

GUIDE DOGS OF AMERICA Partners

winter 2009 volume 24 number 4

RETIRING MY FIRST GUIDE DOG

By: Lorri Bernson, Editor



For a guide dog user, one of the most difficult decisions to make is when to retire a guide dog from his or her working duties. Lorri Bernson is a guide dog user and also serves as editor of "Partners." After eight years, Lorri's guide dog — her first — 10-year-old Nigel has begun to show signs that the time is approaching to hang up the harness. As she prepares for Nigel's retirement, Lorri has had to think about what life will be like without Nigel at her side. Here, she shares her feelings and explains what it is like for a graduate to retire a guide dog.

Here I am with my guide dog Nigel, who has been not only my eyes, but my heart and my best friend for the eight years that I have had him at my side. When I received Nigel in 2002, never in my life did my thoughts ever lead me to believe that my life would be so full, independent and happy.

At GDA, the age we tell our graduates to think about retiring their dog is around 10 years. The reason for that is, like people, we feel it is in the best interest of the dog to allow it to have a "retirement." In a healthy, older dog, some of the signs that it may be nearing retirement are a slowing of pace, less exuberance to work and a general lack of "get up and go." Nigel is slowing down and, as much as I don't want to think about the fact that his retirement time is nearing...I have to.

GDA gives its students ownership of their guide dog. When a guide dog retires, he may continue to live with his partner. If, for some reason, the graduate cannot keep their dog, then GDA will find a home for them. Oftentimes, the puppy raiser will welcome them back. From time to time, GDA is asked to assist in finding a good home for a retired guide dog. Even though Nigel soon will be leaving my side, he will spend his retirement with me.

"Retiring" article continues on page 3 >

COMINGS AND GOINGS...

A Goodbye Wave of the Paw



For the past 10 years, Jay Bormann has served as the President of GDA. He will retire at the end of this year and will leave an incredible legacy. Jay's accomplishments during his tenure are impressive and have built a guide dog program that is well regarded, as well as created an improved campus and facilities that provide exceptional care and comfort for our dogs, our students, and all who work and visit the school.

From the beginning, Jay dedicated himself to raising money for the school and he was able to retire the mortgage on the GDA property within the first four years of his tenure. This was a considerable achievement that allowed Jay to focus his energy on furthering fundraising events in North America. Many large-scale projects were completed as a result of Jay's successful efforts, including renovation of and upgrades to the sleeping rooms and kitchen in the student dormitory; remodel of Puppy and Training Department offices; upgrade and remodel of the Veterinary Department; and purchase of new vehicles for the Training, Puppy and Veterinary Departments.

In addition to the physical campus improvements, under Jay's leadership the school established a "quality not quantity" program for the school's guide dog teams. He also worked with the State Guide Dog Board to upgrade the apprenticeship program for guide dog instructors.

Jay arrived at the school with visions for its future. Thanks to his dedication, the school is poised for success. Please join us in thanking Jay for his years of service to GDA and in wishing him a very happy and golf-filled retirement.

Our guide dogs give their partners years of dedicated and loyal service until they retire.
We asked our graduates who have retired one or more guides or are preparing to retire their guide dog:
How is your guide dog spending his/her retirement?
Their answers appear throughout the newsletter.

COME RAIN OR COME SHINE

First 'Online Only' Campaign Will Fund Permanent Shade Structures



GDA has launched a new "online only" fundraising program to help fund the cost of projects and improvements at the school. The first project is the installation of a permanent shade structure for the kennel runs. When the fundraising goal

of \$8,000 for the structure is reached, a new school project will begin.

The Kennel Run provides a great outdoor space for our dogs in formal training that live at the school for four to six months, as well as for puppies-in-training that spend a few nights at GDA. With the addition of permanent shade structures, our kennel runs will provide shelter from the elements and ensure plenty of exercise and that playtime is a part of every day for the dogs living at the school.

GDA's new online giving feature not only makes it easy to donate, but also tracks how close we are to reaching our goal. To donate, visit the GDA home page (www.guidedogsofamerica.org). Donations are made by credit card. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are accepted. We're moving closer to our goal, but we're not there yet. Your donation, in any amount, is greatly appreciated.

