

We Give Our Hearts to Dogs to Tear **Big Truth** in **Little Dogs' Bodies**

Intimations of their Immortality **Response to Alston Chase,**

We Give Our Hearts to Dogs to Tear

PART TWO: Torn Hearts of Our Making

Joseph Harvill, publisher GSM

Alston Chase

Alston Chase's book. GSM's publisher says, "It's as good as it gets for tracing stretch marks on the heart left by much-loved dogs! It's a keeper." Photo: J. Harvill.

Alston Chase, in his book, *We Give Our Hearts to Dogs to Tear*, discovers working terriers are “indicator species” whose disappearance are signposts to our modern environmental predicament. My response to Chase’s thesis is,

today’s Scottish Terriers, genetic ghosts of the old working Scotch terrier of Scotland are, indeed, signals of cultural and environmental malaise, but I’ve found our dogs are also key to recovery on the road ahead.

Part One I devoted to Chase’s experience in Montana and his vision of dogs and the land as confluent blessings and burdens on the road ahead. Here, in Part Two, I want to explore more deeply than Chase did our dogs as “indicator species” in an effort to make the strongest case I can that our Scotties’ genetic health predicament is of one piece with the predicament of the environment at large. More specifically, I want in Part Two to try to break through our self-privileging denial to show that both environmentally and in the case of the Scottish Terrier we are not just part of the problem, we *are* the problem.

Facing the Out of Control

As I detailed in Part One, Chase parallels his beloved Jack Russell terriers’ devolution over the past two decades from field dog to show dog alongside the disappearance of old ranching families in Montana as wilderness gives way to urban-style development. He worries over trust fund cowboys with urban values buying up land and inflating real estate prices intent on “ranching the view” while changing communities and the land in their wake. He worries over the Jack Russell Terrier’s future as it clocks a decade down the same linebred-for-show road traveled by the old Scotch

terrier a century ago.

Seeing in tandem out-of-control land development and the genetic deconstruction of Scotties is very much my world, too. I’m daily seeing impacts unfold in my historic area of the Rio Grande Valley, older in colonial history than Plymouth Rock, where developers eagerly buy up family farms and turn them into subdivisions intent on remaking this unique agrarian corridor of Tomé-Adelino by the standard of Everyplace, USA.

The tragedy is communities, especially rural ones, have a form of ‘genes’ too, and just like dogs, once you change the ‘recombinants—the ethos and spirit of the place—it is changed forever.

In my own life there is no more compelling example of the out-of-control problems Chase sees in Montana and which we all face in our own communities than the 1970 destruction of Albuquerque’s legendary Alvarado Hotel. Built by the turn-of-the-20th century railroad icon, Fred Harvey, the Alvarado was not only a signature piece of Harvey’s genius, it became over time a unique landmark and meeting place, a beloved icon of Albuquerque natives. My wife, who was born and raised in Albuquerque, grew



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up going to the Alvarado on special occasions—a favored haunt of her grandfather's. In 1970 the wrecking-ball did the unthinkable: shallow standards of urban renewal, driven by greed to “ranch the space” for downtown parking, demolished the Alvarado. It was done, I'm sure, by “friends” of the city, just as friends of the Scottish Terrier have presided over the ruin of the genetic health of our once rugged Diehard and call it stewardship of the breed.

I see Chase's parallel between what's happening to our dogs and what's happening to the land. However, I believe we must go farther by seeing not just a parallel but convergence and accountability. We must see our genetically troubled Scotties as reading glasses through which to magnify our own fingerprints on the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources in the world at large. Conversely, we must see our ruin of the earth's land, water, and air reflected close-and-small in our squandering of the trust that was the rugged Scotch terrier we deconstructed for show. We've sold out the good earth and good dogs to superficial standards of measure and now we're reaping the consequences in our personal lives and in the earth's atmosphere. What we've done globally and privately is of one piece, our dogs the sentinels of what we've done to ourselves and to the environment.

