

EDGE

interview

Beth Ostrosky Stern



Photo by Christopher Appoldt

So many questions, so little time. Model. Actress. Activist. Author. To put it mildly, **BETH OSTROSKY STERN** leads a very interesting life. EDGE Assignments Editor Zack Burgess managed to grab 20 solid minutes with Beth at the “tail end” of the publicity tour for her new book, *Oh My Dog: How to choose, train, groom, nurture, feed and care for your new best friend* (Gallery Books). Zack covered a lot of ground in his Q&A, yet he never got to the question Letterman posed to her on national television: *Why Howard?* Turns out she kind of answered it anyway. The spokesperson for North Shore Animal League America, Beth wouldn’t tell us how her book ends. Spoiler alert...the woman ends up taking care of the dog!

EDGE: When did you make that first connection with animals?

BOS: The day I was brought home from the hospital. When I was born, my mother and father had rescued a mutt named Suzy Dog. Right away my older brother and I were taken with her. When my brother, who is 17 months older than me, came home, Suzy Dog was placed in front of him. It was the same for me. She was the first thing I saw when I opened my eyes. We always had animals in our home. We were always rescuing animals. It’s in my blood.

EDGE: How much thought should go into preparing your home and family for an adopted pet? Some say it isn’t that different from preparing for a new child.

BOS: In some respects that's true. You're not bringing a human into your home, it's an animal—let's just make that clear. But absolutely, you have to assess your lifestyle. Do you work? Do you have a family? Do you have a yard? Do you live in the city? Do you have access to dog walkers? If you travel, do you have people to take care of your dog? All of those things should be lined up and well thought-out before an animal enters your home. I write about that very thoroughly in my book. Whether you adopt a dog or purchase one from a breeder, you have to appreciate that you are in charge of this animal for the next fifteen years. You are essentially the parent of this live being that is needy. It needs to be fed, needs to have a safe place to sleep, and needs to be taken care of.

EDGE: You also write about the importance of bonding. As a celebrity, presumably you have less time to bond with your pets than the average person. So how much time is "enough" time?

BOS: I think anyone who has an animal in his or her life is going to fall in love and make time for that addition. Being a celebrity hasn't anything to do with it. When you have an animal, you're committing to that animal. Yes, both my husband's and my schedules are crazy. But that's true of a lot of dog owners. You put in the time and make sure there is coverage for when you are not available for their needs. They are a part of your family.

EDGE: In your book you describe the Top 20 breeds and the importance of matching the personalities of dog and owner. What ever happened to the old-fashioned way of picking a dog—love at first sight?

BOS: I believe in love at first sight. Just know what you're looking for. Assess your lifestyle, as I mentioned before. When you go into a shelter, if you have a big house with a beautiful yard or access to a park, you might want to get a bigger breed. Or if you live in a one-bedroom apartment, you might not want to get that Rottweiler or Bernese Mountain dog; you might want to go for a smaller dog.

Talk to the adoption counselor, determine the right fit for your lifestyle, and then when you spend time with a dog and



Photo by Donna Newman.

make eye contact and fall in love, you're also going to know it's the right one to bring home.

EDGE: You have been working with the North Shore Animal League for five years now. How did that relationship begin?

BOS: I was modeling in New York City and the booker at my agency asked if I would volunteer my time to model at a fashion show during their annual luncheon. I spent my day walking the runway, modeling gowns with puppies from the North Shore Animal League. I didn't leave the runway until every animal was adopted! They put two and two together, seeing my passion for animals and realizing that I was the girlfriend of Howard Stern. They asked if I would pose for a newspaper ad for the North Shore Animal League. I said absolutely, and after I saw what they do I began to volunteer regularly. I am so passionate about their mission. It has just been the most rewarding part of my life the last five years.

EDGE: Which is how *Oh My Dog* came about.

