



FETCH!

The newsletter of Fetching Companions

Holiday Issue

November 2009

Holiday Greetings!

It's amazing how quickly the seasons pass and the holidays gang up on us, but it's that time again. The hustle and bustle is distracting, but it's the time of year when we draw close to loved ones to celebrate both the spirit of the season and to count our blessings.

It's also a timeto reflect on those less fortunate than us...

It's also a time to pause and reflect on those less fortunate than us, and to extend a helping hand if we can.

If your resources extend beyond your circle of friends and family, as well as those who've fallen on hard times, please take a moment to consider those other victims of misfortune— pets abandoned by

desperate owners.

Our volunteers are taking in as many needy dogs as they can, even while preparing for the holidays, but they need your help as well. Please consider taking on part of the burden through the generosity of a tax-deductible donation. It will give the gift of new hope and life to these homeless unfortunates. And if you'd like to get more deeply involved, there's always volunteering.

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The View from Chaos Manor

Dogs That Stick, and More

by Larry Mittell, Editor



Dutchess

There's an occupational hazard associated with dog rescue—dogs that stick. Here at Chaos Manor (apologies to author Jerry Pournelle for borrowing the name), we have two dogs we adopted by choice,

a pair of black purebreds named Dinah and Tristam, but we also have two that sort of fell into our lives and stuck.

One is Rascal, a mutt who looks sort of like a diminutive 45-pound German Shepherd who walked through a wading pool of paint, giving him white boots and a white tail tip. He just showed up on the front step some dozen years ago. He was so painfully shy that he was unadoptable and has been with us ever since.

The other is Dutchess, a ten-year-old purebred female who came to us in an extremely emaciated state, blind and diabetic. As if that weren't enough, she had a crippling tear in

a knee ligament. She underwent knee surgery and lens implants so now she can see, run, jump, and do virtually anything a normal ten-year-old can do. The diabetes is under control via twice-daily insulin injections, which I administer. We think she'd be happier as an only dog, but we can't find a willing adopter. Here are what I think are the reasons—

- Many people are fearful of black dogs. I know—it's unreasonable—but it's a painful truth.
- Most people are reluctant to adopt a senior dog, thinking they're likely to pass away soon.

Tristam, Dinah and Rascal are all 14 years old, living testaments to the fact that it ain't necessarily so.

- Dutchess requires daily insulin injections. People think that insulin is expensive and that injections require a vet's services. The drug is actually relatively inexpensive and no prescription is needed. The only reason for an occasional vet visit (besides the usual ones) is to verify that the dosage is correct. And if a fumble-fingers like me can do the shots, anyone can.

Meanwhile, she remains with us,

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Tobi, the Tripod Dog

Those among you who saw our 2007 story about Tobi (his name was Lucas at the time) will recall the poor little black Lab mix pup who suffered such terrible neurological damage in a car accident that we were forced to have one of his forelegs amputated.

...he has adapted wonderfully to life on three legs

Well, the little devil is alive, healthy, and prospering

His recovery is complete and he has adapted wonderfully to life

on three legs. He runs, jumps, and swims with the best of them. He's

also got Penelope, his new little sister, to dote on and take care of.

The photo will give you an idea of how terribly smitten by her he is.

The expense of his surgery would have severely limited our ability to continue

rescuing other dogs, but thanks to a generous outpouring of financial aid from our adopters and readers, we were able to weather the fiscal storm.

Our heartfelt thanks to all whose altruism helped us to give Tobi a new lease on life.



Lab Haiku Strikes Back!

It's been several days since we last received threatening phone calls on the subject, so we thought we'd take advantage of the lull to air out the latest verses.