We all know the glaciers are melting, we know the equatorial rain forest, the planet's ‘lungs,’ is daily disappearing on a massive scale by clear-cutting. Even the fishermen whose livelihood depends upon them know tuna are nearing extinction from over-fishing. We know rationed water is a crisis in parts of our country no one ever associated with draught. All but the willfully blind know the environment is in trouble. In terms of health and longevity, all but the willfully blind know the Scottish Terrier is in trouble, too. We know that life expectancy in our Scotties is shrinking, down 10% in the decade from 1995-2005, we know that half of our dogs will die of cancer, and we know anyone today is lucky if their Scottie makes it past age ten.

Both the micro and macro dimensions of our lives are unsustainable as

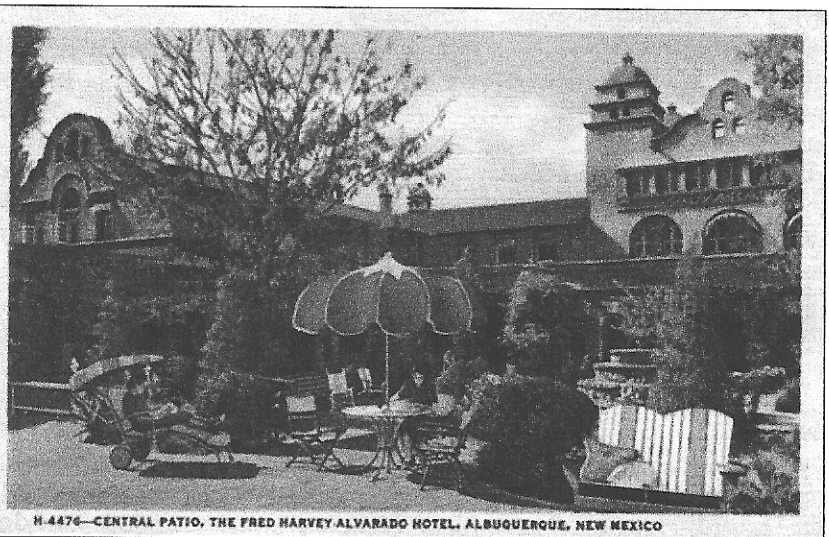
practiced; both manifest the real enemy in our modern predicament, and *that enemy is us.*

Rudyard Kipling's famous question about why we give our hearts to tear—the title for Chase's book—needs to speak also of a vaster ‘tearing,’ a rending of our own making, whereby Mother Earth's face and form and future have been fatally torn. This deed is on our hands. How and why we've allowed exploitation and waste to unhinge the circle of life is the question behind the question that Kipling and Chase raise.

Chase worries over his beloved Jack Russells and urbanization of Montana. For our own good as well as the future of our Scotties, we must get busy connecting the dots Chase has seen linking public and private sectors in our lives in order to identify fatal patterns in our choices. And we must go farther than connecting dots. We must find the will and the way to break from models of exploitation and waste in order to heal our dogs and ourselves. But that journey to renewal cannot begin until we actually see the patterns, confront our exploitive nature, and shoulder responsibility for choices and consequences that are now killing the very dogs we love. We cannot continue breeding Scotties by the same genetically ignorant traditions that brought us to our present predicament and expect different outcomes. Perpetuating the closed studbook and linebreeding folly of the past 109 years can make our dogs extinct; it cannot make them genetically fit. Without change our Scotties will not only suffer, they will disappear.

Landmarks, Dogs, and Schizophrenia

All who love the Scottish Terrier are in this together



Erected in Albuquerque in 1902 by legendary railroad man, Fred Harvey, the Alvarado has been called “the jewel of the railroad era,” the first and signature piece of architectural design by famed architect, Mary Jane Colter. Its broad verandas, sunny patios and pools in the Spanish mission style were legendary among Albuquerque denizens. On February 13, 1970, the wrecking ball smashed into the central portion of Albuquerque's most famous historical landmark, and the venerable jewel of the railroad era was gone. Image is from an early Albuquerque tourist postcard.



