

WIT'S END

BY DAVE BARRY

## All Bark, No Bright

**W**ANT TO TALK ABOUT THE HIDDEN lives of my dogs.

Until recently, I wasn't aware that my dogs had hidden lives. There were many times, such as when they'd take turns repeatedly eating a deceased lizard and throwing it back up, when I wasn't even sure they had BRAINS.

Then I got *The Hidden Life of Dogs*, the best-selling book by Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, who has some astounding insights into dog behavior. For example, in an effort to find out what dogs do when they're on their own, she spent months following a husky named Misha as he roamed all over Cambridge, Mass. What Thomas discovered was that Misha, who at first appeared to be simply trotting around aimlessly, was in fact earning a degree from Harvard Business School.

No, I am joshing. Harvard does not accept huskies unless their parents are extremely wealthy. What Thomas discovered, after much observation, was that Misha spent his time—and here I will attempt to summarize two full chapters of *The Hidden Life of Dogs*—sniffing other dogs and peeing a lot.

This might not strike you dog owners as all that deep of an insight. But trust me, it seems like one when you're reading the book. Because where you might see just a plain old dog engaging in non-rocket-scientist behavior, Thomas sees a highly sophisticated organism responding to elaborate sociobiological stimuli and performing complex problem-solving tasks. It's not her fault that the solution to the problem is usually to pee on it.

Anyway, reading this book got me to thinking about my own dogs. Did they have a hidden life? If so, could I discover it, and—more important—write a best-selling book?

To find out, I removed my dogs from the confined, controlled environment of our house and put them outside, where they were free to reveal their hidden

lives. I observed them closely for the better part of a day, and thus I am able to reveal here, for the first time anywhere, that what dogs do, when they are able to make their own decisions in accordance with their unfettered natural instincts, is: try to get back inside the house. They spent most of the day pressing sad moony faces against the glass patio door, taking only occasional breaks to see if it was a good idea to eat worms. (Answer: no.)

Of course the dogs have important and complex sociobiological reasons for wanting to get back into the house. For one thing, the house contains the most wondrous thing in the world: the kitchen counter. One time a piece of turkey fell off of it. The dogs still regularly visit the spot where it landed, in case it shows up again. There's an invisible Dog Historic Marker there.

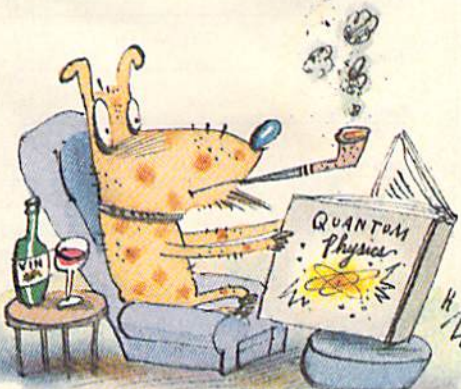
Another reason is that the house provides a better echo for barking. Dogs employ barking as a vital means of communicating important messages, such as: "bark." Barking also serves a vital biological purpose: If a dog does not release a certain number of barks per day, they will back up, and the dog will explode.

Our large main dog, Earnest, spends her day sleeping directly under my desk, and three or four times a day she'll have

a pressure buildup, causing her to wake up, lift her head, release a bark and immediately go back to sleep. Her bark, traveling at the speed of bark, quickly reaches our small emergency backup dog, Zippy, who is sleeping elsewhere in the house. He wakes up and rushes up to the outside of my office door and starts barking at it, because there is clearly something wrong inside. (Why else would Earnest have barked?) This in turn awakens Earnest, who leaps up, bonks her head against the bottom of my desk, then rushes over and starts barking at her side of the door. Each dog is firmly convinced that there is Big Trouble on the other side, possibly involving their archenemy, the U.S. Postal Service truck. It comes around every day, and usually Earnest and Zippy are able to drive it off by barking at it and getting spit all over the windows by our front door, but now apparently the truck somehow has GOTTEN INTO THE HOUSE and is ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS DOOR BARK BARK BARK BARKBARKBARKBARKBARKBARKBARK!!!

This is what my dogs are thinking (if "thinking" is the word I want here) as I get up, walk past Earnest, who is now insane with rage, and open the door. Instantly Earnest charges BARKBARKBARK into the hall, narrowly missing Zippy, who is charging BARKBARKBARK into my office. Each one goes about five feet, then—WAIT a minute!!—skids to a stop, whirls around, and charges back the other way, still barking. Sometimes they'll pass each other three or four times before they run out of momentum and lie down again, confident that, thanks to their alertness, the house is once again safe.

This is the hidden dog world that goes on EVERY DAY in our house. I admit that, sociobiologically, it is not as interesting as the things that Elizabeth Marshall Thomas's dogs do. But Earnest and Zippy are the only dogs I have. Make me an offer. ■



© 1993 Knight-Ridder Newspapers

## WEDDING SERVICES

**FAMILY & INDIVIDUAL PORTRAITS** -for holidays and all special events. John DeFabio Photography, 301-593-5507

**PERSONALIZED/HUMANISTIC/INTERFAITH WEDDINGS**—DC, Md, Va. Ethical Society, 202-882-6650

**PHOTOGRAPHY** — NEGATIVES INCLUDED AT NO EXTRA CHARGE! Over 20 years experience. 703-255-3119.

**PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING -GETTING TO "YES"**—Communication, anger & conflict resolution. Lic Clinical Social Worker. Arl. 703-979-0257.

