

Four Footed Guardians

by Michael J. Walen
reported by Jinnie Jones

The guard dog bares his teeth, slowly rumbling in his throat. Suddenly, it leaps to the end of the leash, snapping at the air.

This act is bad enough if you are standing at the wrong end of the leash. It can be terrifying if you are holding a dog you cannot fully control.

Ron Pace at Canyon Crest Kennels in Puyallup offers a program to learn how to control your dog, and turn a possible liability into an important family asset.



Located at 9110 144th Street, Canyon Crest covers seven acres with kennels and training equipment. An acre pasture in the back gives dogs a chance to learn their lessons in the open.

Pace recommends caution when selecting a trainer. No licensing exists, and methods vary a lot, many bordering on cruelty. Owners should choose a program that they believe in, and feel comfortable with. Pace's methods vary from regular courses. He believes that individual attention is vital. "Most classes work in groups, but each dog is different, and should be given the basics one-on-one".

Owners get ten half-hour classes at Canyon Crest. "It takes the dog from five to ten minutes to learn something,"

said Pace, "the rest of the time is spent teaching the owner." The techniques apply to any dog. Many customers who own more than one dog bring a pet for lessons. They use the information to train the rest of their animals at home.

Pace stresses the importance of maintaining a dog's training throughout its life. He runs free Saturday group classes for his graduates to reinforce individual lessons.

In conjunction with obedience training, Canyon Crest offers additional training for dogs showing protective instincts. "Owners should be able to use their dog's aggressiveness like a switch," said Pace. "It's scary living with a dog you can't control."

The only breed Pace refuses to protection train is the Pit Bull. "They're all right in obedience classes, but they get too intense for protection. You can't turn them off...that makes them dangerous."

The bonding of dogs and owners is an important part of any training. It often comes when the puppy is first introduced to the family. People interested in getting a purebred dog should get to know a breeder early. Pace breeds purebred black German Shepherds, and recommends them as family pets.

"They've got well-rounded personalities. Best of all, the breed has an inborn protective instinct that develops when they get near a year old."

With any puppy, proper socializing is a vital part of life. They must be given good experiences with people early so they can intermix well later.

"Consider what happens when someone buys a puppy," said Pace. "The dog loses everything; family, security and then gets stuck in a rolling metal box with a batch of strangers." He feels the pup must be introduced slowly and comfortably to his new surroundings. While growing, it should be introduced to everything it will encounter as an adult.

In spite of the animal involvement, Canyon Crest has avoided serious disease problems like Parvo-Virus. "We've been lucky so far," said Pace. "All the animals bred here are certified



healthy. But we don't keep track of shot records for dogs coming to classes. We figure owners are responsible enough to get them".

Pace credits Jake, his black and tan German Shepherd, for starting the training business. Researching questions about the rise in use of dogs for protection, he took Jake to an obedience school. "He was such a joy to train." They won a \$1,000 scholarship to the school and a job offer from the school. "We learned everything to training in eight days".

When Pace moved into security training, Jake picked up the new information quickly, and participated at many high school career days in the county.

Jake is now 10 years old, and has pretty much retired from demonstrations. He still responds to Pace's instructions with lightning speed. Jake even has sign language down pat.

Canyon Crest offers a full range of security services. Two years old, the company patrols residential areas, provides crowd control and guards marine and construction sites.

"We're patrolling two major apartment complexes now," said Kevin Flynn, in charge of Canyon Crest Security personnel and operations. Pace trains the dogs and humans to work together. He goes out the first night of a new job to make sure everything is running right. If something comes up it can be adapted to the training program.

During most operations, he stays in contact with the teams at the Canyon Crest Headquarters, coordinating their work with local police forces. This

coordination with the police makes Canyon Crest Security popular with local forces. The team will not take any action by themselves unless as a last resort. "John Wayne" (confronting a lawbreaker on their own) a situation can really cause problems", said Flynn. "Someone could get hurt."

They have been very successful in breaking up a number of theft operations. Flynn credits their success to the meshing of human and canine abilities.

"The dogs are the stars of the show. We let them do the leading. They can sense things a lot sooner." The human controls what happens, acting on information supplied by the dog.

Occasionally, acting on the information can cause problems. "Some of the condominiums we patrol have hot tubs," Flynn explained. "The dogs pick up scents from a long way off, and catch wind of parties. Since many of the tubs are near managers offices, we must investigate. This leads to some embarrassing moments", but with diplomacy, the patrol team moves off again.

"Sure, it can be irritating," said Flynn, "but a lot of the folks are glad for the protection."

"They're better as partners than most people I've worked with," he continued. "When faced with a dangerous situation, people can't help to think about themselves first," Flynn explained. "A dog will back you up. They won't run out on you."

In spite of their success, many people are reluctant to call Canyon for security problems.

Continued on page 5

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The Rainier Independent 11