

The Huffington Post



Peggy Drexler

There's a New Dog in Town

Posted April 13, 2009 | 04:49 PM (EST)

The long wait of an anxious nation is over. The new first dog is here, and his name is Bo.

We have two yellow labs at home -- a great choice, but not if you are allergic (or, for that matter, worry about damage to the rose garden). For short-haired animals, their hair is everywhere; you see it drifting in the shafts of kitchen sunlight. So I will put aside my breed snobbery, and add my welcome to the nation's capital.

As anybody who has brought a little ball of chaos into their lives knows, now the fun starts.

Bo's arrival, of course, played out perfectly for the times. He was selected in secrecy; the selection was leaked; a newspaper was promised the exclusive; but was beaten by the Internet and, of course, there is controversy. What about the campaign promise to adopt? There are quotes that every dog bought from a breeder is a death sentence for one in a shelter. (A bit of a heavy burden, I think, for little girls who just want a puppy.)

There are even same news-cycle talking points: Bo was previously with another family (and called Charlie then), but there seemed to be a conflict with the dogs already in residence. So he was returned to the breeder who provided the family dogs of Ted Kennedy, which then re-gifted Charley to the Obamas. So, go talking points, Bo, as a first-family failure, could have conceivably met the fate of other dogs who don't fit in, and been dropped off at a shelter. I buy that. Really.

Anyway -- get used to it, Bo. You are more than a dog now.

I can only hope he won't star in holiday videos as Barney, the Bush dog, did. Toward the end, it was animal abuse -- or abuse of all dog lovers who watched in spite of themselves, and suffered the dialogue that even made the dog look embarrassed. Barney deserved better.

But it's a new day. The arrival of Bo is truly change we can believe in. Once a puppy arrives at a house -- even the big white one on Pennsylvania Avenue, things will never be the same.

There will be lessons in the laws of puppies" "If I can reach it, it's mine. And what's mine, I'll chew if I want to." There are lessons in the lethality of puppy teeth, which shred wrists and forearms, and can clamp down mid-nuzzle -- on the occasional ear.

There will be the realization your dog is, quite possibly, the smartest dog ever. When is the last time you heard someone say their dog is dumb? By most objective measures, our big, love-bomb of a dog, Stuart is not the brightest toy in the basket. Even though his trick repertoire peaked at sit, we prefer to say he's "chill."

Prepare, also, to be one of "those people" you swear you will never be -- the insufferable ones; the ones who believe that the rest of the world finds your puppy stories as hilarious/heartwarming as you do. Word of caution, Mr. President. Putin doesn't care. Anyway, he seems like a cat person.

There will be discoveries of the hard to define, but amazingly comfortable smell of puppy fur; the power of the loving gaze of big brown eyes, the joyous greetings that -- in their own way -- will be just as satisfying as your reception in the capitals of Europe.

Congratulations are also in order. You will quickly realize that Bo -- who will soon answer to nicknames like Bo-dog, B-dog, Bobo, Beauregard or Bo-dacious -- is the best dog in the world. Even when he's not.