



# Sporting Tails

## November 2006



### Meeting Dates

- **Nov 12 Paws-ab**
- **Dec 3 Puyallup**
- **Jan—annual mtg**

## Spaniel Olympics

What: Different events that show the team of handler and dog.  
 Price: one dollar per event per dog.

Why: Because it's FUN

Spaniel Olympics Events:

1. Obstacle course
2. Cookie Catch
3. Dunkin for dogs
4. Hat trick
5. Galloping gormay
6. Scooper race
7. Hot dog retrieve
8. Best trick
9. Toy retrieve
10. Spoon race

each event \$1.00 per dog.

Awards given for each event and all-around.

Come join the fun!!

## Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled with the Spaniel Olympics.

Meeting will be at Paws-Abilities in at 2:30 pm. We'll just tuck into a corner, like last time.

## Christmas Party

This year's party will be held at Dan and Leslie Connell's home in Puyallup Dec 3 at 2:00 pm.

Directions and Details will be in the next newsletter but meanwhile, take a look at the awards form in the October newsletter and send that off to Ruth Tabaka.

With Awards, Irish Auction and great food prepared by our members it is sure to be a good time!

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### Mission Statement

**Promoting the betterment of Sporting Spaniels by encouraging development of each dog to its fullest potential.**

## THE “AT-RISK” DOG

rehabilitation through behavior modification

by Laura Matzke

Recently we fostered and then adopted a rescue Gordon setter, Ben, who has presented troubling behavior issues we needed to address. Researching ways to rehabilitate him has led me down some fascinating paths in the newest behavior modification techniques.

Please note I am not a professional behaviorist! I'm only sharing with you information I've discovered, and what has worked well with Ben. Every dog is different. The “at-risk” phrase I'm borrowing from the educational field. An at-risk” dog is one who, because of aggressive, guarding or dominant behaviors, is at risk of being isolated, rehomed, abandoned, or euthanized.

In this column I'd like to share with you a general rehab program that has worked well with Ben. Since he is a resource guarder, he also required more specific training techniques, perhaps to be covered in a future column. The more general program below will help you establish a benevolent leadership with any dogs living with you.

It's called NILIF, or *Nothing in Life is Free*. You'll also see this approach presented in various ways on the internet: one excellent summary is presented by dog trainer Deb McKean at [www.k9deb.com/nilif.htm](http://www.k9deb.com/nilif.htm). Shirley Chong, an extraordinary dog behaviorist/trainer, has a wonderful website at [www.shirleychong.com](http://www.shirleychong.com). Her version of NILIF is called “mindgames,” which includes some other excellent behavioral suggestions. Or just google NILIF or “nothing in life is free” and you'll get several resources.

To sum up, NILIF is not a training program, but an overall lifestyle change for you and your dog. It's remarkably simple. In NILIF, the dog must EARN the good things in his life, whether they are food, play, petting, preferred locations, etc. Here are some possibilities, but you can certainly come up with your own:

- Food: before getting his meal(s), the dog must perform some basic obedience command. Ben is always asked to “sit” and “wait” while the food bowl is lowered to the floor. He is then released with an “okay” to go ahead and eat. Having trouble with the “wait” part of the exercise? If the dog lunges for the bowl as you're lowering it, simply raise the bowl again out of reach. Do this until the dog gets the idea. With an enthusiastic eater, you can ask for small steps at first: in the beginning I asked Ben to wait until the bowl was half-way to the floor, then 3/4s, then all the way to the floor before releasing him. He caught on quickly!
- Locations: desired locations, especially elevated ones like couches and beds, are by invitation only! In this situation, you can also ask the dog to perform an obedience command first, such as a sit or a down. Because of Ben's previous sofa guarding, he is rarely permitted on the sofa. When I can't or don't want to supervise the sofa, I stretch a babygate across it so he can't jump up on it by himself. The sofa and bed are simply not free!
- Going outside: again ask your dog to perform some command before he is allowed to go outside. If you're taking him somewhere, have him sit and stay while you go out the door first, since the pack leader always goes first!
- Restrict house access: this is one I made up that really works for Ben. He spends some time isolated in the kitchen with a baby gate, so he doesn't have total freedom (remember nothing is free!). While the isolated time is minimal, it seems to give him a very clear message about his place in the pack. I've noticed that when I get lazy and allow him out all the time, he starts to challenge the other dogs for a more prominent position! Then back into the babygated kitchen he goes. Please note this isn't total isolation: he

**NILIF**  
**Nothing in Life is Free**

## THE "AT-RISK" DOG continued

can see everything from the kitchen and hear us, so he's still part of the household, but just not free to roam all the time.

- Petting: if your dog is pushy about getting petted, again make him perform an obedience command before he gets petted. Or make it a fun game! Teach him to "shake" or "roll over" or "spin." Especially for our affectionate Gordons, petting is a highly desirable reward that works well with NILIF. I'm not suggesting less petting, but just put it on our terms, not theirs!
- Play: incorporate some obedience into your playtimes with your dog. Retrieve games are great ways to combine play and obedience. To build your dog's retrieve drive, have a special retrieve toy that he only gets with this particular game. At first, just do 2-3 retrieves and then quit. If your dog starts to play the game on his terms—i.e., running away from you with the toy or starting to chew on it—take it away for another day. If your dog runs away rather than bringing the toy back to you, start him on a long line or a flexi and reel him in. If your dog doesn't want to give you the toy, teach a "give" with a cookie trade. I always teach puppy play retrieves with a special toy and pocketful of kibble rewards for the "give".
- Toys: again, teaching the "give" is a significant command, taught easily with a cookie trade. You can also restrict access to toys, bringing them out only at certain times, and requiring an obedience command before the dog gets the toy.

**What he most desires,  
make him work for it!**

Does this give you some ideas? There are hundreds of other possibilities, depending on what your dog regards as precious activities and objects. What he most desires, make him work for it! NILIF made a remarkable difference for Ben, because it made it very clear to him what his place in the pack was. Also keep in mind your "requirements" don't have to be traditional obedience commands; they could be fun commands that I've mentioned above: shake, roll over, spin, speak. Experiment and have fun—your dog will love you and respect you for it.

### Treasurer's Report

#### August Chequing :

Previous balance	802.08
Disbursements	237.00
Deposits	1930.00
End balance	2495.08

#### Sept Chequing :

Previous balance	2495.08
Disbursements	1613.19
Deposits	1035.00
End balance	1916.89

#### August Savings:

Previous balance	3534.58
Deposits + Int.	2.00
Disbursements	500.00
Ending balance	3036.58

#### September Savings:

Balance	3036.58
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### New Member Application

We have received an application from Eugene Rivers of Tacoma.

Gene has been in dogs for 40 years has 5 ESS and breeds under the Afterglo Kennel name. He is interested in Conformation, hunt tests and field trials, tracking and the Canine Good Citizen testing.

Gene is a veterinarian and can do educational presentations on medical care. He is ready to learn, to work and participate in club activities. He is also a member of PSESSA, ESSFTA and WWESSC.

Sponsors are: Karen Lee and Lynn Winchester.

## Mount Rainier Sporting Spaniel Association

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## Directions to Paws-Abilities

- From I-405 North or Southbound, Take Exit #1, Tukwila.
- From either exit ramp, turn right onto Interurban Blvd./ West Valley Highway.
- Turn right onto Strander Blvd. (Just past Residence Inn and 7-11 Store.
- Turn left onto Andover Park East (Video Only intersection)
- Turn left onto Minkler Blvd.
- Turn right onto Industry Drive and right into Paws-Abilities Parking lot.

