

LEARNING TO GROOM ROUGH-COATS

Jane Harvey

Having been raised in a home without pets, before the age of ten I brought home numerous animals including at one stage, a draft horse! We have always lived in suburbia and this wonderfully placid Clydesdale had escaped from the local dairy. Of course milk was home delivered in those days, so the horses knew the rounds! This horse grazed and obliterated our suburban front lawn before he was finally claimed. Meanwhile, I was immensely popular with all the neighbourhood children as we all rode 'Boysey' around the streets where he was used to delivering milk.

Finally my mother decided that a dog of my own would put an end to making our home the local welfare shelter. So, for my 10th birthday, a Wire Fox Terrier 'Spinky' was purchased. Of course, she had to be stripped. So, she was taken to the old stalwart of broken coated terriers of that time, Mrs Aggie Davies. Mrs Davies took me under her wing and I spent numerous school holidays at her kennels in the inner Melbourne suburb of Caulfield. She taught me all the basics of dog grooming.

How well I remember those days in the late 1940's! Mrs Davies taught me hand stripping as well as grooming numerous breeds before the days of electric clippers. I experienced the art of clipping Poodles' feet with hand clippers and scissors! However, never would the hand clippers be put on any terrier!

As a teenager during the 1950's, I had my own dog clipping business. I used to go to people's homes, initially by pushbike and later by motor scooter. In fact there would still be those in Victoria who remember me arriving at dog shows on that motor scooter with the dog in a box attached to the back!

In the early 1960's, I sailed by boat to England where I worked at 'Town and Country Dogs', behind Harrods in a dog grooming salon. They used to always give me the terriers to do, and I remember well stripping Princess Margaret's Sealyham. Then, I landed a job in Paris at 'La Belle et sa Bete', just near the Arc de Triomphe. There I worked for several months learning about blow wave techniques and hair dryers as well as electric clippers. The owner, Monsieur Marcel is given the credit of creating the lamb clip for Poodles.

Back home, between my marriage to Bob and the birth of 3 children, I kept up a dog grooming clientele. However, by this time breeding and showing Airedales had become my passion. During the next 20 or so years, I always personally taught our puppy buyers the art of stripping their broken coated terrier. When the people lived too far away for this personal tuition, I directed them by marking the lines on photos, plus phone calls, letters and diagrams.

In the early 1980's a person from Perth who had one of my Airedales, sent me a video of how he trimmed his Airedale, asking numerous questions. This included asking me how to trim the beard! I went into hysterics! 'Don't touch the beard!' I yelled - as if the guy in Perth could hear me! Husband Bob said, 'There is a video camera at work we can hire - let's video a reply!' This was almost 20 years ago. I could have never imagined just where that comment would finally lead us!

The 'reply' (a copy of which I still have) was typical of most people's first time video! I say, 'now watch closely because this little bit is very tricky' and minutes of close-up of the back of my head follows! The camera waves from one spot to the next making the viewer quite seasick! However, this original bit of tape was added to for Tasmanian puppy owner who had trouble with the feet, some video snow and another segment for a Queenslander who could not get the eyebrows right . . . so the video drifted. Surprisingly, it sold about 50 copies!

In 1985, my elder son Rick graduated and it was just ten weeks before he commenced his first job. He said to me 'Mum, we should buy a decent camera and make a properly organized video on how to groom an Airedale! So, the ten weeks were spent doing just that! Of course these were the days before editing was possible in non-studio conditions. So, each portion was rehearsed and ad-libbed with the first 'take' on the 'master' being final. We actually 'put down' a maximum of 5 minutes in any one session of around a ten-hour day's work.

My son Rick was always a wiz-bang on computers. This is in fact the basis of his whole most successful job career. He spent many hours making



Grooming pictures by
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up original graphics on his computer, which he coupled to the video. So the trimming lines could be diagrammatically demonstrated. Moving computer graphics were extremely new back in 1985! Particularly amazing was that they were all done on this 64 kilobit ram 8 bit word Apple computer.

The resultant video 'HOW TO GROOM AN AIREDALE' was the first video of a whole series that has been produced by our subsequent business that followed. Husband Bob super-ceded son Rick as the principle cameraman. More recently, I have operated a second camera. Our videos are of course now known world wide with 'HOW TO GROOM AN AIREDALE' as well as the others enjoying exports to some 44 countries. Today, Rick still advises us with the more technical aspects.

'HOW TO GROOM AN AIREDALE' pioneered video as a teaching medium for many dog people. It has instructed literally tens of thousands of people on grooming rough coated terriers worldwide. It is also popular among Schnauzer people as well as those with Griffons, Bouviers and all those breeds trimmed to a square terrier outline. The brilliant close-up camera shots of hands-on footage, complemented by the innovative computer graphics, are rarely experienced in videos of grooming any other type of coat. The first of many people to review the tape, the late Cam Milward said:

'An Excellent tape! With painstaking effort she (Jane Harvey) gives precise detail, and this method could be exercised with several of the double coated dogs in the Terrier Group!'

'HOW TO GROOM AN AIREDALE' has been re-mastered several times over the years, but its content has never been altered. Shortly, it will be digitally mastered. In the long term, it should also be available on DVD.

There are many people in the dog world who have abundant knowledge in various aspects of dogdom. I consider myself fortunate indeed to have stumbled upon the video medium, which, through the support of my technically minded family, I am able to leave behind my skills for the enjoyment of the next generation.