Restraint

*I am so darned good—
left the steak on the table... wait...
what was I thinking?*

His Favorite Flavor

*I'm licking your face
because I love you of course, but
also you taste good*

The Guardian

*woof! woof! woof! woof! woof!
there, the mailman's gone again.
works every time*

Computer Accessories

*real mice are furry
and are not so nice and crunchy
as this clicky one*

Quid Pro Quo

*give me a cookie
I'll perform an amazing trick—
I'll beg for one more*

Cat-astrophy

*cats are so stupid.
my reward for trying to play
is a darned scratched nose*

Basking

*I lie on my back
in the warmth of the noonday sun
life is doggone good*

Postings

*call that a hydrant?
smells like a doggie bulletin
board if you ask me*

A Work of Art

*it's so beautiful,
so round, so deep, so colorful—
I love my food bowl*

Mesmerized

*look into my eyes...
sleep, sleep— yield to your desire to
feed me two breakfasts*

Destination China

*Why am I digging?
I'm told if I go far enough
there's Kung Pao chicken*

Share and Share Alike

*I have all the stuff
a dog could want except for that
doughnut you're eating*



The View from Chaos Manor

(continued)

is the picture of health, and is as happy as she can be in a four-dog home (not counting fosters). She's welcome here for as long as she lives, but she'd be happier in a one-dog household, and we'd be able to rescue more dogs in need if she were.

Speaking of senior dogs, you may have noticed that we have a tendency to rescue them, though we generally have a sprinkling of youngsters as well. There are some good reasons for this bias. It partly stems from compassion—seniors in a shelter are pretty much on death row and aren't often adopted. We're many times their court of last resort. It also owes to the fact that some foster families just plain old like having a nice senior or two around. Here's why—

- What you see is what you get—the dog's personality and temperament are fully formed, so there's no need to guess how he or she will turn out.

- Destructive behaviors, such as chewing inappropriate objects and digging, will largely be abated or gone altogether.
- House training is almost never required.
- Seniors generally get along with other dogs quite well and normally love children.
- They love a good walk, but don't require the intense exercise a youngster does. They're perfectly happy to curl up at your feet for a nice companionable nap.

There are plenty of other reasons, but you get the picture. They make a pretty compelling case to add a senior to your own family, don't you think?



Where Those Adoption Fees Go

Our adoption fees range from \$150 to \$400 (averaging around \$250), depending on the dog's age. It may seem like a lot, but our average expense per dog is in excess of \$500.

That doesn't seem to add up, does it? We lose about \$250 per dog—why? Most of our dogs are ...hale and hearty, and normally our expenses are limited to the shelter redemption fee and a single vet fee for a basic health check, perhaps \$150 all told. But sometimes we unknowingly take a dog with a serious orthopedic or other health problem requiring surgery or treatment that can run to thousands of dollars. Other times we do it knowingly, out of compassion for the plight of a given dog; Tobi

and Dutchess (see page 1) are but two examples.

Since adoption fees only get us halfway to solvency, we rely upon public charity to keep us afloat. We don't want to raise fees, for fear that we'll turn away good families and thus wind up rescuing fewer dogs.

...adoption fees only get us halfway to solvency...

So far, a generous public has enabled us to hold down these fees.

We are very efficient financially. No officer, director or volunteer receives a penny in salary. We have no offices or other physical facilities to maintain. 100% of our income goes toward shelter, transport, veterinary fees, general dog care and modest fund raising costs.

Your fees and donations go a very long way with us.

Shopping?

How that can help homeless dogs

The biggest gift anyone can bestow on us is to foster one of our needy dogs until it's placed in a new home, but not everyone can. Some have careers that don't permit them the time to do so and some have deed or rental restrictions that don't allow them to house a dog, while others have allergies to dogs.

Whatever the reason, there are other ways to help us. The most obvious is a charitable donation. We are an IRS 501(c)3

public benefit corporation, so your donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. But you can also help us financially with absolutely no expense to you. Here's how:

- Register your Ralphs card and

we'll receive a small donation from Ralphs for each of your purchases. Just click the Ralphs icon on our web site and supply the requested information.

- Click on the Amazon.com icon on our web site to enter Amazon's web site when shopping there. If you do that each time you shop, we'll receive a small donation for your purchases
- Register with iGive by clicking the icon on our web site. Follow the instructions and we'll get a penny each time you simply search on web sites such as Barnes & Noble, Best Buy, Ebay, Gap, Staples and others. We'll also receive a contribution for each purchase made.
- MyCause.com (newly renamed YourCause) has a similar program. Click their icon on our web site and enter the search term "Fetching Companions" to get to the appropriate page.