V E T ' S C O R N E R

This Winter...No 'Chilly Dogs'

Depending on where you live, winter weather is here or it's on the way. Help your dog weather the winter by keeping the following in mind during the colder months:

- **Ins and Outs** — If you have an outdoor dog, be sure he has a warm shelter to protect him from the cold, rain or snow. It's best to not leave your dog outside in the cold for long periods of time. Wind chill can drop temperatures well below thermometer readings.
- **Cover Up** — Tiles and uncarpeted areas may become extremely cold; place blankets and pads on floors in these areas to create a layer of warmth for your dog.
- **Watch Your Step** — Be extra careful when walking or playing with your dog near frozen lakes, rivers or ponds. Slippery or thin ice could cause serious injury to your dog.
- **Good Grooming** — Your dog needs a well-groomed coat to keep properly insulated. Long-haired dogs should have excess hair around the toes and footpads trimmed to ease snow removal and cleaning. Short- or coarse-haired dogs may get extra cold, so consider a sweater or coat.
- **The Wet Look** — If your dog gets wet from rain or snow, towel dry or blow-dry his coat. If he's been out in the snow, be sure to dry and clean his paws to avoid tiny cuts and cracked pads caused by snow or ice that gets stuck in the paws.
- **Out for a Drive** — If you take your dog out for a drive, be sure not to leave him in the car between stops. If the car engine is left on, the carbon monoxide will endanger your dog's life. If the engine is off, the temperature in the car will get too cold.
- **Household Hazards** — Products and appliances that make life easier and more comfortable for us can mean serious discomfort for your dog. The three most common hazards are:
 - **Antifreeze:** This liquid often collects on driveways and roadways. Although it smells and tastes good to your dog, it is highly poisonous and can be lethal.
 - **Rock salt:** Used to melt ice on sidewalks, rock salt may irritate footpads. Be sure to rinse and dry your dog's paws after a walk.
 - **Portable heaters and fireplaces:** Provide warmth, but they can severely burn your dog. Make sure all fireplaces have screens, and keep portable heaters out of reach.

Winter can be a great time for our dogs, but it also can be a time of discomfort and even danger. Taking steps to keep your dog safe and warm will have both of you welcoming spring happy and healthy.

GDA'S NEW TOP DOG

Join us in welcoming new GDA President Dale E. Hartford. A long-time GDA supporter/fundraiser and a member of the GDA Board of Directors since 2004, Dale is looking forward to being involved in the day-to-day operation of the school. He will assume his new position on January 1, 2010.



Since 1986, Dale has served as an IAM Directing Business Representative, Special Representative and Grand Lodge Representative; for the past five years, he served as Administrative Assistant to General Vice President Lynn D. Tucker, Jr. in the IAM's Eastern Territory.

Dale's career with the IAM began in 1982 when he joined Local Lodge 1828 as an employee of SD Warren Company. He was elected Local Lodge President when the IAM created Local Lodge 2740 in 1984.

In addition to his board position with GDA, Dale served as a member of the Board of Trustees for Maine Maritime Academy from 2004 through 2009.

Dale, his wife Robin and the family dog Mattie will be moving from Cincinnati to the West Coast.

"Retiring" continued from page 1...

It will be an enormous and emotional transition for both of us. I have started the process and I am leaving Nigel home more often so he and I can get used to not being with one another 24/7 ... this is the tough part. Then the time will come when there is a match for me, and a new dog comes into our lives. I wonder how Nigel will feel when I leave the house with another dog. Will he feel left behind or will he be happy to go back to bed with the house quiet and all to himself? The trainers say that dogs adjust quickly, but it still makes the process a difficult one.

The experience of making the transition from your first dog to your second is something that is referred to as "second dog syndrome." I know my second dog will be a totally different dog from Nigel and cannot be expected to just step in and act like a seasoned dog, but comparisons are inevitable. I have to remind myself that it took Nigel and me some time to become the team that we are today, and I will need to give my next dog that time as well.

They say that your first guide dog is the one you always remember the most — the one that "changed your life." I will always carry with me the love, companionship and unimaginable bond that Nigel and I have.

The idea of not having Nigel next to me all the time breaks my heart, but what mends it is knowing that the path we started can continue with another blessing by my side.

I have submitted my application to GDA. Sometime during the next several months, I will go back into class to receive my new guide dog— Nigel's successor, as there can be no replacement. I recently was asked by a puppy raiser, "Is it time to pass the torch?" Actually, there is no torch to pass — as that light will burn forever; a new torch will be lit with many new paths to conquer with my next guide dog. It will just be a different light shining the way for me, but with equal brightness.

