THE DOG IN ANCIENT GREECE - HUNTER, WORKER, FRIEND

THE OPENING LECTURE
FOR
THE EXHIBIT

PUTTIN' ON THE DOG

DELIVERED IN BOTETOURT THEATRE

SEPTEMBER 9, 1992

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I would first like to thank the organizers of Puttin' on the Dog for their work on such an interesting and beautifully displayed exhibit, and also to thank them for asking me to participate by speaking to you today on my favorite topic. How many dog owners are in the room, raise your hands. Whatever the answer to the next question is you can all stay. How many cat owners, show hands? How many have both? Quite an assemblage of animal lovers in this group.

The wolf (slide) joined forces with man some 12000 years ago, and embarked on the path which would make this wild canid into the domestic dog. There is a substantial body of evidence that the wolf, *canis lupus*, seen here in the London Zoo, is the common ancestor of the hundreds of breeds of dogs in the world today. There was at the outset a clear but unspoken compact between man and animal, the gist of which may have gone something like this. Wolves, attracted by the scent of campfire stew, hung around hoping some would be left over for them. At a certain point man allowed these optimistic and patient wolves a few unwanted bits of hoof and snout from the day's kill. The wolf's optimism became boundless after these treats, and in exchange for a steady supply of comestibles he began performing janitorial functions and providing security services around the campsite while man was away hunting and gathering, or otherwise preoccupied lying around drinking beer.
Soon man noticed that the wolf was a peerless hunter himself, and then man started trying to figure out how to enlist the wolf’s assistance in a cooperative hunt, thus increasing the availability of hoof, snout and campfire stew for everyone.

By the 6th millennium BC, in many parts of the world, the domestic dog had taken his place beside man, a place he has never left. In the domestication process, physical changes gradually took place in the wolf’s brain, which became smaller, as it did not need so much space for olfactory functions, even though the diminished sense of smell present in the domestic dog far exceeds that of man. The wolf’s teeth also underwent alterations in size and position in the jaw, since man was doing some butchering work on the kills, and the wolf didn’t need to rip open whole animals any longer by himself when he became a dog.

Time passed and eventually the wolf came to look like this (slide of Yorkie in papers) If the wolf had known at the beginning how man was going to help him adapt, he might have run howling in the opposite direction, and we would still be cleaning up around our own campfires.

But the dog was around to stay, and once that became clear, man immediately began to unload innumerable dirty jobs onto his new and able assistant.

Let’s look at some of the things man has managed to get the dog to undertake.

GSD as guide dog for blind, hearing dog for deaf, companion for
handicapped people of various sorts

GSD in helicopter police, army work, finding people

truffle finding dog - bombs, drugs

entertain in circuses Who looks more foolish?

sled dogs - team of twenty eskimo dog can carry a 2 ton load 25 miles w/o stopping.

pursuing prey into inconvenient locations - here,treeing lynx

Newf saving drowning people

the beloved retrievers, the Golden and the Labrador

terriers - the Scottie, so fierce the Romans kept them in cages
dog going into badger holes

competitions - dog showing both for confirmation and obedience and lure coursing

Peke for pet

companion for children
komondor
puli

The ultimate in specialization in canine employment opportunities belongs to a dog called the Lundehund. This 13 lb. dog, 14 inches at the shoulder, comes from the islands in the northern part of Norway and has been specially trained for hunting the black and white birds known as "puffins" whose nests are edible. The Lundehund climbs up on the cliffs or trees where the bird nests, avoiding the bird's strong beak. The dog puts the bird to flight and grabs the nest and takes it to its master. To aid it in performing this singular task, the Lundehund has five toes instead of the usual four, and eight plantar cushions. Just in case that isn't specialized enough for you, in addition to the foregoing adaptations, when the Lundehund is working in caves, the dog is able to close its ears to protect its ear passages from dripping water. Now that is canine specialization.

Now we will take a look at the dog in one particular time and place in history, and this time and place is ancient Greece. This choice probably comes as no surprise to anyone who noted the title of this lecture. My primary purpose is not to correlate ancient and modern breeds of dogs, although there are some similarities of type. We will instead see what tasks were assigned to the dog in this context.
From the earliest representations of the dog in Greece, one type of dog is preeminent, and it looks like this drawing. The Greeks called this dog a Laconian hound. He appears in every art form, sealstones, coins, painting and sculpture, at all periods, from about 2000 BC down to the 2nd century BC. The Laconian hound remains remarkably unchanged over time though there are size variants, and he is a hunting dog specializing in tracking work. I should say here that in English we use the nouns dog and hound more or less interchangeably, but technically a hound is a hunting dog.

