



Captain Haggerty, 74, Dog Trainer, Dog Author, Dog Cineaste

BY STEPHEN MILLER - Staff Reporter of the Sun

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Arthur Haggerty, who died July 3 at 74, was a charismatic dog trainer whose students went on to careers as attack dogs, guard dogs, avalanche rescue dogs, bomb-sniffers, sled-pullers, messengers, and herders.

A former Army K-9 unit commander, he established the Captain Haggerty School for Dogs on East 76th Street. There, he became known as dog-trainer to the stars; the U.N. secretary-general, U Thant, Walt Frazier, and Liza Minelli were among his clients.

At one time, Haggerty had the largest stable of rental dogs in the country, numbering some 300, with clients including Manhattan construction sites and major department stores like Macy's, Gimbel's, and Bonwit Teller. Through Captain Haggerty's Theatrical Dogs, he supplied canine talent for advertisements, soap operas, and dozens of films, as well as Sandy for the Broadway show, "Annie" (1983). He also supplied chic on camera dogs for films shown on the Playboy Channel. (For Hugh Hefner, he trained two Old English Sheepdogs who did not appear on film.)

Over a career revolving around a fixed point marked "dog," Haggerty was a sought-after judge at dog shows; published "Aggression Newsletter," which focused on problem pets; wrote five books on dog training, dog breeds, and dog tricks, and ran a luxury kennel in Westchester he dubbed "Canine Camelot."

Oddly, for a man so devoted to furry companions, Haggerty had his head shaved cue ball clean. With his bulking 300-plus pounds on a 6-foot-3-inch frame, he had a remarkably persuasive physical presence. "I was shaking in my boots," a prominent dog journalist wrote after being buttonholed by Haggerty at the annual Dog Writers of America dinner. "I instantly understood how dogs obeyed him. I was ready to obey him."

Haggerty grew up in the Bronx in an Irish family involved in the labor movement, but his earliest memories were about dogs. "I teathed on a feed pan," he told the New York Times in 1978. "I had a bitch who was bred and registered in my name before I was a year old." He began training dogs at 10 and showed terriers and boxers at 15, while attending St Nicholas of Tolentine High School.

Haggerty saw action in Korea, briefly left the Army, and then re-enlisted as a dog training

Officer at the Army Dog Training Center at Fort Carson, Co. He developed mine detection protocols and made pioneering efforts in training dogs

to detect the "absence of earth" left by digging. He became commanding officer of the 25th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon, and the 26th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dogs), and worked with armed forces canines in Okinawa, Japan, the Philippines, Germany, Holland, England, and with police dogs abroad and at major cities all over America.

Haggerty left the Army for good in the late 1950s, and after a stint as a trainer with Wallingove Kennels in South Carolina moved back to New York. In 1961, he founded Tri-State School for Dogs. His timing was fortuitous, coinciding with the beginning of a decades-long crime rise that in his estimation tripled the market for commercial guard dogs within his first five years in the city. Demand for personal dog training grew as well, and Haggerty prospered. He shaved his head and began going by "Captain Haggerty," and became one of those only-in-New-York characters.

In the early 1970s, he began supplying dogs for films. Burt Reynolds spotted him on the set for "Shamus" (1973), and realized Haggerty would make an excellent villain. Haggerty cherished a still from the movie showing Mr. Reynolds clobbering him over the head with a log. He had small roles in 12 other films, including "Married to the Mob" (1988) and "Honeymoon in Vegas" (1992). He was a frequent guest on late-night talk shows, including David Letterman, where he helped initiate the "Stupid Pet Tricks" feature with a dog that sneezed on command.

In 1991, newly divorced and seeking a change, Haggerty moved to Los Angeles, where he founded yet another dog school and also wrote several books, including "How to Get Your Pet Into Show Business" (1994), "How To Talk To Your Dog" (2001), and "How To Teach Your Dog To Talk" (2002). He moved to Palm Springs in 2004 to be closer to his daughter and grandchildren, and help out at his daughter's dog-training business.

Haggerty had little time for the kind of dog training that emphasizes sensitivity and cooperation; "Results matter, period," he told Dog World magazine in 2003. "Those TPRs [trainers using total positive reinforcement] don't get the job done. Okay, take the dog who barks and barks relentlessly. The desperate renter will have to get rid of the dog if the problem isn't fixed. Here's what I do. I wait with the owner in the [building's] hallway. Sure enough, the dog starts barking and I explode into the house and scare the living s--- out of the dog after one session with me - if the owner follows up - the dog lives. Period."

In 2004, Haggerty gave the keynote speech at the dedication of a monument to the more than 400 dogs killed in action since the start of World War II in the U.S. military. Asked for his thoughts on his own eulogy, Haggerty once said, "He was an annoying and grating individual. But he loved dogs. He saved lives. He got the job done. End of story."

Arthur Joseph Haggerty

Born December 3, 1931, in the Bronx; died July 3 at a hospice in Palm Beach, Fla., of adenocarcinoma; survived by his daughter, Babette, two grandchildren, and a brother, Gerard.

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