

CANINE CONVERSATIONS

IN THE FIRST INSTALLMENT OF A REGULAR FEATURE ON OUR FOUR LEGGED FRIENDS, ROBERT CABRAL, OWNER OF BLACK BELT DOG TRAINING AND FOUNDER OF BOUND ANGELS SITS DOWN WITH DR. LISA OF MALIBU COAST ANIMAL HOSPITAL FOR AN INTERESTING INTERVIEW ABOUT CANINES, THEIR CARE AND THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE.

“I’ve known Dr Lisa, Dr Dean, Dr Dana and the staff at Malibu Coast Animal Hospital for years. They are not only my vets, they are my friends. Since Malibu is such a small and personable town, this is no surprise and something I am very proud of. These vets are not only top notch they are caring human beings, I’m proud to be a part of this community and was flattered to have Dr Lisa interview me for The Local. She knows my work and has supported my work as well as Bound Angels for years.”

Q: Can you tell me what led to your passion for dogs?

A: You know, it’s funny, I was raised with dogs when I was a little boy, we had a dog when I was small, like infant small, and then when my parents split up and mom moved to Germany we didn’t have a dog for a hile, but the downstairs neighbors had a Dachshund, so I played with him. Then, when we came back to the United States we had two dogs, but I never really connected as much with them as I did with my first dog as an adult, Silly, you know, my Shar Pei rescue. He really just changed everything in my life, when I first got him I was thinking this is going to be a pain in the ass, I don’t want to do this, I’ve got to be around with this dog all the time; how am I going to get rid of him when I want a girlfriend to come over or when I want to travel or whatever. But then, as soon as he was in my life, I was like, I don’t want to travel I don’t want a girlfriend around, I don’t want to be anywhere but with him. So from there on in I just was in love with dogs, I just couldn’t do enough and actually then, later on, I looked at him and started transferring that compassion onto all animals. I became a vegetarian, I started Bound Angels and it all went from there.

Q: So that became because of your relationship with Silly?

A: With Silly, yeah. He was the catalyst that completely changed my entire life as well as the lives of the animals I would touch from there on.

Q: I remember when you first got Silly too.

A: I know, I know. You stitched him up a couple times.



Robert Cabral with Dr. Lisa and Dr. Dean at Malibu Coast Animal Hospital

Q: Yeah, I did. Do you have then... Knowing Silly was a Shar Pei, and Goofy is a shepherd, do you have a favorite breed of dog?

A: You know it’s funny I really like shelter mutts, because they’re so unique, they’re so different, they’re such perfect individuals, perfect personality; that would probably be my favorite dog. But, since I don’t have a “pet dog” per se, my dog is a working dog, therefore I look towards the Belgian Malinois which is my favorite dog because of the training, work ability, temperament, the correct control of the dog. That’s why I have a Malinois, and you know I like German Shepherds too, but as far as a favorite dog, no I think all dogs, as far as companions, I think they’re all amazing. Especially those little mutts I see in the shelter; they are so cute. You have no idea what they are.

Q: So I kind of remember, I have thoughts about this but, I’m going to hear what you have to say. How did you start training dogs? and why?

A: Well there’s one person responsible for that, that’s you.

Q: That’s what I thought, just making sure we’re on the same page.

A: Yeah, well, it started, you know when I trained Silly, and because I taught Karate for twenty years, I thought, well, I’ve got to train my dog. And so, I started looking up, how do you train a dog? I looked up all the methods, Bill Koehler methods and all these different things, and I thought why don’t I just refer back to what I was good at, which was teaching karate and understanding the concept, the zen aspect of it and I just tried it with Silly, and I worked. Then I went into the shelter to save more dogs because of my love for Silly and all those dogs I was pulling out, I was bringing to you, to examine them, to health check them and get them ready to go into good homes, and then you said to me, “Why don’t you try training dogs?” and I said “Because I never thought of it.” Then, you sent me a couple clients and from there it just snowballed. I never advertised, I never marketed really.

Q: So, then that also brings up a good point. Can you save all dogs? I mean, I have opinions on this too.

