

ON ALL FRONTS

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Life Imitates Art

Conservator Lawrence Castagna has restored many great works of dog art, but a recent project was a life-changing experience. While working on three oil paintings of Basset Hounds by Maud Earl, Castagna fell in love with one face on the 110-year-old canvas—a Basset Hound named Solomon.

“He was looking at me every day,” Castagna told the *GAZETTE* for a feature on art restoration that ran in the October 2009 issue. “His gaze got to me.”

So much so that Castagna decided he *had* to have a Basset Hound of his own. Luckily, Jim Dok, the painting’s owner, is a leading Basset Hound breeder. And it just so happened he had a tricolor pup, named Gamble, who seemed a perfect fit for Castagna’s life in East Hampton, near the tip of Long Island, New York.

So on January 13, Gamble embarked on the long trip from Dok’s Castlehill’s kennel, on Washington State’s Puget Sound, to Kennedy Airport, where his new owner was anxiously waiting.

“The Gamble has landed!” Castagna wrote in e-mails to friends the next day. “We are bonding quickly. ... He listens to me and is very well behaved. He is snoozing at my feet as I type this.”

Within the week, Gamble’s sensitive nose had checked out every inch of his new home and the dog had settled in. For Castagna, it was like seeing a century-old work of art come to life: “The movements, the sniffing, the brow wrinkles, and sometimes the same poses. Maud Earl was able to capture all of that and now I can see it up close. I bet Maud Earl would be very happy indeed!” —Mara Bovsun



top: Castagna meets Gamble at the airport.
left: Solomon is in the center panel, at the back.

Paws Up >>

To two lifesaving teams who braved raging waters to save dogs in distress.

On January 22, 60 Los Angeles firefighters rushed to the rescue of a German Shepherd Dog-mix stranded on a ledge in the middle of the flood-swollen Los Angeles River. Rescuers quickly realized the only hope was to dangle a person from a helicopter and snatch the dog from the rapids. That task came to 25-year Los Angeles Fire Department veteran Joe St. Georges.

The dog was not cooperative, but St. Georges held tight as the pair was hoisted by cable into a helicopter. TV coverage pushed the lost dog into the spotlight, and a few days later his owner, Maria Medina, showed up to claim him. The dog, Spikey, and Medina’s Labrador Retriever, Polo, had wandered away from her property when her grandchildren left the gate open. Happily, Spikey and Polo are now safely home.

Four days later and halfway around the world, another water rescue turned a stray and his savior into celebrities. This story began with a dog stranded on an ice floe floating on a river past the Polish city of Grudziadz. Rescue efforts by firefighters failed, and the dog was about 15 miles out into open water when, in a fantastic stroke of luck, he drifted past a Polish research ship, the *Baltica*. The crew lowered a pontoon, and ship mechanic Adam Buczynski grabbed the wet, shivering castaway, who was soon onboard, sharing sausages with the crew.

Within days, several people tried to claim him, but, according to reports, the dog “rejected” them all. He was in need of a bath but fearful of water—until Buczynski picked up the dog and the two took a shower together, cementing the bond between rescuer and rescued. Soon Buczynski announced that he had a new pet, and the ship a new mascot. On February 10, *Baltica* came onboard as the *Baltica*’s newest crew member. —M.B.

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