

and, of course, beating—which can ruin a dog. She distinguishes between punishment, which she hates, and reinforced commands, which she uses sparingly but thinks crucial. A “sharp, two-handed jerk of the training lead performed impersonally is a command,” she says. Even doing that (an action that can look pretty choky to a sentimental bystander) can be a disaster unless the dog knows what it is expected to do. Most biting, she feels, “is a response to incoherent authority.”

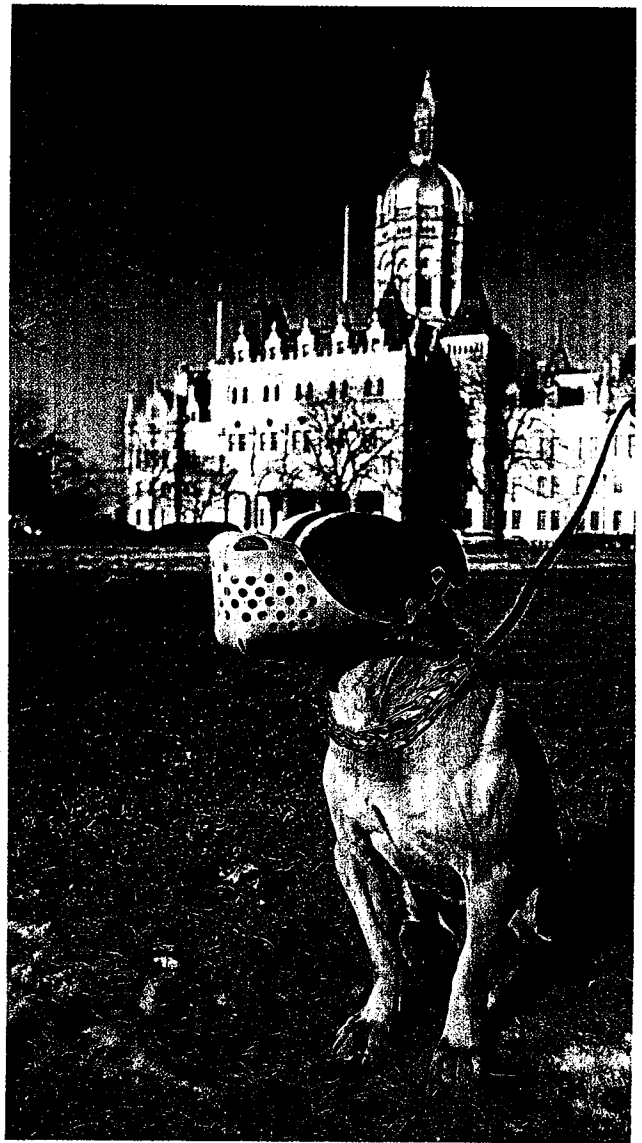
Bandit had had some training, and she found him to be one of the smartest dogs she’d ever met. With every dog, including Bandit, the great training breakthrough occurs when the dog realizes that, in fact, it’s not the leash that is controlling where he is but his decision about how to deal with it. To make this clear, in the final stages of lead training she uses a hundred feet of very light line (a fishing line will sometimes do) and, after a number of commands, walks ahead of the dog and drops the lead for him to see.

*Flying tennis balls did not distract him*

Bandit had no zeal for retrieving and, perhaps because of that, turned out to be a Rock of Gibraltar on the “stand stay” routine. Flying tennis balls and other things introduced to distract him, which would have driven a terrier or a retriever wild, he simply disdained. Yet he doggedly learned to fetch all sorts of things, especially when they were put in high-up and hard-to-get-to places. At his favorite command, “up,” he would relentlessly, joyfully, scramble up onto tractor seats and great boulders. He even learned to climb a ten-foot aluminum ladder into Hearne’s barn.

Just before the three-month grace period was up, Bandit went with Vicki to a park where a number of dogs were gathered to be evaluated by judges from the American Temperament Testing Society, a group that assesses the stability or character of dogs. Children and assorted other distractions were around, and the judges did weird things to Bandit, like leaping out from behind a barrier, shoving an open umbrella in his face, wearing sheets over their heads, shouting and waving their arms. One fired off a gun. Bandit was properly imperturbable and got high marks.

The court order had called for an evaluation by Canine Control. Vicki suggested a crowded day at the New Haven town green, a place with plenty of activity to stir up an inveterate biter. Canine Control wanted to test Bandit without Vicki present “by re-creating the [original] situation,” says state Canine Control director Frank Intino. She felt the dog had been teased and beaten in their custody before, so she refused. Because the case was by then famous, they agreed to let Bandit live without giving him any evaluation. But in Connecticut he could not go in public without a muzzle, and



Bandit sits in front of State House in Hartford, where he was tried. A muzzle is still required in public.

he could not go back to his old master, Lamon Redd.

These days Bandit lives in custody with Vicki and her husband, Robert Tragesser, a philosophy professor at Barnard who happily has grown philosophic about dogs. Also in residence in a smallish house filled with books and computers are three cats and seven dogs, including two pit bulls, two Airedales, a Border collie and a Plott hound. She reports that Bandit lets himself be thoroughly browbeaten by a pit bull bitch named Annie—who wants what she wants when she wants it and has been known to interrupt Hearne by jumping on the computer keyboard. Bandit, by contrast, whom Hearne describes as “terribly black tie,” waits politely, except when, if his need is truly pressing, he heads off