

Your Guide to DAY CARE

BY JUDITH REITMAN

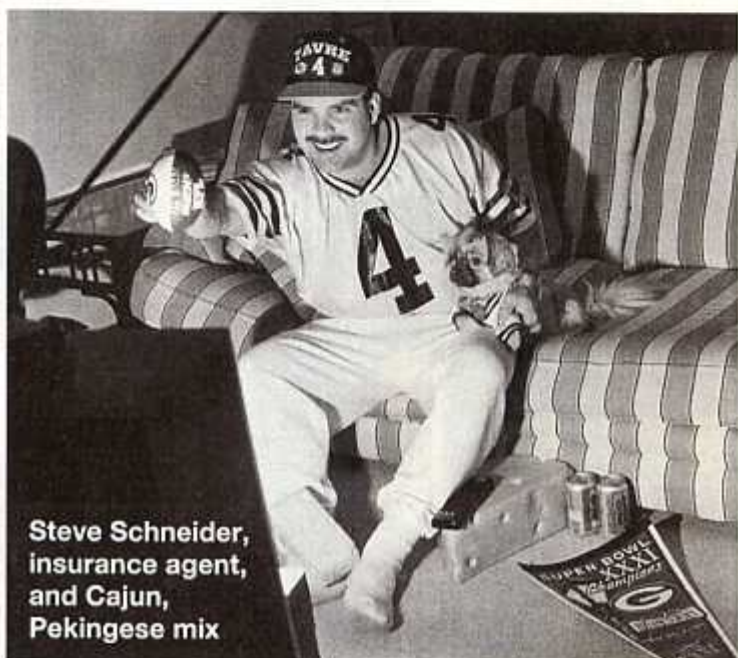


Ted Bell, owner of Bell Canoe Works, and Maggie, Golden Retriever

“Cajun reminds me of Princess Di because she’s beautiful and regal, caring and enduring.” ▼



▲ “Maggie is an expert canoer. She knows exactly how to board, ride and scout as we move along streams, rivers and lakes.”



Steve Schneider, insurance agent, and Cajun, Pekingese mix



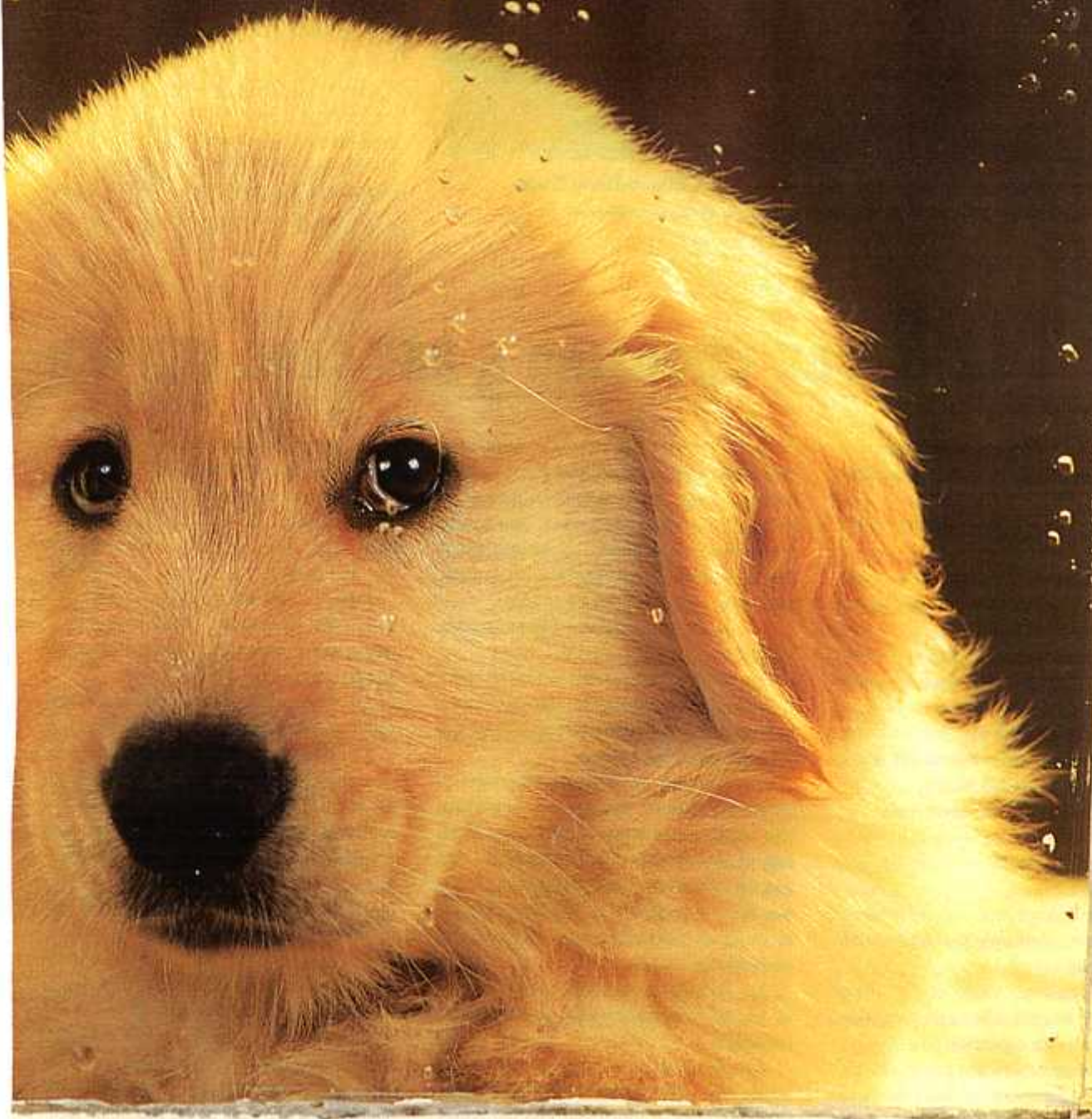
Ozzie, clown, and Bailey, Airedale Terrier

