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Will (one eye)



Wonders Never Cease

I was a first time breeder and quite nervous. This was the culmination of my childhood dream - a litter of puppies. I had no mentor, no one to hold my hand; no one to guide me through or allay my fears - just a few informative books and one great brood bitch doing all the work, while I sat box side praying fervently.



In short order Sage, my 65% Avongara basenji, delivered five robust, though somewhat plainly marked, red and white boys. We were still one short of the

six-pack predicted by pre-whelp x-rays, which of course would be the girl I had specially ordered via daily whispers to what I hoped were responsive ears. Finally the last pup arrived, slightly smaller than the others, bearing a full white collar marred by a single red dot. Thanking my lucky stars for what had to be my dreamed for showgirl, I failed to verify the plumbing. Only later would I discover my showgirl was in fact just another boy. What was the universe thinking giving a first time breeder all boys?

Early on I planned to keep two of the boys I particularly liked for different reasons. Clay had the old-fashioned, albeit plain look of his father that first attracted me, while Drew was the spitting image of his momma Sage. And both excelled in the temperament department - tail wagging and talkative, eager to please, and definitely food motivated. However socializing and training two pups plus two adults while working fulltime proved difficult. Someone would have to be placed, but whom?

Until then my puppy picking experiences had consisted of contacting a breeder of choice, placing my "order" for beauty and brains and sitting on my laurels while another breeder did all the work. What was I thinking when I decided to jump into the fray and have my own litter? Do my own picking? What made me think I could do as well as the breeders who had previously selected my dogs?

By this time I had resumed private training sessions and had enrolled in a weekly puppy class in which "the boyz", as they became collectively known, were rotated individually for much needed one on one time, away from the other.

Differences between the boys became noticeable

during these sessions. While both were still extremely food motivated, Clay was easily distractible. He was also more independent, more willing to wander away from me and explore on his own with no real desire to check in. Drew, on the other hand, was more apt to hang around and see what I was doing. Although he was interested in his surroundings he was just a little more interested in me (or perhaps the fresh liver I carried). Regardless of his reasons for being there, I liked it.

Another deciding incident occurred one evening during a routine walk. Being rambunctious baby boys they loved to hightail it out to the end of their flexi leads, usually stopping well short of the actual length, only to race back towards me, then back out again. That particular evening Drew spotted a rabbit and like any proper sight hound gave chase hitting the end of his flexi at roughly 100 miles per hour, resulting in his flying backwards landing on his back. Not to be outdone, Clay instantly followed suit with similar results except he bounced to his feet and returned to the end of the flexi, intent only on the bunny and totally disregarding a fairly harsh self inflicted negative reinforcement. Drew on the other hand was much more respectful. He subsequently walked fairly close by my side keeping one eye glued to the flexi in case the villainous monster struck again. I liked Drew's respect for the negative consequence; this combined with his strong food motivation and his early interest in me, made Drew my ultimate choice. Did I do the right thing? Did I choose the right one?



My new work schedule no longer afforded me time to fully socialize Drew beyond the six-week puppy class he and Clay had attended. While I continued to train with private lessons in which Drew became a star pupil, the much-needed exposure to many people, places and things fell by the wayside. I hoped his early exposure would be sufficient long term however it was not, as became apparent when I began table work and stand for exams. Not exactly the strong and silent type - he

took after his father whose low rumbles upon a judge's approach shocked us the one and only time I showed him for his novice owner - Drew also had plenty to say and usually at the most inopportune times - namely when a major win hung in the balance.



Thankfully his innate willingness to please overrode any disgruntlement he might voice occasionally, allowing him to not only earn his AKC breed championship from the coveted (to me at least) bred-by class with two 3 point and one 4 point majors, but his companion dog (CD) degree with a High In Trial and multiple class placements. Added to Drew's early affinity for lure coursing, in which he won four majors en-route to his field championship, Drew soon became my first bred-by AKC Dual Champion/CD basenji.