**THE ULTIMATE LOCATION** for your wedding reception. The Roof Terrace Restaurant at The John F. Kennedy Center For The Performing Arts. Superb view & elegant setting for up to 250 for dinner, 400 for cocktails. Parking available. Let our European chef design a menu to reflect your good taste. (202)416-8555.

\* TIERS OF JOY \* Wedding Cakes  
By TIERS OF JOY, 301-424-7741, for free VHS video.

**WEDDING CAKES BY MICHAEL** featured in *Best Weddings* magazine "Creative! Washington's finest" 703-518-8888.

**WEEKLY BRIDAL SHOW/"Elegant Reception Packages in Historic Places"**—Washington's experts help you begin 1993 Reservations limited. Page Scheer, Washington Weddings by Capitol Services, Inc. 703-739-1020.

## WEDDING SERVICES

**WHITEHALL**—in Historic Loudon County. Ballroom & Estate available . for receptions & catering. 703-450-MMMM.

### Historic Sewall-Belmont House

Seen in "Best Weddings & Brides Magazine"  
Rose garden, indoor, outdoor terraces view U.S. Supreme Court  
ELEGANT WEDDING PACKAGES. \$45-120/PERSON. 703-739-1020

## THE KENNEDY-WARREN ART DECO BALLROOMS

PERFECT FOR RECEPTIONS AND CEREMONIES

**Uptown Caterers**  
202-483-2058

Serving you at all of Washington's Finest locations  
Evening and weekend appointments available

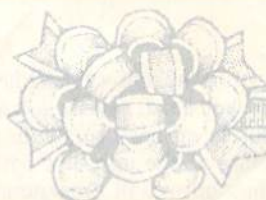
## MAGAZINE MARKET

cordially invites you  
to be a part of  
**WEDDING BELLS**  
SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 1994

Deadlines:  
Line Ads: December 17, 1993  
Display Ads: December 10, 1993

**ADVERTISING CATEGORIES:**  
Bridal Show, Consultant, Reception, Cake, Photographer, Invitations/Favors & Accessories, Calligraphy, Music, Gifts, Ceremony, Catering, Gowns & Tuxedos, Videographer, Florist & Decorations, Limousine, The Honeymoon

Call 202-334-7004



# Holiday Gifts

## GIFT IDEAS

### A NIGHT TO REMEMBER FOREVER

Graduate of Medical Massage Institute. Performs Massage Magic in the privacy of your home. Not a sexual service, but a sensual catalyst to melt you and your mate into one! 410-778-9545

**BATTERYLESS FLASHLIGHT**—Great for Home, Auto, Camping & Boats. \$13.95 incld. S&H. The Young Company, 420 Allen's Landing Ct., Dept. WP, Lawrenceville, GA 30245

**CREATIVE CAKES INC.** Elegant & Delicious Wedding & Groom's Cakes. Call for brochure. 301-587-1599.

**DOG KENNELS**—6'x6'x12". \$289  
Wood Swingset Kits. Unassembled \$89. Del. avail. 301-843-1108

**FIRST COLONY INN/NAGS HEAD, NC**—The Outer Banks' Only Historic B&B Inn (Nat'l. Register). Pvt. baths. Gift certificates. 1-919-441-2343

## GIFT IDEAS

**KENTUCKY COUNTRY HAMS**—Home cured on farm. Aged approx. 1 year. Gov't. inspected \$40-\$50. VI/MC. 1-502-753-2574

**"SAY IT WITH A BASKET"**—Gift Baskets & Mini-Baskets for any occasion. Floral arrangements & crafts. Affordable prices. 301-587-6713 24 hrs./day

**SHIRTS CUSTOM TAILORED...25 Years Experience**  
Also, formal wear clothing. Klaus Inc., Old Town Alex. 703-683-1303

## THE GIFT OF TIME AN ORAL HISTORY

Give loved ones a unique, lasting oral history record of their family heritage, based on in depth interviews by well-known Washington author. Attractively presented with cassette & video recordings. From. \$550  
**Family Heritage 202-483-2717**

## GIFT IDEAS

### OUT OF GAS? BREAKDOWNS? MYLAR® BLANKET KEEPS YOU WARM!

Blanket reflects back 90% of your body heat. 4"x6" package stores in glove box. Unfolds to 56"x80" & weighs 3 oz. 100+ uses.  
**Perfect Stocking Stuffer!** Send ONLY \$5.95 to:  
International Products Direct  
P.O. Box 4974, Timonium, MD 21094-4974

## HOLIDAY ERRANDS

**WILL RUN ALL KINDS OF ERRANDS**—Dependable people performing a quality service! 703-281-5479 or 301-419-8157

### Rates With Frequency Discounts For Consecutive Issues

	Lightface 2 line minimum	Local Display 1 inch minimum
1 issue	\$41 per line	\$445 per inch
2 issues	\$37	\$415
3 issues	\$34	\$380
4 issues	\$32	\$350

Ads available in 1 column width only.

All advertisements must be accompanied by check or money order payable to The Washington Post or charged to your Visa, Master Card or American Express.

Deadline for a receipt of advertising copy and materials in 30 days prior to publication date.

Please send all ad copy, payment and this form to:

### MAGAZINE MARKET

Classified Department  
The Washington Post  
1150 15th St. NW, Washington DC 20071

Please call a Magazine Market advertising representative for any questions or assistance in the placement of your ad.

## Magazine Market Order Form

Please insert my ad \_\_\_\_\_ times, beginning with the issue of Sunday, \_\_\_\_\_ Heading: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Or bill to my (circle one) VISA, MasterCard, or American Express number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_

You can estimate 50 characters per line.  
Your ad: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_