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# AN OBEDIENCE INSTRUCTOR'S FORUM

# FORWARD

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## KEEP THOSE STUDENTS!

*By Helen Cariotis*

When I first started my business, one of the things I heard over and over from successful business owners was that it is always easier and less costly to keep your customers than to go out and get new ones. This just makes sense, of course. We get new training class students by advertising (brochures and fliers, ads in the newspaper), taking part in community events and volunteer efforts, word of mouth from happy clients and dog professionals, prospective clients seeing our building or seeing us at work, giving talks for local groups, joining the local Chamber of Commerce, and just being as visible as we can in our communities. Some of these ways to get students cost money and some require time. Either way, we will expend some effort.

If we can figure out ways to keep the students we have already enrolled in class, we will depend less on bringing in new ones and reduce the money, effort, and time needed to do that. With our classes fuller, replacing those empty spots will be much easier. How can we convince our students to stay with us and keep bringing their dogs to our classes?

*Continued on Page 6*



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# FORWARD

## AN OBEDIENCE INSTRUCTOR'S FORUM

A quarterly publication providing an informational forum for instructors which will ultimately promote responsible dog ownership and enhance the human-animal companion bond.

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## MONDIORING OBEDIENCE

*By Karen A. Shivers*

Mondioring Obedience is part of an International Cynological Federation (FCI) sport titled "Mondioring." "Mondioring was created by delegates from several countries in Europe and America, in hopes of utilizing different portions of already existing national dog sports, and allowing an enriching union of all the enthusiasts of working dogs, beginners or experienced. Its goal is to be entertaining for the spectators, a game of progressive difficulties for the participants, and a competitive sport for the training enthusiast." (*Mondioring Rules of Competition*).

The United States Mondioring Association (USMRA) would like to support the promotion of the "obedience only" portion of Mondioring to all dog trainers and handlers as another venue of competition and training to highlight the "aptitudes of the dog, the quality of its training, the control of its handler," and in the overall competition, the "genetic inheritance of the dog".

Mondioring is designed to test the ability of the dog and handler in obedience, jumping and bite work, however, the obedience only portion is an excellent way for handlers to train for a different type of sport that challenges the abilities of both dog and handler.

The competition field for Mondioring, is usually 130' x 200' and is set up just as it would be for the three levels of normal competition (which includes bite work). For the obedience title, the bite work portion is omitted, however, all the distractions from the field and the crowd are still there.

The obedience title is open to ALL breeds

and can be done with or without the jumps. The obedience only exercises would be very similar to the Open & Utility levels in AKC/UKC with a lot more "stuff" added.

Jumps are much higher than the norm so most likely only ringsport type dogs would be interested in titling with the jump included. As an example, all dogs doing jump work at Level I, must be able to at least jump 3.2' if they choose the hurdle.



**AT GATE**

The ring set-ups and patterns are different at every trial so it is not possible to pattern train the dog. There is also a theme for every trial. For instance, the National trial was recently held in Texas and the committee chose a Western theme, complete with a windmill, the Alamo, hay bales, saddles, a horse trailer, etc., all on the competition field. Depending on the heeling pattern the entire ring is not always used for the obedience only title but the dog, handler, judge, deputy judge, and scribe are all out on the field with the competitor. Apprentice judges are also approved to judge for

obedience only titles.

Dogs and handlers must enter the field, at heel, without any leash or collar on and present themselves to the judge to begin the exercises. The fields are always fenced. The judge determines the heeling pattern for each level and all the exercises are shown to the handlers on the field prior to the start of the competition. There is also a dog and handler (called the "Dog in White") that performs the exercises for everyone to see prior to the start of all levels.

The obedience exercises include:

Level I: Heeling without a leash; Absence of handler (1 minute for level 1); Go out, or as Mondioring calls it, the Send-away; Positions (dog must be able to stand, sit, and down in any order away from the handler), Food refusal; and Retrieve of a thrown object (judge's choice).



**AT HEEL**

Level II & III: All of the above exercises with the addition of Search for an Object. This is much like the articles in Utility except that it is done with what Mondioring calls "little

woods.” It is a small wooden dowel about 6” long and is scented by the handler and then put out with the other wooden dowels on the field for the retrieve. The dog is allowed to watch the dowel go out and down.

