

Primary Sources

Why to Pay Attention to Your Dog

By Kim Pearson

W.C. Fields reputedly refused to work with children or animals. He thought they upstaged him, just by being themselves. He was right, of course.

This may be a problem for an actor, but for a writer and a photographer, the hamminess of animals is a wonderful gift. And of all the animal hams out there, I am convinced the hammiest are dogs.

Just write a book about dogs at the dog park, and you'll see this is true. Especially if you illustrate the book with photographs. Watch the dogs gather around the photographer, Anne, as she sets her gear down in a central point in the park. Anne sits on the ground so she can take a picture of a Chihuahua snarling under a bench. The Chihuahua obligingly bares its teeth again and again, every time he is asked. A greyhound nudges Anne's camera arm and then steps back and shows off the red kerchief tied around her neck. A Black Labrador runs by and makes a flying leap over her, pausing in mid-air so Anne can snap a photo if she so desires. A Bassett Hound ambles by and licks her camera lens. His drool drags on the ground, making a circle around Anne, leaving a slimy trail in the dust. A Welsh Corgi dashes up to Anne and grabs the strap of her camera case, daring her to play tug with him. When she finally gets it back, it is wet with determined dog saliva.

Dogs are the worst attention-junkies there are. Anyone who lives with a dog knows this. If you don't pay attention to your dog, you probably have holes in your underwear and a fat dog who gets into the garbage no matter how difficult you try to make it. You probably have deep holes under your fence and a \$3000 vet bill for surgery to remove the whole basketball he ate.

Paying attention means more than saying "good dog" at intervals. It means more than plunking down a bowl of kibble once a day, or patting your dog on the head when you come home. Paying attention means doing things that are important *to your dog*. Like going on a walk, making sure you pause for the excellent smells along the way. Or throwing a ball or a Frisbee, even when they don't bring it back, or playing tug for more than thirty seconds. Not just a pat on the head, but maybe a whole body massage that makes your dog wiggle with joy.

And most of all, paying attention means just hanging out with your dog, being together, doing whatever you are doing, especially if you love doing it.

Your reward in all this? Your dog will pay attention *to you*.

© 2008 - Kim Pearson is the author of five books, including Dog Park Diary, and a ghostwriter of more than thirty non-fiction books. Dog Park Diary is the first she has ghostwritten for a dog. For more about Dog Park Diary, visit www.dogparkdiary.net, and for more about Kim's ghostwriting services, visit www.primary-sources.com.