A: Yes, and no. The right person, somebody like me, or a really qualified handler or trainer, can handle just about any dog. Because we know what we’re doing, and we know the limits of the dog as well as ourselves; what to push and what not to push. But then, there’s not enough qualified people and homes to save all the dogs that need to be saved. So we have to make a really difficult decision, and that is that certain dogs need to be killed, because they are a danger to society, they’re a danger to other dogs and people. The thing is too, that I’ve learned in medicine, as well, is that there are so many people who have psychoses and mental problems, mental illnesses; dogs do too. People don’t understand that. So, I feel like when we do this a lot of times, you’re actually freeing them from a tortured life that they’re living. That’s why you tell people who are having this horrible decision, I understand this decision you’re going through, but I really think this is a tortured dog who needs to be released, by gently being let go of with euthanization. I mean, you’ve got to make the right decision. There’s been dogs in the shelters I’ve seen where I’ve said you need to put that dog down. But it’s a decision that shouldn’t be made lightly. I never take it lightly, but it is the 80-20 rule. If you can save 80% of the dogs by getting rid of 20%, why would we try to save 20% and kill the 80. Those dogs need so much more attention, so much more work and sadly we can’t do it now.

Q: That’s the thing, you put that dog, a potentially dangerous dog, in the wrong hands, someone’s going to get hurt.

A: Or killed. And a lot of those dogs, you know, the big dogs, the Mastiffs, the Boerboel, these dogs are so dangerous when they’re dangerous. I mean, it’s one thing to have a dangerous chihuahua, it’s another one to have a dangerous Black Russian Terrier.

Q: Right, and that’s why people never hear about chihuahuas gone wild. And I say, that’s because the biting damage of chihuahua is gonna do versus an American Bulldog, or, you know, your kind of Corsos or something. That’s why you don’t hear about these Chihuahua attacks, even though they bite more.

A: Much more. And the reason for that too is, and you understand this, is the way we’ve mutated the dog from the wolf, over the last hundred thousand years, whatever it is; it has only been in the last few thousand years that we’ve created these small breeds and made them smaller and smaller and then there’s inherently more and more problems. The dogs that often have the least behavioral type problems and health problems are the ones that are closest, still, genetically to the wolf.

Q: Correct. We’ve turned them into these designer dogs and we’ve ruined them genetically, we really have.

A: Now we’ve got designer problems.

Q: Exactly, and you kind of mentioned the shelter and the work you do. You know, I’ve been a big supporter of you and everything Bound Angels, can you tell me about Bound Angels, which is just such a beautiful charity that you have started.



A: Yeah, it's very different from most charities, and I'm glad you said charity and not rescue, because everyone says 'you run a rescue,' it's not a rescue. It's an animal rights organization, which focuses on the voice of the dogs in shelters and out. As you know, I support all organizations that help animals, whether it's vegetarian diet or humane treatment of animals or your big cause with dogs in China. Bound Angels is really designed to give a voice to the animals and to help shelters save more lives. So I take my knowledge and the ability I have in training dogs, and give that to the shelters. We do training seminars, we do playgroups, we do behavior assessments and teach them how to market dogs through facebook on youtube and we distribute my books; Desperate Dogs Determined Measures and Selling Used Dogs, and our educational pamphlets. All these tools in the right hands, will get you these things: one, it will increase adoption; two, it will decrease euthanasia, three it will increase the quality of life while the dogs are living in the shelter, and on a flipside to these it will reduce the recidivism rate of the dogs going back into the shelter, which is one of the biggest problems for shelters.

Q: Yeah, we live in such a society where we throw away pets.

A: Disposable, you know, we just put down Baby on Sunday, and I just stopped crying this morning. If I think about her I still cry, and she was a 3-legged, fourteen year old dog.

Q: I know, I was involved in that whole amputation from day one.

A: I know! So for me to carry her out every time she had to pee, and pick her up, and move her and care for her and then she would try to bite because of her fears, I mean, I have a scar right here from her and yet loved her immensely.

Q: She was always good with me for some reason, I don't know why.

A: She hated men.

Q: Oh it's a woman thing, Okay.

A: But, you know, to me I loved her and for many she would have been a throwaway dog. If she was at the Agoura shelter or any shelter, they would have put her down, and probably rightfully so. Cindy saved her, you know, and I fell in love with this dog. I would never have let her go.

