

The Barnes Boot Camp For Canines

BY TOBIN BARNES

Okay, so we got another dog. She's the third dog we've had in the last year. Actually, we've even got some time to go before that year is out. It's been such a short time, my wife forgetfully calls this third dog by three different names at various times.

The other two dogs died in our care. I think our history might be making the third dog a tad nervous.

Of course, we had nothing to do with the other two dogs' deaths. The first one died last spring of kidney failure and old age. Alas, so it goes. The other dog—a fun, frisky pup—died of some strange, rare disease. Again, not our fault unless unbeknownst to us, we're host organisms of strange, rare dog diseases. Only time will tell on that one before we have definitive proof. I hope it doesn't take too many dogs.

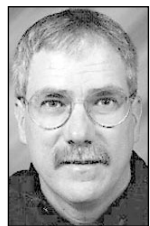
We loved both those dogs and hated to see them go, especially the pup, so far before its time.

The third dog's nervousness can't possibly come from knowing our recent history. Couldn't have anything to do with it. Unless...unless...Dogs do have an amazing sense of smell. Perhaps this dog smells death upon us—dog death, and she has drawn her own conclusions.

Anyway, we're starting with an adult dog this time, as opposed to starting with puppies as before. Puppies, outrageously cute though they are, can be tough on the nerves, and they're a colossal time drain to boot. I had documented both those difficulties in a prior column last fall.

Therefore, we decided to see if we could skip that part, as well as the so-called, dog-teenaged time, and move on to the more contemplative moods of responsible dog adulthood. So now we have an instant three-year-old dog, pre-named Molly (but sometimes known around here as Matty or Scout). And she's everything we were looking for, except maybe that she's a little too tense and a good ten pounds overweight.

In addition to being pre-named, Molly was pre-packaged with fat, maybe in case survival in the wilds of Alaska became an issue. We feel like we rescued her from the fat farm where she evidently got little exercise, but extensive



Barnes

grazing rights at an all-inclusive, well-stocked dog buffet.

So now Molly's adjusting to life at the Barnes Boot Camp. It's probably been like going from the penthouse to the outhouse as far as ease and calories are concerned. From her point of view, she's lately been sorely under-fed while heartlessly over-exercised under our regime. She might even think that this is what killed the other dogs that used to live here.

Nevertheless, she seems to be a very obedient and submissive dog. Either that or she's petrified that the end is near amongst the cruel hard-hearts here at the sweatshop. She watches us like a hawk, and the least sudden movement on our part startles her into life-and-death preparedness like she's trying to survive amidst rush-hour traffic.

But gradually, it's been getting better. Hopefully, she'll learn to trust us.

As I said, she's exactly what we were looking for, especially when it comes to leash walking. We never did get that aspect right with our first dog, Matty. Evidently, through our amazing efforts, we taught her to be a first-class sled dog that could pull cargo through the worst blizzard the Yukon could offer. But that kind of torque never really worked for casual walks through the park.

And leash walking our three-month-old puppy? Forget about it. We were still in the realm of future aspirations on that one.

With Molly, on the other hand, it is loose-leash heaven, just like out of the dog books. No tugging, no pulling, no tests of brute strength that pit brute against dog. But there's just one thing. She always walks behind us, not beside us. And when we turn to see how she's doing, she tucks herself around behind us again. In actuality, we don't see much of her on the typical walk.

Perhaps that will change when Molly realizes that she just might survive here, despite all evidence to the contrary.

Tobin Barnes, a high school English teacher, gets his skewed viewpoints of life from staring too much at Crow Peak, which looms above his home a few miles outside Spearfish.

Help Needed For Choosing Midlife Crisis Car

BY TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI

Dear Tom and Ray:

Guys – you probably have been asked this before, but here it goes anyway. I am 46 years old, divorced for two years, recovered financially, and I am ready to purchase a new car. This purchase would not be out of spite to show I have recovered from the divorce (maybe a little), but I am now looking for a new or certified pre-owned car that would be a great "midlife crisis car." It should be sporty, interesting to the opposite sex and show some level of status and sophistication (I don't have a hairy chest, don't own a big gold chain and don't like unbuttoned Hawaiian shirts). However, I still want to maintain some sanity and don't want to break the bank, have crazy insurance payments or spend every month in the repair shop in hock to someone named "Claus." Here are the cars I'm thinking about:

1. 2006 Lexus SC 430
2. 2008 BMW 335i
3. 2008 Infiniti G37 coupe
4. 2009 Dodge Challenger R/T

Please give me your opinion. Thanks.

– Matt

RAY: OK, Matt. Let's take your choices one at a time. We'll use the process of elimination.



CLICK & CLACK

TOM: The first one we can eliminate is the Dodge Challenger. The idea of a midlife crisis is to turn back the clock 15 or 20 years – to when you were free and unencumbered, and you still had hair. But you don't want to turn the clock back so far that you end up with zits. Driving this car suggests that you want to be a teenager again and hang out in parking lots.

RAY: You want your ex-wife and her friends to be impressed with you. You don't want them

laughing at you, and assuming you went for the hair plugs and calf inserts, too. So cross the Challenger off your list.

