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Quirky Canines

 By Liz Holzemer

We all have our idiosyncrasies, which become more acute as we age. I begin every morning with a cup of Earl Grey tea with two heaping teaspoons of sugar; but when I'm dining out, I'll only drink iced tea with Sugar In The Raw. My desk must be completely clutter-free before I attack a new writing assignment. I sleep on my stomach, but wake up on my back.

I've come to learn that man's best friend is no different. Koufax, my 8-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever, redefines the term, idiosyncratic. Ever the gentleman, he sits patiently by my side until I take my first bite at meal time. Once tines hit teeth, Koufax meanders over to his own feeding station and chows down.

Koufax's quirks aren't limited to his peculiar eating habits. Whenever I pull into the garage, he doesn't bound up to the car with delight, happy to see me. Rather, he makes a beeline straight into the house through his private doggie entrance. Is Koufax subtly reminding me that he is the keeper and protector of our castle?

I've often thought of lending Koufax's canine barometric talents to the Weather Channel because he can sense a storm long before its arrival. The quick onset of panting to the point of hyperventilation is a sure sign.

Then there's the PETA-dog. My husband grew up with Dodger, a Chow-Golden Retriever, who was petrified of leather. He growled at leather couches, anyone sporting leather loafers, bomber jackets, purses.

Dodger obviously had a sixth sense and took pity on animals whose deaths provided for humans' pleasure. And he knew the difference between real and knock offs!

Dodger was also a ladies' man. He'd nuzzle up to them no problem, but growled at anyone possessing the XY chromosome. It didn't matter if Dodger was familiar with the entire block of male neighbors or the pizza delivery guy—he always bared his pearly whites at them. The only two men in his life who he granted growl immunity to were my husband and father-in-law.

My girlfriend Mel's Daschund, Toby, will only consume kibble from a blue bowl. She's tried a plethora of colored bowls to no avail. Toby accepts nothing less than true blue.

However, quirks aren't limited to American purebreds. My Australian girlfriend has a pound-rescued Heinz 57 mix named Beesha who has OCD hang ups about her tennis balls. Beesha insists on skinning each ball and then pulling it apart piece by piece like road kill. She plays fetch until the last dime-sized remnant of rubber is no more before she'll start skinning a new one.

Call them quirks; they work! 





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