



Coffee Beans and Barbells

GDA Grads and Business Owners Gerry Leary & Jerry Homer
Aspire and Inspire



Gerry Leary and London

photo by Ha Lam

Gerry Leary and Jerry Homer share more than a first name and that they are graduates of GDA. Today, both men own and operate businesses that allow them to pursue their passion, but there was a time neither was quite sure what he was going to do with his life.

Gerry Leary has been blind since birth. He has never known a world with sight but he has a keen sense of smell and a curiosity about unfamiliar sounds. It was the sound of what Leary thought was a rock polisher — a really big one — that inspired him to switch career gears.

As a child, Leary learned to repair cars from his father, a trade that served him well into his adult life making his living as an auto mechanic. It was during a trip to San Francisco that, while out at dinner, Leary heard the loud tumbling sound and asked the waiter what it was. The waiter, who was also the owner of the restaurant, explained that it was the restaurant's coffee roaster. He then went on to tell Leary that because he was doing so many things he had come to learn when the beans were roasted by sound and smell, rather than by sight. Leary thought, "I can do that."

Even though he encountered many people who didn't think he could, like in life, it only takes one person to say, "Yes." After two years of approaching various roasters, he was introduced to an instructor at the Coffee Training

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Vet's Corner

Do You Have a Pudgy Pup?



Much has been reported recently about the growing obesity rates among men, women and children in the United States, but what most people don't know is that obesity is becoming even more prevalent among our pets. Many studies suggest that up to 50 percent of adult dogs in the United States are overweight or obese, and many owners don't even know it.

Dogs that are overweight face myriad health problems, including increased risk of developing heart disease, lung disease, liver and kidney problems, diabetes and cancer. They also have a higher

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Mission Statement

Guide Dogs of America is dedicated to its mission to provide guide dogs and instruction in their use, free of charge, to blind and visually impaired men and women from the United States and Canada so that they may continue to pursue their goals with increased mobility and independence.

Institute in San Francisco. Leary explained to the man that he was blind. The instructor told him, "I'm sure we can figure it out." He also told Leary that he would return his money if he wasn't satisfied with what he had learned. That was in 2002.

On March 1, 2003, Leary signed the papers for his business. He received his beans the next day and started roasting. His guide dog at the time, Midnight, became the inspiration for the logo for his coffee brand, *The Unseen Bean*.

After he retired Midnight in 2008, Leary was paired with his current guide dog London. While he trained at GDA with his first guide dog Kodiak for the full 28-day class and again at the school with Midnight for an abbreviated three-week retrain class, he and London were trained in-home. GDA Instructor Steve Burkman spent two weeks in Boulder, Colorado training the team.

Leary and London go to work every day at The Unseen Bean, which now boasts a recently opened café in downtown Boulder, in addition to his roasting facility located just a few miles away. Leary's business continues to grow; recently, a large national grocery chain began selling Leary's beans at stores in his region.

Leary also volunteers his time to The Blind Café, an award-winning community awareness concert and tasting dinner in the pitch dark. At these events, which take place around the country, Leary is a guest speaker and a waiter.

"GDA is great. I wouldn't get a dog from any other school," Leary said. "People always comment on how impressed they are with how the dogs work and how attentive they are to my needs. I couldn't agree more. They get that from their training at GDA."



Jerry Homer and Kestrel

Graduate Jerry Homer learned he was going blind in 1982. At age 42, he was diagnosed with macular degeneration and the doctor told him he would be blind in six months. It took six years. The married father of two was a truck driver for many years. At the time of his diagnosis, he owned a fishing and gun store. "I figured if I am going blind I shouldn't be around guns," he said.

A lifelong weightlifter, Homer took a job at a local gym in 1983 and was soon made manager. As the macular degeneration progressed, leaving him with



Gerry Leary and London relax at the Unseen Bean.

less and less central vision, Homer said that he was "looking almost directly left to see right." Six years after his diagnosis, he woke up one morning and was totally blind. Although he knew that he would be blind one day, he was definitely not prepared for it to be this morning when he needed to be at an appointment down the street from the gym. With a broomstick to serve as an improvised cane, he made it to his meeting.

