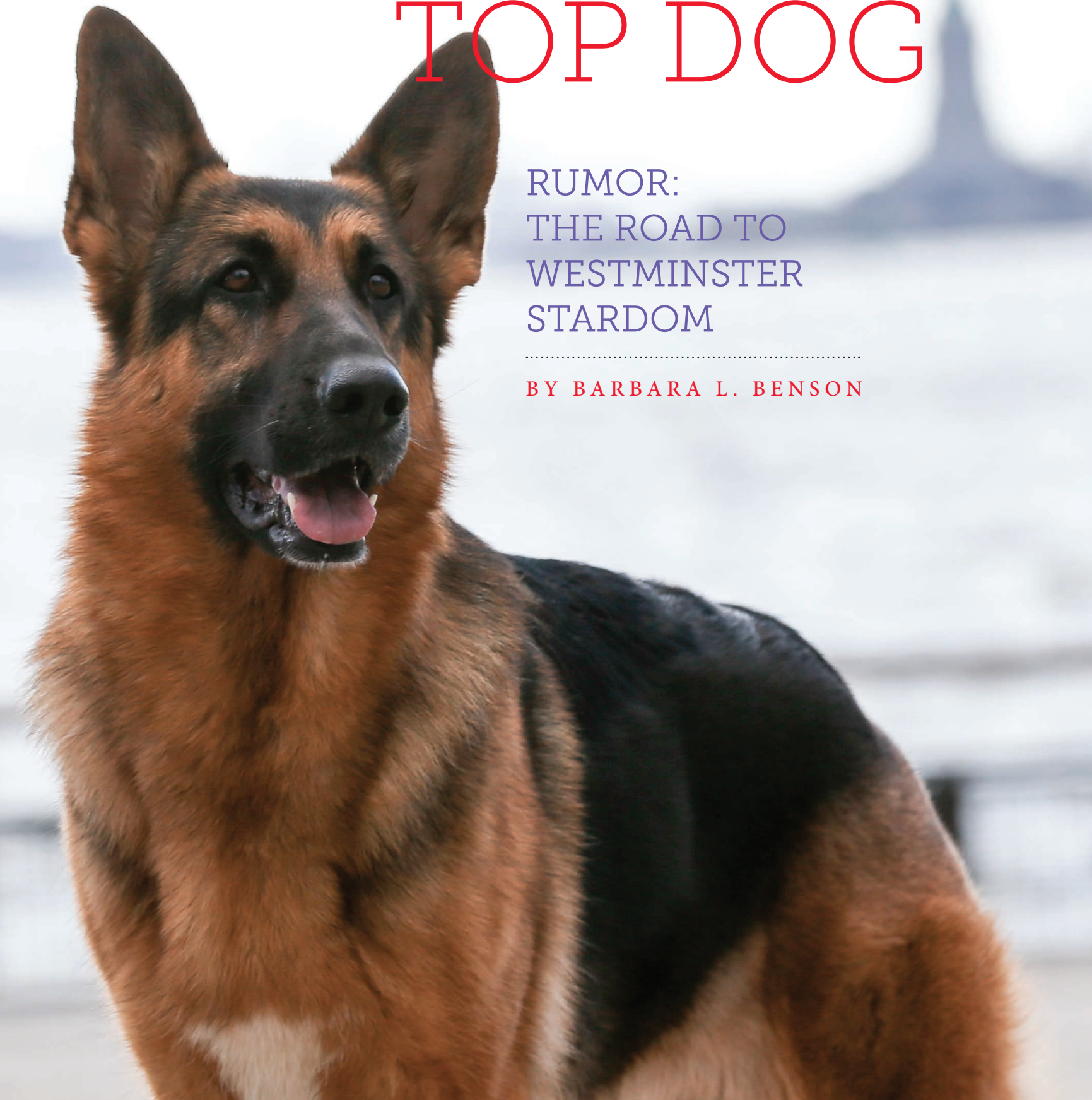


# AMERICA'S TOP DOG

RUMOR:  
THE ROAD TO  
WESTMINSTER  
STARDOM

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BY BARBARA L. BENSON







KENT BOYLES AND RUMOR IN THE WINNER'S CIRCLE AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN AFTER WINNING BEST IN SHOW.

