

Adventures with Durango Pete

Life and Poetry with a Cow Dog Philosofur

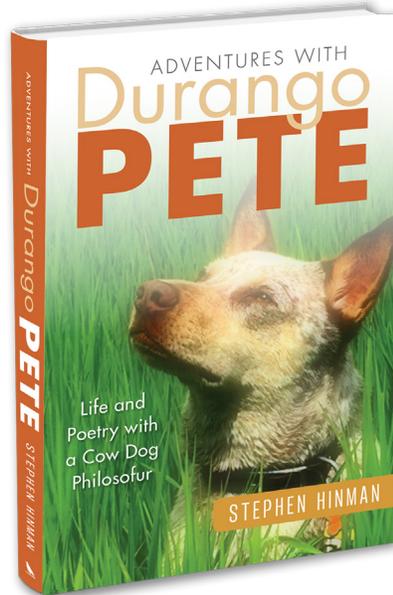
By Stephen Hinman

(and Durango Pete, of course)

INTRODUCTION

Everybody who has a dog thinks his or her canine pal is the greatest. That is the way it should be. I get it. No arguments. So, I ask you to humor me and afford me the same luxury—or delusion. I want to tell you about a dog who is my sidekick and share a few stories and observations about life that I discovered—or recovered—thanks to Durango Pete, a crazy cattle dog who was born in New Mexico, relinquished for adoption at the tender age of six weeks, saved by a great lady, and a short-time later, came to live with me and my wife in Colorado.

But this story is not simply the tale of a man gushing about what a great dog he has as a companion. It is really the story about two souls, both on their own journeys, and the gifts they gave each other along the way. All of us have dreams, fears, needs, anxieties, and curiosity. Durango Pete, I discovered, is no different. We all have unique perspectives and gifts to share. We all want to be appreciated, needed, loved. Often, the darkness that is part of us stands in the way of our light manifesting. Our fears—expressed as insecurity, greed, anger, contempt, and even hate—prevent deep relationships from flourishing, whether it be among humans, or between a human and his dog. It is the struggle immortal—the yin and the



yang. Life doesn't just happen *to* us; it happens *with* us. Our responses to people and events—and yes, a dog—involve our consent. Lashing out, the knee-jerk responses of anger and impatience are always up to us to choose, as are appreciation, understanding, and even joy. Even convincing ourselves that we are justified is a choice. History is littered with examples of great damage done by individuals who felt justified. A simple glance at current domestic and worldwide affairs makes clear this ancient struggle and truth. More important than what happens is our choice about how we respond and act—when slapped upside the head by life or when presented with unexpected joys.

Many walks that I take with Durango Pete happen along ponds, lakes, and rivers. Often, I notice the breeze, however slight it might be, or the landing of an insect so small as to escape my eyes but still be noticeable from the ripples on the water propagated and spread far from that source. Our choices—our behaviors—also create ripples. There is a theory, or a metaphorical concept, coined by Edward Lorenz, called the butterfly effect. This is the idea that small causes can bring about significant changes. The flapping of a butterfly's wings might lead to a change in the path that a tornado would otherwise take.



INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

In *The Vocation of Man*, published in Germany in 1799, Johann Gottlieb Fichte says, “You cannot remove a single grain of sand from its place without thereby...changing something throughout all parts of the immeasurable whole.” I would suggest the same is true when we place a grain of sand on a beach—a grain that was not there before.

Perhaps Durango Pete is the grain of sand—or the beating of a butterfly’s wings (wild and frantic, I agree)—placed into my life. And for Durango Pete, perhaps, I am the same. A harsh rebuke, a simple stroke of my hand upon his head, changes his day in profound ways. It changes mine too. When he refuses to come, or when he brushes his body against my leg as I sit working in my chair, I am changed in simple and profound ways. Blood pressure rises—or blood pressure falls. I expect that similar responses manifest in him. This very thought process, which I sit here and write, is the result of a little cattle dog named Durango Pete entering my life. I might be engaged in reflection if Pete was not a presence in my world. I am an old man, and it is the common avocation of the elderly to engage in thinking about stuff. But I have no doubts that Durango Pete is the disturbance in my dynamic system that has brought me to this place—the place where I think about the struggles between people, cultures, religions, and a man and a dog and a dog and a man. This book is a reflection of the great change that came about because of him—my return to my roots as a writer.

A dog can teach us a lot—if we open our hearts and minds and put aside our arrogance and desire to be in control. Durango Pete is the gift that brought me to a better place. I like to say, “At the age of five, I was fully connected with my

creator—God, if you will. At the age of sixty-six, I am steadily working my way back.” Durango Pete is the unlikely vehicle through which this has happened. I had no idea, when I first saw him almost five years ago at an adoption event, how profound our relationship would be, nor what that relationship would allow me to become: a better person. I like to think that Pete feels the same way. I think he does. Perhaps you are on a conscious journey too. Perhaps Durango Pete can be a grain of sand—or a butterfly’s wings—in your life as he has been in mine.

Pete is over four years old now. We have had quite the adventure getting to where we are. Oh, he still outsmarts me most of the time, and like the first day I saw him, I am still pretty much a sucker for him. But we have ironed out a few understandings over the years, and life is pretty easy with him now—provided Cynthia and I listen to what he has to say. We have shared travel, treats, time, tender moments, tough times, plenty of talks, and quite a few adventures. Pete and I have sat in the wild places, and we have thought about a lot of stuff. Once in a while, Pete shares a philosophical observation with me. Sometimes, the epiphany about life is mine. Sometimes poetry happens—usually a collaboration of an unlikely sort, you know, a ‘mixed-species’ Rogers and Hammerstein.

Early on, Pete and I decided to write this book. We aren’t done rambling and writing yet, even though I am getting a bit old and creaky. This is a collection of our stories about life, and poetry with a cattle dog philosofur—Durango L. Pete—and me, an old man and his friend.