and we're all complicit. I wish to be clear about this: we're all complicit in the genetic deconstruction of the Diehard, all of us, from Scottish Terrier Club of America officers down to the newest Scottie pet owner, in precisely the same way we're all contributors to the jeopardy of the polar bear and to the disappearance of mom-and-pop local businesses by virtue of our out-of-control appetite for cheap goods and limitless quantities made in China and sold at Big Box stores. Our choices, our values, our demands for cheap goods and fast foods, and our personal willingness to look the other way so long as actions make us laugh or rich or a winner—*our* ways fuel the problems our dogs and our planet now face. These same choices, values, and demands enter our dogs' lives through shallow appearance fixations we've all embraced for the past 109 years—all of us, from our most renowned Scottie breeders to consumers buying puppies based on pedigrees and 'looks'—we all took our eyes off genetic fitness in the Diehard and turned the Scottish Terrier into the poster dog for terminal disease research.

killed by "friendly fire." To die at the hands of unknown enemies is hard enough to bear for families and loved ones of the dead, but to die by comrades is a harder blow to bear. And when the government covers up or misleads the survivors back home, it is a second and fatal wound to public trust. In such circumstances we all understand the cry for answers, the demands for truth and transparency and honesty.

This is precisely our situation close and small as we bury Scotties at younger and younger ages. Since our breed is selectively engineered by us and has been shaped by us inside and out for over 100 years, it's not a faceless 'enemy' responsible when the Scottish Terrier immune system is compromised from inbreeding or when our breed achieves #1 national notariety for terminal genetic disease research. Friends of the Scottish Terrier have put the Diehard's survival in question. So the question *why* we're killing our own may be hard on us but it's not nearly so hard as it is on our dogs.

The answer is, while we sacrifice a great deal for our

We've sold out the good earth and good dogs to superficial standards of measure and now we're reaping the consequences in our personal lives and in the earth's atmosphere. What we've done globally and privately is of one piece, our dogs the sentinels of what we've done to ourselves and to the environment.

Because we, the Scottie's friends, have presided over this devolution, the question how and why punctures our self-image as they who sacrifice for our dogs. In our circles we call it the "Scottie crazies" whereby our Scotties routinely get better health care, for example, than we afford ourselves. This phenomenon cuts across lines of show/pet politics. Show breeders are eager and right to remind me that Scottie love did not begin with me; they love their dogs, they rightly insist, every bit as much as pet folks. Now, I have a caveat to make on that point which I'll go into later, but suffice it to say here that I agree; breeders love Scotties truly and when they do, it's for the same reasons pet folks are crazy about these dogs.

That said, the embarrassing question will not go away: in a community where we sacrifice everything for our dogs how is it possible to spend a century *sacrificing these dogs* to genetic deconstruction? How have we allowed the Diehard to turn into the 'die-likely'?

It is not enough to say, "It happened; live with it." It matters supremely that we identify how and why the genetic unraveling occurred or we remain blind as to how to change course so the harm is stopped and not perpetuated.

Friendly Exploitation

I always cringe whenever soldiers are identified as

dogs, we have not yet integrated our nurture of the breed into our breeding of the breed. The outcome is that for more than a century our Scotties have been both loved and exploited by us the same way we both love and exploit the land. We love and exploit them the same way we cherish and laud National Parks and wilderness, doting on polar bears and whales, while we simultaneously "flat-top" mountains in West Virginia to extract coal cheaply, or cut down old-growth timber to build more look-alike subdivisions or turn a Kentucky Bluegrass horse farm into a shopping mall. We simultaneously love and abuse our dogs the same way we eulogize history and priceless antiquities yet we destroy landmarks such as Fred Harvey's Alvarado Hotel in old Albuquerque to build a parking structure, or the same way we demand our right to sanitized, healthy re-circulating air from airlines for our in-flight safety, and litigate if we don't get it, yet we fund the poisoning of the atmosphere and oceans, fields and streams, to manufacture consumables that ruin our health and which we have no place to store.

To labor the point, I press my question, how is it possible for us to sacrifice *for* our Scotties while we simultaneously *sacrifice them* to inbreeding depression and shortened lifespan? My answer is, we've done it out of



the same cultural schizophrenia that drives us to law suits over tainted food in grocery stores, while we simultaneously fund agribusiness by tax-dollar corporate welfare, a food industry built upon chemical fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides, not to mention fratricides, in the killing of the family farm and the fertility of the land.