Scoring is done by point deductions. Dog and handler teams do **not** have to have at least 50% of each exercise to qualify and can achieve the title in one trial. There is a possible 55 points in Level I Obedience without the jump and 70 points with it. Level II Obedience has 85 points with additional points for jumps depending on which one the handler chooses (handlers must choose two jumps in level 2), and Level III has the same start points of 85 with additional jump points if they are chosen. All three of the jumps, if chosen, must be done in Level III. There are only three types of jumps. They are the Palisade, Hurdle, and Long Jump.



**HURDLE JUMP**



**PALISADE JUMP**



**LONG JUMP**

The obedience exercises are never done in the same order at different trials but are always done in the same order at that particular trial. The order doesn't change once the judge for that trial establishes it. The heeling pattern is determined by the judge and must contain two halts, a right turn, left turn and an about turn. It can be as long or as short as the judge desires.

The three different levels progress in difficulty in all phases.

The absence of handler is always done in a down position with the handler leaving, not looking back and stepping into a blind or behind an object so that the dog cannot see the handler (again, 1 minute for level 1 dogs).



**THE DOWN**

Send-aways (go-outs) are done between two points that are well marked on the field.

As soon as the dog crosses the marked part on the field, they are automatically recalled by the handler by either a whistle or voice command. Dogs do not have to sit in front to finish.

Positions are done much like the Utility exercise except voice commands must be used and the handler can sometimes be sitting down, standing up, or sitting on something. For instance, the handler might be asked to sit inside a little row- boat on the field for a hunting theme and give the commands from inside the boat that is on the field. The deputy judge is behind the handler telling them which position to do so they don't forget the order.

The Retrieve can be done with whatever object the judge decides to use with consideration being given to the size of the dog in the obedience only title. If the dog is small, a smaller object will be used. At a recent trial, an empty plastic clothes softener bottle that had a few pebbles in it was used and in another a western boot.



**THE RETRIEVE**

Mondioring is an amazing sport that gives a great challenge to the dog and handler while making it a lot of fun to do. For additional

information on this incredible sport please visit the USMRA website at:

<http://www.usmondioring.org>.

There is a description of the exercises in the rules section and also in the education section of the website. There is also a Yahoo group list available if you do a search for Mondioringobedience at:

<http://www.yahogroups.com>

Youtube has numerous videos available that show different breeds of dogs doing Mondioring exercises.

You may also contact Karen A. Shivers at [stonefox@1starnet.com](mailto:stonefox@1starnet.com) for additional information on becoming involved in Mondioring Obedience.

Please remember that the sport of Mondioring is an FCI recognized sport and is done exactly the same in all countries where it is performed. If you learn it here, you can also compete at the international level. The Obedience only title is typically done in the United States but is offered internationally as well.

**About the author:** *Karen A. Shivers, #632, has been a member of NADOI since 1989. She has been training and competing in conformation and performance events since 1974 and is a licensed conformation judge with AKC and a licensed conformation and obedience judge with UKC. Karen has taught obedience, rally, agility, tracking, herding, conformation handling, and is also involved in training narcotics and personal protection K9's. Her devotion to the working K9 led her to her interest in Dogsport and Mondioring. This article was originally published in NADOI Notes.*

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### **Keep Those Students, continued from page 1:**

One of the best strategies is to always give more than you have to. Whatever your students expect, provide more. More value for what they have spent will put them in the frame of mind to keep coming back. A good way to do this is to offer a lifetime guarantee on your training. If your students know up front that they can always participate in a class when they want to or need to, and at little or even no additional cost to them, they will come to you first and forever. Your success with this plan will depend a great deal on how much time, space and manpower you can provide repeat students. If you run enough basic classes so that adding one or two "lifetime guarantee" students in each session won't be really noticed, this is probably the best way to go. Even if you have to tell a student they may need to wait a few weeks or a month before

they can be accommodated, most will understand. This method is relatively painless for you, the instructor, and keeps your “lifetime guarantee” student happy. And as a plus, happy students are out there recommending your classes!