Emergency Preparedness

How to help your dog to survive

Chances are that you, like most of us, haven't thought through what you'd do in the event of a disaster, natural or man-made. Hurricane Katrina dramatically brought home the fact that all families need to create a disaster plan and acquire the food, water and other supplies necessary to make it through. Here's a good starting point on FEMA's web site— <http://www.fema.gov/plan/index.shtml>.

Once you've decided what to do for the human members of your family, it's time to consider your pets. Here our emphasis will be on dogs, of course.

- **Identification**—Make sure your dog has a collar with an ID tag. The tag should bear both your home and cell phone numbers. Collars have a way of loosening with time and can come off. Check regularly to make sure your dog's isn't too loose. ID microchips can't come off; have your vet insert one if you haven't already. They can migrate or become non-functional, so have your vet scan for it once in a while.
- **Take photos of your dog, both groomed and ungroomed.** If you take digital photos, you can store them on an inexpensive and ultra-portable computer flash drive, along

with other vital information you'll want to take with you if you have to evacuate. Photos can be vital in finding your dog, should you become separated.

- **Pack an Emergency Pet Box**—This should contain enough food and water to last several days. A SteriPEN, available at camping stores, can treat clear water by using ultraviolet light rays to destroy protozoa, bacteria and viri. The bag should also contain your dog's proof of vaccinations and any other essential medical information in a waterproof bag. Be sure it also contains a list of vet clinics, shelters, boarding kennels, nearby friends, and hotels that accept dogs.
- **Be Ready to Evacuate Quickly**—Keep leashes and collars, with your car keys, near an exit door. If you can't take your dog with you, bring it inside to the safest part of the house with as much food and water as you can. A food your dog doesn't like too well can prevent it from harmful binge eating. Set food and water in a corner away from doors and windows. Leave bathroom doors open and toilet seats up. Better to drink toilet water than to die of thirst.

Fetching Companions

an IRS Section 501(c)(3) public benefit nonprofit organization
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Honor Roll

Here's a list of the wonderful folks who have made our foster dogs part of their families since our last newsletter.

ADOPTER	DATE	DOG
Rob Alexander	08/09/09	Shadow2
Susan Alexander	01/01/09	Sparky
Patricia Apel	08/16/09	Buster2
Fran Baruch	06/25/08	Peanut
Sally Becker	08/08/08	Miss Daisy
Lynne Bierhorst	03/25/09	Gracie May
Greg and Tina Blankenship	07/16/08	Darby
Bob Blokdyk	04/11/08	Bart
Rob and Joyce Bonomo	03/06/09	Maggie Mae
William and Terra Burkett	06/05/08	Brody
Ann Carpenter	10/11/08	Elsie
Sue and David Carpenter	08/07/08	Pearl2
Bruce Chisholm	02/11/08	Gypsy
Amy Cimetta	08/03/09	Jet
Eldon Clark	02/08/08	Chandler
Cameron Cottrell	02/23/08	Romeo
Barbara Dirickson	04/25/08	Billie
Peter Dullea	04/27/09	Chippie
Kim and Ron Edwards	05/10/08	Oscar
Michael Gertz	06/23/08	Newton
Susan Giovinazzo	10/28/08	Sweet Sammy
Frank Headrick	08/16/08	Tank
Ed and Marilyn Johnson	03/01/09	Mallory
Diana Karns	07/17/08	Holly
Valerie Kennedy	12/28/08	Barney
Becky Kirby	10/19/08	Snow
Brigitte and Pete Korpela	02/09/08	Diamond
Joe Kouri	01/19/09	Lenore
Debbie Kreis	05/26/08	Shaughnessy
Susie and Minard LaFever	06/22/08	Ian
Jean Longacre	11/17/09	Rafael
Orlando Love	09/07/08	Hershey
Annik Majamaki	02/21/09	Rio
Juliette Maor	12/14/07	Samantha
Rose Marcario	09/13/09	Misty
John Marco	02/22/09	Duke
Donna Marykwas	03/01/09	Skye
Caitlin Masters	06/28/08	Clifford
Sharon and Michael McCabe	11/29/08	Jasper
Barbara Meskin	10/02/09	Roxy
Karen Miller	10/27/08	Rufus
Barbara Moore	03/21/09	Allie
Matt O'connor	12/29/08	Blake
Rafael Osso	02/21/09	Magnum2
Pam Putch	11/17/07	Doug Wilson
Stephen Salem	05/13/08	Panther
Kathy Sekely	02/02/08	Ginger
Julie Sharpe	06/06/09	Prancer
Andrew Smith	06/03/08	Brady
Dale Stark	10/11/09	King
Dennis Steffe	12/17/07	Louie
Bobbie Thorne	01/29/08	Willow
Jennifer Thrall	05/03/08	Sam
Roman Valdez	04/28/08	Blue2
Julie Vasquez	09/21/08	Gus2
Katie Waldman	11/18/09	Juneau
Matthew Walthour	06/03/08	Salty
Scott Weyer	04/27/08	Dallas
Tricia Wilkerson	02/09/08	Bogey
Doug Wright	12/20/07	Tonka