Like the Greek myth of Janus, we are two-faced, and duplicity has become our nature. We 'see' and feel selectively, shedding tears and ire over stranded whales, while looking the other way to avoid seeing cattle stranded in feed lots knee deep in their own dung to supply our next burger, or chickens stranded for life in cramped wire cages to supply our grocery store shelves. We embody love and affection but also exploitation and destruction on a global scale, our conspicuous consumption both mindless and shameless.

To put all this into local human-scale, it wasn't bad luck, or accident, or an act of god that brought down the landmark Alvarado Hotel in Albuquerque in 1970; it was shallow standards of urban renewal and *humans who pursued them*. In just the same way, it is neither bad luck, nor accident, nor an act of god responsible for today's Scottish Terrier carrying more than 20 times the genetic load for bladder cancer than other dogs and longevity shorter than large-size breeds; it is the consequence of a shallow breed standard that neither measures nor monitors genetic fitness and a century of human decisions *by both breeders and buyers* to bet our dogs' future on 'Barbie-Dog' logic that if you breed Scotties to be handsome, they're sure to be healthy. And so, with our eyes on tracking breed line show histories not breed line health histories, recessive genes and defects being what they are, in time our short-sighted fixation on pedigrees and appearance and our functional blindness to genetic histories locked into the Scottish Terrier gene pool more traits than we bargained for and with proprietary zeal and self-congratulation for devotion to high 'standards' we deconstructed the Diehard—just like those who authorized the wrecking-ball that razed Albuquerque's Alvarado called themselves friends and beautifiers of the city!

Change Death At Birth

We can self-justify, we can alibi, we can explain. But the facts are these: the unrepeatable icon that was the Alvarado is gone today by human choices and shallow thinking; so, too, today's Scottish Terrier's once legendary genetic toughness is so compromised he is the National Institutes of Health bladder cancer research subject. Hindsight-ethics and pride over retro-fixes are too little too late. Beyond all quibbling, our past ways are not sustainable. And nowhere is this more manifest than at the graveside of a beloved Scottie companion whose life is cut off by genetic disease. The place to save the Diehard is at the front end of production, not in after-market laboratory research.

The trouble is, at the front end of Scottie production traditions of inbreeding-for-looks are set in institutional

concrete. That's why I said earlier we have not yet integrated our nurture of the breed into our breeding of the breed. And that is my caveat over the claim that responsible breeders love their Scotties as much as anyone. I don't doubt that they do, at least with reference to special dogs who capture their heart. I don't doubt they love those dogs; they just don't breed like they do. What I mean is, when we breed for the winner's circle an agenda that has nothing to do with Scottie health or longevity invades breeding decisions turning our dogs into means to other ends. When Scotties are not ends in themselves, not 'persons' in their own right, but means to other ends—to rosettes or to reputation—then selection criteria skew toward expediting the agenda, not what is best for the dog's life as a companion.

The time to nurture Scottie health is at selective breeding decisions, not after the fact in laboratory test tubes. We've got to change the standard for "well-bred" so we stop abusing Scotties from birth. This requires modifying the way we see and think and choose and act in order that our wisdom may serve Scotties as noble ends in themselves



Our Scotties affect us as nothing else can, evoking compassion and tenderness and sacrifice—in a word, nurturing. If we will expand upon the softening influence they have upon us we can move our thinking, seeing, and choosing away from the exploitive model toward the nurturer model and environmentally sustainable practice. Photo: GSM's Albie by photographer, Susan Hamman.



not as means to our agendas. We must learn to breed as pet owners, not as competitive breeders, choosing what our Scottie-owned hearts tell us is wholesome and harmonious and healthful not exploitive.

The Great Divide

I find it helpful to move away from the helplessness that is empowered by “conqueror” and “victim” labels, preferring instead two models for living whose focal points are *exploitation* versus *nurture* (see Fig. 1, p. 21). Alston Chase, by pouring himself into the Montana homestead that came to own his heart and the bones of beloved dogs, intimates the importance of becoming nurturers as redemptive path to the good life.