"I've always valued independence and I didn't feel very independent with that stick," said Homer. "When I started to train with a cane, that didn't feel right either and I thought, 'I better get a guide dog.'"

GDA had been recommended to him and, in 1998, Homer graduated with his first guide. He returned to the school to train with his second dog, Lightning, after it was time to retire Tatum. He trained in-home with L.J., his third guide; Kestrel or "Kessie," as Homer refers to him, is his fourth guide from GDA.

Homer opened his own business, Heavy Metal Gym, in Kingman, Arizona, more than 25 years ago. Even though he had weightlifted all his life, it wasn't until he was blind that Homer became serious about the sport and entered a competition. Not only did he win his first competition, he won the first nine. He has won 32 of the 40 contests he has entered; and this past April, at age 72, he set the world record in his age group when he powerlifted 352 lbs. at the Amateur Athletic Union.

Homer is not the only one in his family who competes. Son Jerry Jr., and daughter Tracie also lift and, like their father, have won many competitions. His wife Louise doesn't lift, but she never misses a meet. In addition to training his children, Homer trains several other lifters at his gym. In 2009, 10 athletes representing Heavy Metal Gym set eight world records in international competitions that included more than 200 men and women in different age and weight divisions from countries around the world.

While proud of his accomplishments, Homer said, "I feel funny making this about me. It's about the dogs and what they do to make us independent. I am so grateful to everybody at GDA. The people who raise the puppies and give them up; everyone at the school — the trainers, staff, cooks, maintenance people. Everybody there is compassionate, concerned and they care. If you want to learn about independence, it's the number one place to go in my opinion."

Homer also acknowledged that GDA lives up to its mission of giving its graduates a life of greater independence and mobility, but adds one more thing... "a life of happiness." 🐾



Jerry Homer (shown with Kestrel) has won numerous weightlifting competitions.

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incidence of orthopedic problems, such as arthritis, as well as have a shorter life expectancy.

Signs that your dog is overweight include:

- Difficult to feel ribs under fat
- Sagging stomach — you can grab a handful of fat!
- Broad, flat back
- No waist

If you think your dog is overweight follow these steps:

- Consult your veterinarian. He or she will be able rule out any underlying medical issues that could be contributing to your dog's weight gain. Your vet can tell you the ideal weight for your dog's breed and height and devise a safe weight loss plan for your dog.
- Cut back on food and snacks. If your dog is moderately overweight, the vet will have you slowly cut back the amount of food you give to your dog, including table scraps. Those bits and bites add up and can be the sole cause of your dog's weight problem. Also, "people food" is not meant for dogs and can present potentially life-threatening health issues. Many foods are toxic to dogs or pose swallowing or digestive issues. If you'd like to give your dog a special reward, find healthier alternatives such as baby carrots.
- Exercise. If your dog is inactive, start slowly with exercise and build up. Walking, swimming and playing are all great ways to get your dog (and you) moving.
- Stay strong. Don't let those puppy dog eyes get to you. Know how much and how often to feed your dog and stick to it. You are doing this for his health!
- Get the whole family involved. A good weight loss program starts with the support and cooperation of the entire family. In the end, your dog will be healthier, happier and live longer due to your dedication.

In Memory

With great sadness, we note the recent loss of GDA family member:

Larry Westmoreland (Class #359)

We are sad to note the passing of the following guide dogs:

Duncan (Class #333.5),
Odin (Class #325), Ruby (Class #324)
and Tango (Class #355).

We are also sad to note the passing of the following breeder dogs:

Dee Dee, Tagg and Zara

An Apprentice "Graduates"



Join us in congratulating Sean Chiles. Upon completing his three-year apprenticeship,

Sean has passed the State Board tests, officially "graduating" from apprentice to licensed guide dog instructor.

Great job Sean!

GDA 2012 Holiday Cards

The winning photo from the 2nd-Annual Holiday Card Contest of puppy-in-training Gentry will bring "Holiday Greetings" to everyone on your mailing list this year. The inside message reads: "May Your Holidays Be Merry & Bright"

Holiday cards measure 5" x 7" and are bundled 15 cards (with envelopes) to a pack. Price: \$15 per pack, plus shipping & handling (\$3.00 for 1 pack; \$5.00 for 2 – 8 packs; 9+ packs call GDA for rates). Please use the order form on page 5 to place your order. Questions? Call (818) 833-6429.



