

Old Dogs Can Learn New Tricks:
A Loving Tribute to Our Senior Best Friends,
Featuring Resources for Care and Custody

Overview

GANDHI ONCE SAID, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way that its animals are treated." How people regard *older* animals is especially revealing. Senior dogs are often overlooked, under loved and mistreated; in fact, many are carelessly cast away to live out the last chapters of their lives alone, underfed and in pain. Shelters usually consider senior dogs the least likely to be adopted, leaving them in the vulnerable position of being put down prematurely.

However, it doesn't have to be this way. There are many organizations devoted to looking after senior dogs and attending to their plight. Groups like the Senior Dogs Project are offering hopeful alternatives by finding aging dogs nurturing homes to live out their final years. "We believe that society can be changed by opportunities to demonstrate compassion," says Andy Goodman, one of its founders.

Old Dogs will honor our senior best friends and explore their current state of care and custody, primarily in America but also in other countries and cultures that treat their elderly pets especially well. It will include a practical resource guide for those wishing to learn more about caring for senior dogs, both in their own homes and if and when they need outside help.

This book is inspired by the exquisite photography of Garry Gross, a noted fashion photographer during the 60s, 70s and 80s who, after becoming a highly successful dog trainer in New York City, turned his camera lens towards dogs, especially senior dogs. Garry Gross died in 2010.

Garry's portfolio features covers for magazine such as *New York*, *Redbook*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Photo*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Art Direction*. His advertising clients have included American Express, Proctor & Gamble, Saks Fifth Avenue, Revlon, Chanel and Arista Records. Garry photographed celebrities such as Gloria Steinem, Lauren Hutton, Christie Brinkley, Calvin Klein, Bob Fosse and Bonnie Raitt.

Garry received numerous awards during his long and varied career, including recognition from the Art Directors Club and the Advertising Club of New York.

Gross, who along with Victoria Stilwell from the TV show *It's Me or the Dog* founded Dog Trainers of New York in 2002, became devoted to highlighting the plight and value of senior dogs. "The older the better," Gross said. "Dogs with soul in their eyes." Stilwell, a best-selling author and a longtime friend of Garry, has expressed her support for bringing his photography and the plight of senior dogs to the attention of a greater audience. Victoria will serve as a consultant for the project.

"Garry cared very much about all the dogs he photographed but he was especially passionate about senior dogs," says Leslie Jean-Bart, who assisted Garry in his photography studio in the heart of Greenwich Village in New York City. "He saw a direct parallel between them and how senior citizens are treated. He often said that everyone loves to have a puppy, but no one cares about old dogs. He wanted people to see the beauty, dignity and character of senior dogs so that they would become as excited about these dogs as they are about puppies."

David Tabatsky, the co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul's The Cancer Book: 101 Stories of Courage, Support and Love* as well as the co-author of *The Wright Choice: Your Family's Prescription for Healthy Eating, Modern Fitness, and Saving Money* and *The Intelligent Divorce: Because Your Kids Come First*, will serve as the consulting editor for *Old Dogs*. Tabatsky will solicit a selection of celebrity essays to accompany writing contributions from experts in the field of caring for senior dogs. He will also supervise the development of a resource section with the most current listings available for senior dog rescue, adoption, and appreciation. All of the content in *Old Dogs* will be linked to an active website, which will feature additional photography and information on senior dogs.

David Frei, the voice of the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, will consult on the final selection of photographs from Garry Gross's collection.

Old dogs deserve to be treated with the same respect and loving care that senior citizens of the human variety have the right to expect from society. Both literature and Hollywood provide us with notable examples of happy endings for old dogs. *Marley & Me*, based on the best-selling memoir, chronicled the life of a yellow Labrador retriever,

from adorable pup to beloved old pooch, and has enthralled millions of moviegoers. The success of this story bodes well for the potential appeal of *Old Dogs* because most people want to love and reassure their dogs to the very end. When more people become inspired by the unique qualities that senior dogs bring to the world and learn more about how they can make their beloved pet's final years more comfortable, even blissful, then the world will be a better place for us and our very special best friends.

Old Dogs will follow a simple format, coupling Garry's beautiful and heart wrenching photography with essays, poetry and interviews, culled from a collection of celebrity dog owners, professional trainers and philanthropists in the senior dog world. Some of the celebrities include Bernadette Peters, Betty White, Rachel Ray and Debbie Harry.