

The Canine Condition TM –Podcast –
Episode 1 Transcript: How Much Is That Doggy In The Window
Jan 25, 2021

The Canine Condition. Come. Sit. Stay.

Welcome to The Canine Condition Podcast. My name is Jacqueline Piñol. I am an actor, a documentary filmmaker and an animal rescue advocate.

The Canine Condition podcast is a platform to bring awareness to dog adoption and provide all dog lovers and pet owners with information and resources on how to raise a healthy and well balanced dog. If you are thinking about getting your first dog, or just want to know where and how you can help a dog in need, this is also a place for you.

I want to start this episode by telling you what got me to this point in this long journey. Why has the condition of canines in the United States pushed me to speak up and ask questions, find answers and start this podcast?

The one question I ask all of the people I interview is one I also ask of myself. What does the love of your dog mean to you? My dogs' love has shaped who I am as an adult. They have each brought so much laughter into my life. They have brought adventure in the form of travel and hiking and getting out in the world. They have taught me about responsibility, being dependable and mostly I feel that dogs give an unconditional love that is unmatched. I am definitely a better person for having them in my life.

I did not always like dogs. In fact, I grew up deathly afraid of them. I was not interested in getting to know them much less pet one. You see when I was 5 years old my grandmother's German Shepherd, Cosaco bit me. This was in Guatemala City, Guatemala. I have very vivid memories of this moment even though I was so young. I was out on the front porch trying to jump rope and I remember him walking by and lying down. Just then, I landed on his tail. He jumped up and instinctively went right for my calf. He broke the skin a little bit but I was fine. I was more emotionally scarred than physically scarred. And my sweet little abuelita (grandma) who was 4'11" and a nurse, she always got home really late at night, and that night got totally yelled at by my dad for having a "mean" dog. From that moment on the narrative in my home about dogs was "you better watch it, the dog's gonna bite you", "if you don't listen, the dog's gonna bite you". If I was being a bad girl suddenly the dog was going to bite me. Ese perro la va a morder. Si no hace caso, ese perro la va a morder.

You hear that enough times, you grow up staying away from dogs because it just seems like the easier, safer road to take.

No one in my mother's family had dogs and she was never exposed to them growing up. I remember her always being concerned if there were dogs in a friend's home or if distant relatives had dogs. She didn't want hair on her clothing. And if she ever saw dogs licking faces she would blurt out "ay que asco" which means "how disgusting".

So how does one go from being deathly afraid of dogs and finding them kind of gross and scary to now having 6 of them (hence the cover art for this podcast), devoting much of her free time helping homeless ones find homes, trying to finish post production on an already filmed DOGumentary series and now speaking to you on this podcast about canines?

It started with Peggy Sue.

A 15 pound white poodle who befriended me when I was 20 years old. I was visiting my mother's side of the family in Cali, Colombia South America.

When I first arrived for the two week stay I politely asked my aunt and uncle that they not allow the dog to come into the room where I was sleeping. At some point during this trip this dog snuck into the bedroom and I wake up one morning and she's curled up right next to my head on the pillow.

My eyeballs see this- my body is stiff, I calmly lift the covers, slip out of bed and I tip toe to the kitchen, she follows me. She always wanted to be near me! It's almost like she knew that I was not comfortable around dogs but she was determined to make me like her. Well, my heart wasn't made of stone so from that point on she slept in the bed with me. I didn't get as far as letting her give me puppy kisses or petting her too much but I enjoyed her company and I used to talk to her at night before bedtime. Peggy Sue. She lived to be 16 years old. I remember when I heard the news that she had passed. I cried my eyes out. That little white poodle had a very big impact on my life. I didn't know how big back then but she set the stage for what was to come.

I am starting off by sharing these stories with you because if you had known me back in the day, you would never believe I was going to become a total dog lover much less an advocate for dog rescue. Even my parents are dog owners today! My dad rescued a Shih Tzu mix and my mom has a huge White Shepherd. And she cooks for him everyday! They are the only ones I trust to be our dog sitters when we travel without our pack. If you know someone like the old me or can relate to how my parents used to be, Well I am here to tell you, you can teach an old dog new tricks! There is hope.

A few years after meeting Peggy Sue, in May 2002 I got my first dog. She was an eight week old fawn pug and I named her Gracie after a cartoon character I had voiced at the time. She had a lot of sass and was super duper outgoing and friendly just like the cartoon character. She had my parents at hello! Thanks to Gracie, my whole family now loves and has dogs! She left us gracefully in Oct of 2016 at 14.5 years old. It's still hard to talk about her. I didn't know myself without her in my life. Losing you first dog feels like a part of you is missing and you can't get it back. But having known that love and companionship, I would do it all over again. And I did.

