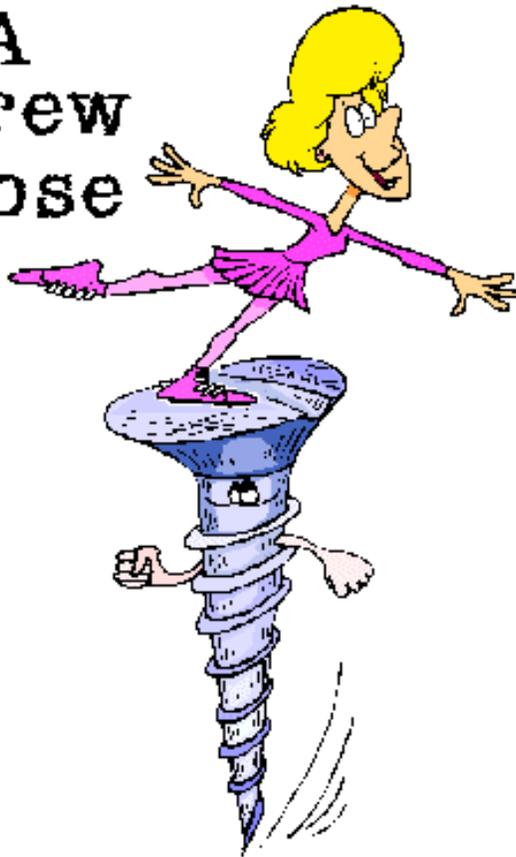


A Screw Loose



by Liz Holzemer



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Doggone It!

I've just read that Americans spend millions, if not more, on their dogs every year. Between the food, grooming and toys, it's no surprise how quickly that adds up. When I was a kid, we had a Great Dane. She was a retired show dog. We played fetch with her and bathed her in the yard with a garden hose. We took care of our dog the old-fashioned way.

This is no longer the case. Days ago, one of my dearest friends, Amber, called to announce that she and her husband had adopted a beagle. Actually, rescued the dog after he had been badly beaten and left for dead in a trash bin behind a strip mall.

I could hear Amber beaming over the phone and commended her for saving a life that a person not

deserving of one, had so easily discarded. Her voice raised an octave or two when she recounted how her and her husband had decided upon a name—their respective alma maters, Berkeley and Bradley were ruled out in the interests of remaining husband and wife. They finally settled on Bailey, named after one of their favorite wineries in Temecula, Calif. They've nicknamed him Speagle as he is a beagle-spaniel mix.

I nodded in agreement until she announced that Bailey had already been registered for obedience training and then the kicker, 15 Saturday sessions with a personal dog trainer named Burrud—yes, pronounced bird. A personal trainer is one thing for building a buffer bod, but a canine coach?! And that's not all. Not only does Burrud offer Puppy Kindergarten with a mandatory puppy housebreaking orientation, he provides Behavior Problem Solving Consultations. Sounds like psycho, er barking babble to me. For only \$500, Bailey will receive an additional seven private one-on-one sessions with Burrud. To top it off to alleviate the guilt Amber and her husband feel while they work 12-hour days, a professional pet sitter will take Bailey out on two scheduled walks a day. But it's all worth it, Amber decries, as the hired-for-fresh-air walker leaves behind a daily incident report, which also includes detailed notations concerning Bailey's bowel movements.

I'd heard enough already.

I have another girlfriend who takes Buddy, her golden retriever, to day care or doggy day as she calls it. Some of the MOCS (Mothers of Canines) pack lunches of gourmet treats from their local upscale bakeries. Did I mention they're packed in dog-themed lunch boxes? Despite a house full of kids, she insists that human interaction isn't enough for Buddy. What I want to know, is there a pre-paid enrollment plan with discounts for future canine siblings? "Buddy, needs daily social interaction with his canine companions," she explains one morning as she drops her kids off at school, then Buddy. Apparently, an ample backyard, a loving home and soy-based snacks are no longer enough.

Target's even launched its own canine and feline 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. There's bottled water, organic food and even pet acupuncture.

*Bad Hair Day

*Mommy
Hullabaloo

*Dirty Laundry

*The Morrison Boys

*Side Dish

*Comments From
The Carpool

*The Foggiest Idea

*Home Away
From Home

*Small Town Soup

*Mommy - Daddy
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*From The Frontline

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*Livin' In My Head

*Sigh, Moan &
Garfbuckle

*Diary Of A Mom

*Don't Get Me Started

*Dad Libs

*Lady Of The House

*Blissfully Numb



Alas, I forget hotels have cashed in on the canine catering craze as well. The Ritz Carlton in Beaver Creek, Colo. 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 on 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.

I've even discovered other hotels offering a one-hour massage for master and pet. I love animals, but I draw the line at communal massages. I can already imagine the raised eyebrows when I announce, *"I'm here to get a massage for me and my pussy."*

As I ponder the sometimes ridiculousness and sublime nature of all this, Amber brings me back to reality. *"Hello, hello, Liz, do I have to remind you how you behaved a few years ago?"*

Yes, she is right. Just five years ago, 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 cans of tennis balls, multi-sized kongs and leashes. We were only doing what any first time parents would do. But it wasn't enough. 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 of Colorado for three months. Sounds cruel, but we did have weekend visitation rights. Koufax mastered combat swimming; retrieving ducks and chasing pheasants for future hunts with my husband. All for the bargain price of roughly two mortgage payments.

Koufax successfully completed the program (framed dusty certificate in basement proves it!) and I'm happy to report that four years later, he has yet to retrieve a duck. However, Koufax retrieves a tennis ball and does know how to shake left-pawed.

Doggone it!

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[*College Daze](#)

[*Midlife Cometh](#)

[*The Imperfect Man](#)

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[*Mommymorphosis](#)

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[*My Brain On PB&J](#)

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Liz Holzemer is the founder of Meningioma Mommas.org , an online support group she founded after surviving a baseball-sized meningioma brain tumor. She is a freelance writer, LizHolzemer.com and is currently looking for a permanent home and cushy advance for her book; I Have a What in My Head?! Liz is a 2004 Woman's Day "Women Who Inspire Us" recipient. She lives in Colorado with her husband and their two miracle children. Liz also maintains her sense of humor on a daily basis and can be reached at lizholzemer@comcast.net if you have a plum writing assignment to offer her.



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