

Studies Suggest that Doctors Purposely Avoid Discussing DNR Status

by Ryan Brown



The original Snoop Dog was a mix of Golden Retriever and German Shepard with oversized paws and ears that seemed to swivel like office chairs. My brother and I had actually named him after Snoopy (of Peanuts fame) on the way home from the humane society 22 years ago. A close second was the suggestion "Fartsy" for which my brother ate a bar of soap.

Snoop proved to be a fierce dog. He barked at and attacked everything in the yard always protecting his two best buddies from squirrels and rabbits and the occasional leaf. His fuzzy front legs moved so fast that they seemed to spin rather than run. And, his hind legs always jumped out to the right side of his body in order to join the race. Often times, his tail and his head would arrive at places simultaneously.

The next door neighbor owned an Irish setter appropriately named Red and approximately 63 dog-years senior to Snoop. She made about 150 laps around the garage daily. Every time she appeared around the rear corner, Snoop would erupt into a barrage of staccato yips; each time a little bit louder and more sustained as if to say, "88...89...90."

Red had massive jaws and would taunt my brother and me by parading every ball that went into her yard up and down the fence line for a few minutes before returning to circle the garage. As a kid, ball recovery stories from Red's yard were worth 5 minutes of undivided attention, even from the 6th graders that lived on my block. Stephen once fell from atop the fence and landed headfirst in a pile of poo.

Boys always gave nicknames. I knew a Shorty, Skinny, Craig Hog, and Big E and you can imagine what we called Stephen. I called my brother "Dump Truck," a name that never really caught on because of the tendency to be swiftly flattened shortly after finishing the "...uck" sound. Even my dog was nicknamed "Snooper Doggy" after we found him dangling by his ankle from atop our gate, memorizing the countenance of each bird that had gathered inches below his nose to taunt the backyard despot.

Our gate was large enough to pass a car through. Because of its massive size, it hung laboriously at the hinges; weighted down further by a large metal chain. When Snoop climbed to the top, he could get his balance on the decorative trim and leap courageously at the freedom that lingered on the other side. One day his extra 70 pounds became too much for the decrepit gate, and we returned to find a 6 foot wide metal gate lying across the middle of our driveway. In the backseat of the car, my brother and I were like sponges, and we soaked up an earful of phrases from the front seat that day- many of which lasted us well into high school.

The family car was a brown Ford Grenada station wagon, wide enough to lay plywood flat. My brother was a left-sider and I grew up riding on the right- always behind the passenger seat. The space between was a barren wasteland with imaginary lines drawn down the center with the intent to keep us on our own sides because we apparently didn't want my dad "to have to come back there." There was only one item that had free reign of the demilitarized zone...the middle seat belt.

The middle seat belt had enough extra belt length to strap in a medium-sized Jersey cow. The head of the belt was adorned with a 2-pound steel anchor for locking the belt into place, and the tail of the belt was riveted to the frame of the car somewhere down in the crack of the bench seat. At first glance, any child knows that a fully extended middle seat belt is easily transformed into a gyroscoping, nunchuk of pain. My left leg knew it, and my brother's right leg faired no better.

When necessary, Snoop rode in the back of the car with my brother and me. Seatbelt laws were more lax, and with Snoop in the car, we often just put the back of the seat down and rode without restraints. A three body pile-up on the floorboards was not uncommon when coming to an abbreviated stop at a red light. Snoop hung his head from the window and drooled while narrowly avoiding the passing poles and speeding cars. My brother and I were not allowed this luxury, so we hung our arms outside of the car and played relentlessly with the electric windows laughing prognostically at the thought of catching the other's spare limbs or round head in the paradoxical guillotine.

On one of our trips, we stopped at the pet store and purchased two hamsters. My brother's was a sleek brown female with thin straight hair and a can-do attitude. Mine was a stubby male with thick, mottled, brown and white fur in disarray and could always be found inside of an empty food dish taking a nap. I called him "Feisty."

We think he had a heart attack when he was three years old.

