

P R O F I L E

A dog is a cat
is a bird is a fish

People and their pets

by Renee LaChance

A pet is an animal or bird that is cherished by its human companion. The degree of affection showered on a pet varies with the person. People often humanize a pet to compensate for the lack of a happy emotional relationship. Gay people, ostracized by an ignorant and homophobic society, often adopt pets that become surrogate children, lovers, and family, to replace the solace and companionship denied them.

Pets are adopted by people who are lonely and in need of the comfort afforded by an adoring animal. Such was the case with Steve who was recovering from *two* broken legs, which he incurred in a motorcycle accident. He found Babe, a coati mundi (Central American raccoon) in a pet shop in Milwaukie. Still needing to be bottle fed, the care and nurturing Babe required from Steve helped him to forget his own injuries. That was ten years ago.

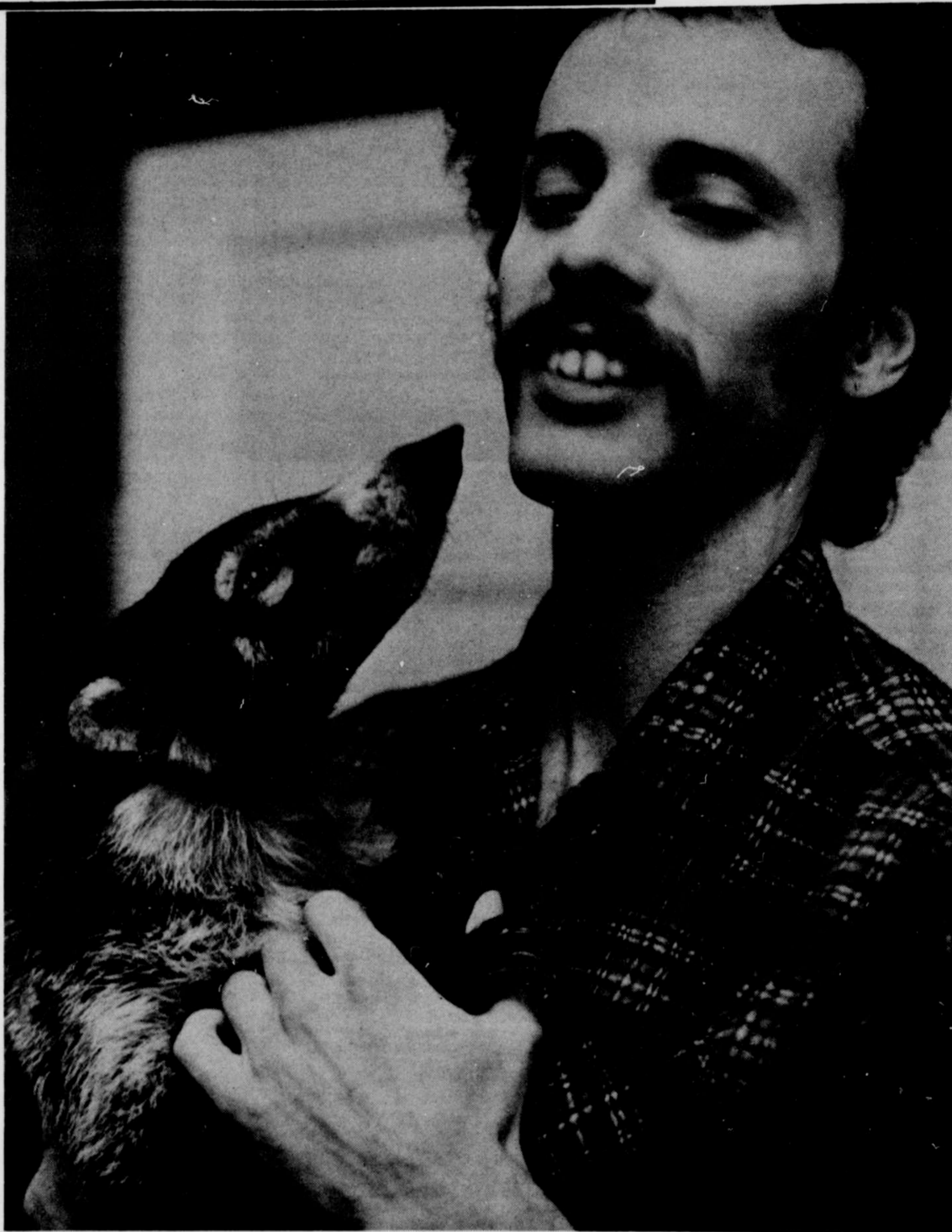
For the first five years of Babe's life, Steve lived alone, so her interactions with humans were infrequent. Babe was so dependent on Steve that she became jealous when his lover moved in with them and never warmed up to him. Babe gets along fine with Steve's cur-



Sherrie Riggs, our photographer.

rent lover, though she is still most attached to Steve.

During her younger years Babe was playful and boxed like a kangaroo with Steve and accompanied him on walks to the park where she was the center of attention and aroused curiosity. Babe lives in the basement of



Steve and his coati mundi, Babe.

Steve's house in a specially built cage that allows her plenty of room to roam and romp. A coati mundi's nose provides it with its most precious sense, smell. Fond of sweet and perfumy smells, Babe wanders about when let loose for company smelling everything and everyone in sight.

Unlike raccoons, Babe is not attracted by shiny objects as our photographer discovered when she pulled a set of car keys out of her pocket to attract her attention — and she did. Dashing across the room in a blink of an eye, Babe wrapped herself around Sherri's wrist, apparently frightened by the keys. It was one of the few times Babe ever had bitten anyone.

There is a special place in Steve's heart filled by Babe. She has her own photo album

titled "Babe's life story in pictures." Steve remarked that he will be shattered when Babe dies, and would be unable to replace her since coati mundis are no longer imported to the United States.

Babe is not Steve's only pet. He and his lover George live in North Portland with a wide variety of animals. Their most recent acquisition is a terrier-mixed dog, Tyke, who wandered into their hearts when Steve saw him in a pet shop and thought he was just too cute not to bring home. Tyke was recently found in their fenced-in yard with a broken leg and no apparent reason for the break. A love for an animal knows no financial bounds. A \$500.00 vet bill later, Tyke's leg will be as good as new, but until then he sure is a

pathetic looking tyke.

When Steve and George first got together, they adopted a fuzzy black kitten and named it Butch. He loves to hunch up his back, and make his hair stand out doing his Halloween impressions for the entertainment of guests.

A friend Steve worked with gave him a duckling six months ago. The duck was thought to be a male until she recently started laying eggs. She lives in a pen outside with her own wading pool. She occasionally gets to romp around the yard with the other animals and enjoys nibbling people's feet.

In the dining room of their home are three aquariums. One holds 65 gallons of salt water and a lion fish named Lacrechia. Lion fish have poisonous tips on their fins, causing the