4TH ANNUAL "PARTNER'S" AWARDS DINNER RAISES \$110,000 FOR GDA VETERINARY AND SURGERY FACILITY

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley provided the setting for this year's "Partner's" Awards Dinner held on Saturday, Oct. 3. Many of the 260 guests arrived with puppies-in-training and guide dogs for the memorable evening that included auctions, library tours, awards presentations and dancing. The dinner raised more than \$110,000 for the renovation and updating of the Veterinary Department. The GDA Veterinary and Surgery Facility will provide state-of-the-art treatment for our puppies-in-training and dogs in the program and will save the school hundreds of thousands of dollars in veterinary expenses annually.

This year's "Partner's" Awards were presented to Nancy & Brian Matthews, South Bay Puppy Raisers Area Leaders, and the National Charity League (San Fernando Valley Chapter).

We would like to extend a very special thank you to our wonderful sponsors, without whom this event would not have been such a tremendous success. Top Dog "Dinner" Sponsors: Suzanne & Michael Tennenbaum (Tennenbaum Capital Partners, LLC); "Play Date"



"Partners" for the cause

Sponsors: Mrs. Macki Singer and Mr. & Mrs. Steve Gettleman; "Kibble" Sponsors: Casey Scott & Jennifer Scott (Scott Wealth Management of Wells Fargo Advisors); "Dog Bowl" Sponsors: Mrs. Eleanor Hughes, Mr. & Mrs. Steve Williams and Mr. & Mrs. Adam

Lawrence; "Printing" Sponsor: The Esseff Foundation.

For the contribution of their time and considerable talents, we also would like to thank the following: Tammy (and husband Mark) New for creating beautiful floral centerpieces and table décor; Tami Semler for wine from Malibu Family Wines; Command Performance Catering; Joe Scavo, photographer; DJ Mike Lavalie; Judy Reilly; GDA staff; and the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation.

For additional pictures, please visit www.guidedogsofamerica.org and click on "Fundraiser Photos."



From left to right: Alaine Balsamo-Gillis, Debby Loggia, Debra Walker, Debby Harrisberger, Anne Weatherson, Valerie Herzig



From left to right: Jay Bormann, GDA President, Nancy Matthews, Brian Matthews, Debbie Sands, Dinner Chair

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!



Class #360.5

GRADUATES from LEFT to RIGHT: (*Puppy Raisers in parentheses*): Greg Steinmetz & Cash (*Lee & Russ Jacobs*), Sally Pacheco & Suki (*The Uroff Family*), Greg Hoover & Kuma (*The Jost Family*), Veronica Elsea & Tai (*Amy & Matthew Toussaint*)

INSTRUCTORS standing from LEFT to RIGHT: Dave Ponce, Linda Hawes

IN-HOME GRADUATE: Ruth Ann Acosta & Egan (*Sheila & Shelly Harvey*)

INSTRUCTOR: Patty Elizondo

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!



Class #363

GRADUATES from LEFT to RIGHT: (*Puppy Raisers in parentheses*): Sean Chiles - Apprentice Instructor, Bill Harrison & Janie (*The Carmichael Family*), Danny Powell & Lex (*Bob & Yvette Sheehan*), Mary Reifowitz & Sunday (*The Kearney Family*), Rose Ann Figura & Promise (*Rich & Peggy Kollin*), Andi Mills & Tibbs (*Cherry Teter*), DJ Simpson & Tyson (*Naomi Jost & Family*), Carolyn Ward & Peace (*The Pittman Girls*), Elaine Fogle & Sherpa (*Susie Edwards*), Michelle Plunkett & Noble (*Jerry & Sydney Cain*)

INSTRUCTORS standing from LEFT to RIGHT: Dave Ponce, Tiffany Andrews, Joanna Wilkinson, Linda Hawes

MAKING GDA'S WISHES COME TRUE — AT THE HOLIDAYS AND ALL YEAR ROUND



During the holidays and all year round, there are many ways to support GDA and continue to fulfill the hopes and dreams of our students — past, present and future.

Please take a moment to read about the many ways that you can create holiday memories today and for years to come! Your generous gift also can be “thoughtfully

made” in the honor of a person, group or event to show your support of GDA. Call GDA at (818) 833-6429 or make an online donation from our website: www.guidedogsofamerica.org.

