



Former Rescue Earns Titles, *Or* It is Never Too Late To Teach An Old Dog New Tricks

By Pam Clark

Seems hard to believe it has been almost three years since I adopted Pirate. I would like to share with you highlights from his journey so far.

When Pirate came to live with me and Sasha (an adult rescue Belgian Malinois/German Shepherd mix) in January of 2009 he was unsure of himself. That manifested in lots of barking and a bit of lunging in new situations. My goal in adopting and fostering is to give the dog a job and to find the job that they LOVE to do. As an added benefit, dogs with jobs don't get into as much trouble.

To find Pirate's job we needed to start with the basics. Off to obedience class we went. As we bonded, he gained more confidence, discipline and control.

Within a year both dogs were ready to go into the obedience ring. I wasn't sure about myself. It had been 20 some years since I had been in obedience competition with my first BSD, Misty. With a good dose of encouragement from



my training partners and instructors, we dove in. We started with Obedience Novice. Pirate and Sasha did wonderfully both in the ring and waiting ringside. Both dogs finished their CD titles in 2011. For fun, I registered us for Rally Novice. "Fun" was the operative word. We had a blast in the ring and before the end of the year we had completed our RN titles.

I found out my vet has sheep and does herding classes at her farm. We had to go! Pirate was a little mystified by these large, white, fluffy "things" that sound funny and were just standing there. He looked at me, then the sheep, then me. He wasn't sure what to do. Finally curiosity got the better of him and he moved closer to smell those "things." One smell and he was on! Eyes opened wide. Ears popped up. Brain engaged! Let the herding begin! He was fantastic of course.

So what was next for my old boy who is coming into his own? Enrichment and more challenges. We continued to train and move into Rally Advanced. We had the opportunity to show in Huntley, IL for a Rally Advanced leg. We got to meet in person Joe & Sharon Roundy (Sharon is Chair of the BSDRT) and meet again Susan Spinhime (2nd chair of the BSDRT). Pirate hopped up into Sharon's lap with permission to say hello with his beautiful brown eyes and a nose flip of Sharon's arm for some lovin'. He is quite the snuggle-bug.

I have to add a personal note. As an adopter, I wasn't sure how much contact the Trust would want or desire. I was thrilled that Sharon, Susan and many fellow

adopters have allowed me to stay in contact, give updates, celebrate our accomplishments and continue to encourage us. Great care is put into the re-homing of BSDRT's rescue dogs and the care continues after the adoption as well. Deep friendships, both human and canine have developed.

In 2012, we finished our Rally Advanced and Rally Excellent titles plus Canine Good Citizen, all big accomplishments for this formerly unbalanced boy. It has not been all work though for Pirate. We have lots of fun too. Balanced dogs get to run at dog parks, meet new canine friends, and go to lots of new places. He doesn't like to swim, but now will go chest-deep into a lake, stream or river. This is a long way from "Oh, my toes just got wet!" Pirate has fun jobs too. I discovered he LOVES to pull a cart or wagon. He even got to walk in the St. Patrick's Day Parade that goes from Rock Island, IL to Davenport, IA. Pirate pulled his little red wagon dressed in green carrying a cute dog house. He was a hit with the crowd.

Pirate is now 9 years old and going strong. He answers the question "Can old dogs learn new tricks?" With a Belgian smile and a little 'tude, his answer is, "HA! Just watch me!"



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Respectfully submitted,

Marion Heise

Treasurer, BSD Rescue Trust

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