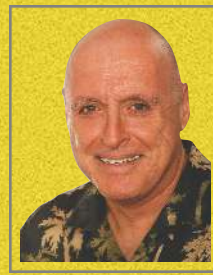


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1061 Dogs and People – Tempering Expectations

Certain dog breeds yield certain results, we all know that, right? As well, certain types of people can be counted on to perform in an expected fashion. What if I told you both of those statements ain't necessarily so? I'm Jerry Roberts, and we'll get into this next, on The Extra Point.

I've raised a number of dogs in my time, and two in particular stand out. Both were of the German Shepherd category, both came from a lineage in Australia, and both had that regal look and posture that shepherds are known for.

I got them at about the same time in their development, between 8-10 weeks after birth. One was from a private breeder in Guam, and the other from a pet store owned by a breeder with years of experience.

Dog lovers have long assumed that a dog's breed shapes its temperament. Now, a major study from the University of Massachusetts that compared the behavior and ancestry of more than 18,000 dogs, found that ancestry does affect behavior, but breed has much less to do with a dog's personality than we have believed.

Study co-author Elinor Karlsson said adopting a dog based on its breed means you're getting one that looks a certain way, but behavior is more the "luck of the draw."

This was my experience with Rusty, the first shepherd; and Mack, the second. Rusty was 90 lbs. of brilliance and grace, and he reacted to non-verbal commands. Mack was unusually large, maybe 110 lbs., and he did not possess the same qualities. There was nothing brilliant nor graceful about him. I trained him the exact same way I trained Rusty, but Mack didn't take to it.

The breeder said to stay with it and Mack would come around. He never came around. At the

suggestion of someone else, I focused on a few basic commands for Mack and he did all right with them. We'd end the sessions by playing a few games, and I discovered that Mack was better at the games than Rusty had been. I think we both looked forward to those games.

The relationship between me and Mack got better, but only because I recognized his best qualities, accepted them, and adjusted my expectations.

This parallels a story I read about a winery. The leader was the grandson of the founder, had two sons of his own, two years apart. He would eventually hand the directorship of the company off to one of them. He figured it would be the youngest, Joe.

Joe played baseball, was analytical, and had the desire to be an investment banker. John played football, was mechanically inclined, and took over all technical aspects of making wine.

Same father, same mother, the two had grown up in the same circumstances, and had pretty much the same childhood. Yet, they were totally different.

When it came for the father to step aside, John took over as the CEO of the company. It took three months for him to realize that he hated everything about the business, except the actual wine production.

He told his father he didn't want the job, and to hire a real manager. The old man declined, and instead hired a consultant and a coach for him. He told John that he expected him to carry on in the tradition of the family, to run the winery.

(Con't.)

John was ready to quit. Both the consultant and the coach advised the father that he wasn't the answer to lead the business.

The father had held fast to the idea that he would be letting down the legacy of his grandfather and father if one of his sons did not replace him as CEO. It was a bitter pill for him to swallow.

The story ended well. Joe, the investment banker, found a manager who loved wine and wanted to get his family out of the city, and he became the new CEO. John went back to the job of making the product, the company was profitable, and the dad was able to accept that the legacy was still intact with John, even if he wasn't the CEO.

As business owners and leaders, sometimes we're married to a strict idea of how we think something should go, of who should do what, of the way things ought to be.

Whether we're talking about dogs or people, our ability to accept a reality that isn't what we had planned for, then adapt to it, can be a key factor in our success.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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