GDA Students Take Flight with Donated Frequent Flyer Miles

Our GDA students come from all over the United States and Canada, which means that, for many of them, their 28-day training at the school begins and ends on an airplane. GDA is able to cover 100% of all students’ travel expenses, including airline tickets, by purchasing their tickets using frequent flyer miles from United Airlines that have been donated to the school.

If you or someone you know have unused miles with United Airlines’ Mileage Plus program, they can be donated directly to GDA to help support our program.

To donate your miles, have your account number ready and contact United Mileage Plus Customer Service at (800) 421-4655.

Call GDA at (818) 833-6432 for more information.

Year-Round Giving One Month at a Time

Many of our supporters make monthly donations to GDA using our convenient automatic donation program. At the beginning of each month, we automatically charge your credit card in the amount you specify. At year’s end, you will receive a thank you letter with a donation total for your tax records. Call (818) 833-6429 with questions or to participate.

Become a Member of the Partners in Trust Society

Just as blind men and women partner with GDA’s remarkable dogs for more independence and mobility, generous friends and supporters partner with GDA to help us carry out our work. Become a member of the Partners in Trust Society by naming GDA in your will or trust and receive a beautiful crystal biscuit jar.

For more information call (818) 833-6432.

Make a Perfect Match

Many companies offer a matching gift program to their employees. These programs match, dollar-for-dollar, charitable contributions made by an employee, doubling the donation made to Guide Dogs of America!

If you are thinking of making a donation to Guide Dogs of America, ask your employer if they offer a matching gift program.

GDA'S HOLIDAY WISH LIST



Help us continue to bring comfort and joy to all our GDA puppies with a gift from the GDA "Holiday Wish List." As you are making your list and checking it twice this holiday season, please remember all the GDA

puppies that have been extra nice! Items on our Wish List will bring comfort and joy to our puppies during the holiday season and beyond.

General Holiday and Year-Round Kennel Wishes:

- Gift cards from any mass market pet store (i.e., Petco, PetSmart)
- Large sterilized bones
- Large heavy-duty rubber toys
- Large compressed rawhide bones and large compressed rawhide chews
- Nylabone Double Action Chews (www.petedge.com) – Item: TF813
- Tough by Nature Holee Rollers (www.petedge.com) – Size: 5 and 6.5 (\$4.99 -\$6.99); Item: ZX335

Nursery Wishes:

- X-Pens/24" size (all pet stores)
- "Guardian Gear" Poly Animal Control Leads (www.petedge.com) – Quantity needed: 5 dozen (12 pack); Item: TP41212
- Kirkland Signature Pet Throw 64" – available at Costco (in-store and online)
- Vanguard compact centrifuge with timer (www.paragonmed.com); \$269.00; Item: V-6500
- Nylabone (www.petedge.com) – Giant Size; Item: TF176

Vet Department/Recovery Room Wishes:

The following item is available at Costco:

- Kirkland Pet Beds – Quantity needed: 5; Size: large*

The following items are available from www.jbpet.com:

- Sanding Drum – Quantity needed: 2; Item: 686-0101-3*
- Thermo Bolster Bed – Quantity needed: 6; Size: large (\$99.99)
- Medi-Paw – Quantity needed: 4 (large), 4 (medium); Item: 105-0100*
- Walk-a-Belly – Quantity needed: 2; Size: med/large (\$17.39); Item: 137-0112*
- Memory Sleeper – Quantity needed: 6; Size: large (\$99.99); Item: 300-0114

Reference Books available from www.wiley.com/go/veterinary:

- Infectious Disease Management in Animal Shelters (Wiley Blackwell) – Quantity needed: 1 (\$71.99)
- Plumb's Veterinary Drug Handbook, pocket size (Wiley Blackwell) – Quantity needed: 1 (\$71.99)

Anywhere:

- Charlie Bear treats

*Please call (818) 833-6431 before ordering these specially marked items to make sure these "wishes" have not been filled yet, as we only need a small number of each. Items sent directly to GDA should be addressed: "Attention: Lorri Bernson."

"After nearly seven years of service, Fila is living with her puppy raiser family. She now has a chocolate lab sister and a black lab brother. They are going for walks, playing in the sprinklers, and she may be doing some therapy dog work at the school she went to as a puppy-in-training. She is full of life and, finally, she gets a doggie door!" **CHRISTY CRESPIN**

WINTER MERCHANDISE

Save time and money by shopping online at the GDA Web Shop. You'll find a wide selection of clothes and accessories — all with the official GDA logo. Shipping and handling is free with all purchases! Click on the link from the GDA website (www.guidedogsofamerica.org) to shop and show your support of GDA.