3rd-Annual Holiday Card Contest

It's not too early to start thinking about staging a holiday-themed photo of your dog to submit for our 3rd-Annual Holiday Card Contest. Details about how and when to submit will be included in the next newsletter. Say, "puppy treats!"

Donor Spotlight



Chris and Doris Christensen never miss an opportunity to teach someone about Guide Dogs of America. Chris is a retired principal, and Doris is a retired teacher who taught handicapped children the last several years of her career. Ever the teachers, these Partners in Trust are eager to tell people about GDA and why they chose to designate the school in their will.

For these retired educators, it is those early “teachers” of GDA’s guide dogs — the puppy raisers — that ignite their interest and desire to give to the school. The Christensen’s feel that it is important to acknowledge the dedication of these volunteers whenever possible.

“It’s the people behind the scenes. They are the unsung heroes that socialize, raise, and care for the puppies-in-training and give them that early foundation,” said Doris.

Giving a recent example, Doris shared an interaction the couple had at a car show. They saw a puppy raiser with her puppy-in-training and engaged another show participant in conversation. They explained that this is an important first step in a guide dog’s career, and that the puppy raiser is responsible for socializing the puppy from an early age so that it can become a guide dog. It is through chance meetings like this that the couple finds teachable moments during which they can encourage others to learn more about the school and, perhaps, to do as they have.

If you would like to learn more about becoming a GDA Partner in Trust like the Christensens, please call Rhonda Bissell at 818-833-6432.

A Goodbye Wag Of The Tail



Sandy Meyer, GDA’s receptionist, retired in June. For the past five years, Sandy warmly greeted graduates and raisers, volunteers, donors and guests at GDA. She will be missed by all, and we wish her much happiness in her retirement.

Partners in Trust



As you have read about the Christensens....you can make your gift to Guide Dogs of America last a lifetime and beyond. The Partners in Trust Society was established by GDA as a way to recognize and honor the generosity of those who have included the school in their planned giving. Providing life income gifts and bequests let your gift continue

working beyond your lifetime to help others achieve their goals with increased mobility and independence through a partnership with a loyal and loving guide dog. Charitable organizations are not subject to gift or estate taxes, so your gift continues to support the causes close to your heart, like Guide Dogs of America, without being diminished by the IRS.

You will receive our special “Partners In Trust” crystal jar as our way of thanking you. We hope that you will display it proudly, knowing the difference you are making in the lives of others through supporting Guide Dogs of America. Please call Rhonda Bissell at (818) 833-6432 for more information.

Congratulations Graduates

Class #373



Graduates (Puppy Raiser in parentheses):

left to right: Becky Griffin & Deco (*Linda Barber*); Luetta Johnson & Champ (*Jerry & Sydney Cain*); Liz Whitlock & Dublin (*Colby Morita*); Michael Moore & Gracy (*Karlen English*); Cat Perry & Gareth (*Carl & Chris Peterson*); Lynn McClellan & Winzy (*Yasmine Khalil & Clint Crump*); Jan Johnson & Gideon (*Rachel Conway & The Carlton Family*); Rudi Khalil & Daisy (*The Metcalf Family*); Ari Hughes & Eclipse (*The Winnett Family*); Mark Davis & Gentry (*Denise Brown*)

Instructors: left to right: Mindy Romero, Dave Ponce, Patty Elizondo

In-home: Don Kanallakan & Trooper (*The Oppenheim Family*); Mike Edwards & Troy (*Crystal Jackson*); Ron Bodey & Westin (*Sherrie and Samantha Wette*)

2012 Raffles



2012 Quilt Raffle

This year's quilt, "Knick Knack Paddy Whack," was made and donated by the Orange County Quilt Guild. Each panel features an adorable bone-bearing pooch in a dog house. The quilt measures a generous 99" by 110" and will fit a king- or queen-sized bed.

Purchase tickets using the order form on this page and mail it to GDA postmarked by Dec. 2, 2012. Tickets are \$2 each or six for \$10. The drawing will be held at the GDA December puppy raiser meeting on Dec. 8, 2012. Winner does not need to be present.

