

Sitter Gives A New Leash On Life to Vacationers

Dog, Cat ... Etcetera,
She'll Keep It Happy

By Joe Clark

Daily News Staff Writer

Kerri Hunter feels she was "predestined" to work with animals.

Maybe it's because her mother was a bunny. A two-footed, cottontailed, Playboy bunny from the Windy City.

Whatever ... Hunter still cottons to animals. All kinds of animals: Dogs, cats, birds, fish, ferrets, snakes and turtles. Lizards, spiders and chameleons, too.

Hunter operates a pet-sitting service. And because it was summer's last, long hurrah, Hunter was hopping more than usual over the Labor Day weekend.

While Hunter's clients were having one final, three-day, out-of-town fling, she was walking doggies, cuddling kitties and feeding fishies ... among other things.

For the past 15 months, Hunter has been dropping in on homes throughout the city caring for creatures great and small, and in between.

Hunter's charges range from heavyweight Ralph, a 150-pound Labrador retriever, to lightweight Piglet, a 2-pound Yorkshire terrier, to featherweight Peppy the parakeet.

The 25-year-old Center City resident, who has eight cats of her own, says she normally averages about 25 stops a day, seven days a week.

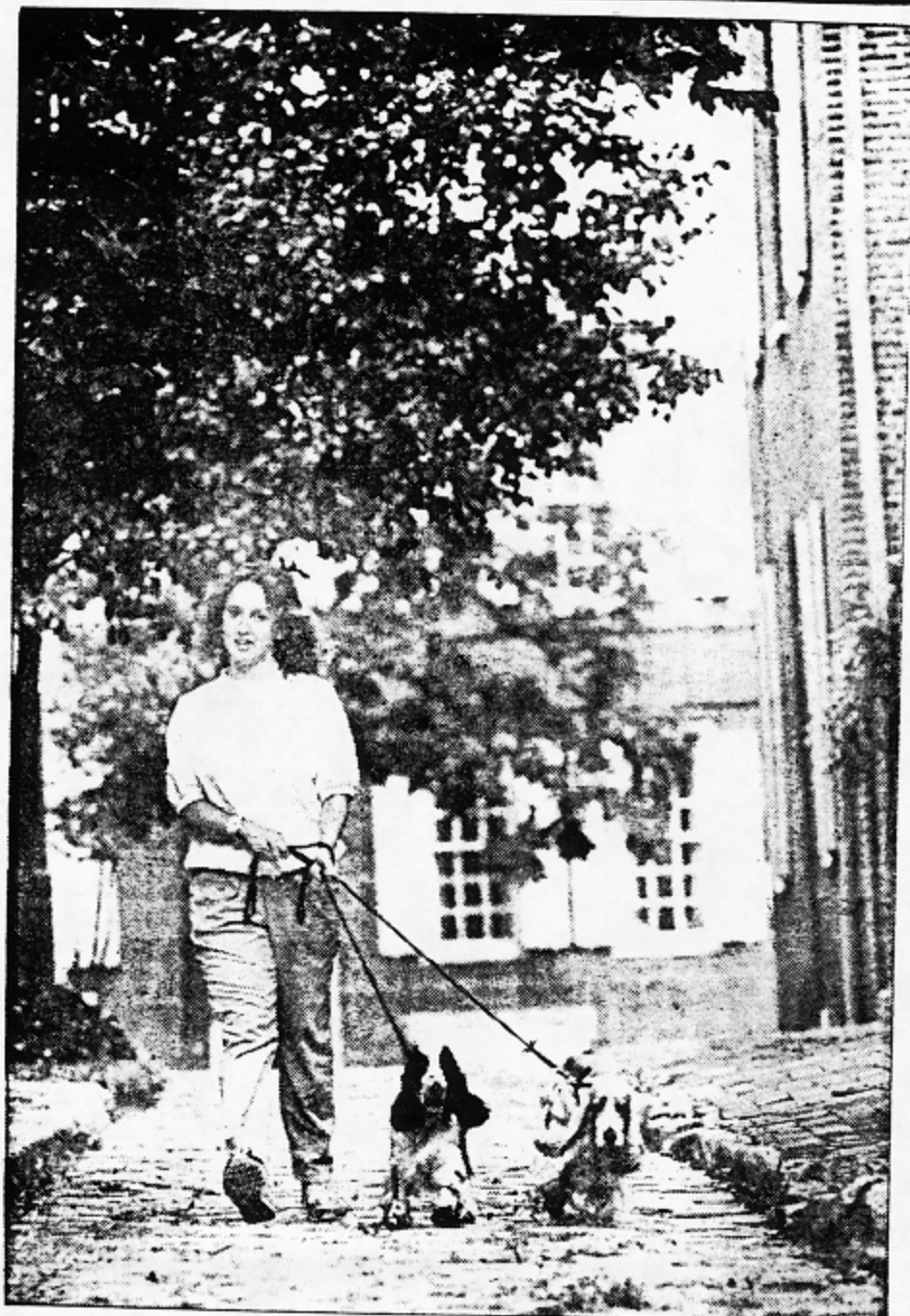
But come the holidays, her pet stops multiply like rabbits.

Over the Labor Day weekend, Hunter expected to check on "at least" 40 pets a day. "I'll get no rest until Labor Day is long gone," said Hunter. "Many of my customers will be gone for the entire week."

Hunter started pet-sitting part time while working for a veterinarian in the Art Museum area. "A few customers went away and didn't want to put their animals in a kennel," she said. "They asked me if I'd come to their homes and watch their pets."

Five months later, she traded in her vet job for the pet job. It wasn't long before the Hunter became the hunted. Clients clamored for her services. And with ads in the *Welcomat* and on the side of her car, she now has so much business that six people help her out part time.

Hunter said her service — Kerri's Cat Care — now visits more than 220 households, most of them occupied by working people who



SUSAN WINTERS/DAILY NEWS

On her daily rounds, pet-sitter Kerri Hunter walks spaniels Katy and Lily

You Can Pick and Choose Among Pet-Sitters in the Area

Kerri's Cat Care is one of three bonded pet-sitting services in the Philadelphia area. The others are Home Sitting Services of the Main Line, Rosemont, and Pet Sitters Ltd., of Cherry Hill.

don't have the necessary time to be with the family pet.

For less than the price of a haircut — \$7.50 for a half-hour — Hunter will walk, water, feed and even try to amuse Fido, Morris or Tweetie. She also makes "people food dinners" for finicky pets, and goes so far as to ro-

tate the hot lamp warming a client's favorite snake or chameleon.

"I'm an animal lover," said Hunter. "When I was growing up in Chicago we always had animals around the house — cats, pigeons, snakes ... I feel I was predestined to work with animals. I really do."

If Hunter has one pet peeve, it's not having a day off in almost a year and a half, or a vacation in almost two years.

"My last vacation was two years ago. I went home to Chicago," said Hunter, an avid Cubs fan. "I went to Wrigley Field almost every day. When I was a kid I was always going Cubs games."

"I was raised in Wrigley Field," she added. Born to a bunny, raised in Wrigley. It could only happen to a pet-sitter.