



Shake  
and other tricks dogs taught us

## Foreward

*Shake* was adapted from one of my first homework assignments.

When our instructions said, “*Pick a product and describe how user behavior has changed as the product itself evolved,*” I took that to mean we should offer a fresh take on things. In other words, the story about cell phones was out.

Hoping for inspiration, I laced up my boots and headed to the woods. Joey and Mabel, my Golden Retrievers, made it a threesome.

“Wadda you guys think?” I said. “I’m stumped.”

Joey looked at Mabel. Mabel looked at me. She wagged her tail and then I swear, she gave me one of those winks. - JF

I can hear what you're thinking -  
"So, you're saying Man's a product?"

Oh, if you only knew!



Let me introduce myself. People call me “Charlie”  
— they think that’s cute — but my real name’s Charles.



And I'm Charlie's sister, Darwin. I let "Charles" do most of the talking, but I'm the brains around here.

When I said, “I can hear what you’re thinking,” that’s no lie. We can do that.

And something else you probably never knew: We’ve been tinkering with People for thousands and thousands of years. See, that tinkering has been to our advantage.





At first, it didn't look like our plan would work. People's ancestors were scared foolish of my ancestors. I don't know, maybe it was the teeth. Or because of how much faster we could run. But anyway, for the longest time, Canines and People just didn't get along.





But eventually, People began to grasp what we'd been trying to convey for generations: Maybe, just maybe, People and Canines could work together. We'd teach them about teamwork; we'd teach them how to hunt. And then we'd split the food. Deal?