2012 GDA Bike Raffle

This year, the GDA motorcycle raffle is for a 2012 Harley Davidson Ultra Classic. The winning ticket will be drawn on Nov. 17 at the Guide Dogs of America Annual Banquet in Las Vegas. (Winner need not be present to win.)



SUMMER 2012 Order Form

Questions? Call (818) 833-6429. - Mail this entire form with your payment.

Raffle Tickets — \$5 per ticket or \$20 for 5 - includes shipping & handling

☐ 2012 Harley Davidson Ultra Classic \$

Raffle Tickets — \$2 per ticket or \$10 for 6 - includes shipping & handling

☐ Quilt Raffle \$

Holiday Cards — \$15 per pack (15 cards) - plus shipping & handling

☐ 2012 Holiday Cards \$

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____

Credit Card (check one) ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ AMEX

Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: ____/____

Signature: _____ CVC: _____

required for credit card purchase

3-4 digit code

☐ **Check** (make your check payable to **Guide Dogs of America**)

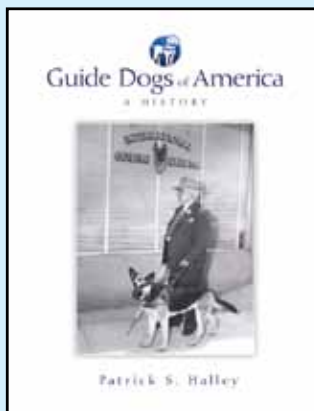
Mail to: Guide Dogs of America ATTN: Summer Merchandise Order Form, 13445 Glenoaks Blvd., Sylmar, CA 91342 **Or use the enclosed envelope.**

Ride For Guides

More than 500 riders participated in the 9th-Annual Motorcycle Ride for Guides on May 20. Along the scenic, 80-mile ride that began and ended at GDA, riders were greeted by graduates, puppy raisers and puppies-in-training at designated stops. Back at the school, a barbeque and raffle brought the day to a most successful close. Thank you to everyone who participated and volunteered. We are already looking forward to next year's ride.



New Guide Dogs Of America History Book Available Aug. 29



Author Patrick S. Halley spent nearly a year researching and writing the book, *Guide Dogs of America - A History*. The result is a 200-page, photo-rich story about the school, including new historical information. The book recounts the heroic efforts of GDA founder Joseph W. Jones, Sr., who, when denied a guide dog because he was deemed "too old" at age 57, started his own guide dog school. Also detailed in the book is GDA's program

and how the school produces successful guide dogs, as well as how the support from donors, puppy raisers, volunteers and the IAM&AW make it all possible.

The hardcover and paperback versions of the book will be available Aug. 29, with an audio version available soon (please check the Guide Dogs of America website at www.guidedogsofamerica.org for additional information). Hardcover: \$50. Paperback: \$40. Prices do not include shipping and handling.

The book can be purchased at GDA or by calling the school at 818-362-5834 or by emailing us at Partners@guidedogsofamerica.org.

GDA Las Vegas Charity Weekend

Save the Date – Nov.15-17



The 32nd-Annual Charity Banquet & Golf Tournament will be held Nov. 15-17 at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas, and Revere Golf Club in Henderson, NV. In addition to the motorcycle ride on Nov. 15, there will be a Skeet & Trap Shoot at the Clark County Shooting Park. All details are posted on the GDA website. If you would like more information, please contact Robin Hartford at 818-833-6422.



**GUIDE DOGS
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Open House Rounds Up Hundreds of Guests

It was a dog-gone good time at this year's Open House, where the theme was "Saddle Up for Western Day at GDA." Several hundred guests moseyed over to the school and joined in the festivities on Saturday, June 9. Friends old and new enjoyed the day's events, which included the always-popular Puppy Trials and Silent Auction. Here are a few photos featuring some of the highlights from the day. We hope that you'll make plans to join us next year.



A volunteer from the audience gets a taste of being led by a trained guide dog.



A puppy strategizes in the moments leading up to her turn in the puppy trials.



The Puppy Kissing Booth was full of business all day.