

DOGS NATURALLY

for dogs without boundaries

RABIES
miasm

HERBS
for digestive upset

Vitamins and Minerals
that could be harming your dog

the **FUNGUS** among us

Lyme disease

memories of Juliette de Bairacli Levy





Sitting at the Feet of a Master

It seems unthinkable now, but back in the early 1980's, when I was first discovering homeopathy and natural diet for myself and for animals, there wasn't a single prepared dog food being marketed using the word organic, and there were maybe two widely known dog food products considered natural: Solid Gold and Wysong. When my business partner and I launched our Sojourner Farms Natural Dog Food in 1986, we were told over and over that no one would pay for "granola for dogs", much less go to the bother of using our expensive raw grain and herb mix as part of a so-called raw food diet. My, how things have changed, but what an exciting time it was!

We were vegetarians who knew that our dogs were most definitely not interested in beans and rice, no matter how we felt about meat personally. We belonged to the kind of sharing community of like minded individuals who shopped at the food co-op (some of us ran the place), who grew vegetables in the backyard (my gosh, even in the city!) and who would share books and articles at meetings and pot luck dinners because there was no internet site to google, no emails to forward and no online journal to link to. Mostly we learned by doing.

There were other people doing what we were learning, and the one lady who really inspired us was a well known teacher, master herbalist and early proponent of natural rearing methods for animals named Juliette de Bairacli Levy.

British born, Juliette loved and raised Turkoman Afghan hounds her whole life. She attended veterinary school at the University of Manchester and Liverpool but quit within three years, after figuring out that so much illness in animals was man made, and witnessing widespread animal experimentation. Her interest in

the ways of the herbalists turned into a true calling, and thus began a lifetime of world travel to seek out authentic, natural medicines and natural rearing methods among the world's peasants.

At one point after leaving school, Juliette was running a distemper clinic in London during an epidemic of the deadly disease. With her knowledge of traditional ways and using a combination of natural diet, fasting, appropriate exercise and herbs, she cured hundreds of dogs. She began to write and self publish some small books on canine herbals in the same time period, the best known of which was *The Cure of Canine Distemper*, published in 1933. That little book helped establish the field of canine herbal medicine among breeders and veterinarians in England.

Public interest in traditional methods grew and in 1947 she published *Puppy Rearing by Natural Methods* which went into three editions in the first year. Breeders especially were hungry for this information and the book was translated into several languages. Then after some more years of travel and research, she wrote *The Complete Herbal Handbook for Farm and Stable* in 1952 - the first complete holistic veterinary book to be published for the western world.

Juliette is now known as the grandmother of herbal medicine for the pioneering role she played in bringing the traditional uses of plants for healing into greater acceptance. By writing down for us what she learned in her travels among gypsies, peasants and nomadic cultures of the world, Juliette began a paradigm shift toward holistic medicine for both animals and people in our era. Today we are so grateful.

I discovered Juliette through the book she wrote in 1955 combining all her previous canine herbal works. A quirky, straightforward little yellow paperback on using herbal remedies and raw foods to raise strong and healthy domesticated animals, this book, *The Complete Herbal Book for the Dog*, became the basis for all of our homemade recipes and cures. Revised in 1986, it was retitled *The Complete Herbal Handbook for the Dog and Cat*.

Once, when my friend's puppies got parvo, we looked in the chapter on "Ailments and their Treatments" and mixed up a gruel of virus killing herbs including sage, wormwood and rue, and fed this to them morning and night. Of course we also gave them homeopathic remedies too. I can still see their droopy little necks in my memory of that awful time but she saved most of the litter.

We used Juliette's books time after time as the starting reference for all of our animal questions and when we started Sojourner, it was her feeding program of raw meat in the morning and grain and herb mixture at night that inspired us. Juliette's direction was sometimes extreme, such as her advice not to refrigerate raw meat but to bury it for several weeks in a deep pit in a shady spot, lined with tree branches or slabs of stone to 'ripen' it. She did advise making sure to thoroughly scrape off any maggots before feeding, or before allowing the dogs to go out and dig it up. Yes, I did say she was completely entrenched in natural care!

I remember the day I finally met Juliette; it felt like meeting a rock star. She was in the US as a special guest of the New England Women's Herbal Conference in May, 1991. Back then, I think it

was simply called the Women's Herbal Conference, and it was held in East Barre, Vermont at a simple retreat center with outdoor meeting rooms and camping accommodation. Speaking to the group of us women alongside Juliette was Helen Nearing, the delightfully earthy co-author, along with her husband Scott, of *Living the Good Life* (published 1954) and *Continuing the Good Life* (1979), books about their experiences as converts to homesteading during an era where most people were actually moving to the cities, not out of them. The Nearings are credited with helping to inspire the popular US "back to the land" movement that began in the late 1960s.

These two older ladies were good friends, often touching hands and sitting close together on the benches and tree logs we used outside. They talked to us for two days about their experience, in quiet voices, humbly sharing wisdom and fascinating stories and giving us encouragement to continue our learning and practicing.

Juliette would have been 79 when I met her. She was small and stout, her hair still coppery red, with very little grey. She wore gorgeous cotton print skirts with embroidered peasant blouses and lots of earthy jewelry. I remember thinking she looked like a beautiful gypsy. I didn't get any alone time with her as she was looked after very closely by our hosts, who at any sign of her tiredness would call a break and escort her to her quarters for a rest. I still managed to get a few photos of us together however.

Helen Nearing would die four years later, but Juliette lived another 18 years. To meet one of the icons of natural healing, to sit at her feet and listen, was a privilege I didn't appreciate as a young woman in the same way I do now. How I wish I could sit at her feet and listen to her once again. Thank you, Juliette (11 November 1912 – 28 May 2009). 🌸

Maria Ringo is a homeopathic practitioner, teacher and co-founder of Carna4 Dog Food, a small ethical company producing synthetic-free whole foods for pets. In 1986 she co-founded Sojourner Farms, one of the first commercially available raw foods diets for dogs. She lives in Toronto, Ontario with her family and may be reached at maria@nthm.ca



DNM Social Sharing

Did you know we have a busy, engaging Facebook page? Visit us today and read our great online articles, drop us a note or ask your question. Dogs Naturally is a community and there's no better online community than Facebook!

www.facebook.com/DogsNaturallyMagazine



Maria (forefront) with Juliette