

THE KENNEL SPOTLIGHT GOES GLOBAL!!

By Jim Hughes

Well, I guess *The Kennel Spotlight Magazine* has finally been noticed by the big city boys! We got an invitation to attend the APPA show in Orlando, Florida, as a member of the industry press corps. Kathy and I received conformation from Kerry Sutherland, a public relations consultant for the Global Pet Expo. The show was held at the Orange County Convention Center, a huge complex of buildings, with adjoining parking lots and numerous hotels, maybe somewhat smaller than the King Ranch. Even though Kathy had a room adjacent to the complex, she needed a shuttle to get her back and forth. Orlando is a very large city and the overabundance of warm weather and sunshine has done something to the personality of the drivers in that city.

Here in the Ozarks we show a little courtesy toward our fellow drivers. If I have waited at a stop sign for 4 or 5 cars, I think I have waited long enough and I kinda stick the nose of the car over the line a couple of inches. Someone always waves you into the traffic flow out of courtesy. In Orlando, that's a good way to be in Tampa way before you wanted to go there! There are always the horns and the fingers waving in the air and my Missouri license plate always generates the sound of "hillbillies" being yelled at me. I live in Neosho, a town of 10,000 people, but Kathy works in Wheaton, a town of 500 people. More than once, I have driven this 26 mile stretch of back roads and never passed a car in either direction. In Orlando, 50 cars will pass the driveway before I can even put the key in the ignition. I-4 has 4 or 5 lanes of traffic to park on with cars stretched out before and behind you as far as the eye can see traveling in both directions. It says the speed limit is 70 miles per hour, but around 4 to 6 pm and 7 to 9 am that is slowed down somewhat to about 7 miles per hour. In the late evening, when it is too dark to read the signs, that is stepped up to 80mph with some clowns doing over 100. I could not live there.

The Global Pet Expo, which took place on Feb.14th thru Feb 16th, is billed as the pet industry's largest annual trade show. It is sponsored by the American Pet Products Association. The 800 or more booths from the members of the APPA are the people who manufacture and sell the inventory of the pet stores across the nation, the leashes and collars, the bird cages, the fish tanks, the dog toys, etc, etc...

As we walked the aisles of the show, we saw a few familiar faces, but not many. It was hard to picture the products of the retail pet trade being used in the large scale dog breeding kennels that we are used to seeing. Some of the dog food companies are the same ones that we see at our seminars but some are very special with all natural ingredients and holistic additives that price them out of the reach of a large scale kennel but not for the pet shop who then sells it to the family pet that 'nothing is too good for or too expensive for'. We saw pet grave markers, offered by Mr. Vincent (Jim) Milano of Milano Monuments, stainless steel feed bowls from Wet Noz, represented by Johanna Hunt, caging and crating made as designer pens for indoor confinement within the home, odor and stain remover, offered by Sea Yu, Quincy Yu, president, dog sweaters and snow boots, flea and tick control products, etc. Use your imagination, almost everything you

can think of for the pet industry was displayed on the floor of the trade show and offered for sale.

We saw an odor and stain remover that seemed to work fabulously offered in 6 ounce spray cans. Their minds were shocked when we asked them the cost of a 50 gallon drum. We saw dog treats packaged in 2 pound containers. We asked the price of a 50 pound sack. We saw all natural holistic dog food in 12 and 20 pound bags. We asked about 50 pound bags with quantity discounts. They offered 10 bag discounts, we asked about an 18-wheeler load. We surprised them with our size and they surprised us with their prices, but we could work some cooperation with a change of mind set in both of us.

One place that seemed unworkable was with pet grave markers. They wanted to talk to us and as we talked, these ideas started to jump into my mind. So many of us now deal with the final consumer. We sell a puppy out of Fluffy Jo to a customer. She has the dog for two years and it is accidentally killed. She feels the pup she bought from you cannot be replaced from anybody except Fluffy Jo. She orders another puppy from the same mother, hoping to get an almost clone puppy to replace her dead one. She sends a deposit and agrees to wait for the puppy. You then send her a letter of condolences for the loss of her original puppy plus a grave marker plus a stuffed dog depicting your breed. Why would you do that, absorb that expense for no reason? **Because you are not a “Puppy Mill”**. Because you are a caring, conscientious **BREEDER**. Because you want to change the image that the public has been brainwashed into believing about your industry. Because, if you have cut out the profit that the broker and the pet store have been making and pocketed that money yourself, **YOU CAN AFFORD IT!!** You have become the Pet Store!!

I know you can not afford the \$125 dollar Wet Noz Stainless Steel feed bowl that weighs 5 lbs. A San Francisco chain of restaurants ordered 100 of them to serve salads in. But, there were some fancy bowls with football, golf ball, baseball, etc. bottoms on them that looked great from Gulf Coast Products, represented by Stacie Parfait. They were much cheaper and looked great. I was imagining what they would look like when they were sitting in your pens, being featured on the Oprah show. Or maybe the Pet Fly Dog Beds would look so good in your kennel that Oprah would not even want you on her show, especially if you had some dog toys from World Wise laying in the bed. Mr. Jonathan Poretz would be glad to help you acquire a few of these. Of course, the pet stores have the showiest products displayed on the fanciest fixtures in our business and that does not exempt them from the scathing criticism of the “Humaniac” cameras. I was told one time by one of the chief Humaniacs, “you just cannot get good enough to suit me”. Well, we do not care, but we better get good enough to suit a judge.

The theme of the show and particularly the new products featured this year, was all about ‘green’; organic, all natural and earth-friendly. New varieties of organic food and treats were also introduced, as well as ‘homeopathic’ herbs, which are advertised to treat everything from inflammation to digestive problems. They even had people from ‘Shoo!Tags dressed up in giant animal costumes waving at you from the entrance to promote their products. We attended the press reception (sponsored by Purina) with free

food and drinks to rub 'elbows' with the pet industry's various magazine editors and publishers (Dog Fancy, Cat Fancy, Dog Daily News, etc...) It gave us a good chance to promote the *Spotlight* as the **only** publication representing the Professional Breeders. We had a great time and gave out lots of magazines and hopefully bridged some of the gap between retail and the high-volume breeder.