So anyway, I was planning to address Do Not Resuscitate status today but I seem to have run out of space.



Trouble Yourself

by Joe Krug

In 1996 I had the chance to study abroad and take a comparative politics class.

Until that point I had never given much thought to the right that we, as American citizens, have to vote or not to vote.

The governments of this world tend to seek power, and as such, very few are actually open Constitutional Republics like ours. In certain countries it is mandatory to vote, in others it is mandatory to show up (though casting your ballot is optional). In some only men have a say, and in others there is nothing but the muzzle of a dictator's gun guiding the principles of law.

So as we approach the first Tuesday in November, I am asking you to do two things: if you stand for something then vote, and if you really don't know or don't care then please stay home.

The luxuries that we have in this country allow us to explore so many dimensions of our lives, liberties, and pursuits. Almost everyone is passionate about something—be it the eradication of terrorism, the current income tax system, the state of public education, the ongoing debate about partial birth abortions, and-on-and-on. I urge those who have such passions to find out how their representatives, mayors, senators, and presidential candidates feel about those same issues. Write letters, read platforms, watch debates, or even meet the candidates, and then make an intelligent choice on your ballot.

If, however, you feel that "my vote doesn't count" or "it's a choice between the lesser of two evils," then I ask that you not trouble yourself with the hassle of making a choice. Locally and on the state level elections are decided by a scant few votes—these are the elections that decide how our land is to be used, how schools will be funded, and how hospitals will be maintained. Our system might not be perfect (or less evil), but the people who are elected are still taking a substantial portion of our checks and will be making laws that impact the health care field for years to come.

Not voting is your right. Voting should be your choice.

If the Environment Could Vote...

by Allison Meadows



In the spirit of the election season, I thought I would examine our presidential candidates from the perspective of their environmental records. Environmental issues have been all but absent from both campaigns, a surprising fact given how great the disparities are between the candidates. Therefore, I will briefly look at where each stands on emissions, energy, and conservation.

Let's begin with our current president. According to the Sierra Club, President Bush has accrued "one of the worst environmental records of any president in U.S. history" through his approval of bills that reverse environmental legislation and cut funds to conservation associations. Both the Clean Air and Water Acts have been dramatically altered since 2000, weakening federal protection of wetlands and waterways, reducing emission control standards for power plants, chemical plants, and oil refineries, and extending the amount of time companies have to implement pollution reduction methods. Among the deregulated emissions is mercury, a toxin that appears in waterways and in the fish we eat. Mercury is now so pervasive that one in six women has a high enough body burden to risk having a severely disabled child. Superfund sites—federally designated locations so polluted by industry that they are uninhabitable—are no more. The Superfund designation that held corporations financially accountable for site clean-up was allowed to expire, thus displacing the financial burden onto taxpayers. And the Healthy Forest Initiative? Not only does it increase logging, but it increases the risk of large forest fires by depleting those trees that are most resistant to burning. Need I even mention the battle for drilling in the Arctic Refuge?

In stark contrast is Senator Kerry, who not only proposes stronger environmental regulations, but has a voting record to prove his intentions. Kerry has sponsored bills that range from prevention of oil drilling off California to addressing issues of global climate change. As president, Kerry would set up a task force with the EPA allowing the most polluted areas to receive federal priority. Through Kerry's Conservation Covenant, funds from resource extraction would be reinvested into national conservation efforts. He plans to develop a tracking system for chronic diseases that stem from pollutants such as mercury, and will reverse Bush's environmental deregulation of the Clean Air Act. A President Kerry would restore water for freshwater lakes and riverfronts, and remove tax incentives related to urban sprawl. Furthermore, he would invest funds into renewable energy research, with a goal of generating 20% of U.S. electricity from renewable sources by 2020.

Clearly the environment is not the only issue in this election, but it does deserve more attention than it is receiving. As a proactive environmentalist, I encourage everyone to vote, particularly those who care about the direction in which our environmental health has gone and could go in the next four years.