His example I will come back to later, but at this point it needs to be said my contrast here between exploiters and nurturers is not a contrast to the past as if exploitation were yesterday's problem, nor am I suggesting we can smugly draw a line that leaves exploiters on one

side and nurturers on the other. On any issue, in every situation, each of us has within us the right stuff and the wrong stuff to enable exploitation or nurturing in our deeds, so each of us is capable in any circumstance of being part of the problem or part of the solution.

I am shamelessly old-fashioned in coming down on the side of the ethics of nurturing, and against exploitation, especially pertaining to innocent creatures over whose lives we have dominance and control. But there is a problem even before we begin. That is the serious handicap we each face today in the thorough contamination of our ethical judgment by popular culture's embrace of greed as good, thereby throwing open the door to shamelessness. Like the alcoholic locked in denial, we label ourselves “nurturers” even while exploiting the land and jeopardizing our dogs!

That's why I'm quietly thankful for Bernie Madoff. Remember him? His example of unmitigated greed, of shameless exploitation of investors, is so over the top that even the most jaded among us is sickened by it. The Madoff case is compelling because it reveals unforgettably the difference between substance and show. The truth is, Madoff was not an expert in making money, he was an expert in the 'Best In Show' game in the investor's circle, an expert in looking like he was champion among champions. To those dazzled by appearance and programmed to lionize champions, that was enough to empower Madoff's colossal swindle.

Evils of exploitation are easy to see in Madoff and in the whole sub-prime banking scandal. Not so conveniently

recognized is the portfolio of genetic 'toxic assets' the Scottish Terrier Club of America has accumulated and its default on investment 'assets' sold to the public. The painful truth is this: the STCA, as trustee of the heritage that was the Diehard from Scotland, has controlled the Scottish Terrier-loving-public's trust and treasure for 113 years, largely without audit or accounting of their stewardship. For our investment of trust and canine treasure we were promised “well-bred” return on investments, meaning that our high class Scotties might cost more to buy but because our dogs were bred by experts, not backyard breeders, they

would be healthier and ultimately less expensive in veterinary bills. The public's role was non-interference, while trusting the experts and subsidizing their monopoly over responsible breeding. We've waited 113 years for delivery on our investments, now to discover that the legendary genetic riches of the Diehard that was our inheritance from

Scotland has been squandered, with the comprehensive 2005 *GSM Scottish Terrier Health Survey* showing that the best-bred Scotties among us statistically have no health advantage over others and that our breed's average lifespan shrank by 10% in the decade 1995-2005!

Private versus Public Good

Just like Bernie Madoff, who is no expert in wealth for anyone but himself, the AKC and the STCA are not experts either—at least, not experts in what is now vital to our dogs, viz., management of an inbred population. Let's disabuse ourselves: their knowledge domain specialty is the “specialty” codified into breeding dogs to appearance-standards. They know it because they invented it. I'm not denying such knowledge is expertise; I'm saying it is expertise in a tiny domain of special-interest that is irrelevant to how to get us out of the closed studbook, inbreeding depression mess we've bred ourselves into, and has everything to do with the simplistic genetics-as-show-glamor thinking that got us here in the first place.

What is culpable here is not ignorance—that is the human condition, and it can be fixed. But ignorance and arrogance cannot. Had Madoff told investors straight up that he wanted their money for his private interests, not for the greater good, there would be no scandal. There also would have been no investors! Public trust is just that—it has to do with the common good. But the truth is, the public is not a shareholder in the STCA and the private club's expertise is not breeding genetically fit, long-lived Scotties for the

Two Models: The Great Divide	
Exploiters	Nurturers
Spirit of hubris/abstraction/ greed Culture of efficiency Ethos of change/progress Mode of competition/conquest	Spirit of modesty and reverence for individual Culture of love Ethos of continuity/sustainability Mode of cooperation/harmony

Fig. 1 Two models of the good life. Model 1, the American Way for 300 years, has harmed the land, the planet, and all creatures including our Scottish Terriers. It's past time for a paradigm shift to a sustainable, wholesome model as nurturers. Table by the author.

Continued on p. 44



“*But the public is not a shareholder in the STCA and the private club's expertise is not breeding genetically fit, long-lived Scotties for the real world, it is breeding arbitrarily defined champions for the artificial world of the showing.*”

real world, it is breeding arbitrarily defined champions for the artificial world of the showing.