◀ “Our favorite acts are the ones kids love so much they have a tough time breathing in between laughter. Just Bailey’s presence in her funny clown collar and hat gets them roaring.”

Choose a center, pet sitter, kennel, walker or pet door to keep your dog happy while you're at work.

Add commute time to your work schedule and you're probably away from home 10 hours a day. That's a long haul for your dog who anxiously awaits your return. You are, after all, the "leader of the pack," and

your absence is felt. Sleeping and gazing longingly out the window can take up only so much of your dog's time. And there are physical needs, like bladder issues, that must be addressed as well.



Brighten your dog's day with a healthy dose of fun .



BARBARA KINNEY

Naptime follows playtime at the dog-ma Day Care, where dogs socialize and stay active while their owners are at work.

Fortunately you have options to leaving your pet home alone. Among the solutions: doggie day care, pet sitters, boarding kennels, dog walkers and dog doors if you have a fenced yard.

To determine the solution that best suits you, evaluate your dog's temperament, its degree of socialization and one-on-one needs. Examine your budget and schedule. Then consider:

Day-care centers

When he was 3 months old Gipper Fluharty's enthusiasm was over the top. His dad, John, a lobbyist on Capitol Hill, clocked 12-hour workdays, and John's partner was also gone for long stretches. By the time they came home, their Cocker Spaniel was ready to rock 'n' roll. Now 8 months old, Gipper is a regular at dog-ma Day Care for Dogs, Washington, D.C.'s first doggie day-care center. He spends his own 12-hour days there, wrestling with pals Early, a Great

20 TIPS FOR CHOOSING A DAY-CARE CENTER

The folks at dog-ma Day Care for Dogs in Washington, D.C., offer this checklist:

1. Tour the center before leaving your dog there.
2. Note whether the play space seems clean, odor-free, comfortable and safe for the stated capacity of the center.
3. How and where are the dogs given down time to wind down from the flurry of activity and avoid potential conflicts?
4. Are there outdoor play areas? If not, where do the dogs relieve themselves and is there a schedule and safety rules?
5. Is the center climate-controlled during weather extremes?
6. Is it well equipped with toys, bedding and supplies?
7. Are the management and staff mature, knowledgeable, courteous, professional and patient at all times?
8. Do they maintain control of interactions at all times? Dogs, particularly in groups, should be constantly supervised.
9. How are corrections and praise administered and what provisions are there for avoiding fights? Physical punishment should never

be used. Owners should make sure staff members have a plan and tools (water sprayers, hose, noisemakers) to prevent or break up fights that might occur. They should understand "flash points" — circumstances that might make dogs agitated such as food, protectiveness around owners and toys.

10. Is the ratio at least 1 human to every 10 dogs?
11. How do the dogs respond to the staff? They should seem happy to enter the center and greet the staff enthusiastically. Covering is a sign something is wrong.
12. Is there an in-depth interview to determine relevant background, behavioral and health information, including confirmation of spay/neuter, proof of vaccines, flea and tick prevention, etc.? And is the information kept up-to-date? This will prevent transmission of parasites and disease and unwanted pregnancy.
13. Are requirements and rules in writing? All parties should know what to expect from each other.
14. Does the center maintain the same policies for the boarding dogs if applicable? Boarding dogs, if integrated into the group,

should meet the same criteria as day-care dogs to ensure safety and health.

15. What is the schedule of activity, including group play, size and makeup of groups, amount and type of individual attention, rest and nap periods, use of toys, training reinforcement and feeding, if applicable? You should feel comfortable the staff provides a varied, active environment and that dogs get an appropriate ratio of activity to rest.
16. Does the daily cleaning seem adequate for disinfecting and preventing disease?
17. How are new dog introductions handled? New dogs should not be integrated into the entire "pack" without being introduced to individual dogs — particularly more dominant or higher ranking dogs — in a controlled setting.
18. How do the other dogs act during your visit — aggressive, happy or out-of-control?
19. How does your dog behave after being there after an initial adjustment of a day or two? Is it calm and well exercised?
20. Is there a great deal of barking? Uncontrolled behavior of any kind, including barking, can raise agitation levels overall and indicate lack of control on the part of the staff.