The 4th century BC writer Xenophon has quite a bit to say about our Laconian hound in his treatise on hunting, even down to recommendations on color of coat. He says dogs with solid color coats have a wild streak which makes them defective in the hunting field, and it is better to have a hound with a different color patch on the face. In Xenophon’s estimation such a dog has the best temperament for hunting. His detailed comments on the Laconian and the other breeds he knows, called the Indian, Cretan and Locrian hounds, make it clear that the Greeks bred dogs true to type and with specific characteristics in mind. The Indian hounds, says Xenophon, were bred to be strong and plucky for hunting the most dangerous game. But first to the Laconian shown on the screen. He is a fine-boned hound type with a long narrow muzzle, with rather
small erect ears.

Minoan seal
Pylos pot x 2
Acropolis dog
Amasis ptr
BF warrior departure
RF """
Artemis companion
Artemis Pan Ptr Actaion "revenge is the best revenge"
H and Kerberos Andokides Ptr
Guard type R copy of Hell
modern mastiff
2 choes
coin
modern maltese

What characteristics make it possible for dogs to do certain jobs? What are they capable of? Scent will be important for dogs expected to track prey, for example, but house pets need only to be able to identify their favorite flavor when the supper dog food can is opened.

parts of a dog slide go over muzzle, angulation
I have called my talk The Dog in Ancient Greece: Hunter, Worker, Friend for the three types of ancient Greek dogs we have seen so far, but there is another dog we need to look at. I have an article coming out soon on this fourth dog, which is also a hunting dog, but not a Laconian hound. So far this dog appears only once in Greek art. Let's see where that appearance is made.

Vergina landscape
drawing of tomb in ground
gold larnax - whoever was buried in this tomb it wasn't Demetrios the waiter from the local restaurant
facade of tomb
frieze and drawing
left side details
right side details
light dog
drawing and frieze again
Karelian
Rhodesian

(slide) One use to which the ancient Greeks did not put dogs was to herd and move other animals, or at least we do not hear of this use in written sources, nor see it in art. Even today in Greece dogs are used for guarding herd animals but not usually for
moving them from place to place. One reason for this may be that Greek herds are often quite small and the containment and transfer work can be done by the shepherd alone, by throwing little sticks and making whistling noises. The herding of animals is a job to which the dog is well suited, because of the herding techniques wolves use to corral their hunting targets. The dog is widely used throughout the world to herd other domestic animals, usually sheep, goats or cattle, but sometimes pigs or horses, or even reindeer. This function has been performed by dogs for thousands of years, and without the efforts of sheepdogs the great plains of the US and Australia wouldn’t be settled yet. The pesky herd animals have a way of getting into places humans and wheeled vehicles, or even horses, cannot follow, and it is up to the dog to go and get the wanderers out, get them together, bring them home, pen them up.

We saw the difference between the komondor, for guarding herds, and the puli, for herding them, and we see here another herding type, my own breed, the Pembroke Welsh Corgi, the world’s smallest herding dog. A little herding dog has been known in Wales since the 12th century and is arguably the ancestor of the modern Corgi, of which there are two types, the Cardigan, with a tail, and the Pembroke, without one, as seen here.
(slide) This Corgi is 30 pounds in weight and 12 inches tall at the shoulder. The cow is much larger. As amusing as the size contrast of the cow and the Corgi is, the Corgi is known in his Welsh homeland as a superb and effective drover of cattle, and he has earned the respect of all who have seen him work for his abilities with the herd.

(slide) Here a Corgi moves in on a straggler. Corgis are said to be quick to realize where the shepherd wants or does not want the herd or a specific individual to go, and their method of urging is the nose to heel method. When herding the Corgi singles out the leader and appears to have a conversation on the desirability of obeying instructions. Usually the cow puts its head down and follows, and insurrections in the rank and file call forth more persuasive conversation, a great many threats, and finally an occasional nip at the tenderest part of the cow's heel. The Corgi has speed well out of proportion to his size and build, and while one sitting or standing still can look awkward, there is nothing awkward when one of these little dogs takes off in full flight, and their speed can be surprising to those who do not know the capabilities of this little herder. Corgis dash and dart around their charges, always on the move and always barking. They are absolutely fearless, boldly taking on the biggest bulls if asked. Reports have been received, however, that some Corgis are so zealous they occasionally end up stuffing too many cows in one barn.
The strength useful in cattle herding is also an asset in obedience work. Here a Corgi, with a 1.5 lb dumbbell in his mouth, jumps a 40 inch obedience obstacle.

QE II w Buzz son of Susan who accompanied then Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip on their honeymoon in Africa, and Susan was at Elizabeth's side when the message was received that the King had died and Susan's mistress was the Queen of England. Susan's headstone at Balmoral Castle marks her as the Queen's favorite Corgi. Last year one of the Queen's Corgis took a well-publicized nip out of a royal finger when Her Majesty was breaking up some Corgi hostilities.

