

GOOD NEIGHBOR NEWS



DECEMBER, 2016

**Training Schedule:
Class Sessions Can Be
Found on the GNDOC
Website**

**INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED Classes are still
held on Saturday mornings. Space is limited, so
make sure to sign up for the classes you want!**

DECEMBER – The End of Another Great Year...

CLUB BUSINESS & MORE

Membership: Membership is due by January 15, 2017. Cost is still \$65/year. **Forms are attached to this newsletter and will be available at the club.**

Classes: Starting dates for all classes are Tuesdays – new session will start late January; Wednesday – next session starts December 28/28/16; Thursday – next session starts January 5, 2017; and Saturday's next session starts 12/17/2016. We will be continuing all classes through the holidays.

Upcoming Club Events: On Monday evening, 1/30/2017, there will be a Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test held at the Club. For those interested, a review of the exercises in the CGC test will be held Monday, 1/23/2017. Details and cost to follow.

Sign, Sign, We Are Getting a Sign! We are getting estimates for the cost of the light up pedestal sign in the front of the building. Our sign will be visible from the Mall parking lot! Speak with Camille about this!

Cleaning Schedule: We'd like to set up a schedule for cleaning the club. The whole floor can be done in ½ an hour if two people vacuum. Mirrors need to be wiped down, bathrooms cleaned, etc. It's not much, but we'd like to see some new volunteers.

Annual Brunch: Our Annual Club Brunch is approaching after the New Year. We are looking for a new location. If you have any ideas, please let Andrea know.

BRAGS

*I KNOW I am missing some brags,
so PLEASE email them to me!!)*

WHY I LOVE OBEDIENCE (really!) – and why it needs work

{written by Deb Zorn and originally published in The COURIER, September/October, 2016, newsletter for the Portuguese Water Dog, and reprinted with permission from the author}

The 2016 Olympics showcased 306 separate events over nineteen days of competition, giving us the opportunity to witness the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. Many of the events from 1896 when the Olympics reconvened, such as Weight Lifting, are still events today. Many events, such as the Tug-of-War, Underwater Swimming, and Polo, have gone by the wayside and are not remembered as Olympic events.

Is this also the fate of competitive obedience, to fall by the wayside and someday be forgotten? Each year obedience trial entries go down. There are fewer participants and fewer dogs earning titles. "Smugtrainer," an internet blogger, humorously called Obedience Trials "*Bingo Night with Dogs*," as most of the exhibitors are over the age of fifty.

The reasons obedience entries have declined are almost as numerous as events at the Olympics. Agility, with its fast pace, challenging courses, and camaraderie, has lured away many of the younger crowd. And there are many other venues, such as tracking, nose work, water trialing, and barn hunt,

sometimes considered very competitive, unlike other disciplines which are graded as Q (Qualifying) or NQ (Not Qualifying) and where placements are awarded by a non-subjective factor such as time. The scoring at Obedience Trials creates a level of stress almost unique to the sport. Some handlers like the stress and are challenged by it, others do not care for it.

It is important to realize obedience scores actually are somewhat subjective and dependent on the judge's interpretation of the AKC (or UKC) Obedience Regulations. (Agility trials are often quite fun because you are part of a support group. Perhaps we should incorporate support groups into Obedience?)

It is equally important to realize an obedience score is just an indicator of what the dog has learned well, and what needs improvement.

We can all learn a lesson from Sylvia Bishop, world-renowned dog trainer & multiple winner at Crufts, when she states she never trains her dogs for the obedience ring. Instead, using highly motivational and positive techniques, she teaches her dogs to be well-behaved canine citizens. She consistently and fairly communicates with them on a daily basis, and then sometimes takes them to an Obedience Trial to check their understanding.

Instead of comparing ourselves to others, if we compete against ourselves, if we challenge ourselves to do better each time, if we truly work on developing a strong relationship with our dogs, we might not qualify at a particular Obedience Trial but we will not entirely fail, and so much of the stress is eliminated, and Obedience Trials become enjoyable. If we all had this attitude, perhaps we might infect others, and then Obedience Trials would regain the camaraderie seen at Agility Trials.

"Smugtrainer," the blogger I mentioned earlier, has several suggestions for revitalizing the sport of obedience. He suggests moving it outside, enlarging the rings, making the heeling patterns more interesting, and perhaps incorporating agility equipment. Furthermore, he advises awarding points for style, creatively restructuring the "Stay" exercises, being considerate to newcomers, and allowing day-of-trial entries. (Regarding points for style, who wouldn't prefer a flashy, happy dog whose fronts and finishes are slightly crooked to a plodding, mechanical dog whose fronts and finishes are absolutely perfect?) He suggests restructuring

"the entire thing to show what a dog can REALLY do," and to make each exercise a party.

In England, if a team fails, they can use the remaining exercises to train in the ring, or an entry at an Obedience Trial can be for exhibition-only, allowing the handler to train some or all of the exercises while in the ring, being scored on some and not scored on others. Although it is true we have "fun matches" in North America which supposedly simulate an Obedience Trial, rarely do they achieve that goal. In some areas, fun matches are not offered. As exhibitors and guardians, we can petition the AKC (or UKC) to incorporate some or all of the ideas presented above, or perhaps completely different ideas that will pump some fresh blood into the sport, making it more enjoyable for everyone.

In my own experience, I have been guilty of yanking and pulling instead of teaching. At times, I have been frustrated and had to walk away. On several occasions, however, I have experienced that rare joy of perfect communication with my dog, that lovely, almost ethereal feeling of being completely synchronized with your dog's mind and body. It is amazing experiences when you feel as if you are looking into the soul of your dog and he is looking into yours. It is what brings me back to the obedience ring over and over again. It is love.

{Thank you, Andrea, for providing us with this thoughtful article!.....Ed.}

MAKE SURE TO CHECK our Club Website for Class Schedules, Club News, Closing for weather, etc., etc.
Our website is: www.gndog.com

Please feel free to send me any newsworthy tales, stories, jokes, articles (recipes?) or anything else you think may be of interest to our Members for inclusion in future newsletters! Emails are:
kacosta@fsalaw.com
and home email is: kacosta66@gmail.com

Kathy Acosta, Editor