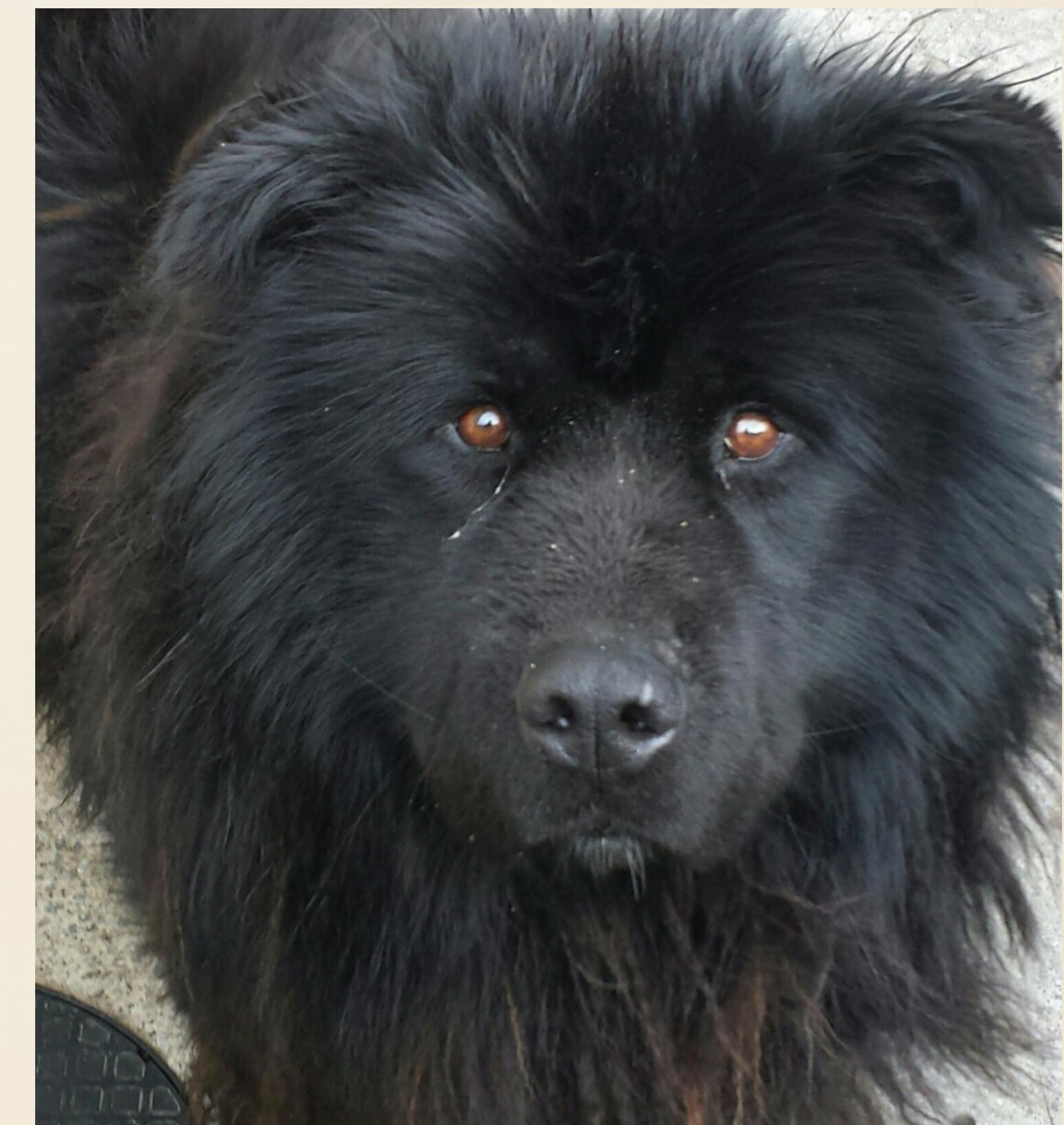




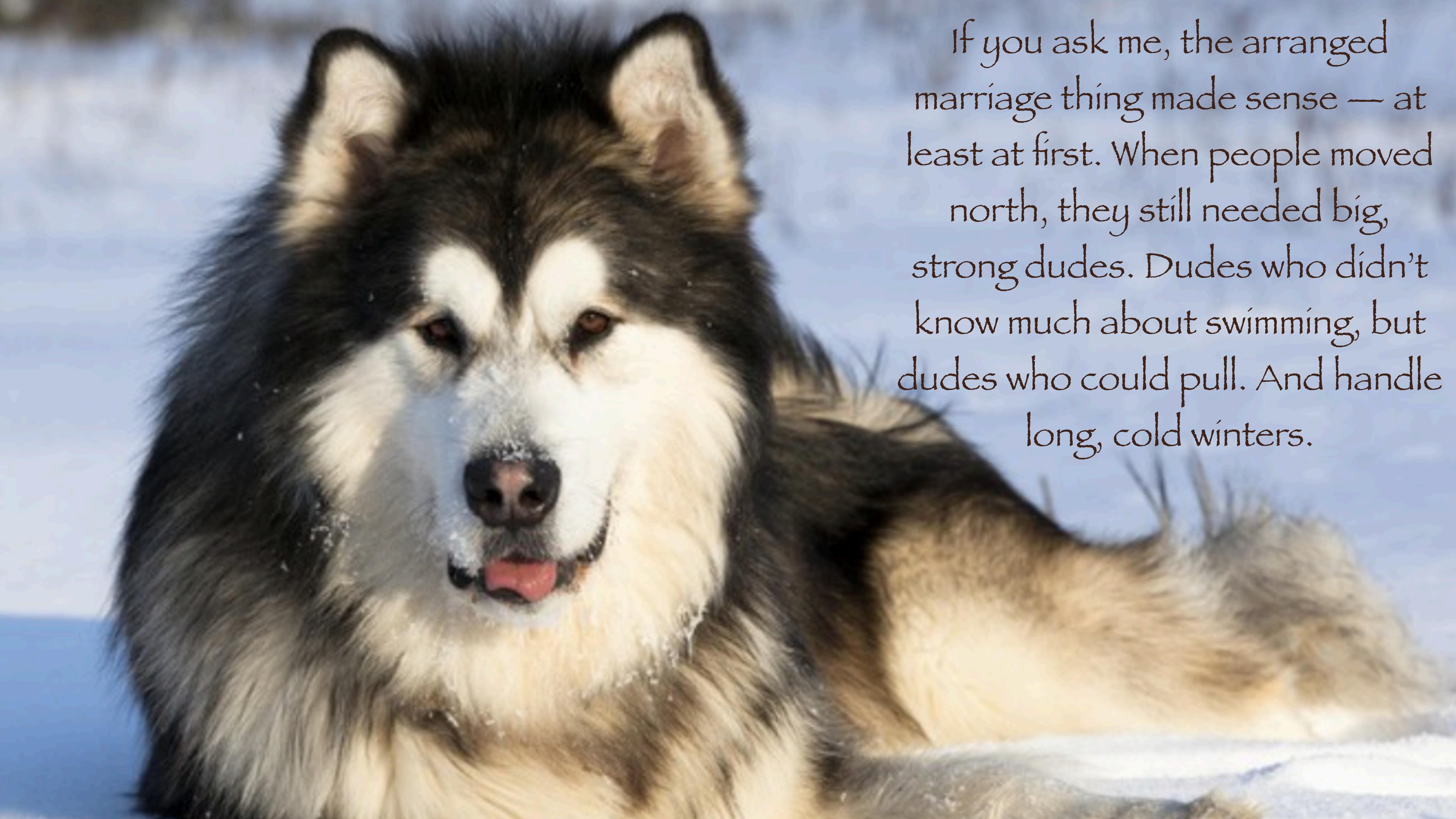
As time went on, People began to feel that there might be more to life than chasing game. And when some of them began to live by the sea, we followed.



