

The Watchorn

June 2009

Holiday Harbor/Cabrillo Marina

I had this dog growing up, a papered Springer Spaniel named Higgins that had the most beautiful brown and white markings you've ever seen. Unfortunately, he was one of those breeds that had been so inbred over the years that it seemed he came with a severe case of ADHD and an attitude problem. We'd take him pheasant hunting, hoping that by allowing him to fulfill his destiny as a true hunting dog he would burn off some of the excessive energy that drove my family and I crazy nearly every day, and perhaps maybe even give a little purpose to his boring life. It never worked. We'd let him out of the car, and like a bolt of lightning he'd be a hundred yards ahead of us, flushing up every bird in the field before we could put our boots on. It ruined our hunts, and rather than running Higgins into an exhausted stupor, the days exercise would only put him in a grumpy mood that caused him to lash out aggressively.

Then one day, when my father and I were having a round of catch in the back yard, I overthrew the ball and watched as it went sailing high over my father's head. It was a hot day, the temperatures were well into the triple digits, and my father was too worn out to get the ball himself. Instead he turned to my dog, waking him up from his sleep on the porch under the ancient maple tree. "Higgins, fetch!" He yelled, an order that invoked no response from the panting dog whatsoever. My father looked over his shoulder, mentally calculating what would cost him less energy; invigorating my dog to retrieve the ball, or walking the fifty feet to get it himself. He chose the former, but rather than repeating to Higgins a command he had not been trained to respond to, he said "Higgins, get the bird!"

Instantly Higgins jumped to his feet, scanning the back yard for the rustle of a pheasant in the grass. Disappointment filled his face, there was no bird. When he saw my father pointing at the baseball he reluctantly trotted after it, placing it at my feet upon his return. But instead of lying down again, Higgins stood at my feet and waited for another bad throw. His life changed forever that day, and I can't remember a single moment from then on that he did not have a baseball or tennis ball hanging from his drooling mouth, eager to place it at the feet of anyone that caught his eye. Forget hunting, baseball was his life from then on. In the end, we helped to give him purpose.

The reason I'm telling you this story isn't because I wish to encourage everyone to teach their dog to fetch. Quite the contrary actually, Higgins drove us crazy with that stupid ball. The point I'm trying to make is that although we have run a certain course in our lives, perhaps because of our careers, the needs of our families, or simple familiarity, that course doesn't have to define us as individuals. Higgins was born and bred to be a pheasant hunter, and yet he was the worst bird dog I've ever seen. Instead, he found something that made him happy and he made the most of it. It made his life more fulfilling, and because he was happy, it helped to ease some of the strain in the lives around him. We too can change, and when the world sometimes changes around us, we can evolve with it. Don't look at forks in the road as complications, but rather as opportunities to explore the same world from different viewpoints. Do what makes you happy, whether that is going for a nice sail on a warm night, reading a good book, or learning a new language. Find your purpose and never let go.

D.H. Jr.

Real News

- Once again Southern California is experiencing draught conditions and we ask that everyone using marina water please limit their water consumption. Use nozzles on your hoses so no water can run wastefully into the ocean, notify marina staff if your faucet leaks, and be careful when you wash your boats. Just a little thought can go a long way to preserving life's most precious resource.
- Along with this newsletter you have received a notice put out by the U.S. Coast Guard. It reinforces the regulations regarding right of way and how to safely navigate the channel. While these regulations have always been in effect, the Coast Guard is now planning on enforcing these regulations heavily, and many have already felt the effect of these changes. In the future, many people will receive heavy fines for breaking said regulations, and anyone who crosses a pilot operating area should pay extra attention to their surroundings. Remember that if a freighter has given you five horn blasts, you've already broken the law.