

BowWOW!

Facts, observations and musings about Our Best Friends

What does OLD SCHOOL really mean?

Some 14,000 years ago groups of Cro-Magnons devised a new tactic for survival: they established permanent base camps that eventually led to a primitive form of agricultural community. The establishment of fixed villages led to the growth of garbage dumps around the outer periphery of their camps, which naturally led to an infestation of opportunistic scavengers. While this included mice and rats, it also included wolves and jackals, the ancient precursors of dogs. Let's call this Really Old School.

These dogs became part of the communities of early man. They had much better senses of smell and hearing than their human counterparts providing timely warnings against predators and invaders. Colonies grew, flourished and dog and man developed beneficial symbiotic relationships.

Flash forward to present day to witness the ancestors of these same dogs, partners of man, chained in the fenced backyards of Beaufort County. Once partners in survival, these former caretakers of man are now relegated to positions of pain, boredom, frustration, starvation and illness. Certain County Council members and others opposed to a chaining ordinance proudly announce that they're "Old School". Huh. What else is Old School, by comparison, just so we can put things in some kind of context?

Not too long ago all homes in this county had outhouses. (Old School) The idea of moving that particular activity out of the elements was pretty radical in its day. However, indoor plumbing changed the lives of all of us for the better. There was a time we illuminated our homes with whale oil (Old School). The whales and we can all be grateful that Thomas Edison jettisoned old school thinking and devised a better way. And let's remember that during the Old School days farmers were reliant on horses for power and basic transportation. The invention of the internal combustion engine radically changed the way we produced our food, transported our goods, and eased the rigors of travel; horses became beloved pets rather than beasts of burden.

On the humanistic front, between 1876 and 1965, we all suffered through the Jim Crow laws, mandating segregation in all public facilities. The rights and liberties of people were maligned and ignored, cruelty and ignorance pervasive for 89 years. The time before 1876 was even worse. Human beings lived on chains and weren't allowed in the house. Now, how's that for some hard-core Old School?

The anti-chaining ordinance asks citizens of Beaufort County to examine what they have come to accept as “just the way it is”, that Old School excuse for lacking common sense and compassion. Logic check: I have not been able to figure out the excuse that a chained dog in the yard is a deterrent to crime, the most popular excuse for tying a dog to death. Seems to me, if a thief knows the dog is choked on a tight chain, won't he simply walk *around* the dog? Sure, it will bark but he can ignore that if he's determined to steal your gun collection. Doesn't it make more sense to have that snarling, barking dog *in the house* next to the gun collection?

Nevertheless, since the Really Old School days when early canines lived in comfortable harmony with their human community, the majority of people on earth have continued to look at their dogs as compatriots and partners. Dogs serve as assistants to the disabled, find cancers, offset grief, save the lives of countless people a year, serve in our military, are our hunting buddies, our children's playmates and our friends. That's the *real* Old School way.

The “Old School” excuse is just that, an excuse with not much thought behind it. It's an excuse for laziness, an excuse for ignorance and an excuse for cruelty towards creatures that have been, that are and will continue to be Man's Best Friends.

Chaining is pervasive in Beaufort County. Don't like it? Get involved. Call your representative. Take a stand and make some noise because these dogs need a voice. For more information go to www.chainfreebeaufort.org.

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