**O**n February 15, 2017, Rumor, the German Shepherd Dog who was named Best in Show at the Westminster Kennel Club's 141st Annual Show at Madison Square Garden the night before, is giving another flawless performance. She is being chauffeured around New York City to a series of appearances that a star could only wish for. Rumor is the toast of the Big Apple, and has had thousands of German Shepherd Dog lovers across the country jumping for joy at their television screens.

First there is "Fox and Friends", "Good Morning America", and "The View", where her breeder, owner, and handler Kent Boyles guides her through interviews, and she faces the cameras with confidence and dignity. The other members of her human family, Liz, Maria, and Daniel Oster are there to share these moments of greatest success in the dog show world. From the studios, they will travel to Times Square, for a presentation by the Cunard Line, a Westminster sponsor, for a trip across the Atlantic on the Queen Mary 2. There is a visit to an NYPD Precinct and photographs with the smiling officers. In a sense, one of their own has come out on top. New Yorkers and their First Responders have not forgotten the tireless and heroic work of the dog teams after September 11.

During the traditional Winner's Lunch at Sardi's, Rumor enjoys her favorite steak, served on a silver platter. The day is not over yet; there is the Nasdaq appearance, the World Trade Center, and the Empire State Building where Rumor sits on her Westminster blanket, the vista of Manhattan seen through the windows behind her. Then back to the Fox Studios to appear with Shepherd Smith on his news program. Lastly, the Wall Street Journal Television Studio, where Rumor finally dozes at Boyles' feet as he talks about the years of training, loving care, and travel.

#### WINNER TAKES ALL

It was almost 11 p.m. on Valentine's Day when Best in Show Judge Thomas J. Bradley 3rd, signed his Judges' Book and announced that his Best in Show choice was the German Shepherd Dog, to roars of appreciation from a packed Madison Square Garden. That night, Rumor joined the roster of great athletes who have known acclaim at the Garden. Bradley's decision was the culmination of two days with three levels of competition for over 2,800 of the most carefully bred dogs in America. They represented 200 breeds and varieties, recognized by the American Kennel Club (AKC). Each Breed had its own judging, from which a "Best of Breed" was chosen. Breed winners then went into Group competition.





KENT BOYLES, WITH RUMOR AT HIS SIDE, IS INTERVIEWED FOR TV IN NEW YORK CITY.

There are seven Groups, where the dogs are assigned given their origins, and evolution of their roles in the human world. The Toys, the Sporting Dogs, the Hounds, the Terriers, the Working Dogs, the non-Sporting Dogs, and the Herding Dogs, where Rumor belongs, that being the original function of German Shepherds. The AKC has rigorous standards for each breed. Rumor won her Breed, and went on to compete against 30 other Herding Dogs to win the Group First Place ribbon, which sent her on to represent her Group for Best in Show.

It is a momentous evening for whichever breed wins the gorgeous gold and purple ribbon and the huge silver cup. The spotlight will follow the dog for the next year. For Rumor, her win was akin to breaking the drought when the Chicago Cubs won the World Series last year. A German Shepherd had not won a Westminster Best in Show since the great Covy-Tucker Hills Manhattan in 1987. In these days of social media and increased print and television coverage, there are so many opportunities to learn about the attributes of the winning breed.

Winning at any dog show, let alone Westminster, begins with knowledgeable and quality breeding. An understanding of bloodlines is paramount. Temperament, health, and conformation, meaning the physical structure of the Sire and Dam are a critical foundation to producing dogs that will be sound representatives of their Breed. A litter in any breed may include puppies that are vastly different from each other, and it might be several months before the potential of each animal is apparent. Parent Clubs of the many breed clubs that exist across the United States refine the standards by which purebred pups will be evaluated. The German Shepherd Dog Club of America defines the standard for its breed.

