

Ruh's Muse of the Month
As told to Chris Mandeville

Ruh (pronounced "Roo") is a service dog and PPW/C mascot. He likes stories of all kinds, especially those involving good chase scenes. His favorite things are writers, children, his kitten Loki, and Monterey Jack cheese.

JUNE & JULY 2007 – Dawn Smit Miller & Barb Dyess

Ah, summer. It's finally here. And we all know what that means. Shedding. What, that's not what you were going to say? Were you thinking baseball or vacation or watermelon?

Perhaps you were thinking that it's time to gear up for the 2008 Paul Gillette Writing contest sponsored by PPW. Our fearless leader in all things "contest," Dawn Smit Miller, is my muse for June, and she's already preparing for the Paul Gillette entries that will arrive in the PPW mailbox come fall. Will your story be among them? If so, you can rest assured that your "baby" will be in good hands with my pal Dawn at the helm. She's modernized the way PPW runs the contest, trains the judges, and handles choosing the winners from the finalists. She's been quite an inspiration to me as I've seen her manage hundreds of entries without missing a step or batting an eye. It blows me away how she keeps contestants, judges and volunteers happy with a speedy, fair, efficient system. What impresses the socks off me, though, (have you seen my socks?) is when she applies her professionalism, organization, efficiency and enthusiasm to her writing. I know you'll be impressed too when her next book comes out--she's working with her father, Lou Smit, to tell his stories, and they are doozies. Lou is a retired homicide investigator who worked on a number of high profile cases, including the JonBenet Ramsey case. See? Doozies, I tell you.

Thank you, Dawn, for the inspiration you bring me, the terrific program you bring to our contest entrants, and the stories you bring to all of us. I can't wait to get the inside dirt on some of your dad's cases. I really like dirt. Congratulations, too, on being honored as the 2007 Pikes Peak Writers Volunteer of the Year--I can totally see why you were chosen.

Now on to July. Still summer. Still shedding. But my buddy Barb Dyess never seems to mind when I lean on her and get my golden hair all over her jeans. It's no secret how much I like Barb, so it should come as no surprise that she is my muse for July. She always has a smile and a pat for me, no matter how rough her day has been. Sometimes her days can be pretty darn rough because it's her job to recruit writers to report on PPW events and submit stories to this NewsMag. Not an easy task, but Barb brings her great sense of humor, her broad range of life experience, and her own kooky style to bear, and she gets the job done. Every time a NewsMag shows up in the mailbox I applaud Barb's efforts (figuratively, folks). When Barb is not corralling NewsMag writers she is a writer herself. She says she loves to throw together characters with diametrically opposing worldviews and see what happens. Have you heard the one about the atheist doctor and the born-again divorcee? Or the one about a cynical warrior-artist and a faith-filled

healer? No, these are not jokes, but examples of Barb's tales. Though she's come to the craft of writing later in life, she has the advantage of bringing to it her ideas, ideals, adventures and experiences. What inspires me most about Barb is how she embraces every opportunity to learn the craft and share in the experience with fellow writers.

Thanks, Barb D., for your dedication to Pikes Peak Writers. You provide an invaluable service to the NewsMag, and provide a friendly welcome to all who cross your path. I know I'm not the only one who appreciates what you do. Keep doing it! Keep smiling, writing, experiencing and corralling. You are one awesome, inspiring person, and I'm glad I've got you to lean on.

Anyone looking forward to August? We all know what that means. Yep, shedding. And more inspiration from "Ruh's Muses." Will it be youses?