

Dogs and Fences

I was sitting around waiting for something inspirational to fall from the sky into my lap.

Well, after wasting a huge amount of time, I was unable to find anything to shower you with. I even tried to think of something nice to say (not likely), and then of course, I had the option of pursuing one of the topics from the introductory column.

We'll, I've got all year for those. So, in keeping with the tradition of the last column, I wanted to go deep, "deep like the minds of Minolta"... (thanks Snoop). Again, I drew a blank. But one thing kept popping into my head, dogs and fences, and before you jump off into that microscopic world that we all tend to engulf ourselves in, it's not about the "Dog Pound."

Sometimes, I find that I don't trust myself completely, and I should. This is a story for all of us who will, one day or the other, be leaving the fairy tale atmosphere of Carolina and returning to the real world.

"Dogs and Fences" was close to genius, I just fought it too hard, but it fought back and won, and pretty much took over the keyboard, so come with us.

Several years ago, I used to breed and sell Great Danes of the Harlequin persuasion, and at one time we had fourteen. Anyway, these are massive, beautiful animals that grow incredibly fast and tall.

People usually are fearful of them purely due to their size. We had a couple of kennels for the dogs and two of them lived in our tiny little house. Now, there are two major misconceptions about these dogs. Number one, that they are aggressive and number two, that they are clumsy. Misconceptions are rampant in our society.

People have pre-conceived ideas about certain colors, places, sizes, styles, ideas, and of course, people. Educate yourself and don't be guilty of this form of ignorance. Even divisional lines are no longer clear as black is attempting to be white and white, believe it or not, is doing the exact same thing. But neither

example is true. The worst damage ever inflicted upon home or children was, that the mattress on my bed had to be replaced. The animals had curled themselves up in the center of the mattress, which in turn, left me with a large sunken area in the center.

So even when we teach them the things not to do, they sometimes

and slept better at night.

Unfortunately, some were lost to the streets. They could have possibly been blue ribbon champions or the mothers and fathers of champions. They could have served as a valued and much loved companion. But they were forever lost to

outstanding litters I had ever witnessed. I had absolutely no reason to be so self righteous as to think that this animal was anything more than what it had defined itself to be.

Like the professors of life, we stand proud of those who succeed and establish themselves in the

must cross: race, sex, age, etc.

The fence of social etiquette is one that spans so high and so far, that instead of spending our entire life fighting it, we should learn to live within its boundaries. There may be a certain adrenaline rush associated with breaching the fence, but the thing to ask yourself is, "is it worth the consequences?"

These boundaries are merely weapons against the agents that are attempting to "take us out;" agents such as AIDS, gangs, drugs, violence, racism, alcoholism, a lack of self-esteem and love and a lack of moral consciousness.

There will never be another dog like that one to me, but you know, that's what made her so great—her individual style. It's hard to believe, but the same thing is true of people.

So here's my tip for the semester—take some time and attempt to find out who you are and then, be yourself. Before I close on this one, let me just say to all you brothers and sisters out there, check out the latest Tri-Star release, Philadelphia, starring Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington. P.S. Take some one you love with you and go and see it.

Peace my brothers and sisters.

No She Didn't With Tonya Crew



insist on doing what they will, such as assuming a position that they knew was forbidden, when no one was home.

I digressed. Back to the ranch. We, needless to say, had not planned on owning fourteen Danes at the same time and did not have a fence with which to limit the movement of the animals. So after finding it impossible to keep order, we erected a fence. It broke my heart to see these gentle giants locked behind "bars."

In my mind, I saw them as children, more specifically as young adults who needed the space to express themselves while they were shifting from "puppydom to doghood".

There were so many reasons why the fence was necessary, but most people thought that the reason for the fence was to protect the neighbors and their property. But understand that from my viewpoint, the important thing was protecting my babies from deadly diseases from other dogs; dog catchers; overindulgence in animal behavior; and that running with the pack mentality.

That "running with the pack" mentality seemed to frighten me the most, because it threatened the ties of authority and responsibility.

At night I would lie in bed and hear the other dogs calling for my babies to join them, and I prayed that I had taught them correctly and that they would not fall victim to the seduction of the pack. I knew that the fence we had constructed would not hold them, if they chose to leave. That fence itself, was the symbolic representation of social order, and in the absence of order, there is chaos.

I think it is pointless to progress with this, though if must be concluded, we got rid of all the dogs

the pack. Some survived and returned, mangled and diseased, soon to die. But of all my babies, there was one I would never, ever forget.

As a baby, Kitty was the runt of the litter and had to be resuscitated at the time of her birth. We watched her more intensely because we truly did not expect her to live. We knew if she made it the first month, her chances of survival were good. She remained small during all of her first year of life.

During this time, she did not socialize much with other puppies (which is unusual), and she never fell victim to her brothers and sisters. Instead, she preoccupied her time entertaining herself. We found her different, one might even say strange.

A little over a year old, Kitty was given to some friends who lived on a farm in a nearby town. One day, my friends asked me to come and see her about a year and a half after she left home. She was huge and beautifully spotted, and had basically taught herself to assist in herding the livestock. I was so proud, and some three years later, she produced one of the most

world, but do we ever take inventory of the ones we discouraged or unfairly discredited due to some primal misconception?

I think about it today, and I say thanks for social and moral boundaries (the fence), and I say thanks for the strength that allowed this puppy to be an individual. It didn't take guts for her to follow someone's lead, but to define herself, to lead herself and to conquer, most certainly did. And when you analyze the situation, here you have a strong animal being hunted by life (this should not be an unfamiliar theme) that seemed one thing and in fact, was something else.

I believed in my heart that that runt knew that there were things in her world more important than running with the "homies or trying to conform to their definition of what a dog's life should be." There are so many boundaries that we

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