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*"This Above All... To Thine Own Self
Be True. And it must follow, as the night the
day, thou canst not then be false to any man."
• Shakespeare / Hamlet / I / III*

When Your Dogs Come Out



My dog is a fag. There's just no other way to put it. Zack, my three-year old vizsla, is the girliest male dog I've ever seen.

He crosses his paws at the ankles instead of the knees, he barks with a lisp and he only sniffs boy butt.

It wouldn't be so bad if Zack looked like a gay dog. You know, like a French poodle, or a Bichon Frise, the kind of four-legged queen you dress up like a girl whether it's a girl or not.

But Zack doesn't look like the kind of dog you'd hang berets on. He's a 60-pound hunting dog, for God's sakes. A guy's kind of dog.

Like any parent of a sissy, I hoped no one would notice. But then my sister Cindy outed him. "He is *not* gay," I told her when she confided that she'd never seen a gay dog before. "Who are you kidding?" she pointed at him. "Look at the way he walks!"

It's true. My hunting dog doesn't walk; he prances.

I don't understand how I got stuck with an effeminate dog. I tried to de-gay him but nothing works. Everytime he crosses his paws he looks like Noel Coward waiting for someone to light his cigarette. So I go over and uncross them. "Bad dog, femme dog," I scold him. But as soon as I turn my back he crosses them again.

It makes me wonder where I went wrong. Did I smother him too much when he was

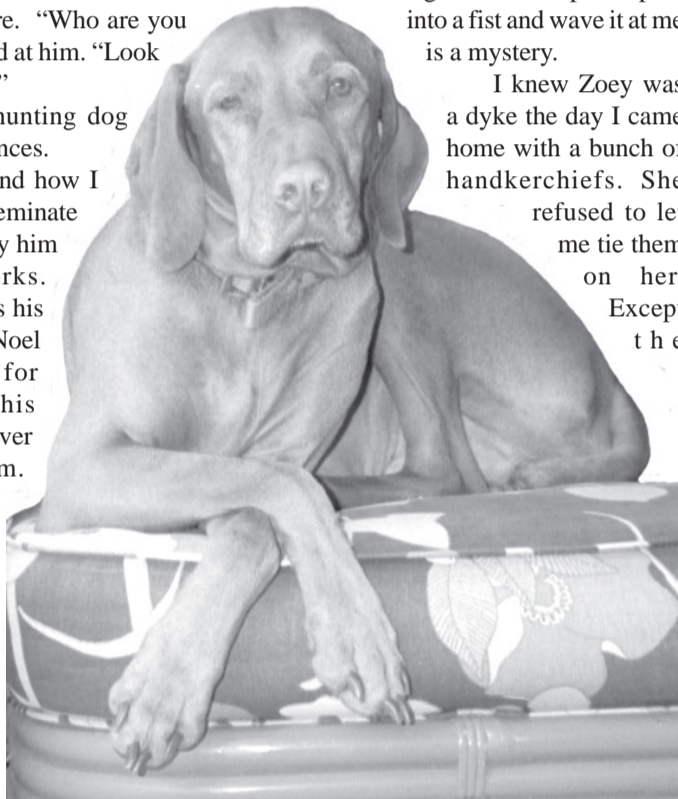
a puppy? Was I too distant? I think it really comes down to the nature or nurture question. Does effeminacy in male dogs occur naturally or does it come out as a response to their self-loathing owners?

Whether Zack was born with the desire to walk like Cher or whether he picked it up from his owner's ex-boyfriend, I'll never know. All I know is that this isn't the lifestyle I would have picked for him.

My other dog is no consolation either. She's a lesbo from the word go-go. At first, I thought her lesbianism was cute. But then she got militant on me.

Zoey is a black Labrador Retriever who hasn't retrieved anything for me except headaches. "I refuse to fetch anything for the patriarchy," she once scratched out in her dinner bowl. How she managed to ball up her paw into a fist and wave it at me is a mystery.

I knew Zoey was a dyke the day I came home with a bunch of handkerchiefs. She refused to let me tie them on her. Except t h e



ugly one. That one she wore every day.

Dinner is the best time to see the juxtaposition of Zack's girliness and Zoey's mannishness. Zoey chows down and barks for a beer. Zack picks at his food and wonders if a little coriander wouldn't take the edge off the kibble.

Zoey hip checks Zack off his bowl, like a school bully shaking him down for lunch money. Zack comes crying to me, wondering if I didn't perhaps have a nice Cabernet to comfort him with.

Whenever my sister comes over to my apartment the first thing she says is "Hi, girls!" It's unclear whether I'm included in the greeting, but that's not the point. The point is that she simply assumes Zack is gay and feels free to take liberties with the correct pronouns.

Hearing my sister's greeting was the last straw. I needed support so I went to a meeting of the canine division of P-FLAG (Pet owners and Friends of Lesbian and Gay Dogs).

It was there that I learned to accept the sexual preferences of my pets. Did I say preference? I meant orientation.

As hard as it's been, I've learned to cultivate pride in a retriever who won't retrieve anything until I grow tits and a tight box. As hard as it's been, I've learned to brag about a nelly, swishy dog that can't bark without a purse falling out of his mouth.

It took me a while, but today I really don't give a damn who sees my dyke dog swagger or my girlie-boy prance. We're a family and shame is not a family value.

Michael Alvear lives with his lesbian Labrador and girlie-boy Vizsla. Constantly demanding to get paid for his frivolous work, he can be reached at MAIvear@ExpressGayNews.com

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The Express Stylebook Policy

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