

My topic is dogs in our lives, companions, security, rescue, and Man's best friend, the American Kennel Club. I could have taken the topic any number of ways from over breeding, to dog fighting to other pertinent and germane subjects. However, this paper will make an attempt to explain the role dogs have transitioned into from wild animals to worker animals and to family members as they remain man's best friend.

First let me say to the dog lovers in the house ... dogs may not be our wholes lives, but they can make our lives whole. Andy Rooney said "The average dog is a nicer person than the average person."

I have always considered myself a "dog lover." I grew up sickly and allergic to everything, unable to have any pets because I was allergic to animal fur. I spent most of my life in the hospital until around the 4th grade while in the hospital I dreamed and read about dogs and hoped to some day have my own dog. I use to walk around the neighborhood and imagine friend's and neighbor's dogs were mine. So in my mine I owned 15 to 20 different dogs. My favorite barrowed dog was a German Sheppard named Bandit. The summer between my 3rd and 4th grade school year I befriend a stray black Labrador mix puppy. I remember the dog being beautiful, black and very skinny. The dog didn't seem to have a home, so I brought out several bowls of milk before he had his fill. He ran off, but he came back every day. So now I

really did have a dog. Each day he'd come by and I would feed him. I named him Mid-Night. Finally after what seemed like a week my mother picked up on Mid-Night and what I was doing. She then realized that maybe I no longer had an allergy for dogs so she let me keep him. We bought dog food a collar and other dog supplies. I tried to bring him in the house, but we couldn't keep him inside, because as soon as the door opened he'd race to get outside again. Maybe a few days past not more than that and Mid-Night showed signs of being sick. We took him to the veterinarian and to my dismay we found that Mid-Night had distemper and he died shortly thereafter, what seemed like a very painful death. I was crushed, but looking back it was actually a breakthrough. We were now aware that I could have a dog and eventually we got a family dog we named Rex – a collie mix that I grew up with. My dog was my best friend he seemed to always know what I was thinking, when I was happy or sad. The only bad part about Rex was we really never trained him. Cammi Leffers from Pampered Pets Bed and Biscuits "says don't baby your dogs, train them so they understand their role in the household". She went on to say the biggest mistake dog owners can make with their dogs is to treat them like humans. What essentially differentiates mankind from other species in pack societies is that we don't need a specific order, unlike the animal kingdom where individuals are ranked from the leader on

down to the last follower. Everyone has a place. The leaders are the strength of the pack, while the followers need the leader to guide them. Dogs have an instinct to constantly test the being above them and an instinct to know they will always be tested by the being below them. Instinct tells them that if there is not a strong being in charge, their life and the lives of the rest of their pack are at stake. This primal instinct keeps the pack secure and in the case of our 21 century companion dogs it keeps them happy.

As I said we didn't train Rex we treated him like a part of the family, we gave him lots of love so I think he viewed himself as the Alpha male in the household so if he was laying on my bed I'd have to bribe him with something to get him off the bed or off anything he had set up shop on. He felt like it was his bed, his chair his couch and I was getting in his way. But for the most part Rex had an extremely friendly temperament and provided companionship and love to everyone in the house. Rex's relationship was similar to many human relationships that I have known.

I want you to consider how a human-dog relationship is similar and yet not really comparable to a human-human relationship? What distinguishes the two? These questions are important simply because of the shifting demographics of companion dogs in the United States. In the United States there are currently nearly 70 million pet dogs, an

increase of nearly eighteen percent since 1991 (2012U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook). In addition to the rising numbers, owners spent approximately thirty-eight percent more money on their canines in 2011 than they did in 1996 (American Veterinary Medical Association AVMA, 2013). This increase in spending comes with an increase in activities and options available for our canine companions. Dogs, who once lived in the backyard, now have human-like luxuries available to them. There are dog spas, “doggie daycare,” dog parks, play grounds, pet hotels, and high-tech medical procedures. On the home-front, dogs are included in holiday festivities amongst other things. For years, dogs have been thought of as “man’s best friend” because of their loyalty and faithfulness to their companions. The increasing popularity of activities such as canine daycare and puppy schools demonstrates to me that dogs serve an integral function in the American family unit. In some cases, dogs appear to be surrogate children. Before my wife and I had our first child my mother would refer to our two dogs as her grand puppies. Whether a person thinks of a dog as a best friend, a child or a companion, the contemporary bond between humans and canines are unique.

