

**You and your pet**

**Seeing eye dogs: they're more than pets**

To be considered responsible, the average pet dog has only to bark at strangers, follow its toilet training and perhaps perform a few tricks at the command of its owner.

But there are exceptions. Some pet dogs have very important demands placed on them. There is

in training are given a command to go forward, they do—even if they have to jump over a green manhole to do it. Other breeds have a tendency to head for home when they feel they have done enough work for the day.

**IN ONE EAST COAST** training program, more than 100 dogs are screened and trained each year as companions and guides for blind persons. Male and female puppies start their training by being boarded with 4H Club members to get accustomed to household activities. Then, at about 15 months of age, they are returned to the school to begin a carefully tailored program of obedience, guide work and "educated disobedience" lessons.

The obedience lessons are those any well-mannered dog receives: sit, stay, come, fetch and others. Next, the guide work accustoms the animal to the feel of the harness and encourages him to think about handling everyday obstacles such as curbs on the sidewalk and traffic. He also learns the specific cues which indicate barriers like curbs and stairs to the blind—a slight hesitation for stairs, a full stop for curbs.

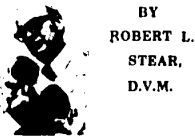
Finally, there are the "educated disobedience" lessons—those that make him understand that there are times when his own judgement must prevail over his master's, such as refusing to cross a street where there is nothing but a gaping construction site. In final examinations, a blindfolded instructor takes several trips through city streets with only the dog for guidance.

Dogs and blind applicants are matched for physical size and character. Persons who are nervous and tense are given dogs with especially calm, steady natures. Petite women receive slightly smaller dogs than husky men. Each dog and prospective owner go through a short training period to see if they work together. Sometimes an individual must try more than one dog until the proper combination is achieved.

The great value of a seeing eye dog lies in the concentrated attention he devotes to his job and his ability to react to situations the blind person is not aware of.

Therefore, while you may feel that petting a stranger's guide dog or feeding him little treats is a friendly gesture, it is an inclination that should be resisted. What you are really doing is distracting a busy employe in a complicated job.

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BY **ROBERT L. STEAR, D.V.M.**

perhaps no better example of this than the dogs who, since their introduction in the United States in 1929, have helped more than 4,000 blind persons lead productive lives. Although there is no one "right" breed for this important guide work, German shepherds and Labrador and golden retrievers come closest to having this combination of qualities:

• **Stamina.** They have the physical size and strength to spend several hours a day in harness, rapidly walking with an adult man or woman.

• **Ability to learn.** They have the capacity to absorb and remember instructions given during a training period that usually lasts about three months.

• **Intelligence.** They can gauge situations in everyday life and decide whether to follow old orders exactly or modify them to fit a new situation.

• **Character.** They have the willingness to do what is asked rather than follow their own personal inclinations and mislead their blind companions.

Most dog breeds have those four basic characteristics, but few have them in the proper proportion. Poodles, for instance, are probably smarter than most shepherds; however they are too obedient to be good guide dogs. When poodles

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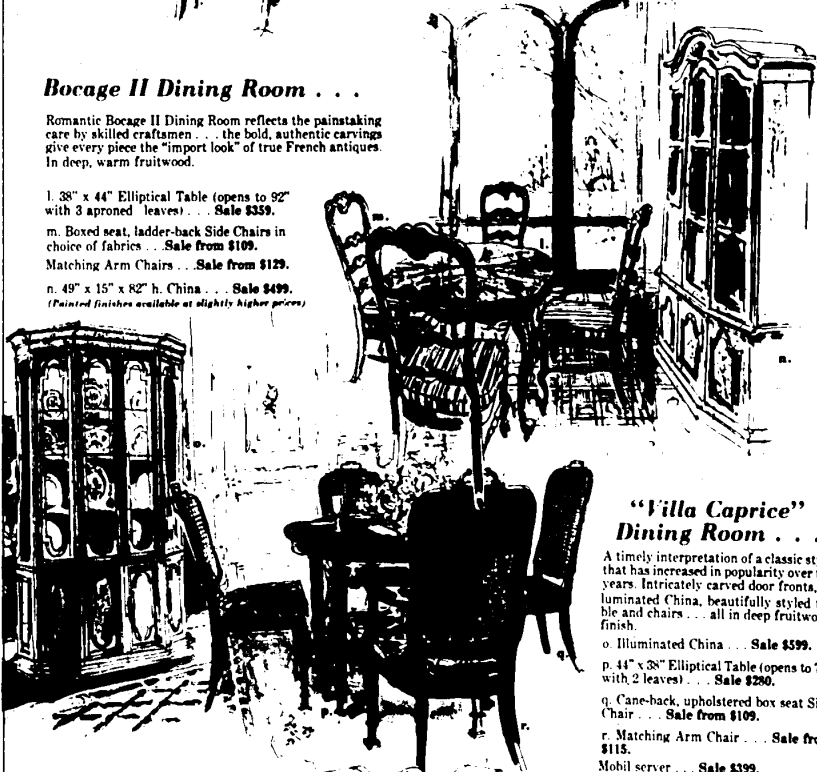


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- s. Mobil server . . . **Sale \$399.**

*(Painted finishes available at slightly higher prices.)*

**MS classes set for fall**

The Metro-Detroit Branch Chapter, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and the American Red Cross will conduct free home-care classes for family members of MS patients beginning in September.

Classes are for two hours and will run for 10 consecutive weeks. Subjects include basic health procedures, nursing fundamentals, nutrition, transfer techniques, equipment, physical therapy and aids to daily living. The psychological consequences of MS are also to be discussed.

Depending on response, the fall series of home-care classes will include daytime classes in Oak Park and downtown Detroit.

"Though we have mailed hundreds of program announcements, many metro MS families are not on the society's mailing list and, therefore, will not know of the home care program," Wilson Peller, chapter chairman, said. "We urge interested MS families to contact us for more information about this health education program."

For registration information, call the Multiple Sclerosis Society office.

**League offers suffrage program**

The League of Women Voters of Birmingham and Bloomfield is offering a program entitled "The Struggle for Woman's Suffrage."

The Feminist History Research Project has produced a slide and tape presentation which includes the voices of women who participated in the suffrage struggle.

The presentation is highlighted with historical engravings and photographs depicting the 72 year long battle for the right to vote.

For more information on this program call Audrey Meland (646-5645) or Elinn Quin (646-4163).



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