

The Metro Section

The New York Times



Arabella Motta/The New York Times

Gayle Kirschenbaum and Chelsea with the filmmaker Albert Maysles at Cabrini Hospice, where Chelsea visits patients.

Cut! She's Chewing the Scenery

A Shih Tzu and Her Stage Mother Strive for Stardom

By SHERRI DAY

Gayle Kirschenbaum is obsessed with her dog. And, like many pet owners, she is convinced that her fellow humans delight in hearing endless stories about Chelsea, a 13-pound black and white Shih Tzu that she calls her "dog-ter."

But unlike other pet owners, Ms. Kirschenbaum, a freelance television producer and Emmy-Award-winning documentary filmmaker, has the dangerous ability to foist her dog tales onto a wider audience. Yes, Ms. Kirschenbaum is turning her pet's life into a movie.

"Did you ever see a girl like that?" she asked as she pulled a pink and white visor onto Chelsea's head and fastened a faux-jeweled collar around her neck. "This is a star."

Last March, Ms. Kirschenbaum began shooting a documentary film that chronicles her adventures with Chelsea as the two wander about New York City. Ms. Kirschenbaum describes the movie, titled "A Dog's Life: A Dogumentary," as "Best in Show" meets "Sex and the



Chelsea and Ms. Kirschenbaum also do volunteer work at St. Vincent's Manhattan Hospital, where Chelsea has her own identification badge.

City." Her goal is to submit the film to the 2003 Sundance Film Festival, where she hopes it will attract enough attention to get Chelsea her own television series. "I used to joke that we were going to be the next Dorothy and Toto, but they were only in the one movie," Ms. Kirschenbaum said. "I want her to be branded."

Ms. Kirschenbaum, who in her spare time is working on a documentary

about the parole system that has been commissioned by HBO, spends most of her days trying to make Chelsea a superstar. With the help of a volunteer production crew, Ms. Kirschenbaum and Chelsea have shot more than 50 hours of film. Her studio apartment in Greenwich Village doubles as an editing suite and Web site production office

Continued on Page B7



Chelsea wore a tiny camera for some scenes: from left, in Greenwich Village, in Central Park and at a fair in the Village.