

First Family: It's all about dog love

After all, you don't want your new pup writing a tell-all book some day.

By Peter Gerstenzang

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I've been asked to give the first family some advice on raising their new puppy, a Portuguese Water Dog named Bo. I took a rescued Golden Retriever into my home last year, so the folks at DogChannel thought I might have some insight to share.

Considering that I was once asked to stay away from the past first family, this is definitely progress. My name is still on some kind of list, though, I think.

Anyway, President Obama, Mrs. Obama, Sasha, and Malia: Here are some things I've learned about bringing up dogs right. I think they should make your dog-rearing easier. If not, here's hoping my name doesn't end up on an entirely different list.

First, I recommend crate-training, which will keep your new puppy safe. Since it's unlikely that any of your furnishings are sale items from Ikea, it will keep them safe, too. It was one thing when Happy destroyed my Barcalounger. It will be quite another if the presidential puppy goes wilding in the Lincoln Bedroom.

Immediately continue with the training Bo has already received. And now that you have a PWD, it's especially important. Trust me. It's a lot easier to push a 15-pounder's butt down when you say, "sit," than when he's 50 pounds. Then, he'll just look at you, like, "No, you sit." And if he says it in Portuguese, it will sound even more ominous.

Please teach your PWD not to jump on people. At least, Mr. President, not on any important people. If it's, say, the ambassador from Pago Pago, let Bo decide if he's even worth jumping on. You can't control everything.

Finally, first family, it's all about love.

Even though you may end up with a professional dog walker, an in-house trainer, and a chef to make Bo his favorite dishes, he needs your personal attention and love. Pet, hug, and play with Bo every day. Otherwise, this first dog may end up pampered and lonely – a sort of canine Christian Brando.

Then, judging from the state of the publishing industry, it won't be long before the dog publishes a tell-all book.

Believe me, nobody wants that.

Peter Gerstenzang lives in New York with his lovable Golden Retriever Happy. His work has appeared in DOG FANCY, The New York Times, SPIN, Rolling Stone, and many other publications.

Want to read more about the Obamas' new dog? [Click here.](#)