I do have to come clean with you. I am guilty. I bought my first dog Gracie from a breeder. I bought my second dog Zeus from a pet store.

It was 4 years after I got Gracie. My boyfriend Jonny who is now my partner in life, my producing partner for this project, my baby daddy, my doggy daddy – we bought a black pug puppy from a pet store. The year was 2006. A dear friend of mine, Morani, was visiting us from Israel. We were driving to Malibu for the day to show her around and we didn't bring Gracie's food with us. We stopped at a pet store (that is no longer there today by the way...but more on pet stores in a future episode). Jonny wanted to stay outside with Gracie so Morani and I walk in and what do we see? Puppies in big glass cases. There were lots of them and all different breeds, Maltese, Bulldogs, Chihuahuas, Pomeranians, Puggles and a black Pug!

We look closely through the glass and the little pug is standing in poop and licking it. That starts to really bother me because then the Puggle in there with him is stepping on it. And its those cases where the floor is like a plastic cheese grater. I think to myself what if I tell the girl that I'm interested in buying the dog? She'll have to clean him up. I call her over so she can show me the puppy and what is the first thing she does? I see her cleaning the dog poop on the grate and on his paws. I run out to call Jonny and literally have to beg him to come in because he doesn't want to see puppies. What's wrong with him? She brings out the puppy and I tell her to hand him to Jonny. Jonny loves pugs. That's what brought us together. I was driving on Crescent Heights toward Sunset Blvd if anybody knows the area it's in Los Angeles. My dog Gracie, is in the front passenger seat and she suddenly starts barking incessantly which was so unlike her. I turn to her to tell her to stop when I notice the cute guy in the blue Jeep. He's flirting with my dog. Anyway, the rest is history. But back to the canine condition.

I remember Jonny taking the black pug puppy, holding him above his head and saying “Oh my gosh, he’s wonderful. Let’s get him!” The sticker price on his glass window said \$1800 so I’m thinking you must be crazy. And without hesitation he says, “I can put him on my credit card”. The girl comes over because she can see we are enamored with this dog and says, “We can knock off \$200 if you want him”. And Jonny says “OK!” I had so many mixed feelings at that point but I was not going to let that puppy go back in the cheese grate case. He was ours. Our little Zeus. He is now 14.5 years old. He has been the absolute friendliest dog we have ever known. On our walks, the pigeons come by and walk with him. I’m not even kidding. He is a total Zen master.

Notice I said earlier, “I am guilty”. That would indicate I did something wrong. Was buying a dog from a breeder or a pet store wrong? Today the simple answer is yes. I cannot turn a blind eye to the truth. In 2021 it is wrong to buy a dog from a breeder or a pet store. It has been wrong for a long time.

Are there exceptions? Hmmm. Maybe. Maybe for some breeders? But that is a whole other episode and we’re going to get to that! I promise! But stay with me here.

I understand why some families want to only get puppies especially if they have young kids or other pets in the home, or if they grew up having an incident like the one I did. And no one is saying you can’t get a puppy. You just should not buy it from a breeder or a pet store when you can adopt one for a lot less money and a lot more guidance and support from the places that adopt them out. That is what I am here for. In all my future episodes, I will be giving you names and locations of places where you can safely search for the dog of your choice and also trust the people on the other end.

Through this podcast and our social media pages you can find those organizations and a plethora of information on how to raise a healthy and well balanced dog. Just because a dog is rescued or adopted doesn’t make them damaged. It’s all about how we raise them and nurture them and guide them. They are people pleasers. They want us to tell them what to do and how to do it.

A simple internet or social media search today will shower you with hundreds of choices of licensed non profit dog rescue organizations near you that will help you find the dog of your choice to adopt. Any breed, any age, male or female, pure bred, house trained, dog friendly, kid friendly, dogs of a certain energy level or temperament. Yes you can get that picky and find a most wonderful dog to adopt.

Back in 2002 an internet search for a dog would turn up breeders. That was how I found Gracie's breeder. I thought I was doing my homework by calling and interviewing them to choose the one that sounded the nicest and most caring. I chose the one that allowed me to meet the dog at her home and she took credit cards! Some breeders were not as transparent or wanted only cash. At the time, I honestly believed I was saving my dog. Can any of you relate?

