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In the doghouse — and glad to be there

By Elisa Ung

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

LOS ANGELES — So this is where the other half yaps.

Doggie utopia awaits at Canyon View Training Ranch for Dogs, where stick-throwing attendants seem never to tire, a waterfall and koi pond compete with smashing hilltop vistas, and tail-wagging guests frolic in a bone-shaped wading pool.

"We didn't want to run a standard kennel," says Randy Neece, 48, the dog resort and training school's co-owner, who counts Disneyland among his greatest life influences.

"I will not remember any owners' names. I remember the dogs' names," adds Neece's business and life partner, Joe Timko, 44, who trained his own Tibetan terrier, Max, to win national dog shows and wanted a place to teach other pooches.

So in 1998 Timko and Neece, two guys with killer tans and giant smiles who never do anything halfway, turned several acres of brush in the Santa Monica Mountains into a bonanza of rose gardens, a fruit orchard, and a manicured lawn where, on one recent afternoon, not one of the sunbathers was barking.

"Dogs often bark because they're bored," Neece says. "Here, they don't

See **DOGS** on E6



The Blue Bone Lagoon at Canyon View Training Ranch lets the dogs enjoy a refreshing swim. The kennel boards only 30 pets at a time.



Canyon View's Joe Timko (left) and Randy Neece say they give celebrities' dogs no better treatment than anyone else's.

It's the lap of luxury for some Calif. dogs

DOGS from E1 have time to get bored."

It would figure. Not only are the rich and famous having more fun than the rest of us, but so are their best friends, courtesy of Southern California's luxury dog spas.

You can almost hear all of Hollywood's stray dogs baying jealously at the moon.

(Of course, if one had to be a stray dog, one should hope to be a stray dog found by *Baywatch* babe Pamela Anderson. She rescues dogs from animal shelters, sends them through one of Canyon View's pricey training courses, and gives them away to friends.)

And how the chosen ones are pampered. Canyon View, for all of its sun-drenched five acres, will only take 30 pooches at one time.

In Canyon View's sloshing Blue Bone Lagoon on one recent gorgeous late-spring morning, Ava the poodle dipped her paws, while Bo the Boston terrier dried off in the sun. An attendant — a doggie lifeguard? — watched closely.

Earlier that day, Ava and Bo received their wake-up call at 7 a.m., dined on lamb and rice, and were back out at 9 to romp as they pleased. The day was warm, so they would have mandatory cooling-off periods.

"We're trying a new lawn," Neece says, pointing to the new Kikuyu grass on the estate. "You see lots of it in the Hawaiian islands and Africa. It's very hardy."

"See," Timko says, "the stuff we had goes dormant in the winter."

"... Though the dogs don't care ..." Neece adds.

"... We care," they declare in unison.

"We don't want them on" — Timko winces — "cement."

The couple and their seven Tibetan terriers live on the estate, in a charming yellow house previously owned by Melissa Sue Anderson, who played the blind sister, Mary, on *Little House on the Prairie* in the 1970s. They call it "the house that *Match Game* bought us," because Neece directed the brief 1990s resurgence of the 1970s TV game show.

Canyon View has its share of celebrities, particularly those who travel to long movie shoots. Lindsay Wagner, Tracy Chapman, Dennis Hopper and Sinbad have trusted Canyon View with their pets.

Christopher Lloyd often sends his two on their own. Limo pulls up, driver opens door, dogs hop out, limo takes off. Lou Rawls does the same with his Jack Russell terrier.

Although Neece and Timko can shoot off the canines' names easily, they don't know a movie star from Adam. Timko says he once told Bond girl Denise Richards, who was dropping off her four dogs, that she was just so beautiful, and had she ever thought about modeling?

"We are so out of touch," Neece says with a sigh. But that's a plus, he says — dogs of celebs don't get any more biscuits than the others.

Prices range from a base \$35 per night to \$2,800 for a training course, sort of a boot camp for naughty dogs.

"My dogs are astonished when we let them out of the car," Jay Wolpert, a former *Price Is Right* producer, says of his golden retrievers, Locksley and Custer, who often visit Canyon View. "They think they've died and gone to heaven. They get exercise like they've never had in their lives."

Too extravagant for a dog? Wolpert shakes his head. "It's so much better for a dog to be in a dog pool in California in the summer than not," he says.

"We are very sensitive to the rap that California living has earned. ... But you cannot tell me that there isn't a dog in the world that wouldn't prefer to be there."