

## PETS ON BOARD

Written by Ruth Palmer



Ken and I were decidedly nervous about our first cruise with Ernie our five month old Schnoodle pup. Ken chose him in February from a litter of six because he was the most active. Little Ern' barreled his way through his littermates like a deranged locomotive as they tried to sleep and was purported to be the most affectionate of the lot.

In the ensuing five months we learned all too well that Ken had chosen the alpha male of the litter. Ernie spent a lot of energy in convincing us that he is also the alpha male of the Palmer household. In spite of the daily conflict, we oriented Ernie to the water with baths and swims in the pool. We took him on a few day sails during which he was pretty much oblivious to the motion of the boat or indeed to the fact that we were under sail at all.



So here we are on our first 'family cruise'. True to early performance, Ernie has been sleeping through the actual sailing part of our days. He sleeps downwind with the spinnaker flying. He sleeps with the wind on the nose and a 30 degree heel. He blithely slides from side to side in the cockpit, snoring through each tack and gibe. If the wind dies he sleeps more soundly than ever as we motor to our next

port of call.

Ah but in port Ken and I are slaves to the whimpers and yips of this little alpha male. Is he hungry? Is he thirsty? Does he need more exercise? Is it time for another pit stop? And most importantly whose turn is it to answer the puppy's call.



Although we carefully packed the many important items for the care and feeding of the kingly beast, all seems to be for naught. We have wheat-free chow for strong bones and healthy pup, long leash, choke collar for 'obedience' training, harness, puppy PFD and all his favorite toys and treats. Who knew he would be teething and off his feed for four days. (Or was it a slight case of motion sickness?) Furthermore boat objects have become the new

favorite puppy toys. He chomps rubber frogs from the days when we counted boating seasons with addition of a yearly frog. Pint milk containers are also enticing especially with yarn inside to pull and unravel. Thankfully he has also made it his duty to cull the unending supply of 'coozies' for his exclusive use as chew toys.

Ernie's main problem with the sailing life occurs when Ken and I set out to explore those places ashore that do not welcome animals. This would include all eating establishments, most retail stores, cinemas, and other sailing vessels. When left on his own below, the puppy yips, yelps, and yowls without pause until one of us returns. Makes for unhappy dockmates.



Furthermore, he becomes so anxious to go ashore at the end of each sail that he jumps ship before the docklines are set.

We have decided that if he can grow out of some of these puppyish habits, it looks like Ernie, for better or worse, is a 'Salty' dog. Hopefully we can keep him from leaping ashore every time one of us needs a pit stop.