Sometimes the “lifetime guarantee” can produce more students than you can realistically blend into new classes, but if you have the time and space, you can run a special class for them. Put a cute name on it like “Beginner Times Two,” or “More Beginner,” and no one feels singled out as “having” to do more. I know an instructor who is fortunate enough to have an assistant who runs this class pretty much all year for her, and loves it. Because of its small size, she sees great results in the dog/handler teams and students know they are getting a super value. She does charge a small “administrative” fee, which is basically covering what she would owe the Parks and Rec department that provides the space for her. If this class is run concurrently with another or you have time right after a class, you may feel you can get by without charging at all. I have done it both ways and both work well.

Another way to keep students is to provide “bridge” classes. Perhaps you would normally send your beginners right into intermediate, or novice class. Many may have young dogs and just need a little more time before they get too serious in their training. Perhaps you have students who really don’t have any interest in going on to obedience or rally. They may have already told you they don’t want to do anything competitive. Do you have a place in your schedule for a “fun” type class like tricks or an agility sampler? How about a class that meets in the real world, where every meeting is a field trip? This can be as simple as meeting on Sunday afternoon in the park, or planning walking tours in a

shopping area (with a fun stop at a dog-friendly café, of course)! Do you have students who would enjoy the “social class” type format, where everyone hikes together in a group with dogs off lead? These kinds of classes can be as unique as your interests are, and scheduled routinely or as student interest warrants. Normally, once things like weather and your manpower are factored in, you’ll find that keeping these “bridge” classes flexible is a good idea. I always found that charging an “each time” fee worked best for me, and that way no one felt locked in to a bunch of classes.

Many schools will offer a CGC periodically so that their beginner students can take part in this wonderful AKC program. If you keep the fee low enough to cover your costs, maybe provide a little gift to your evaluator and some cute extras for the handlers and their dogs, lots of folks will take part. The CGC can sometimes provide just that little motivation a student needs to decide to go further in their training. It is a great way to bring in families, and is non-competitive enough that most of your students will want to try for that award. If you have the time at the end of a beginner session and your classes are small, you can easily build the CGC into the course itself and many instructors do. I always found it easier to put on a separate event, usually out at the park where we’d get spectators, and we knew we’d have time to run it smoothly. Photo ops and refreshments afterwards will keep everyone in a great mood. Students who are happy and having a good time in your programs are likely to want to stay in your programs.

Get creative about offering ways for your handlers to socialize. One big reason people either enjoy dog obedience class or merely endure and get through it is their ability to socialize and simply enjoy themselves. You will keep more students if

they feel like they have a pleasant place to meet new friends. If you have building, make sure there is a place for folks to sit and talk, perhaps have soft drink, coffee, or just a water, and share with others who are also working to train their dogs. If your class is outdoors, it costs little to load up your cooler with some ice and water for afterwards. Having extra lawn chairs is good as well. Scheduling special events throughout the year where trainers and their dogs can come out and socialize with other students is always a plus. Even just an annual picnic can make your students want to stay with you.

Dog owners are quite savvy nowadays; they watch TV and know what dog activities are out there. If you have students who really want to do agility or fly ball, for example, and you don't offer them, find a way to set up a reciprocal program with your friend down the road who does. For example, you send your student to her, and she promises to send hers to you for obedience (or problem solving, social class, or whatever else you do that she doesn't do). You are helping one another and you both will probably end up with that student at one time or another. If you really don't have what your student wants, don't be afraid to refer him on, as this makes you look good and they will remember that.

Do you have a business web site? Make sure you are using it effectively so that your students feel like you appreciate them and you are continually giving them something of value. Of course you post your handouts and provide tips and answer questions, but you can also post photos of your students and their dogs. Most folks love this, and if you will make sure they can "lift" them off so they can share them, you will please many.

Of course, it goes without saying that the best way to keep students in your program is

to provide them with what sent them to you in the first place: a trained dog that is safe in their home and community, and fun to have around. If your students are successful and finish your class with a dog that is better than when they came to you, they will understand the value of training and why it is for a lifetime. If they feel like they have learned how to prevent and solve problems, and know they can always call on you if they need advice, they needn't be perfect. Results oriented classes will always keep your students happy!