#### DOGS ON THE JOB

In the case of German Shepherds, the options for a breeder are many. There may be outstanding conformation show dogs, while others with all-important obedience training become well-behaved family pets. Others are trained for all facets of police work, partnering with their officers in law







KENT BOYLES AND RUMOR VISIT WITH NEW YORK'S FINEST.

enforcement. Other specialized work is search and rescue; search and recovery; and sniffing out contraband and bombs. Some owners like to see their dogs achieve Herding titles. The value of certain breeds as Service Dogs including Guide Dogs for the Blind has long been proven, with German Shepherds prominent among them. A more recent development is the use of companion dogs with the ability to detect the onset of diseases such as cancer, or diabetic and brain seizures. Important too, dogs may be included in the rehabilitation of military veterans.

Nowadays, Animal Assisted Therapy is widely accepted in hospitals, hospices, and nursing homes. Locally, both Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital and Northwest Community Hospital welcome Therapy Dogs. These may be purebred or mixed breed animals which have been certified for their temperament and good behavior. These visits bring much joy to patients who may be separated from their own animals (see next page).

That Rumor has exceptional qualities and temperament was demonstrated during her odyssey in New York, and a month later when Boyles and Oster took her to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Sports Show, a four-day event which draws thousands of visitors from all over the state. Rumor shared a booth with Dave Robinson, a Super Bowl winning Green Bay Packer. During four days of appearances she received a steady stream of visitors, many admitting that they had come only to see Wisconsin's new "leading lady". Children sat comfortably on the floor next to her, enjoying her gentle presence.



MADDOX BECKER OF SOUTH MILWAUKEE MEETS RUMOR AT THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL SPORTS SHOW.



# A SMALL WORLD OF SMILES

## The Therapy Dogs of Northwest Community Healthcare

Smiles come to the faces of many patients when their visitors are shown into the room. These visitors are gentle, caring, soft to the touch, and seem to have smiles of their own, like Gumbo. They brighten the day, especially for those who may have an extended stay in the hospital.

The visitors are the dogs of Northwest Community Healthcare's Animal Assisted Therapy program. Now celebrating its 10th year, the program, which is entirely run in-house, has over 65 dogs with their owner/handlers, who completed more than 12,300 patient visits in 2016. Managed for almost 10 years by volunteer dog handler Kathy King, the acceptance of the program is partly due to results that go beyond the human-animal relationships formed in the visits. The Purdue University Center for the Human-Animal Bond has found that patients' spirits are improved, often their anxiety is reduced, and their blood pressure lowered after these visits. And with many patients separated from their own dogs or other animals, the presence of the dogs brings a touch of home to a hospital room.

### TRAINING A THERAPY DOG

There are certain basic requirements to join the program. Dogs must be at least 18 months old, and have basic obedience training. They must respond to voice commands, walk on a loose leash, and refrain from jumping and/or barking. After applications are accepted, qualifiers will attend a two-hour temperament and obedience evaluation by professional dog trainers, which costs \$30. Final qualifiers will go through three days of training at the hospital in October. This costs \$125.

The dogs may be purebred or mixed breed, and therefore, as the photograph above demonstrates, can be of many different sizes and in fact they somewhat resemble a dog show! The smaller dogs are often taken into patients' arms and gently stroked. The animals are all kept meticulously bathed and groomed which allows for this.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF NORTHWEST COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE

Northwest Community HealthCare's Animal Assisted Therapy Dogs pause to celebrate the Cubs 2017 season opening day.

