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Doggone It!

 By Liz Holzemer

In his new HBO special, "It's Bad for Ya," George Carlin asks if kids today even know what a stick is and if so, do they play with one anymore.

I wonder the same about dogs. When I was a kid, we had a Great Dane. Amber was a retired show dog. We played fetch with her and washed her in the yard with a garden hose. We took care of our dog the old-fashioned way.

This is no longer the case. Today dogs are preened, primped, pampered and paraded around in purses. Or poked with acupuncture needles, proffered organic snacks and poured pristine bottled water.

One of my girlfriends takes her golden retriever to Doggy Day as she calls it. Some of the MOCs (Mothers of Canines) pack lunches with gourmet treats from their local upscale bakeries. One of them even insists, despite a house full of teenagers to keep her Buddy excited, that her pooch requires more than just human interaction. What I want to know, is there a pre-paid enrollment plan with discounts for future canine siblings? Apparently, an ample backyard and a loving home are no longer enough.

Years ago, Target launched its own canine clothing line. Is that not what fur is for? Rhinestone-studded collars might be de rigueur for the Paris Hilton dogs of the world, but I'll pass. Project Ruffway anyone?

Alas, I forget hotels have cashed in on the canine catering craze as well. The Ritz Carlton in Beaver Creek is pet-friendly and they have their own mascot, Bachelor the lab. They offer a service, Loan-a-Lab

(I kid you not) in which you can hire him out for

hikes if you miss your own dog back home. If you're hankering for your hound that damn much, why not bring man's best friend with you to the pet-friendly hotel you've checked into? Makes sense to me.

As I ponder the sometimes ridiculousness and sublime nature of all this, I'm reminded of that August day nearly nine years ago when my husband and I brought home the first love of our lives—an alpha yellow lab we named Koufax. Before his arrival, I'd already pre-ordered the Cabella's monogrammed bed, name-embossed leather collar and personalized matching food and water bowls. We stocked the garage with tennis balls, multi-sized Kongs and leashes. We were only doing what any first-time parents would do. But there was more. My husband was convinced Koufax would become his hunting companion during the fall and winter months.

So just before Koufax's first birthday, he was whisked off to an elite hunting camp for Navy Seal wannabes. He lived on the Eastern plains for three months. Sounds cruel, but we did have weekend visitation rights. Koufax mastered combat swimming, duck retrieving and pheasant chasing for future hunts. All for the bargain price of roughly two mortgage payments.

Koufax successfully completed the program (the framed dusty certificate in basement proves it!) and I must report that seven years later, he has yet to retrieve his first duck. However, Koufax can retrieve the paper, a tennis ball and yes, a stick.

Doggone it! 





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