If we've left you out, please accept our apologies. Drop us a line and we'll include you in our next issue.

Ellie's Last Ride

The sound of Ellie's labored breathing, as she lies sleeplessly at the side of my bed, wakes me. I'm unable to get back to sleep; I'm worried over her rapidly declining health and the sad duty I must carry out tomorrow.

Ellie Mae came into our lives about 10 years ago, a couple of years after dog rescue did. She was a beautiful yellow girl. Large and athletic, she was possessed of an extremely sweet personality.

We knew rescued dogs sometimes have separation anxiety, which evokes panicky and sometimes destructive behaviors when they're left alone. In fact, we'd dealt successfully with a case or two, but we were innocently and completely unprepared for the sheer intensity of Ellie's problem. It took failed adoptions by two families before we realized we had a very extreme case on our hands.

Her pain and suffering have taken the heart out of her: Ellie's life, after so many happy years, has become a bleak struggle. We have a date with our vet in the morning— an appointment to free her from her burden. Until then, I hope she gets some sleep.

Carolyn and I decided to foster her, rather than return her to her original fosterer. We're at home most of the time, so we have more time to work with problem dogs. This we research into the dog's problem and consult with behaviorists. Nothing worked; she still frantically tried to escape our home when we'd leave minutes, breaking fences, whatever it was an option; she could seconds. We were home.

Normally a dog can be cured through appropriate conditioning, but this was an aration anxiety case. Finally, we resorted to an expensive, custom-made, welded aluminum crate with bank-vault-like strength. That allowed us to leave home for a couple of hours without fear that Ellie would harm herself or escape. We knew now that we couldn't burden an adopter with her problem, so we adopted her ourselves, for better or worse.



I can't hear her breath any longer— she must finally be asleep. Thank goodness; she deserves a respite from her suffering.

As the years passed, Ellie's anxiety abated to a large extent, and physical infirmities left her incapable of escape. She was a happy girl throughout, and was never happier than when on a walk or a car ride.

She blew out a spinal disc. Emergency surgery left her hind legs paralyzed. After several weeks of hydrotherapy, she could walk again, but with a "pacing" gait, in which the legs of one side move forward at the same time— extremely unusual for a dog. She enthusiastically resumed regular walks and led a contented life for a few years.

I took her for a walk today using a sling to support her rear. Normally nothing could make her happier, sling or not, even if the walk is only a few hundred feet long, but her heart wasn't in it this time, and hasn't been for a while.

Finally, she had a spinal "stroke." A disc had leaked its contents into her spinal canal, leaving her rear legs paralyzed once again. She recovered after a couple of weeks, but control of her hind legs became marginal. This gradually grew worse and she eventually became incontinent as well. We knew the end was at hand. At least we had the consolation of knowing that we'd added several comfortable, enjoyable years to her life.

She died during the night. We load her body into the Jeep as the dim, overcast morning sky oozes a grim, dismal drizzle. We take Ellie on her last ride. One of the clinic's vet techs, Adam, meets us and takes her from me. I begin to weep.

Sunlight breaks through the parting overcast, bringing with it the promise of a bright new day. Rest in peace Ellie, rest in peace.

— Larry Mittell