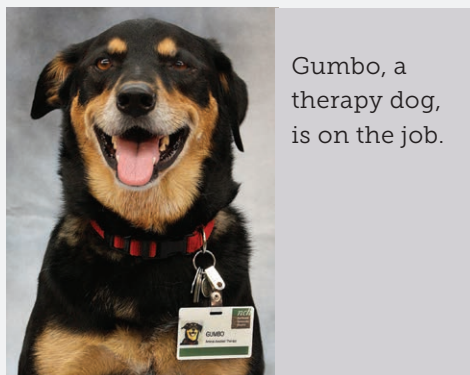
Among the local volunteers are Amy and Pete Mullaly of Barrington who bring their Goldendoodles to the hospital. Amy talks of heartwarming experiences when her dogs come into even seriously ill patients' rooms. She remembers one occasion when a hospice patient opened her eyes for the first time as she felt the dog's silky fur. For another couple, where the husband had spent 40 days in the hospital, visits from the dogs provided relief from days of arduous medical routines.

The dedication and compassion of the volunteers and their canine companions brings added humaneness to the halls and rooms of Northwest Community Healthcare, and there is always room for more on the team. Perhaps you would find this a rewarding activity with your well-behaved dog. Kathy King, the program manager, can be reached at 847-618-7968, or email [k2king@nch.org](mailto:k2king@nch.org).



PHOTO: ARIEL MAJEWSKI

Amy and Pete Mullaly of Barrington with their Goldendoodles Finley, 7 years old, and Peyton, 7 1/2. They have the same sire, but different mothers. The Mullalys and their companions have been members of the Northwest Community Healthcare Animal Assisted Therapy program for five years. They each, separately, visit the hospital twice a month with their gentle, well-behaved dogs. As well as being beloved family pets, the Mullalys have given the dogs a job. In their rounds at the hospital, they are calm and happily accepting of the praise and attention they receive from patients and staff, and they seem to return the smiles.



Gumbo, a therapy dog, is on the job.

Rumor's breeder, owner, and handler is Kent Boyles of Kenlyn Kennels in Edgerton, Wisc., and her co-breeder was Pamela McElheney of Lockenhaus German Shepherds, hence Rumor's AKC Registered name of Lockenhaus' Rumor Has It v. (von) Kenlyn. And yes, the family named her for Adele's hit song. Boyles, with a successful 30-year career breeding, showing, and training German Shepherds, quickly identified her potential as an outstanding example of her breed. This was confirmed as she accumulated both All-Breed and German Shepherd Specialty titles, acquiring her Championship before she was two years old. In her third year, 2014, she was the Number One German Shepherd and Number Five Herding Dog in the systems that tally all AKC sanctioned dog event statistics.

### THE ROAD AHEAD FOR RUMOR

It was decision time. To campaign a purebred dog for the top titles is a commitment of time, travel, and money, and loving care of the animal. Diet, exercise, good grooming, and a happy animal are all-important. In a close-up video, when the Judge went over Rumor's coat, not a hair fell out of place.

Believing that Rumor had the qualities to reach the top, 2015 saw Boyles and his partner Liz Oster become part of that peripatetic dog world that populates show venues throughout the country every weekend. Thousands of breeders, owners, and handlers travel with their dogs in vehicles ranging from vans, RVs, travel trailers, and even coaches converted to luxurious living on the road with dogs, and create temporary campsites at the show locations. Exhibitors may not go home for weeks, and while they are competitors, there is a camaraderie amongst them born of years on the road. Many dog show people are multi-generational.

With responsibilities to family and their thriving kennels, boarding, and training facilities in Edgerton, Boyles and Oster made it home almost every weekend, often driving through the night after the Sunday shows to reach home by Monday morning. This was the long, long road, the hard, unglamorous part of the journey, but the rewards came as Rumor counted up the Best in Shows. By this time she had gained more sponsors, Pamela Buckles, Patti Dukeman, and Deborah Stern had joined her team. As 2015 came to an end, Rumor was the Number One dog in the country with 99 Best in Shows to her name.