I didn't know that the swipe of those credit cards purchases was contributing to the demise and insufferable pain of dogs all over the country. I know that sounds dramatic but it is. The problem is a real problem.

Was I just lacking information and resources? Or was I just not thinking about the bigger picture and I just wanted what I wanted. Because, I did know to get my own dogs spayed and neutered. I never once considered breeding them.

But I also didn't think about the poor momma dog and daddy dog that were being forced to breed each heat cycle just so someone could make money by selling their puppies. I didn't know about puppy mills, or the meaning of "reputable" breeders vs. backyard breeders which really is just a person who chose to make their money or extra money on the sale of their dog's puppies.

We no longer have to believe we are saving them from a breeder or a pet store! We can prevent them from ever getting there. We can change the way our country treats the canine condition as a whole. Dogs are not products to buy, they are living, innocent beings who need us, the human condition to help stop the cycle of abuse, neglect and abandonment.

But here I am telling you to rescue dogs when I have bought from a pet store and a breeder. Well this is where the journey gets really interesting and emotional for me.

When my black pug Zeus was 4, I was driving home from a job at a new location. On that day I decide to take a different route due to heavy traffic. If you live in Los Angeles or have visited you're no stranger to that. I also needed to get dog food so I see a small pet store on my way and I figure it's always good to support small businesses right? I park out front. I walk in and I only bird seed bags and fish food so I asked the gentleman behind the counter. "Where is the dog food?" He points to the back. I head down this long semi dark aisle and I see the dog food on the right, but not before I noticed three rows of glass cases with puppies in them and one extra large crate on the side where there was a white standard poodle. She had just enough room to do a 360 and she was. She kept walking in circles.

This man had everything from French bulldogs to Shih Tzus, to Maltipoos, and then on the bottom right, was a black pug, an overweight black pug puppy. The sticker on the glass was a mess. It looked like the original price read \$1600 but was slashed through and marked down to \$1200 but slashed again and was now at \$850 for the final price. The pug's age: 8 months. I wondered how long had this pug been there. He was crammed in a space with 3 white walls and the 4th was glass.

Being as claustrophobic as I am, my heart started racing imagining myself in this pug's place. He couldn't even stretch his legs when lying down. I asked the man at the shop why he was on sale? He said "nobody buy yet." I asked to see him, as if I was going to buy him, but I just wanted to give him a moment of reprieve from being jammed in this tiny box. The man called to a tall, slender woman in the back. He told her to show me the dog.

When she got the pup he didn't want to stand on the floor nor walk to me. He spread his legs out and flattened on the floor like a pancake. I pretended not to be mortified at how scared and unsure this pug was. I looked at all the other cages and most of the pups were standing on their hind legs with their front paws scratching at the glass. I could hear their muted barks and yelping. I thanked the man for showing me the dog and said, "Well, if I can convince my husband to let me get him, I'll be back."

It's one of those moments when we are screaming on the inside but we're forced to keep composure on the outside. I don't know how much foot traffic this place got but those dogs had been there for a while.

I didn't even take the dog food. I just left. I knew I couldn't have a 3rd dog. We lived in an apartment and we were artists. Our income was a constant ebb and flow. Having a 3rd dog would be an additional expense and responsibility we couldn't take on. I cried all the way home and not just for the black pug but for all of them.

I couldn't sleep that night. I cried all night and in the morning my eyes were swollen. Jonny knew I was in distress and that it wasn't just going to go away. I'm not the kind of person who can find out about something and pretend like it didn't happen. That's just not me. I have to handle it. I have to do something about it. I have to speak up.

I wasn't always the type to speak up and take action. I used to think speaking up or out of turn could get me in trouble. I come from a background and a

culture where women mind their manners and are expected to be rather proper and submissive. But as I grew into adulthood, I realized I needed to use my voice. As a Latina woman growing up in Los Angeles, I faced many situations where my voice was saving grace. I learned that if you see something you say something. So now I can't pretend something doesn't exist or convince myself it isn't really happening simply because it is unpleasant.

In 2010 social media was not the go to solution for help with a dog like it is today. I had Facebook and that was it at the time. Jonny suggested that we share the story about the pug with close friends to raise the money to get him out but he insisted we had to find somebody to adopt him and give him a good life. By speaking to friends we did get some referrals to dog rescue organizations. I found one that was a pug rescue. These were people who volunteered to take care of homeless or unwanted pugs in their own homes until the proper adopter came along and was properly screened and approved to adopt the dog. Adoption fees were \$250 to \$300 tops. They would pay out of pocket for their needs or have fundraisers to pay for the veterinary bills so every adopted pug was fully vetted when adopted.

