

# Dog days of summer

What better time to hunker down in a hammock and discover your hound's inner life?

BY ORIANA GREEN (WITH ASSISTANCE FROM HER LONGTIME COMPANION, ROSE)

As a certified Dog Nut, right from the top I was ready to love two new books by Northwest authors about interspecies communication. And although there's nothing particularly queer about these books, there's no denying we homos love our pooches.

**UNLEASHING YOUR INNER DOG**  
by Mari Gayatri Stein. New World Library, 2001; \$14.95 softcover.

In the tradition of looking for wisdom in unusual places, Mari Gayatri Stein scrutinizes her four border collies and discovers they display many qualities she's been striving to adopt herself: authenticity, acceptance, devotion and unconditional love. This delightful little book examines what our dogs can teach us, including: how to

get your way without being a pig about it; how to look good enough to eat without getting bitten; and how to be devoted without being a love slave.

As Stein wisely points out: "A dog will never break your heart, betray your trust or abandon you when you are needy and afraid, in the throes of madness or drowning in the lagoon of your emotions.... Their loyalty and obedience inspire us to renewed faith and belief in the nature of our existence."

*Unleashing Your Inner Dog* is profusely illustrated with the author's whimsical drawings, which especially remind me of the cartoons of James Thurber. Through 30 years of observation, Stein manages to capture the pure essence of dogness with only a few strokes of her pen.

This one (right) hit home, because I spend

all day at a computer. Then after I leave the office, I often do something that astonishes my dog: I sit some more in front of another computer!

Rose has learned to be exceedingly patient at work, but at home all bets are off. She reminds me repeatedly that the sun still shines just beyond our door and gives me a look that says, "Wouldn't you really rather be dashing with me across a green park?"

Stein puts it this way: "If there is happiness to be had by dog, it does not belong to the future."



I've had cats and I've had dogs, and there really is a huge difference. I've come to the conclusion I really can't trust anyone who isn't a dog guardian, and I've formatted all my friendships on this principle. Hey, what's not to like about unconditional love aimed your way 24/7?

"Dogs are guileless, free of the bondage of judgment. We are shackled by the cynic within and intimidated by the critic waiting out there to pounce," Stein writes with wry humor that rings true.

And best of all, "Dogs teach us that life never has to feel dull." Tag, you're it, Rose! **✎**

MARI GAYATRI-STEIN will read from *Unleash-*



ing Your Inner Dog at three Barnes & Noble locations: 7 p.m. Aug. 24 at 7700 N.E. Fourth Plain Blvd., Vancouver, Wash.; 1 p.m. Aug. 25 at 18300 N.W. Evergreen Parkway; and 7 p.m. Aug. 25 at 1231 N.E. Broadway.

ROSE GREEN does her best to keep the humans who work at Just Out well supplied with adoration. ORIANA GREEN returns the favor. She is also the Entertainment Editor and can be reached at [oriana@justout.com](mailto:oriana@justout.com).

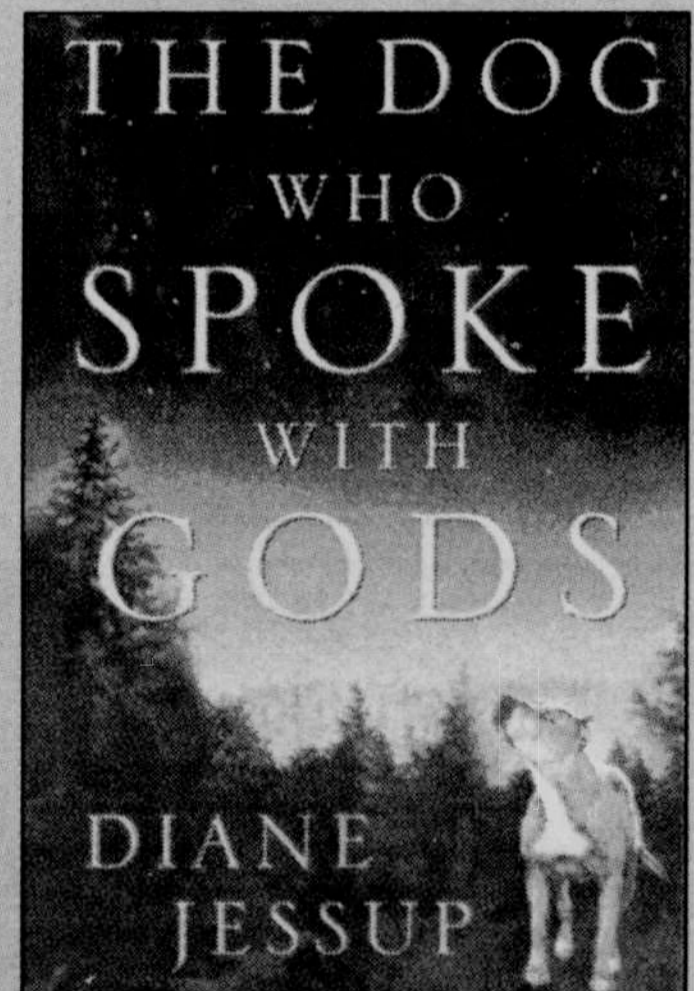
**THE DOG WHO SPOKE WITH GODS**  
by Diane Jessup. St. Martin's Press, 2001; \$23.95 hardcover.

If you're a dog lover and you love a big, thick, juicy thriller with pacing that'll keep you up nights reading, then have I got a book for you! Set in the Seattle area, this well-written novel focuses on animal welfare issues and one very special dog (who is rather unfortunately named Damien—perhaps the author was thinking of Father Damien, the priest who ministered to lepers on Molokai, but I keep thinking of the demon kid in *The Omen*).

Overlooking that, the story is skillfully told and will keep you in suspense until the last page. Even if you are one of those cretins who begins a book by reading the last few pages (I know you're out there), I implore you not to do it this time.

At its center is the extraordinary bond between one dog and one woman who champions his cause so far beyond any call I have ever heard that the tale becomes truly inspiring as well.

I can't say a lot about the plot without spoiling it. One small warning, though: *The Dog Who Spoke with Gods* contains a few short scenes of violence against animals that are integral to the story but that I was unable to read—I just skimmed over them, got the gist and skipped to the resolution. Any other hypersensitive readers easily could do likewise. The story takes a turn that to some might seem fantastical, but even so, this tale is rooted in the reality of the undeniable connection between humans and their canines.



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