BOS: Yes. People would stop me on the street and ask me questions about their dogs. I had to explain that, although I'm affiliated with animal rescue, I wasn't an expert on dogs. So I would rush home to my computer and go online. Not only did I quickly learn that there was bogus information on the Internet, I also saw that I was getting ten different

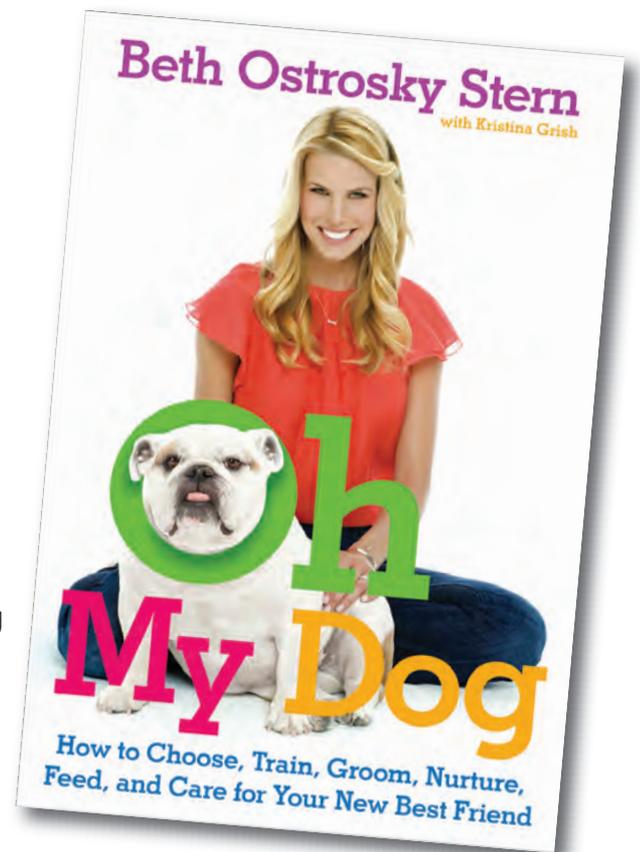


Photo by Christopher Appoldt.

answers to every question that I would plug in. Wow! I didn't know which answer to give people. Then I realized I had such amazing experts at my fingertips. I'm friends with Oprah's trainer Tamar Geller. I know one of the groomers that was on *Groomer Has It*. I know these amazing people at the North Shore Animal League. What if I gather all those questions that people have asked me over the years—come up with even more questions—and act as the “host” of a guide filled with their expertise? *Oh My Dog* ended up being over 500 pages.

EDGE: As a writer, I know one of the hardest things to do is to ask your spouse to read something you've written. It's probably one of the reasons I have an ex-wife. What was that experience like for you?

BOS: I didn't actually let Howard read the book until it was finished. He knew what chapter I was working on or what outline or interview I was working on, because it took up so much of my time—a year-and-a-half actually. Howard was a loving husband. He supported me and encouraged me every step of the way. I couldn't have been luckier. I guess I get props for not making him read every page.



EDGE: Did being married to a public figure help or hinder you as the book project moved along?

BOS: I don't think it made a difference at all.

EDGE: Who could you have not written this book without?

BOS: My dog, Bianca. She was my inspiration. She was beside me, at my side, the entire time that I was working on this project. She was my best friend. She kept me going and drooled on the pages as I was proofing them.

EDGE: The English majors of the world need to know—did all that reading and writing in school pay off when you authored your first book?

BOS: Absolutely. But you know what has really helped me? I'm so grateful that, in high school, we had to take a typing course. I don't think they offer that anymore. Being able to type very quickly has been my savior. But yes, understanding sentence structure, being used to writing every day—I think that my English Lit background was definitely useful. **EDGE**

Editor's Note: Beth Ostrosky Stern is one of the judges on the ABC reality series *True Beauty*, where contestants think they are vying to become the “face of Las Vegas” but are, in fact, being evaluated on their character. She says she was honored to be chosen as a judge of inner beauty. Zack Burgess is tearing it up as a freelance writer and editor this summer. Look for his upcoming articles in *Politics* and *SLAM* magazines.