, they had been held back, thus, in each experience, creating an uneasy and suspicious association. The dogs seemed to be frustrated and unsure of themselves. When the owners learned what their problem was, it was very easy to regain the dogs' confidence by controlling introductions to strange things and people, encouraging the 'dogs to be themselves and not dependent on a cue for their



reactions.

One of the worst offenders is the owner who won't let his pride-and-joy be touched or petted by strangers. It doesn't take long for a dog to become affected by such a situation. He usually becomes shy or overprotective. In the latter case, it can become serious, and the perplexed owner then has a nasty fear-biter on his hands or a real coward. It is especially tragic when this manifests itself in an excellent breed specimen with everything going for it except disposition.

We found that excellent progress could be made in the method used for overcoming such a situation. We named it "transfer." Again, the plain or non-slip collar and light, but strong, lead are used. And the voice is extremely important. As the owner and the stranger walk beside each other, the dog to the left of the owner, they talk and their voices must be pleasant and conversational with some laughter mixed in. There are no corrections, no harsh handling or sharp commands. Try to put yourself in the dog's place and determine what his thoughts might be .. "If my owner is not afraid of this person, why should I be?"

Another problem was the dog that refused to move while carrying something, or refused to pick up anything from the floor or ground. Since we don't like a "forced retrieve", this was a challenge. Our first breakthrough came at a clinic in New England.

One of the dogs refused to hold and carry his dumbbell, but picked up one I had with me and seemed to enjoy it. Then I found that the dowel mouthpieces on the two were different diameters. At other clinics with other dogs having retrieving problems, we found that as little as 1/16 of an inch could make a difference. To many dogs, an uncomfortable fit in the mouth means they should spit it out. Fitting a dog with the proper dowel, then making the dumbbell with ample clearance to the floor for a comfortable pickup, with the ends close enough to avoid imbalance but not interfering with vision, licked this problem.

All problems are solved more easily and satisfactorily if we learn to approach them from the dog's point of view. It is also very important to be patient and content with progressing slowly and gradually, instead of trying to reach for the finished product too fast.

The newly approved AKC obedience regulations, except for one or two instances, are a big improvement and a real incentive for good training and good handling. One of the new exercises required in the novice class is "stand for examination off lead." If this can be done off lead in obedience, there should be no question as to a dog's stability in submitting to examination on lead in the breed ring. There is also a completely new exercise in Utility, a directed retrieve. This teaches the dog to "take a line" on an object for a retrieve and can well serve as basic training for later work on game birds in the field or water.

The AKC is getting more strict in all phases of the dog world. Judges are asking for better control and better performances in breed, obedience and field trials. Competition is great, and without adequate training and good handling a dog has little chance to win.

To create some means of passing on educational information and training tips to instructors, to give them incentive to do their very best for their pupils in the most humane way, and to see training become a source of enjoyment for both handlers and dogs, the National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors, Inc., was formed. There is a strict code of ethics to be followed, not passively, but as a set of dynamic principles guiding the member's conduct and way of life in obedience training.



We feel that instructors recognized by this Association will be qualified to do the best for their pupils and anxious to present training in the best way possible.

Points Covered in the K.P.T. Guide:

1. The importance of the veterinarian.
2. Grooming and cleaning equipment, its use.
3. Training equipment (light lead, plain flat collar).
4. Importance of tone of voice.
5. Proper use of hands, feet and body position.
6. Correct method of picking up and carrying.
7. Type of praise and correction.
8. Introduction to people and other puppies.
9. Introduction to the collar, short cord, with "yard play."
10. Introduction to the lead.
11. Playtime, with a bright red ball small enough for the pup to carry.
12. Teaching the "stand-stay" and "sit-stay", no walking, no pressure on hind quarters.
13. Progressing to the "stand" and "sit", with motion.
14. Testing "chute" for puppy thinking.
15. Controlled walking.
16. Controlled play, all pups running.
17. Introducing the pups to strange objects, to moving objects.
18. Introducing to doorways, gates, stairs, low jumps.
19. Introduction to different noises from the front, later from sides and rear.
20. Gaiting normally, also slow and fast.
21. Down and stay.
22. Recall on lead, in motion, importance of motion and use of hands.
23. Playing with a ball against a wall.
24. Getting a dog's attention with use of name.
25. Introduction to grooming table and crate.
26. Advice on riding in car.

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