



The Difference a Dog Makes

Large, yet gentle Leonberger dogs from a local breeder frequently visit Sunny Hill Elementary to serve as reading partners for students.

When I was a child, my first dog was named Bingo, at least for his first several weeks in our home. Unfortunately, Bingo was never able to do anything right. When you would say, “sit,” he would come. Say, “come,” and he would sit. Say, “stay,” and he would rollover. We tried to adjust for Bingo’s backwards understanding of our instructions, but his transposed hearing persisted. The neighbors thought we were insane; when we wanted him to come in from the yard, we would yell, “Bingo, sit, sit.” Over time, Bingo came to be known as BigNo since he was always getting into trouble and we were always screaming, “No!” at our poor, hapless pup.

My mom earned her wings as an angel with the effort she put into cleaning up after BigNo. Eventually, BigNo passed on, probably to confound the angels in canine heaven. I can only imagine the confusion of Saint Peter at the pearly gates, telling Bingo to “Come on in” only to see

BigNo sit down instead.

After college, I was too busy teaching math and coaching three high school sports to have a dog. But some advice from a gridiron guru caused me to reconsider.

One year at Crystal Lake Central High School we had a good football squad. In the playoffs, however, we ran into an even better Belvidere team. After the season ended, our head coach, Bill Mack, took the coaching staff to watch the practice of another powerhouse in the area, Deerfield High School, coached by Paul Adams. Coach Adams had won a state championship and always seemed to produce great players. Watching his staff run practice taught us how much we needed to improve.

Each spring the Illinois High School Association held a football-coaching clinic at the University of Illinois. As a young coach, I decided to attend a session led by Adams entitled *The Ten*

Things Every New Coach Needs to Do. In a fashion similar to David Letterman’s *Top 10* lists, Coach Adams’ countdown landed on his most important advice: *Get a dog*.

Adams’ explanation was simple and wise. He believed if you coached long enough you would experience many highs and lows. One year, you would beat the crosstown rival by three touchdowns. You would come home and your wife would have a wonderful meal waiting, your kids would brag about you as their father, and your dog would greet you, wagging its tail and bubbling with unconditional love. The next year you would lose to that same team by 30 points. You would arrive home to leftovers in the refrigerator, your kids would claim they were adopted, but your dog would still greet you, wagging its tail and bubbling with unconditional love.

Coach Adams' advice prompted me to get a yellow Labrador puppy that I named Hokulani, which I knew means "A Star in the Sky" from my stint teaching on Maui. Lani, as I called her, was a truly a star. She was intelligent, loved to play, and offered exactly what Coach Adams had said: constant, unconditional love. Sadly, dog years pass more quickly than human years. Lani had a great life and probably helped BigNo finally figure out how to get through those confounding pearly gates.

I love Labradors. They are strong, big, faithful dogs brimming with soulfulness and uncurbed enthusiasm. I have had the pleasure of owning several in my life: Snickers (a chocolate Lab), Duffy, Waverly, Beauregard, and Daisy. Each one had its own unique personality, but all were loyal and loving to the end. The only issue I ever had with Labs was their shedding, which created a constant battle to corral the fur balls tumbling throughout the house.

After a couple of years with no dog in my life, I decided to try another breed. I found the website of a middle school administrator from Peoria who breeds poodles as a side passion. I loved the website's name, *Poodles with Principal*. At the same time, I was reading a trilogy on the life of Josephine Bonaparte in my weekend French classes. Into my life then came my current dog, whose official name is Josephine Bonaparte, the Second Empress of France ... but her friends (and there are many) know her as Josie. She is intelligent in an Albert Einstein kind of way, but Josie also has the calm, loyal, and loving qualities I enjoyed in my Labs. Best of all, she does not shed.

Josie exudes cuteness. In fact, when people meet her in the park, their first words are always, "Cute, so cute," to the point where I think Josie believes "Cute, so cute" is her actual name.

Dogs also play an important role in some Barrington 220 schools. For example, at Sunny Hill Elementary, large, yet gentle Leonbergers serve as quiet and patient reading partners for students; and at Barrington High School, Dandy, the Golden Retriever safety dog, visits the campus to sniff out the presence of any illegal substances.

Dogs, cats, and horses – pets of all types – have enriched my life. My hope is that if Saint Peter one day finds me on the right list, my furry friends will be the first to welcome me in Heaven. And as they bound towards my outstretched arms, I will remember the words of Coach Adams about their unconditional love, except for BigNo, who might be off digging on another cloud, trying to remember where he buried his favorite bone. U



BARRINGTON 220 SUPERINTENDENT, DR. TOM LEONARD, with his poodle, Josephine Bonaparte, the Second Empress of France (also known as Josie). He may be reached at: tleonard@barrington220.org, or by phone at 847-842-3588.

Selecting A Financial Professional Can Be *More Important* Than Selecting The Family Doctor.

You don't always go to the doctor when you should. Of course your doctor calls you every month or quarter to discuss your goals, tolerances and exercise schedules. The good Financial Professional is not afraid of challenging you or your personal and/or financial objectives.

Financial professionals can assist you in the following ways:

- Assess your relevant financial history, such as tax returns, investments, retirement and estate planning, wills, and insurance policies.
- Review your net-worth statement and examine your debts.
- Help you decide on a financial plan, based on your personal and financial goals.
- Identify financial areas where you may need help, such as building up a retirement income, improving your investment returns, tax saving suggestions, etc.
- Write down a financial plan based on your individual situation.
- Review your situation and financial plan periodically and suggest changes in your program when needed.

Robert F. Bieniek has been a *Financial Professional* since 1977. In those 36 years he has had clients consisting of lawyers, CPAs, plumbers, electricians, metal stampers and home builders. He's worked with an array of clients from a one man sales force to an owner of a professional football team. He has been a resident of Barrington and the Northwest Suburbs for close to 50 years.

For a 20 minute independent review of your financial plan from an entrepreneurial minded Estate and Business Underwriter and Financial Planner call:

Bob Bieniek

847.380.8900

847.342.1700

Rbieniek@weg1.com



"Securities and Advisory Services offered through World Equity Group, Inc. Member FINRA/SIPC"

"World Equity Group, Inc. does not provide tax advice"