

“The one absolute, unselfish friend that man can have in this selfish world—the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous—is his dog.” George Graham Vest

That quote is from the famous “eulogy to a dog” speech given in a trial in Warrensburg Missouri. involving a dog named “Old Drum”. If you are not familiar with this speech, it is one of the most beautiful tributes to the dog ever written. There are many tributes to the dog, and few that we know of to owners. That is a shame, because there are many owners worthy of tribute, and we can always use more. .

As members of a community dedicated to the welfare, maintenance and love of canines, it is our responsibility to make sure that those who acquire an animal from us understand that the loyalty, love and devotion that are inherent in the dog must be reciprocated by the owner. The new owner is getting an animal that represents the work, care and love that we have invested in the breed, and proven in the ring. It is in the best interest of our dogs that we be very careful and selective about where they go. It is also in our best interest to do all that we can to educate the new owner about the breed, its care and welfare, and also the problems that can arise, so that they will be able to love and appreciate that dog as we would.

In the last year we have lost several of our older dogs, and although they all lived long healthy lives, we grieved for each one. It is not difficult to see how the owner of a single dog can be devastated by its loss. There are facets of dog ownership that are difficult to discuss, but the eventual loss of a beloved friend is something that every potential owner might have to face. For those who have acquired a breedable female, there are even more pitfalls to be discussed. Over the years, we have prevented a great many breedings and encouraged a lot of spays with one simple argument that goes like this: “Pregnancy in any animal can be dangerous to that animal; Are you willing to take the chance of losing your beloved pet?” The birth process is never easy, and in small breeds like ours there are often complications.

We have a small program, and only occasionally will we have a pet available to a home, but when we do, we like to take the dog on two home visits with the potential owner. We can see how the dog reacts to the new environment and person, and also spend time discussing responsibilities of owning a dog. The more time that can be spent with a potential new owner, the better. Hopefully we are making an impression upon the new owner, and it should be one that mirrors the highest ideals of the fancy and encourages responsibility and same commitment to dogs that they so faithfully give to us.

Each of us can make a difference in how dog ownership is viewed and how those that deal with us approach ownership. Responsible, educated owners are owners that will be worthy of the loyalty their dogs give them, owners who deserve tributes.

If you are interested in the “Old Drum” story, it can be found on Wikipedia and several other places on the net.

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