

## Questions & Answers

1. How did you pick the breed of each dog? Does each breed seem to have its own personality?

Originally, all the dogs were to be a mixture of all sorts of breeds. It never occurred to me that each had a specific lineage. Then, a very strange thing happened. Each dog selected its own breed. It was never planned.

As the dog personalities evolved, it turned out that collectively they represent the human spirit. One represents the sweet part of human nature; another characterizes the grief that all humans experience. One dog is a leader. His friend provides balance to the spearhead of testing the rules. There is a Dumpster Dog who represents love and submissiveness and one who is the consoler for those who need help. Another accepts who he is and symbolizes acceptance for those who don't fit in.

2. What are the benefits to children growing up with animals?

Our furry, feathered and scaled pals teach children how to be kind, giving and caring. I have rarely seen a big sister or a big brother be as attenuative and loving to their siblings as are our four and two legged pals who are not human.

Pets teach children responsibility, sharing, cuddling, and companionship. What a gift!

3. What makes the love of animals so special, and how does it differ from humans?

If we study our pets, be they horses, lizards, dogs, cats or birds, or any other species, these creatures aren't bogged down with worry, guilt, regret, or fear. They live in the present. They learn to cope. When things get too intense, they leave the scene or disengage. Creatures don't wallow with us in our worries. They comfort us. They are great healers. They are so wise.

On the other hand, I have noticed that many humans find it very difficult to love unconditionally like our pets do. It seems like overcoming judgments, resentments, biases, and fear of others who may be different than we are is one of humanity's greatest tribulations. It would be wonderful if we humans could be more like those critters we take in to love.

4. What can humans benefit from learning from their pets?

A one-word response would be "EVERYTHING!" If we study our pets, we make the most amazing discoveries. When I was a little girl, I had a Guinea Pig named "Who Dat" and her daughter named "What Not." I used to sit by their cage studying their interactions. They would eat together. There was no argument about portions. They shared until their meal was gone. Mama took care of her daughter and they loved each other. I used to let them out and follow

them around my bedroom. Who Dat and What Not explored together and they watched out for each other. They taught me responsibility because I was in charge of cage cleaning and feeding. I learned how to go to the back of the grocery store and ask for leftover lettuce and carrots. I kept an eye on their water. I became a better human being because I had some furry pets who allowed me to pet and hug them. I learned to love how they communicated with me by squeaking.

Who Dat and What Not were remarkable teachers. They lived their lives in perfect guinea pig rhythm. They didn't gossip, they were kind to each other, and they taught me how to give unconditional love. When they peed on the floor, I loved them anyway.

#### 5. What inspires you about the Dumpster Dogs' story?

This is a story about how a group of abandoned dogs find love and how they then pay it back to those critters who are less fortunate than they are. I am so inspired by the notion that we pass on to others the love we are given. I am even more inspired by Sophie. As a puppy, she is abused but finds a way to give the love she never experienced as a baby to other dogs who are in need. The Dumpster Dogs helped me know that no matter our situation, we have love to give.

#### 6. How can humans be better advocates for animals?

Foster critters. Donate time and money to ARRF and the SPCA. Volunteer to give a dog or cat a bath or take them for a walk. Talk to them. Bring a brush with you. Furry friends just love to be brushed. Give comfort and kindness for a creature who is in great need. In return, you will most likely feel really good about yourself.

With every interview I do for the You Tube Dumpster Dog Channel, I ask each dog's guardian, "What have you learned from your dog?" A popular response is, "I am so thankful for all the love my dog gives me. S/he has taught me to be kinder and more loving to others." If you don't have a dog to study, adopt the Dumpster Dogs. They are great examples of "dog love." Then, share what you have learned with your pals. Everybody likes to talk about their dogs!

#### 7. Tell us about how your pets are caring for you while you write this series. Did any of your pets inspire the characters?

I am the privileged human of two Ragamuffin cats, Biscuit and Ted E. Bear. Because I am so busy, I decided that a dog was not in my immediate future – it wouldn't be fair to the dog. However, there is not a day that goes by that I don't long for Mandy, my Golden Retriever who died 10 years ago. She was an amazing, wonderful teacher of love and devoted friendship.

When I am writing, Ted E. Bear comes into my office and sits on a chair next to mine, purrs, and then takes a peaceful nap. His brother takes a place on a bench located on the other side of my office. Stereo purrs. When I am stuck on a story line, I take a break and pet one of them and

then the other. I study their peaceful, trusting and content demeanor. That brief break and the soothing that their lovely fur has usually delivers the perfect solution.

The characters in the Dumpster Dog series were inspired by my studying any dog who crosses my path. They are a composite of Mandy, my other past canine, Daisy, and those furry friends who have been generous enough to allow a stranger to give them a pet.

8. How is Dumpster Dogs relevant to what is going on in the world today?

This is a complex question since there is such unrest in the world. I think if all of us could embrace each other like our pets embrace us, the world would be a fantastic place. None of the dogs are ever in a power struggle for attention, safety or food once they find the comfort and security provided by Emily. There is great equanimity in the Dumpster Dog Club. Perhaps the Dumpster Dog series can provide a template for how we humans could be more kind and loving to each other.

9. Can you give us a sneak peak of what the Dumpster Dogs are up to next?

The next book is titled *Dumpster Dogs: The Rescue and Delivery Mission*. It is full of adventure. The dogs decide to investigate if any other critters are using their "Dumpster City" for safety. What they find is a discovery that leads them to think about what happens to pets that run away due to fear and those who are abandoned. The rescue leads to Officer Washington going to Court and being confronted by Orthella for his arrogance and bad judgment. The dogs have some deep conversations about how they see humans. You'll have to wait to see what is rescued and how it is delivered.

10. What is the most important takeaway you'd like your audience to remember after reading the Dumpster Dogs?

Dogs are such special teachers about how humans could be more loving and kinder to each other. They are not naturally mean. They don't gossip. They don't post mean things on social media. They don't tease or put down any of their species. Dogs are the best friends humans could ever have. If we all considered how we could be more canine-like to our relatives and friends, the world would be a happier place.