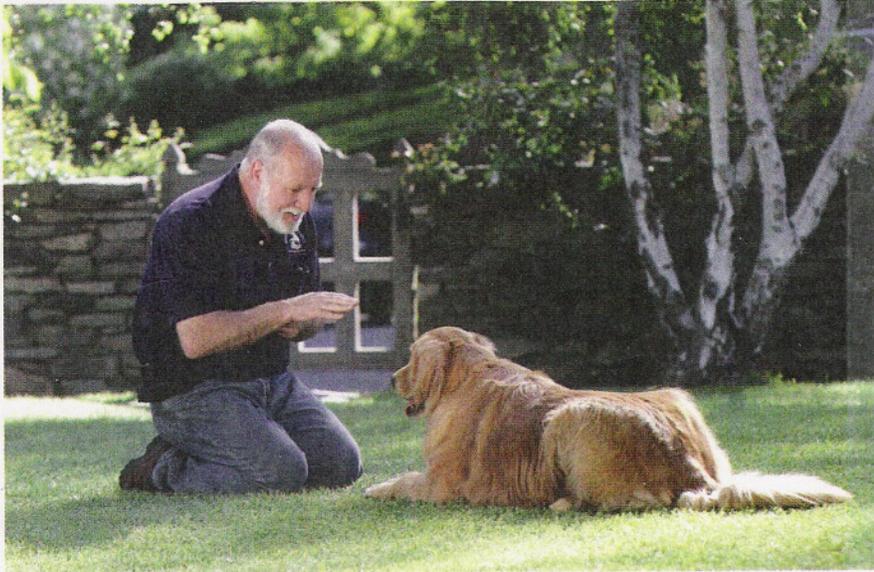


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Dog Whisperer

COURTESY: BRIAN STEMMLER



PAUL OWENS TEACHES GENTLE DOG TRAINING.

Paul Owens likes to catch dogs in the act of doing the right thing. If Grady the golden retriever happens to be pacing along at Owens' heels as they walk across the lawn, a bit of cheese will materialize in Owens' hand, and Grady will discover there are great benefits to heeling. Each time Sweet Pea the terrier stays in place on command, the chicken appears. When Molly the poodle sits—voilà, a bit of turkey.

Owens, a Southern California dog trainer, calls his method of canine education "dog whispering"—borrowing the term for the hugely popular modern style of horse gentling. Owens eschews physical punishment of any sort—no choke collars or rolled-up newspapers. The word "No" is not part of his course.

"I put it this way: You shouldn't do anything with your dog you wouldn't do with your children, yourself or your grandparents," Owens avers. "We are an intelligent species, so we ought to be able to get a dog to sit without poking or hitting him."

The Burbank-based trainer's techniques are now found on a new DVD, *The Dog Whisperer* (www.dog-whispererdvd.com), which details his philosophies and techniques for a dozen necessities of canine/human coexistence, ranging from commands such as sitting and staying to games such as ball retrieval. In every case the dog is guided into performing the desired action, and | to page 15

from page 8 | rewarded.

Three keys underlie his techniques:

1. Set your dog up for success. For example, teach sitting in a comfortable location, with both dog and human in a calm frame of mind.
2. Train for the behavior you want, rather than trying to stop the behavior you don't want.
3. Make it fun for both dog and human.

So far, 1,000 of the DVDs (which cost \$29.95 each) have been sold, and they are now headed for national distribution, with a new print run of 10,000 copies. A portion of the proceeds from the enterprise goes to Owens' nonprofit organization, Raise With Praise Inc., through which he promotes nonviolent animal training.

"If we can promote kindness and compassion with animals, we can make a lot of people and dogs happier," Owens avows. "Many people don't realize they don't have to do physically aversive training."

A former yoga instructor and stress-management consultant, Owens has trained about 10,000 dogs over the past 30 years; he abandoned coercive techniques 15 years ago. A much-in-demand private dog trainer in the Burbank area, he says his courses are designed to educate both his two-footed and four-footed clients.

"The dogs get it after about three weeks. It usually takes the people five weeks," he says with a laugh.

—Eric Lucas