When sea People realized it would be a good idea to have the biggest Canines in the pack, the strongest swimmers they could find as helpers, that's when it started. The arranged marriage thing.







If you ask me, the arranged marriage thing made sense — at least at first. When people moved north, they still needed big, strong dudes. Dudes who didn't know much about swimming, but dudes who could pull. And handle long, cold winters.

And northern People learned that sometimes, they needed Canines who might not be as big, but were good at keeping reindeer in line.



A close-up photograph of a Shar Pei dog sitting on a green lawn. The dog's skin is wrinkled and textured, with a mix of tan and dark brown colors. It is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a thoughtful, slightly weary expression. The background is a soft-focus green lawn.

But somewhere along the way,  
People went loopy, arranging  
marriages that made no sense at all.  
Not to judge, but really???



But I get it. What I wouldn't do for a pair of Doggles!

Then you get People who seem to see themselves in us.



But the People I really don't get  
are the ones who pretend we're  
babies — even when we're all  
grown up!

“Look at my little doll — she fits  
in my bag!”

Better you than me, Tinkerbell,  
I like the deal Dar and I landed.  
We've got the life!





This is how it works:  
Run in the woods,  
romp in the muddy  
creek, pretend we'll  
never get muddy  
again, then chill out in  
our own private  
swimming pool.



Yes, like our ancestors, we struck a deal with our People. When we saw what they hung on the wall, we figured, "Fair enough —



— a deal's a deal!"

## Articles & Photo Credits

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<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/how-wolves-really-became-dogs-180970014/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/mar/01/hunting-with-wolves-humans-conquered-the-world-neanderthal-evolution>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/3/130302-dog-domestic-evolution-science-wolf-wolves-human/#close>

Photo credits:

Cover: Discover Pet Training

David Tipling: (Wolf peeking from behind tree.)

Caveman by fire, Caveman sitting with wolf: from the movie [Alpha](#).

German Shepherd/Newfoundland mix: [doggiedesigner.com](#)

Malamute: the [thehappypupsite.com](#)

Samoyeds: [samoyedclubofamerica.org](#)

Sharpei: [vet.cornell.edu](#)

Biker with Bulldog: Alamy stock photography

Dog sleeping on bed: "Master Bedroom," by Andrew Wyeth

## Afterword

How on earth did I decide to write about the wolves-to-dogs story for this assignment?

Well, maybe it's because people have been selectively breeding dogs for centuries and if that doesn't qualify as **design**, then I don't know what does. And fate may have played a role in my decision: at Christmas, I received a book titled *Good Dog* and have been using its smooth surface as my mouse pad ever since.

At any rate, I went to bed the other night with plans to write about how humans have bred dogs for centuries, sometimes designing breeds for specific tasks, and sometimes for no other purpose than our own amusement.

I awoke the next morning to two wet noses and empathy. As designers, aren't we supposed to tap into empathy? So that's when I said, "Screw it — let's tell this story from a dog's perspective."

Having lived with dogs most of my life, I've often felt that there are times when it's them training *us* to suit *their* needs. On hot summer days, my dogs delight in romping in a nearby muddy creek and after a good scolding, slink to their "private pool," waiting for me to hose them down with cool water. *In other words, my dogs have trained me.*

So there you have it: We've manipulated dogs and they've manipulated us. Is there a cautionary tale here? I'll let you decide.



*Good Dog* makes for a good mousepad



In Memoriam  
Shane  
2006 - 2015  
Mentor & friend