In a historical context of Dogs in Society Rex and I represented the bond and relationship that exists between human life and dog life. There is much debate about the historical role of dogs in human societies. If

dogs provided a service, were they also companions or friends to humans? Were they just furry bodies that spent most of their non-working time outside with the other animals? The historical roles of dogs can help us understand the modern canine role in our society. Are dogs today inherently different from dogs years ago? Have the roles they played fundamentally changed or is there more of a continuum depending on the changing needs of the people?

One thing for sure all I really needed to know about life I learned from my dog Rex. I learned things like never passing up the opportunity to go for a joy ride; I learned when loved ones come home, always run to greet them; I learned run and play for exercise everyday; I learned when someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them very gently and finally I learned when you do leave your yard, make it an adventure! In addition to the latter Rex helped me grow and mature as a person. In fact it has been researched and found that the role of a dog on child development fosters positive psychosocial development in children (Melson, 2003), enhances empathy, self-esteem, cognitive development, and produces greater participation in social and athletic activities. Awha! Maybe that's why I was my middle school's starting middle linebacker. Considering I had spent most of my life in a hospital up until the 4th grade and then I was a skinny little kid that no one thought would develop into a physical football player.

Our history tells us ancient peoples valued the profound connections between humans and animals. In recent years, increasing research evidence confirms that physiological, psychological and social benefits of interactions with animals are still valued in a wide range of settings.

In ancient times and in cultures worldwide, animals have been respected as essential partners in human survival, health, and healing. Many spiritual traditions have honored the relationships of people to animal forms of life, as part of the interconnectedness of the natural world and a link to the spirit world (Serpell, 2006).

Animal companions and guides have assumed powerful roles in cultural beliefs and practices all over the world (Campbell, 1984). Asian cultures, Amerindians, and other indigenous peoples continue to draw symbolic meaning and important teachings from animals.

In Chinese legend, 2,500 years ago the Buddha summoned twelve creatures under the Bodhi tree, taught them about their strengths and weaknesses, and then sent them out into the world to guide people in their personal and relational growth. The Chinese believe that each of us is born with essential characteristics and creative forces of the animal associated with the month and year of our birth. The “Fu

Dog," a mystical part-lion, part-canine creature, is still prominent in stories, sculpture, and imagery, as a protector of the home and small children.

Over time the domestication and socialization of animals was an interactive process of mutual cooperation.

Archeological evidence reveals that over 14,000 years ago the domestication and socialization of animals was based on a shared need for shelter, food, and protection for man and dog.

History reveals that domestic wolves, ancestors of the dog, lived in settlements with humans. Valued for their intelligence, keen senses, and loyalty, early dogs were respected as guardians, guides, and equal partners in hunting and fishing. The new school thought about the wolf ancestor of the dog is that the dog is more likely related to a now extinct wolf than the wolves we see in the wild today. There has been very limited success domesticating a wolf from the wild even when they are raised by humans from puppies. About 9,000 years ago, both dogs and cats assumed crucial roles in developing agricultural communities. Dogs assisted in herding and farming, while cats eliminated rodents that brought disease and threatened grain harvests. Although treated as subservient to their human masters, both became increasingly valued as companions. Dereke Bruce said "In order to keep a true perspective of one's importance, everyone should have a dog that will

worship him and a cat that will ignore him."

Both dogs and cats were treated with great respect in ancient Egypt.