I didn't even know this existed. It blew my mind. And to know that there were so many pugs out there needing homes that there was a need for a rescue organization to exist? It was actually sad.

When I spoke to the dog rescue lady on the phone I was very hopeful. I explained the situation to her but she told me that they don't buy dogs from these pet stores because that is only going to exacerbate the cycle of these pet store owners ordering more puppies from their brokers and from puppy mills. It continues the cycle of homeless dogs and perpetuates dog breeding for sale in pet stores.

Well, I wasn't giving up. I said to her, what if I buy the dog and then give him to you so that he can be properly vetted and adopted out safely? She said, "well I can't tell you not to do that so if you want to, once you have him, you can surrender him to the rescue, we have room right now. We will make sure he gets a home and we will let you know where he goes". Oh my gosh, I was halfway there. I had somewhere he could go. I just needed to get him. My husband Jonny and I came up with \$425 cash by the next day between the two of us and a few friends who wanted to help. Jonny said, "You walk into the store, let the man see the money in your hand and tell him you only have \$425 and you want the black pug. If he says no, walk out the door".

That was a tall order. I was nervous as heck. I walk in and say hello. I tell the man that my husband thought it was a great idea for us to get a puppy but he had to go to work and couldn't come with me. He gets the dog out. The pup is still very nervous and scared and sprawls out on his belly on the ground. I take the cash out of my pocket and show him my hand. Mind you, I am trembling and I'm hoping he doesn't see my hand shaking. I say, "I only have \$425." and he looks at me and he says, "No. Can't do it." and I said "Please?" and he says "No, not for \$425." I say "OK, thank you." And I turn around and walk away. As I'm walking toward the front of the store. I'm so pissed inside I can feel the heat building up in my chest. My heart is pounding. I'm ready to head out the door and I kid you not, just like in the movies, I reach for the door handle and he yells at me from the cash register "Okay you can take!"

It was so hard for me to contain how happy I was in that moment. I calmly walk up to the cash register put the money on the counter, pick up the dog and I was out! It felt like a shady backdoor deal but I needed to save that dog!

We wanted to give him some sort of name and identity. Jonny named him Ulysses S. Grant. That night he slept on my kitchen floor completely stretched out and he snored all night. He was adorable.

We took him to breakfast with us at an outdoor café on Melrose Avenue the next day. We had to spoil him a little because he was leaving us for the rescue. Long story short, when I went to meet the lady from the pug rescue she was on her way to a photo shoot. And later that day, I got a picture of him dressed in a dog tuxedo and he was making the cover of a magazine! It turns out they needed a male groom dog because they only had female dogs to play brides & grooms so he landed in the right place at the right time. He was adopted shortly after that. I did not get the adopter's name but was told that she was an architect in Los Angeles, and that Ulysses would go with her to the office and sit by her feet and he had a wonderful life.

And what happened to all those other dogs in those cages? I don't know. What I do know is that thanks to volunteer groups and advocacy leaders who have taken action in recent years, through change.org petitions and lawmakers listening to their constituents which is us, that pet store is now closed. Many pet stores across the country can no longer legally sell dogs.

We haven't solved the problem, but huge strides have been made to help end the sale of dogs. After living that experience and remembering how many pet stores I used to see with dogs in cages, I will tell you that it makes a difference to speak up, to unite with other like-minded people and legally pursue a cause

that you believe in. In this podcast, we will get to hear from some of the people making a difference for the greater good of our dog companions.

At a time when there is so much divisiveness and negativity in our country, The Canine Condition podcast will share with you how people of all different cultural, social, religious and political backgrounds consistently share a binding factor: their willingness to lend each other a hand to save man's best friend. I interview fascinating people with stories and knowledge that leave me speechless and humbled. I have encountered mostly women in the rescue movement but the men that get involved are gems.

I hope you will join me in the next episode where we get to hear a man's perspective on the topic and what issues have come up for him as a dog adopter, rescuer and volunteer.

I will also share the story of Dublin, my first adopted dog, a great dane/pitbull mix and the inspiration for the The Canine Condition DOGumentary series. And check out our social media pages **@thecaninecondition** to see pictures of some of the dogs we talked about in this episode. Embark on this journey with me, and let's save man's best friend together.

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