TOM: Next, I'd eliminate the Lexus SC 430. It's a nice car, but, in my estimation, it's a geezer car. It's rounded and soft. Save that one for 30 years from now, when you're in your end-of-life crisis, not your midlife crisis.

RAY: So that leaves the BMW and the Infiniti. Those are both good choices. So if you really have the hots for one or the other of those, you have our blessing.

TOM: I think I'd take the BMW. I love how BMWs drive.

RAY: I'd take the Infiniti. It'll probably be more reliable, and that's more important to me.

TOM: I think they both meet all of your criteria, Matt. The BMW is a little more common, and the Infiniti is a little more interesting and unusual. So buy whichever one makes you smile more when you drive it. And regardless, see if you can find one that comes with an eHarmony package.

Got a question about cars? Write to Click and Clack in care of this newspaper, or e-mail them by visiting the Car Talk Web site at www.cartalk.com.

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HEART

From Page 1A

accessible for a transplant at a moment's notice.

On his final day at the top of the list, Mengershauser received the long-awaited news.

"We got the call about 5 a.m. My wife jumped up and down with excitement, saying 'They have a heart, they have a heart!'" he said. "But I didn't share the same excitement. It was the right thing to do for me and my family, but I knew for a fact that this wasn't a sure thing. I was at peace with myself—even how I wanted my funeral."

Mengershauser was in surgery for 14 1/2 hours. "When they removed my heart for the transplant, it just fell apart," he said. "Cindy has pictures of it, but I haven't brought myself to look at it."

The new heart brought a dramatic difference, Mengershauser said. "Cindy said, for the first time in eight months, she could see blood flowing in the artery on the side of my neck," he said.

The good news was short-lived, as Mengershauser developed an infection. "They had to open me up and clean up the infection," he said. "I was like an irrigation system. I had seven tubes inside me for 2 1/2 weeks, and I was in the hospital for six weeks."

Mengershauser holds a dubious distinction as general manager of Charles Mix Electric in Lake Andes. "I am the only heart transplant for our (National Rural Electric Association) insurance, so I'm a poster child," he said with a chuckle.

Throughout the whole ordeal, Cindy reached family and friends through Caring Bridge, a social networking Web site for providing

updates on medical patients. The Caring Bridge site remains active and has received more than 100,000 hits.

The Mengershausers found another support group—fellow Lake Andes residents R.G. and Bev Svatos.

R.G. Svatos underwent a liver transplant at Rochester, Minn., in March 2008, shortly after Mengershauser received his heart transplant.

The two couples were already friends and formed an even stronger bond. The wives communicated during their husbands' transplants. And the couples served as parade grand marshals during the 2008 Fish Days celebration in Lake Andes.

As a way of paying it forward, the two men have also set up a fund at Andes State Bank to help other transplant recipients.

R.G. Svatos was unavailable this week for an interview for this story. However, Bev Svatos said her husband has done well during the two years since his transplant.

"At first, R.G. was hospitalized 17 or 18 times, and he was getting very sick," she said. "He was seeking a donor for 1 1/2 years before he was listed (as a candidate). But once he was listed, it took no time at all. The transplant worked out wonderful."

Both men have written to their donors' families. Mengershauser said he found it difficult to put his gratitude into words.

"It was a tough, emotional letter to write," he said. "You let the (donor's) family know how many lives have been affected. You write about the things you can do that you couldn't before, yet how sorry you are that this happened (through the loss of their loved one)."

In Mengershauser's case, the donor's family has chosen not to contact him. "I hope some day to meet them, because they gave me the greatest gift of all," he said.

The outcome was different in Svatos' case, as the donor's family responded. "R.G.'s donor came out of Parkston. The donor's wife now lives in Aberdeen, and we correspond back and forth," Bev said.

As for the future, Mengershauser will take anti-rejection pills for the rest of his life. Insurance covers the \$8,600 cost for a 90-day supply.

Each day remains a victory, he said. "The first year is the toughest, but I could undergo rejection at any time, for any reason," he said.

Mengershauser has seen tremendous strides in stem-cell research, which he said could someday grow his own heart rather than rely on the transplant and chance of rejection.

"I realize this is a controversial topic. But it doesn't have to be fetal stem cell research, that some churches oppose. It can be other things," he said. "There is the potential to save millions of people. We can watch how it develops,

but it's a good thing if we can drive in right away."

A donor himself for 25 years, he also encourages others to become donors. "There are hundreds of thousands of people who have lost their lives because there aren't enough donors," he said.

Mengershauser plans to continue working as long as possible. With his improved health, he has bought land and now raises cattle as a hobby.

"I drive fence posts, and two years ago, I wasn't able to do it," he said. "But right now, I do have lifting limitations. If I lift too much, I become short of breath. It's hard on the heart."

The average heart transplant patient carries a life expectancy of 10 years, Mengershauser said. He said he feels "great" and hopes to outlive the average because of his younger age.

In the meantime, he has truly found a heartfelt joy.

"I've never been happier with my life. I enjoy each day," he said. "Before, I worked hard and played hard. Now, I have more patience. I slow down a lot and don't let things pass me by."

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Tuesday, Feb. 23
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Wednesday, Feb. 24
7:40 ABS Fundraiser, Rich Wright

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