Our economy can be a brutal place to run a small business, and we all need to find ways to set ourselves apart from the competition. Be smart: work hard to fill your classes AND understand and use strategies to keep those students!

***About the author:** Helen Cariotis, #372, is a longtime member of NADOI and the current President of NADOI. She recently retired from operating a successful business, Canine Counselors, in the Dallas, TX area.*

## **That One Particular Person IT'S OK TO HIDE**

*By Charlotte Schwartz*

In a recent puppy class I had a lady student with a lovely little Border Collie named Aaron (that name should have given me a hint at what the lady was all about!). Helen, the owner, was a middle aged lady with a gentle smile, whispery voice, and soft, "I'll take care of you" type of nature.

Once the class began, I quickly noted the lady's habit of stroking Aaron incessantly and whispering soft words to him. She seemed not to notice my request to the class

that all puppies should be on the floor and none in human laps. The pups need to know this is school and it's time to learn how to play with other dogs and people and behave with good manners. Sitting on their owners' laps would prevent them from experiencing the many life events that awaited them.

A few gentle reminders to put all puppies on the floor and Helen got the message. However, the moment Aaron's feet hit the floor, Helen pulled him in to between her feet. (Aaron must not touch or smell other dogs – they might have fleas or other bugs! Or they may bite that little black and white fellow! One look at Helen's expression told me more than I really wanted to know!)

As the hours and weeks progressed, the class had no trouble teaching the pups to sit, sit and stay, and come to the happy sounds of owners calling their dogs. The general atmosphere in the class was filled with bits of hot dog slices, the sounds of celebration when dogs and owners all performed the new lessons. Learning to pay attention, to watching their owners, to recognize the many sounds of effective voice use, and the laughing cheers of "OK! You're so smart!"

During those first two weeks, Aaron did not learn anything except to keep close to Helen whenever she put him on the floor. He simply hugged her feet and every time he got the chance, he would wiggle his way between her feet and stand there looking up for approval. Her response was the same each time he did that; she would pat his head and utter words of affection.

And during that two week period I must have reminded Helen a dozen times to keep her hands off the dog, not coax him to huddle beside her and to encourage him to make friends with the other puppies. None of this seemed to penetrate Helen's thinking so she

continued to do whatever she wanted to do without any verbal response to me.



When week three began, I promised myself to ignore Helen and let her do whatever she wanted as long as it did not hurt Aaron or interfere with any of the other dogs and owners. Maybe ignoring her would turn her thinking around and she would at least try to comply with the class lessons. However, this was not to be. Now it was my turn to ignore her and get on with my job of teaching.

Week three we began sitting on the floor and encouraging the puppies to lay down beside us for a treat and some gentle stroking. As I had hoped, Helen loved the idea of sitting on the floor with Aaron but she did not want to give him bits of hot dogs. Instead, she produced some little pieces of beef jerky with the explanation that the jerky was more of a treat than plain old hot dogs.

At that point I explained that jerky probably contained ingredients that were spicier than hot dogs and therefore not very good for the puppy.

Helen insisted that she had previously taste tested it and found it fine for her little boy. Once again, I gave up and turned back to the lesson without making any more remarks.

This type of student response to each activity continued throughout the entire course. Aaron never sat, stayed, came when called because he simply could not stay still until Helen walked away and then called him.

As part of our kindergarten program, we include the new AKC Star Puppy Program in our course. We explain the details of Star Puppy on week one and each week we do some of the tests until all behaviors are tested by graduation night. Then, the students receive a graduation certificate and the Star Puppy test form which they will send to the AKC to register their puppies.

Unfortunately, Aaron did not pass any of the test items. Helen did not seem concerned or to care. Lastly, she did not bother to say thanks or good bye to any of her fellow students or to me. That did not surprise me and I admit that I drove home that night with a heavy heart. If only I could have convinced Helen to give the course a chance to help Aaron develop into a bright, caring, willing companion instead of a frightened dog that hid between his owners legs as she soothed him with her attitude of "It's OK to hide beneath me."