Q: I know, she really was a happy dog, too. So, since you've been so imminent and it works so well with the shelters, and more and more all the time, that you're doing. What do you think are some of the biggest issues facing the pets in the shelters?

A: Misunderstanding, and I think a lot of rescues try to lead with their heart and not their heads. So, you have a very emotional component that's involved that's killing the logistical solution. People try to save the twelve year old, 3-legged, blind, diabetic dog with mange, that has a hernia, and it's going to take so much effort, so many resources, so much funding, to save that one dog, that in the meantime eight to ten dogs will slip through the cracks and be killed, and they're perfectly adoptable, perfectly saveable, and unless we start looking at that solution, and saying, hey these are the dogs that we can help, these are the dogs that we're going to need to save, we're going to keep killing hundreds of thousands of very adoptable dogs every year. In light of that, I tell shelters that, yeah, there are certain dogs that we're not going to be able to save, so if we had a really beautiful end of life type program and let people give them a dignified ending it would be so perfect.

Q: Is there controversy with your methods?

A: I think there is always controversy when someone thinks different or rocks the boat, and I never have been one to hide from controversy. I have never been one to say I don't do something or I don't give dogs corrections. I do what I do to save dogs and to help dogs, not necessarily to impress people. I do believe that a pet dog can be handled differently from a shelter dog who is at imminent risk of death. There is a lot that can be done, and a lot of time and money can be invested. When I work with dogs, in shelters, I only have a few minutes, and they're going to decide if they kill the dog because the dog is having problems. "Can you show us that there is hope for this dog?" I will do anything to show if that dog can be saved, and sometimes those techniques might be controversial, sometimes they might be questionable to some people, but 100 percent I can say that they save lives and they are the only hope that the dog has. The issue people will have is they say 'wow, this could all be done with positive-only training,' but that's not true, they are always there to say that after the fact, but no one has ever, EVER worked with me at a shelter who stepped in and said, 'here I can stop that biting dog with a clicker and a treat'. They only say it after to criticize me, keyboard cowboys, they really piss me off. Positive only training is very very good, I use it all the time in the right place. Goofy is trained 99 percent positive-only. There's a tug. There's a treat. There's a toy. There's an engagement. But I raised him from a nine week old puppy. So he does everything from protection sports to obedience to everything else, and competitively. He's received corrections too, I don't believe all positive is the only way, balance is the way grasshopper! So if you're looking at pure aggression that has never been channeled, never been managed, and you don't have a relationship with the dog, and you only have this limited amount of time, your goal is to shut that behavior down, and to see if it can be shut down and avoid getting your arm chewed off. Now these corrections don't not involve hitting, kicking, punching, or yelling at dogs. It involves specific techniques that will block a negative behavior and allow a dog to move towards a positive behavior, and when I use them at shelters I am very open about it. I think that they should be used. I think they should be part of the repertoire of any qualified trainer who understands a balanced method of training and they help save lives.

Robert Cabral, stumbled into dog training through his rescue work with some very "troubled dogs." At the advice of his veterinarian he began taking on private dog training clients.

It is immediately evident that Robert loves dogs, but most importantly, he understands them. In fact, when he's not training dogs, he spends most of his time saving them through his work with Bound Angels.

Robert's approach to training is focused on understanding the dog and developing a relationship and training regime from there. His expertise includes every aspect of dog training including rehabilitating aggressive dogs, working with obedience dogs, protection dogs and companion dogs.

Unlike conventional pet-dog trainers Robert's knowledge of most every breed, temperament and behavioral challenge gives him a broader understanding of what may be troubling your dog. He has handled thousands of dogs including dogs that owners, trainers and behaviorists gave up on. In particular the dogs doomed at local and national animal shelters. Robert continuously teaches, lectures and writes on various aspects of canine behavior.

Robert is very active in rescue and donates much of his time and resources to building a better world for animals. Through his work with Bound Angels he educates shelters, humane societies, SPCAs and rescues nationwide on canine behavior, proper temperament evaluations and dog training as well as marketing dogs for adoptions.
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