

Nomad Editions

Good Dog

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Inside: The dish behind dog food



The Dog Behind...
Mark Ulriksen

It wasn't love at first sight, but Henry the chocolate Lab soon became the talk of the town

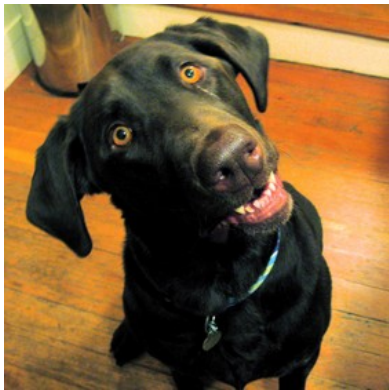
BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

See Mark's work in
"An Illustrated Life"

In Mark Ulriksen's world the Statue of Liberty is a torch-wielding hound and Dalmatians hang out at the ballpark. Best known for his *New Yorker* covers — 38 to date — the illustrator has a habit of seeing paws when sketching bipedal cultural events. His unique relationship with his chocolate Lab, Henry, may explain his preoccupation with the quadrupedal.

At first, Henry — who lives in San Francisco with Ulriksen, his wife, Leslie Flores, and their daughters — was a non-starter. Ulriksen was on the verge of swapping him for a better fit before the pup wormed his way into the artist's heart. Nine years later, Bonehead, as he's been nicknamed, has scored his own couch and graced a *New Yorker* cover. Not bad.

How did you and Henry come into each other's lives?



Henry the chocolate Lab—and mutt model.

We had a chocolate Lab, Ted, who passed away in 2002. Ted set a real high bar, but we were smitten with chocolate Labs. We found a breeder online, packed in the car and drove three hours to some funky farm in Colusa County, about two-and-a-half hours north of San Francisco. There was only one puppy that was a deadbeat and didn't engage. That was the puppy



they brought out for us. He just stood there and didn't want to bond. At home, he was petrified. We put him on a tiny patch of grass, and he didn't move. He didn't want to walk on the hardwood

floors. After six days, I said, "This isn't working." We decided to take him back to his breeder the following day, but the next morning Leslie said, "He's changed! He likes us now!" That was almost nine years ago. Even though he's probably peed in the house 100 times, I love him. He's a total goofball. I'm working on a children's book with him as the subject.

Does he inspire your work?

He inspires me to get out of the house. Golden Gate Park is our de facto backyard. He's supposed to be a Labrador Retriever, but in the park, he's more of a Labrador gopher-hole-digger.

Do dogs influence your work?

Henry is the main image on my website. There was a *New Yorker* cover called "Hot Dogs" in 2007 that I did with a grid of dogs panting and waiting to get out of a New York building, with a lone cat sitting

New York building, with a lone cat sitting on a swamp cooler. Henry and my mother-in-law's dog are in there, and I put a few friends' dogs in there too. I love to do that and then tell them after the fact.

What are you working on now?

Some sketches for *New Yorker* cover submissions; a portrait of a businesswoman for a business publication; and a couple private commissions—a family portrait and a scene from the *Third Man*, my all-time favorite movie.

Does Henry travel with you?

Yes, but unfortunately for him, we downsized our car. We now drive a Honda Fit. But we just had a great weekend in the country near the Russian River where it was dog heaven. He had to sit amidst all the bags in the car, but he's a trooper.

Show me a dog that doesn't want to be in a car. There's nothing happier in the world than a happy dog. My friend says a chocolate Lab is the keg at the party — everyone's happy to see him. ■