It's NOT OK, and if ever I get another student who wants to protect their dog from the world, I will tell them the story of Aaron and Helen. Helen paid a lot of money for Aaron and, due to her reluctance to accept a course in socialization and manners, she must live with a dog that hides under furniture, behind doors, between his owners feet whenever he feels, sees, hears, or senses something new or strange. My heart

hurts for Aaron.

**About the author:** A well-known author and valued member of NADOI, Charlotte Schwartz, #119, lives in Florida.

**Advertising Rates for Forward:**

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Full page - \$125.00 per issue\*

Photographs: no charge for up to 3 photographs per full page ad; 2 photographs per ½ page ad; one photograph per ¼ ad. Additional photographs, any size ad are \$6.00 each. Line art illustrations are no charge.

\*10 percent discount for prepayment of four ads

**THE EVER-EXPANDING DOG LIBRARY** - *Training Dogs: A Manual* by Colonel Konrad Most

Colonel Most was "one of the world's most experienced and distinguished authorities on all types of dog training and a pioneer in the study of dog psychology." His book, first published in Germany in 1910, was translated into English and published in Great Britain in 1954. Although out of print for many years, DogWise has reprinted this classic and is now available at [www.dogwise.com](http://www.dogwise.com)

There is a wealth of information to be obtained from reading training books published prior to 1980 as is evidenced by this book written over 100 years ago.

It is obvious in reading this text that Colonel Most had a profound respect and admiration for dogs. However, he did not fall into the trap, still prevalent today, of believing that dogs

have the capacity for thought and moral behavior. He recognized that dogs are capable of emotion and his book was developed to “serve as a guide to a system of teaching suited both to the emotional and instinctive life” of the dog.

The first chapter, *The Theory of Training*, explains clearly and concisely how dogs use their senses and how training can build on this understanding to produce a dog that is under command. In this chapter, Colonel Most explains that “[t]he aim of training can be achieved only by exercising compulsion whenever the dog does not spontaneously do what is required of him.” The next chapter covers the use of compulsion and inducements – the positive and negative reinforcements and punishments used by trainers today. Contrary to what many trainers would espouse today, good trainers in the past, were not only well aware of the quadrants of learning theory (though the terminology may have differed) but were capable of using that knowledge to develop a true working partnership with the dogs they trained. As Colonel Most wrote “[w]e have no wish to see a panic-stricken slave doing what we want in fear and trembling, but a dog that enjoys life and is happy in his work, putting all his heart into it.”

When discussing teaching the retrieve, Colonel Most wrote “The observant trainer will discover that many dogs soon develop a very strong inclination to seize and bring objects if the exercise is made to resemble play.” A little further in the chapter he notes “[T]he duration of training and the number of repetitions required depend on the individual dog. The exercise should be interrupted as soon as the animal can no longer be persuaded to execute the movement required. Even a slight application of compulsion may well prevent the return of the right mood for some considerable time.”

Throughout the book, the thread is woven that training should work with a dog’s natural

instincts rather than against those instincts. While the use of compulsion is part of the training methods described, he also goes into detail about the need for trainers to understand that training was an ongoing process and that it was unreasonable to expect dogs to behave perfectly at all times.

While training techniques have changed throughout the decades, the underlying principles expressed in *Training Dogs: A Manual*, remain as true today as they were when first written in 1910. This is a book that should be read, and re-read, by all trainers who desire to increase their knowledge and understanding of dogs.

**Review by:** Jan Gribble, #925. Jan is a past-President of NADOI and currently serves as its Executive Director.

### **Come Play in the Ozarks!**



### **May 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> in Springfield, MO**

**Nicole Wilde will speak on Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup> on *Helping Fearful Dogs* and will cover *Creative Client Coaching* on Sunday, May 13<sup>th</sup>. NADOI's very own *Brenda Aloff* will be the featured after dinner speaker at the Saturday night Banquet. Come hear her talk about: *Bang for the Buck Exercises – How to do a little work and get a BIG result.***

**[www.nadoi.org](http://www.nadoi.org) – click on Events**