Exploitation enters when we, and they, presume the 'specialty' world of appearance conformation is for health and the common good. It isn't. Selective breeding for appearance conformation and selective breeding for genetic fitness require mutually exclusive criteria. To my knowledge no Madoff investors died as a result of his exploitation, but our Scotties die daily from consequences of ignored inbreeding depression, the 'toxic assets' in the STCA's 'investment portfolio' from a century of exploiting Scottie genes for ideals of appearance.

Let me repeat: the scandal here is not ignorance, it is private interest masked as public good. Indeed, the fact that the AKC and STCA are *de facto* ignorant of how to manage a genetically endangered population is not a crime, it is a redemptive opportunity. What I'm saying is, if the STCA would now turn for direction to the real experts in how to manage inbred, threatened populations to health and vigor—zoo keepers, conservation biologists, and those trained in population genetics—the STCA could demonstrate good will to embrace the Nurturer Model by putting the dogs's needs ahead of self-interest.

In my view it would be healthier for STCA's reputation and for our dogs to admit a century of breeding ignorance, than to insist they've known all along what their choices and priorities and practice would do to the gene pool but chose to save the appearances and do harm.

Accountability In Money and Dogs?

I've gone to lengthy detail on this matter of proprietorship and accountability not to merely produce a piece of smartassery but because we need in our Scottie circles what we're not getting in congress with reference to explicit analysis and accountability of how and why banking crises happen and why the economic meltdown that wrenched lives around the globe wasn't foreseen and prevented. What failed? Without definitive answers we cannot proceed intelligently to change the system so it doesn't happen again.

Precisely the same is true of our genetic deconstruction of the Diehard within Scottie circles. It's not enough to be told "there is a problem." We know that. We're burying them. We need to know why and how health problems now tearing our dogs and hearts can exist in dogs whose genes and lives we control through selective breeding; we deserve to know what real change is in place to assure "well-bred" will mean health and longevity tomorrow.

As I ruminate over parallels between our USA financial house of cards and the canine genetic house of cards

that is the modern Scottish Terrier, I remember the Savings and Loan scandal and bailout 35 years ago, and the cooked profit ledgers of the Enron scandal at the turn of the millennium, and more recently the sub-prime mortgage fiasco and the Madoff ponzi scheme. I know "there is nothing new under the sun" and I despair it will ever change.

Conclusion

Exploitation is in our blood. Our nation was founded on it. Today the original foreign colonialism that exploited our land is replaced by colonialism of global corporations who, because they gain so little from community in the short run, do not hesitate to destroy community for the long run.

To put our national character into human scale, consider our earliest exploration in this land. The expedition of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, 1540-1542, sets the mentality of what follows and whose triumph is our catastrophe. He left Compostela, Mexico, and headed north with 336 Spanish soldiers, six companies of cavalry, one of infantry, and one of artillery plus wives and children and several hundred Indians. More than a thousand horses and mules packed baggage, arms, provisions and munitions. Coronado was only 31. In the plains of Texas the avarice-driven Coronado, bewitched by tales of "cities of gold," handpicked 30 of his best men, mostly in their twenties, from some of the finest families in old Spain, and taking an Indian slave, they made a side trip "northward by the needle" toward the Land of Quivira to find gold.

Their guide was a slave in exile who lied about the cities of gold because he was homesick. He gambled that the lure of gold was his ticket home so he exploited the exploiters made gullible by greed.

After finding no gold in the Land of Quivira (today's region of the Zuni Nation) and ending up as far north as central Kansas, the expedition, angry and frustrated, strangled their guide with a rope twisted around a stick.

The murdered man, whom they'd named "The Turk," was not cunning enough to overcome the power of conquest. That same power strangles us today.

Change will not come from the top down led by institutional agendas aimed at consolidating power, least of all from one whose mandate is conformation. Our Scotties' hope for tomorrow will come from the bottom up, one hopelessly enchanted individual at a time.

When I despair, I look into my Scottie's eyes and they shame me into resolution. In their eyes is a great language of trust that humans will one day do the right thing.