Cats were honored and even worshipped as god like. Dogs were

considered such loyal companions during life that they were revered as

guides in the afterlife. For those of you that don't like cats I don't I

think because I am still allergic to their fur I want you to know the "Cat's

Motto: No matter what you've done wrong, always try to make it look

like the dog did it." -- Unknown

Still travelling through history we find during the early Greek and Roman

empires, dogs were commonly kept as hunters, herders, and guardians,

but were also treated as loyal, beloved pets (Coren, 2002). In early

Greek literature, Homer wrote about a dog's loyalty and recognition in

the Odyssey. When Odysseus arrived home after an absence of many

years, disguised as a beggar, the only one to recognize him was his aged

dog, Argus.

Today are dogs companions or workers? Some historians and scholars

argue that the compassionate relationship between humans and pets

evolved with our modern society. One could argue that, with

industrialization, human residences has become more urbanized and

more animals were brought into people's lives as "pets" to ease the

isolation and loneliness of city-life as well as to bring aspects of rural

life into cities. The bravery expected from dogs in ancient cultures is

today replaced by affection, as an antidote to the loneliness inherent in some cases to urban life”. Today dogs serve as legit members of the family for the people they live with. This trend is apparent in the large number of pets found in family portraits.

While it appears that some dogs “lived the good life” two hundred or more years ago, the life of a dog has actually improved over time. City dwellers, then and now, have loved their pets, but our notions of the good life with our dog companions have changed dramatically....

Companion animals eat different foods, sleep in different places, see different doctors and even enjoy some very different public rights— than they did 200 years ago. Today, this relationship transcends class barriers, and dogs are companions to people from all levels of society. Even homeless people are frequently found caring for dogs as companions. The increasingly compassionate dimension of human and animal relations may have paralleled the rise of urbanism. In cities, dogs for the most part are no longer needed to herd sheep and guard livestock. Yet a modern example of the multidimensional relationship between humans and animals can be found in assistance dogs.

Assistance animals are “working” animals used for the rehabilitation of prisoners, patients in nursing homes, they are agents of justice for the police force and army as well as lifesaving assistants for the blind, epileptic, or other physically challenged individuals. Assistance dogs

clearly foster both a working and personal relationship with their caretaker, providing both emotional and physical support. Previous research has indicated that there is an intense emotional bond between humans and their assistance dogs.

Do dogs either have to serve a utilitarian function *or* be a companion in our modern society, or could there be several dimensions to the relationship? Assistance dogs are often a clear example that dogs *can* play many roles for their human companion. I would argue that even the companion dog serves a utilitarian function, just one that might be more emotional than physical. According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, the word utility means something that is “kept to provide a useful product or service (www.m-w.com). Many people seem to think that in order for something to have a working or utilitarian function that it must produce some sort of economic or physical result. If that is the case, then most “pets” would no longer serve such a function. Nevertheless, if we use an alternate definition where utility means “something useful” (www.m-w.com) then the modern dog could serve many utilitarian functions. Companionship, health benefits (both physical and mental), as well as the assignment of status and prestige all are examples of functions that companion animals serve in our contemporary society. One can even argue that historically animals were utilized for some of these same functions. In

our past while it may have seemed frivolous for royalty or the elite in society to “own” domesticated animals, these pets provided their caretakers with status, making it clear to others that they had wealth and power not unlike many dog owners of today who own very expensive breeds of dogs.

The dog human connection in a traditional sense has changed, the “usefulness” of dogs may have waned over time, but according to the caretakers whom I interviewed for this paper their dogs clearly serve a purpose in each of their lives. Repeatedly, interviewees spoke of a mutually beneficial relationship between themselves and their canines. Clearly, both humans and canines serve important roles in each other’s lives. This reciprocity extends further than just the human providing the dog with the essentials to survive and the dog providing the human with companionship. The caretakers I interviewed also expressed strong ideas regarding ownership versus guardianship of their dogs. Additionally, they described a clear sense that a form of mutual understanding existed between them and their dogs.

The term “guardian” denotes a positive relationship and mutually beneficial bond between two living beings, where constant care, attention, and affection are necessary for a thriving relationship. It instills respect for and appreciation of our dogs. Pets may no longer be the proper designation for dogs who reside with humans and a better

name may be “companion animal”. A companion dog can be a term that distinguishes a working or service dog from a household family dog.

