



It Takes Two To Tango

It was sheer joy to see Amitabh Bachchan and Shanouk engage in a friendly pow wow, says **Farzana Behram Contractor**. Power and grace, fun and game, the two even danced, what a ball!

PHOTOGRAPHS: FARZANA BEHRAM CONTRACTOR

A gentle giant, that's Shanouk, alright



The adjectives used to describe Great Danes are regal, dignified, elegant, trust worthy, dependable and yes, patient. Adjectives which one can easily apply to Shanouk and his Master Number II, Amitabh Bachchan. But that is when they are not out on the *Prateeksha* lawns, horsing around. Then the traits they share are;

affectionate, charming, playful, athletic, powerful. And of course, at all times they both are tall and handsome.

When Amitabh came striding into his living room, I couldn't help notice just how fit he looked. He had just finished a two hour session at his home gym and was ready to measure up to yet another activity-filled day, the first being my

meeting. He seemed joyous discussing Shanouk, his face lighting up, eyes twinkling, as he spoke about his canine friend who came into their lives, some seven years ago.

"Shanouk was a gift for Abhishek, really," begins Amitabh, "Our friends, Abu and Sandeep, located this breeder of high-end dogs in Poona and got him from

there. And though Abhishek was the first Master, he now belongs to all of us. We love him dearly. He is special."

"No, there was no real reason why I never had a dog as a pet when I was a child or when I was growing up, however, subsequently I always had one. I am fond of Alsatians, we've had two of them. Also a St. Bernard and another,



“

Shanouk, a Piranha Dane has substantial attitude. He puts up his nose at packed food, even if it is 'imported' but loves home-made chicken broth. He shuns expensive toys, preferring to play with empty plastic water bottles, chewing them shapeless!

Try getting this from me!





a rather unique one, which was a cross between a Labrador and a Chow Chow. This one was given to me by Rajendra Kumar. The St. Bernard, was again a gift from a doctor in Delhi. Climatically, it's okay over there to have these dogs, they do have a winter, and in summer people move away to the hills where it is nice and cool. But here, in Mumbai,

it is torture for them. St. Bernards are known to become senile because of the heat. We used to keep massive blocks of ice, right here in the living room and this huge dog would just float around!" laughs Amitabh throwing back head.

And then adds, solemnly, "But they are all gone now. And that is the

unfortunate part, they age so soon, die so quickly. It's heart-breaking, very painful. When I used to live in Delhi, I had a Silky Sidney, Pisti, she was called. One fine day, regrettably, she just walked away, disappeared. She had gone very old. Sad. Every time we lose a dog, we say, 'no more', and then get another. It's Abhishek and I who want dogs around

us, all the time. Though Jaya, doesn't mind them at all and Aishwarya likes them too. And Shweta has just got two pugs for her children."

As we sit chatting about the wonderful world of dogs, I learn, Shanouk, as a little pup, slept in bed with Abhishek. Hilariously, as he started to grow – which



“

Though Abhishek was the first master, Shanouk now belongs to all of us. We love him dearly.

is real fast, he started to kick Abhishek out of his own bed! That's when a special cot was got into their room for Shanouk. But soon he outgrew that too and was sent packing to the kitchen where he now sleeps, albeit in his own king-size bed.

The kitchen is his domain. That's where he stays put. Till as such time that Jaya Bachchan goes in there in the evenings.



He quietly sneaks out behind her when she leaves and follows her around and eventually parks himself in the living room and won't budge, even if there are guests. "Some guests are frightened by his size, you know. They actually panic. And when we try to send him away, adamantly he goes and sits by the main door. The only way to send him back to the kitchen," says Amitabh, "is to switch off all the lights. That seems to work!"

I believe Shanouk, a Piranha Dane has substantial attitude. Somethings he likes, some he doesn't. He is snooty on some counts, simple on others. Puts up his nose at packed food, even if it is 'imported' but loves home-made chicken broth, which he eats twice a day. He doesn't care too much about expensive toys and on the contrary loves to play with empty plastic water bottles, chewing them shapeless! A serious ball game on the lawns, involves his Master chucking this half-filled plastic water bottle with gay abandon, which he retrieves with great energy, bounding effortlessly. Pampered as he is, Shanouk used to enjoy the long drives with Amitabh in his convertible and was not at all pleased when the Bachchans sold his favourite car.

He is a darling, alright. One can see that in his demeanour. And what an



“

He is a darling, alright. One can see that in his demeanour. And what an apt meaning to his name - Shanouk; A warm gentle breeze on a cold winter morning. He really is special, this gentle giant.

apt meaning to his name - Shanouk; A warm gentle breeze on a cold winter morning. He really is special, this gentle giant.

But gentleness, notwithstanding, apprehensions in the household have surfaced. There is a little baby in the house now, and it becomes a matter of concern. Firstly, the doctor advised that doggie hair falling around, even in a short-haired breed such as a Great Dane would not be good for an infant. And secondly, it is pretty much established that dogs are overly possessive creatures, can undergo personality changes, even suffer tremendously. So what does one do?

Well, Shanouk was re-located to new living quarters; the basement of the house. Where he promptly felt sicker than a dog. And started to get depressed. And showed it. To all concerned members of the family, who were genuinely concerned, Amitabh decided to spend extra time with the canine to no avail. The dilemma was soon resolved. With Aishwarya and baby living in one section of the house and Shanouk, back in the kitchen, in another! And the great Mr Bachchan is now reading a book, on how to initiate a baby to a dog and vice versa.

What a pawsome grandfather!



Good boy, now relax!



1st ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

dogs & more

India's premium pet mag

Inside
Pawsome
Poster #7

Breed Profiles

German Shepherd

Shar Pei

Dog Lovers

Ayaz Memon

Chef Abhijit Saha

Priya Dutt

Tribute to Prince

Bachchan v/s Shanouk

The BIG PAW Reigns Supreme!