

A noted veterinarian says
that you're cheating
your family and your
pooch if you let it be just a pet

By JAMES R. KINNEY, V.M.D.

Author, with Ann Honeycutt, of "How to Raise a Dog"

kiddy clique had no place for this outlander, and she, in turn, was not forceful enough to challenge them. In sheer loneliness—or was it inspiration?—she dressed her poodle in outlandish femininity and promenaded her down the street. The intrigued neighborhood youngsters flocked around the dog who, an extrovert like most poodles, charmed them right out of their haughtiness and into acceptance of the person on the other end of the leash.

I have heard of parents using a dog's fears to explain how unreasoning fear is, and I have known children who have been "gentled," to use a horseman's term, by the docility of a dog. But most interesting, I think, are the families that use their dogs to introduce young children to life itself.

THERE WAS one family, for instance, whose two eldest children were deep in the "where-did-I-come-from?" stage. The family also had a spaniel on her way to motherhood, and not by coincidence. These youngsters—8 and 9, I would guess—didn't care about the facts of life yet; they had a simple question about the curious way young creatures appeared in this world, and they wanted an answer.

Could there be a more tactful, candid teacher than their beloved spaniel? Here was an expectant mother, large but thoroughly unself-conscious, accepting each natural development as it should be accepted—naturally.

These two youngsters, with suitable running commentary from Mom and Pop, watched pregnancy, whelping, nursing, protecting. They witnessed a mother alternately tender and tough with her young—but always a mother doing her best to preserve and strengthen life. When it was over, the children's questions had been answered in the healthiest terms.

So maybe a dog for Christmas is just what your children want and need. Usually the next question a veterinarian hears is: "What kind of dog is best with children?" And the answer is: any kind treated right. Buy what appeals to your family.

Take your time buying and, as you do, plan a little ahead. Get everybody together and decide where the puppy will sleep and how he'll be fed, walked, and trained—and who will do it.

In other words, let your children benefit from everything a dog can offer. And not many gifts can offer more.

A Guidebook to Help Train Your Dog

"Forget your other dog manuals; here is one you can read"—that's what one review said about Dr. James R. Kinney's book, "How to Raise a Dog," coauthored by Ann Honeycutt and illustrated by James Thurber—just right for parents and children.

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