The word “companion” is used because it indicates more of a friendship/familial relationship between the dog and his/her human counterpart. The changing role of the dog has also created new terms for a person providing care for a canine. Historically people have been referred to as the “owner” or even “master” of a dog. Ownership implies that an animal is “private property” and, as with other forms of property may be disposed of however an “owner” sees fit. While a dog may be “owned” privately by one person, a dog’s wellbeing is often of public concern, making a person more a “guardian” or “custodian” of the animal. If the dog, just like a child, is not being treated well, officials can assume guardianship and seize the “property” for the dog’s own benefit. Some cities, such as San Francisco California and Boulder, Colorado have recently gone as far as to change the wording of their animal ordinances from “owner” to “guardian”.

A word does make a difference in what is considered family.

“Guardian” is a newly created legal designations that is beginning to be used to replace the term “owner” but many people use more intimate terms to describe their relationship with their canine. Many people without human children, are quick to describe their dogs as their

children when asked about the relationship. Me... I was one of those people too. People talk about and interact with their dogs in emotional and relational ways that parallel human-human relationships.

Are dogs members of our family?

Today, more than years past, people appear to look to dogs for emotional comfort and understanding, rather than more pragmatic services. This shift signifies the belief that dogs can be fully functioning social companions. This arguably requires a different kind of understanding and communication, more than just mere training and commands. If the person is not able to clearly interpret the dog's actions and does not believe that the dog has a solid understanding of him/hers, then a strong two-way relationship cannot exist. Jessica Henry Executive Director of the SPCA said she has a dog and/or cat for each and everyone of you to adopt. She also said "Dogs are man's best friend and that many people find emotional fulfillment in their relationships with their dogs". This suggests that dog guardians have been able to achieve a special type of communication and understanding between their dog companion and themselves. To some, especially those who have never had a dog as a companion, this relationship may seem to be an illusion. Feelings and communication always entail interpretation of ambiguous expression by the different parties involved. Who can say that one person's interpretation is more

correct than another's? Even with the ambiguities, the importance of emotional connections, whether between humans or between humans and dogs, are not lessened. Whether referred to as a child, best friend, or puppy, people clearly illustrate that dogs are prime participants in human social life. With this being the case, those who hope to understand 21 century life with our dogs cannot afford to ignore the canine companion's changing and important contributions to modern society. Yes dogs are now more than man's best friend they are a part of the family.

I am a dog lover and as that I want read A Dog's Plea... author unknown

Treat me kindly, my beloved friend for no heart in all this world is more grateful for kindness than the loving heart of me.

Do not break my spirit with a stick for though I should lick your hand between blows, your patience and understanding will more quickly teach me the things you would have me know.

Speak to me often, for your voice is the world's sweetest music, as you must know by the fierce wagging of my tail, when your footsteps fall upon my waiting ear.

Please take me inside when it is cold and wet for I am a domesticated animal, no longer accustomed to bitter elements.

I ask no greater glory than to have the privilege of sitting at your feet.
Keep my pan filled with water for I cannot tell you when I suffer thirst.
Feed me clean food that I may stay well, to romp and play and do your bidding, to walk by your side, and stand ready, willing and able to protect you with my life, should your life be in danger.

And my friend, when I am old and no longer enjoy good health and sight, do not make heroic efforts to keep me going, I am not having fun. Please see that my trusting life is taken gently.

I shall leave this earth knowing with the last breath I draw that my fate was always safest in your hands.

From the wild to worker to pet, dogs have gradually transitioned into our families.

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The American Kennel Club

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Interviewees

Jessica Henry

Sandra Vas

Jeff Gladney

Cammi Leffers

Tamesha Fikes

Liz Simon

Tommy Davis

Paula McGee

Mike Dolan

John Foster

Gab Lopes

Cindy Adams

David Seiferd

Tyrone Hamock