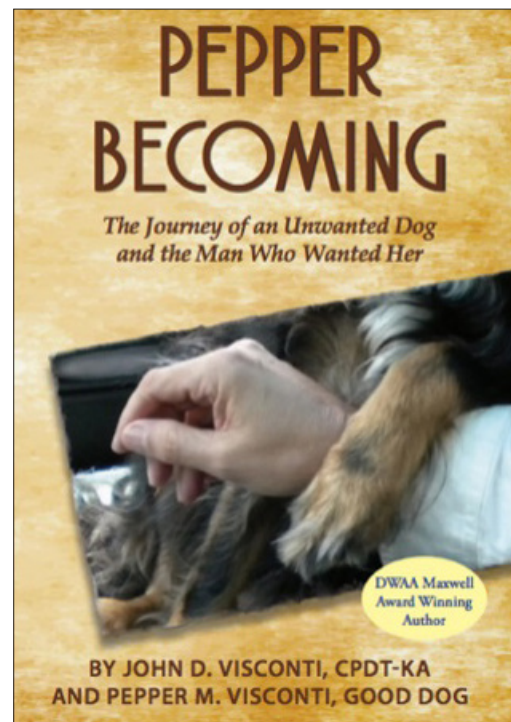


Editor's Choice

PEPPER BECOMING *The Journey of an Unwanted Dog and the Man Who Wanted Her*

Written by John D. Visconti, CPDT-KA and Pepper M. Visconti, Good Dog
Published by Rising Star Dog Services, LLC, Cary, North Carolina; August 2018
release; 185 pages. Where to purchase: Amazon for \$12.95 hardcover, \$7.49 digital
version. Additional pictures may be seen at www.PepperBecoming.com.

“Pepper Becoming” is not only a story about a dog trainer adopting a dog with issues from a shelter. The book is also not just how a dog trainer honed his skills on this reactive dog who had been discarded on more than one occasion and deemed unadoptable. “Pepper Becoming” is a love story.



Oh, don't worry – there are plenty of training methods outlined for mitigating certain behaviors that come with a dog that suffers abandonment, thunderstorm, delivery truck and men-in-uniform issues, just to name a few. But the heart of this book is the relationship between Pepper and the author, John Visconti, who wrote “Fetch More Dollars for Your Dog Training Business,” the 2015 winner of the Dog Writers Association of America Maxwell Award for reference book of the year.

Pepper was found wandering the streets of Long Island 15 miles from her owners, who refused to claim her. That put her on the euthanasia list. She was saved from that fate by an elderly gentleman, but unable to deal with her myriad behavior issues, he brought her back a few days later. Diagnosed by then with a severe case of heartworms, the Collie-mix was put back on the kill list. On Nov. 7, 2007, she was accepted by the Great Tails Animal Shelter.

The rescue organization treated Pepper for the heartworms and got her to a healthy weight from an emaciated state of 26 pounds. But little was done to help her emotional state. Branded with a “yellow” label as a dog with problems, Pepper languished at the shelter for two years.



In the meantime, the author was contemplating his career as a dog trainer, but reluctant to own a dog himself. He upgraded from a Betta fish to adopt a cat named Buddi, who taught him to respect her “animal-ness” first; yet her death convinced him he was done with the responsibility and pain of pet ownership.

Interested in improving his dog training skills nonetheless, Visconti decided to volunteer at an animal shelter close to his home and requested a local trainer, Mira Leibstein, to mentor him. Her patience, experience and humor shaped the novice dog trainer to handle what would soon be his greatest challenge as a trainer.

And so it was John Visconti, dog trainer and avowed non-pet owner, would serendipitously meet the repeatedly abandoned and reactive Pepper at the Great Tails Animal Shelter after a traffic jam detoured him from his original destination.

As Visconti explains in his forward, the book title was inspired by Zen teachings: “Nothing exists. All things are becoming.” Through this book, Visconti shares his and Pepper’s “becoming” journey from the second he recognized “there’s a dog inside that dog” and Pepper taught Visconti how to live in the present, because for Pepper, “every good moment was the best moment ever.” — The editor