### BEST IN SHOW

On a joyous December night, in Orlando, Florida, the Judge, the Honorable Robert Stein, called out Rumor as Best in Show at the 2015 AKC Eukanuba National Championship. It was her 100<sup>th</sup> Best in Show, and she had defeated thousands of dogs from all over the world. This is the only show where the winner receives a financial reward. More awards came Rumor's way, including Show Dog of the Year from "Dogs in Review" magazine.

As 2016 began, Rumor was prepared for Westminster. She had won her Breed and a Group placement at the 2015 show, and now she was used to the big stage. She again won her Breed and then the Herding Group, which put her in the coveted Best in Show lineup. In spite of all the predictions and the Vegas odds, 2016 was not the year.



KENT BOYLES RUNS RUMOR AT THE WESTMINSTER SHOW  
SHORTLY BEFORE TAKING THE TOP PRIZE.

Rumor went home to rest with her family, motherhood a possibility. But her supporters had a sense of the journey unfinished, and late in 2016, entered her for the 2017 Westminster Show. She warmed-up in January, with Herding Group and Show wins, and then headed for New York, driving with her family and all of her team, to support her through the arduous two days. First, on Monday there was the Breed Ring in the afternoon. Nowadays, all individual judging of the Breeds takes place on two converted piers along the West Side Highway, where the great trans-Atlantic liners used to dock. In the evening, the Groups take the televised stage in Madison Square Garden.

Rumor won her Breed. The Herding Dogs were the last Group on Monday evening, a nervous wait for Boyles and Rumor's entourage. But she came through, with her glorious flying trot, to await Tuesday evening's Best in Show appearance. Her entry into the Ring was commanding from the start. She simply captivated the audience. After the final heart stopping moment, when Judge Bradley had made his announcement, he was asked how he had made his decision. He gave Rumor her best compliment yet: "The German Shepherd standard talks about quality and nobility. When you recognize it, it hits you at home, and that's what it really is. She is just magnificent."

It is one great shining moment in canine history, and "Rumor Has It"! 🐾



Barbara L. Benson grew up in Kent, England, and later moved to New York. She settled in Barrington and has walked with our history since she first arrived here in 1980.



After Westminster, the following words of appreciation appeared in the April issue of "The German Shepherd Review": "We are so very proud of all Rumor has accomplished. We are both grateful and humbled by the enthusiastic response the dog fancy has had to our girl, especially all the German Shepherd fanciers who cheered her on at Westminster and throughout the last three years. Thank you so much to all of the judges who have given her these prestigious awards, and to all of the people who love her as much as we do." – Rumor's owners.



## After a short hiatus

following Westminster, Kent Boyles and Liz Oster are back at the dog shows, starting the careers of young dogs. Among them (left) is Grand Champion Marquis' Can You Stop the Rain v. Kenlyn, known as Peabo. At two years and four months, Peabo already has 14 Herding Group One ribbons, and three Reserve Best in Show Awards. Peabo is co-owned by Barbara L. Benson of Barrington, and Liz and Maria Oster with whom he lives.



# CHICAGO K9S FOR COPS

Perhaps it is a coincidence that the public art installation in Chicago this year celebrates the German Shepherd Dog and its role as a working dog with law enforcement and as a service animal. More than 100 sculptures of 54" tall German Shepherd Dogs are standing guard around downtown Chicago, paying tribute to the police department's canine unit. The sculptures are part of the "K9s for Cops" campaign organized by the Chicago Police Memorial Foundation. In addition to honoring police dogs, the campaign is also a tribute to Chicago police officers who have died, and has raised money to support PAWS Chicago Animal Shelter. On display through Labor Day, the sculptures will then be auctioned on eBay.



The rock band, Chicago, and their manager, Peter Schivarelli, sponsored this statue with artist Erika Vazzana, to celebrate the group's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



The Chicago Wolves offer messages of hope and courage that adorn this statue painted by artist Clarence Franklin.



The Chicago Bears sponsored this statue with artist Laura Junge.