Collectible 2010 GDA Lapel Pin Now Available

The annual GDA lapel pin for 2010 is now available. As in years past, the pin measures 1" x 1" and is the perfect everyday accessory. The lapel pin is \$8.



GDA "Our Family" Black Sweatshirt

Become a part of the GDA family with the new "Our Family — Guide Dogs of America" puppies design on a black sweatshirt. Made in the U.S.A., the sweatshirt is 50% polyester-50% cotton and is machine washable. Adult sizes: Small to 3X. \$25.

WINTER MERCHANDISE ORDER FORM

Questions? Call (818) 833-6429. ****ALL SHIPPING & HANDLING IS FREE****

GDA "Our Family" Sweatshirt (Unisex sizing, men order one size larger) **\$25 per sweatshirt**

Indicate quantities in box next to chosen size(s).

☐ SM ☐ MED ☐ LARGE ☐ XL ☐ XXL ☐ XXXL \$

GDA Lapel Pins **\$8.00 per pin**

☐ 2010 GDA Lapel Pin \$

☐ 2009 GDA Puppy Star Lapel Pin \$

☐ 2008 GDA 60th Anniversary Lapel Pin \$

☐ 2007 GDA Yellow Lab Lapel Pin \$

☐ 2006 GDA German Shepherd Lapel Pin \$

☐ 2005 GDA Chocolate Lab Lapel Pin \$

☐ 2004 GDA Golden Retriever Lapel Pin \$

☐ 2003 GDA Black Lab Lapel Pin \$

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____

Credit Card (check one) ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover

Expiration Date: ____/____/____

Card Number: _____

Signature: (required for credit card purchase) _____

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

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

New Website Feature: "Planning" to Give to GDA

In an effort to keep our supporters up to date on current issues involving estate planning and planned giving, Guide Dogs of America has added a "Gift Planning" page to our website. Visit www.guidedogsofamerica.org and click "Gift Planning." This page offers information about how to "Build Your Gift"; e-Brochures (gift annuities, year-end giving, estate planning starters); and informative monthly feature articles on timely topics such as the new charitable IRA legislation, retirement planning, charitable gift annuities and endowments.



**GUIDE DOGS
OF AMERICA**

13445 Glenoaks Blvd.
Sylmar, CA 91342

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

LOS ANGELES, CA
PERMIT NO. 2181

IN MEMORY

It is with sadness that we note the loss of two members of our GDA family:

Graduates

Luella Knapp – Class #344 **Lew Wilson** – Class #352

With sadness, we also note the passing of one of our breeder dogs and the following guide dogs for their dedication to ensuring the safety and independence of their partners:

Arthur – Class #321

Toby – Class #323

Erin – Class #322

Trusty – Class #313

Mystique – Class #314

Maddie – Breeder

"My former guide dog is now 11 years old. He is currently enjoying his retirement with my mother in Colorado. My mother believes he is getting younger." GREG HOOVER

"Shane is spending his golden years eating, sleeping, riding in the car and walking in the park. How could a dog ask for more? At 11 years, he still enjoys a weekly doggie play date, though spends much of the time on the sidelines egging the younger dogs on. He has a new job now. He is acting as mentor, sage and buddy for the new guide, Morris." VAL SIRNA



YOU HAVE OUR ATTENTION

If you have suggestions for future articles or "Graduate Questions," or if you have comments about the newsletter, please email partners@guidedogsofamerica.org.

2010 CALENDAR OF EVENTS HELD AT GDA

Graduations

Graduation celebrations take place at GDA, under our outdoor canopy, and begin promptly at 10 a.m.

January 31, 2010
May 2, 2010

August 1, 2010
October 24, 2010

7th Annual Motorcycle "Ride for Guides"

May 23, 2010 (Sunday)

Open House

June 12, 2010 (Saturday)

For events and involvement opportunities in your area, please visit the GDA website (www.guidedogsofamerica.org) and click on "Events Calendar."



Partners
newsletter

Published by: **Guide Dogs of America**

13445 Glenoaks Blvd.
Sylmar, CA 91342
(818) 362-5834 FAX: (818) 362-6870

EDITOR

Lorri Bernson

E-MAIL

mail@guidedogsofamerica.org

WEBSITE

www.guidedogsofamerica.org

CONTRIBUTORS

Jay Bormann
Rhonda Bissell
Debbie Sands