Prince Andrew in happier times in 1952 w Sherry
Tasha Tudor's Beauty Treatment

You may be beginning to feel that you have seen enough dogs but I will still show you seven more, my own dogs, both the four who are here, and three who have died within the last two years. Some of you are familiar with these dogs, others will meet them now for the first time. Here they are.

(slide) First my Akita, Kiri. The Akita is a large Japanese dog
used for hunting big game, including bears. Akitas are also used as guard dogs, and even as helpers for fishermen. Powerful swimmers, with webbed toes, the dogs dive under the water and drive the fish into the nets. Akitas are usually reserved with strangers, but Kiri did not have a true Akita temperament, since she certainly never met a stranger. (slide) She was a big dog, nearly 130 pounds, and she never saw the show ring with those hound ears, despite her platinum pedigree. It was impossible to look at Kiri’s perennially happy face without smiling. She saw the best in everyone, and she died without the slightest idea that humans can be unkind to dogs.

(slide) Chaos, Kiri’s lifelong companion. The two Akitas were together from the age of ten weeks until Kiri died at ten years of age. Chaos followed her fifteen months later. This black Akita had an owner, but he knew no master (slide) His massive head and 26 inch neck, and his catlike ability to move without a sound startled unsuspecting house guests several times. Despite Chaos’ imposing appearance with his glossy dark face and eyes, and his silent and suspicious approach to unknown situations, he was as gentle and loving as a pet could possibly be.

(slide) Rumpus, my Pembroke Welsh Corgi, shown here helping me with my income taxes. Born deaf, and the only survivor of a litter of 6, Rumpus got off to an uncertain start. For the first three weeks she struggled for her life every moment, and was so ill she had to
be fed every hour. But Rumpus flourished, and grew strong and beautiful. Her phenomenal eyesight and peripheral vision, combined with constant alertness and self-confidence helped her live a life very close to that of a hearing dog. The only major constraint for Rumpus was that she always had to be on a leash when outside because of the danger from cars she could never hear. I wrote two articles about her for Dog World, and I gave the second one a sort of pale title, which the editor changed to Rumpus: A Full Life for a Deaf Corgi. The second title sums up the way this merry spirit lived in her silent world.

(slide) Now on to those who are still here. Tickle, also a Corgi in a pose characteristic of her. She is quiet and obedient, welcome to make prolonged visits at the houses of her human admirers. Tickle’s soft sweet nature has resulted in her being declared a "perfect boarder" by the caregivers at the kennel, since she rarely makes a sound. It wasn’t easy to get a bark in edgewise while Rumpus was alive, and so perhaps Tickle got out of the habit.

(slide) From left to right, these are Splash Dash and Moose, born to Tickle in January 1992. Moose, the male, has gone to live with the Brelsford family here in town. The other two, both females, have remained with me. It is a standard statement in Corgi lore that there are two types of Corgis, and nowhere could the truth of
this statement be seen more clearly than in Splash and Dash.

Splash is just like Tickle, whom she resembles physically very much. She too is quiet and as obedient as an 8 month old puppy could possibly be expected to be. (slide) Dash, however, rivals Madonna in her lust to be the center of attention. "Turn that camera right around here and point it at me!!!" is her motto.

This is the Corgi who would stuff all the cattle in one barn, lock the door and throw the key into the pond for a practical joke on the humans. Dash's preferred first activity every morning is ricocheting off the forbidden velvet couch, preferably with a large audience to appreciate her athleticism. Her understanding of the dog door is that it was an invention of a cooperative human just for her special projects. The device, in Dash's opinion evaluation was designed to provide a route for carrying valuable objects out into the backyard so they can be dismantled unseen, not to be discovered until unidentifiable bits are tossed up into the trees. Then, back into the house through the dog door to urinate on the floor. But it is this kind of spark and spirit which enables Corgis to successfully challenge cattle many times their size and weight, and I did not completely appreciate this spunk until I saw Dash in operation. I hope this fire and star quality will stand her in good stead when she goes to the show ring in the spring.
I have prepared this talk for you today in memory of my Corgi Rumpus, who was special to me in a way no other dog will ever be. Although she was physically deaf, she could listen with her heart. She runs free now, without a leash, as she loved to do on the beach in North Carolina. I am proud to have called Rumpus my dog from her birth on August 22, 1984 until she was euthanized at the age of six because of a malignant tumor on April 26, 1991. We can be so much kinder to our canine companions than to our human ones.

For Rumpus. Much loved. Much missed. Gone so soon.

Thank you for listening to my talk this evening.