

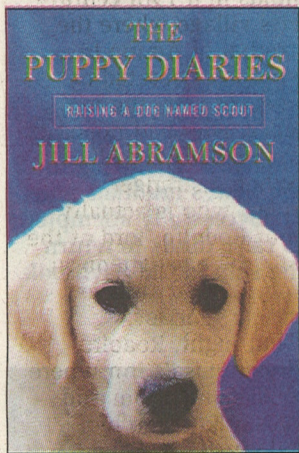
ABOUT A DOG: 10/14/11

Times executive editor turns from hard news to the softer side with 'Puppy Diaries'

By Lisa Reisman
Special to the Times

MADISON - She has the power to direct the national conversation, move markets, unseat politicians and create Hollywood movie stars. She's an influencer.

More likely than not,



The author will do a book signing on Saturday, Oct. 15 at the Scranton Library in Madison and Scout might even make an appearance.

though, Jill Abramson, the executive editor of the New York Times and Connecticut weekender, will be upstaged by a gorgeous platinum blonde this Saturday at Madison's Scranton Library at 2 p.m., Oct. 15, in an event sponsored by R.J. Julia Booksellers.

The culprit: a golden retriever at the center of "The Puppy Diaries: Raising A Dog Named Scout," a chronicle of the trials and tribulations Abramson and her husband encountered while navigating the first year of their dog's life.

And that's fine with her. Getting Scout, she writes, strengthened her 30-year marriage and eased her recovery from the devastating injuries she suffered in 2007 when a refrigerated truck barreled over her foot and legs in Times Square and the spell of depression that followed. Above all, she writes, it helped her come to terms with

the death of Buddy, the "stone-deaf, feisty-to-the-end West Highland white terrier," that her two children described as her "one perfect relationship in life."

As with Buddy, she said in a recent interview, her Upper West Side drawl betraying her Manhattan roots, spending time with Scout, whether here in Madison or in New York, "provided a non-verbal outlet for someone whose career and life has been intensely focused on words." It also placed the 57-year-old and her husband squarely in a demographic she terms ABBB, or Aging Baby Boomers with Dogs.

Not that cute acronyms and a soft and furry tale should lead to the conclusion that the woman who cut her teeth as an investigative journalist for the Wall Street Journal's Washington bureau has gone soft.

Quite the contrary.

"The Puppy Diaries," which arose from a wildly popular series of columns that first appeared in the Times Home Section, digs into the various schools of thought regarding training - from pack-leader gurus like Cesar Millan to positive-reinforcement advocates like Karen Pryor. It explores the issues of breeders versus shelters, of adopting a dog rather than rescuing one, on whether a raw diet or a vegan one is healthier for a puppy. There are comparisons of doggy day care facilities, the best dog parks in the city (some too snooty, some too cliquy, some too dirty), and the expense of a doggy swim club.

As for whether an account of Scout relieving herself on her Swedish Duxiana mattress on the puppy's first trip to Manhattan might detract from the gravitas of her position, Abramson didn't sound particularly

concerned. "The wonderful thing about the Times is that we cover so many areas of life. It's a very broad and deep news report that takes you from a bunker in Afghanistan to Willow the cat," she said, referring to the Colorado feline that recently turned up in Manhattan five years after she was lost.

In fact, Scout on occasion actually enhances her job performance. "Just getting away from the pressure of work and letting my mind wander when I'm walking the dog, I've come up with a great story idea or reporting angle," she said. Besides, "it isn't the worst thing in the world to share experiences that are warm and filled with love."

Asked to confirm Scout's appearance at the library on Saturday, Abramson politely demurred. "She's been invited," she said.



The author of "The Puppy Diaries," Jill Abramson. Photo Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

Editor's note: Jill Abramson will appear at the Scranton Library in Madison at 2 p.m. on Oct. 15. Reservations are recommended. Tickets may be purchased at the Scranton Library desk and online for \$10 dollars with PayPal and include complimentary dog treats courtesy of The Modern Dog on Main Street in Madison.