Despite his registered name of "Picture Perfect" he was far from perfect and demonstrated many moments of true basenji-ness. One time he swallowed a pack rat whole and led me a merry chase throughout house and yard, ignoring my attempts to enforce obedience. When finally cornered I nearly drowned him in hydrogen peroxide forcing him to regurgitate his treasure. Another time, when my beau (now husband) and I were dating and in the throes of a kiss, Drew quietly snuck off with Rand's glasses. Within the very few minutes it took us to discover them both missing, Drew had managed to maul both earpieces creating razor sharp prickly edges Rand lived with for the next year! Life was certainly never dull with Drew around; it was pretty good. He had begun successfully competing in agility with many Q's to his name and was training for open obedience with the goal of completing his CDX by year's end 2005. But as the saying goes "the best laid plans..."

In July of 2004 we discovered on his routine blood work that Drew had a low positive Valley Fever titer. Valley Fever (VF), also known as San Joaquin fever or desert fever, is a fungal infection contracted by inhaling



soil-dwelling spores. These microscopic spores are found in the arid soils of the low desert regions of the southwestern U.S. All mammals are, to some degree, susceptible to VF; dogs more so due to their close proximity to the ground and their penchant for digging in the soil where the spores live. VF, while prevalent throughout the southwest, is not contagious from animal to animal; dogs cannot transmit to dogs (or humans), humans cannot transmit to humans (or dogs). Many humans affected with VF usually recover without benefit of treatment or even knowing that they are infected. For unknown reasons, dogs are not so lucky and many will develop serious disease; in truth without treatment active VF can be deadly.

We believed Drew's low titer was due to exposure in our VF endemic area since there was no evidence of active disease. Unfortunately in January 2005 Drew presented with bilateral uveitis, or inflammation of the middle layers of his eyes. Uveitis has many causes, one of which is fungal infection. His VF was now causing problems, serious problems; a retest shows his titer had quadrupled in the span of six months. The vets needed to work fast if they were to save his eyes; uveitis often-times creates the right environment for glaucoma, a painful condition where the pressure of the eye increases to intolerable levels and may result in painful blindness. Treatment of glaucoma/uveitis can unfortunately comprise the body's ability to actively fight infections such as VF so we walked a fine line trying to keep him healthy.

Despite an aggressive month's long treatment, Drew's

right eye did not respond well and we had to think about removing it; thankfully his left eye improved. I worried about his future; he loved coursing, enjoyed his agility and obedience training, and he was just too young to retire. I sent out some feelers – was there any rule that would keep a one-eyed dog from doing these things? All replies were resounding "No's!" So long as he has sight in his remaining eye, so long as he was not a danger to himself or to others and so long as he had the desire, he would be welcome with open arms in any venue we wanted to try. The question was...would he still want to do it with half his vision gone?

The pressure in his right eye could not be controlled, and the pain it caused was evident in Drew's demeanor – I decided to act, so on February 15, 2005 Drew's right eye was enucleated. His surgery, thought by all to be routine, set off a series of unfortunate events that would last almost six months. Within a couple of days of his surgery, he became cautious about opening his mouth, screaming in pain when he forgot and tried to open it normally - not unheard of after enucleation since the jaw junction and the eye socket are rather close together. Within weeks his jaw locked fully and we were unable to open it more than half an inch; Drew could have easily choked on vomit, food, et al., and died. Without access to his airway we would have been unable to intervene. It was a scary time in our lives.

We grasped at straws trying to figure out the cause, meanwhile putting him on large doses of steroids. Over three thousand dollars, one c-scan, and one muscle biopsy later we found - nothing! Apparently he

was fine, quite normal (apart from his VF), with nothing wrong to account for his mysterious condition. Sadly, by this time steroids had taken their toll and where once rippling muscles gleamed, one could only find flaccid skin and a dull coat. Determined, I settled in to months long physical therapy - my own idea actually - holding bully chew sticks for hours, forcing him to chew on the right side of his mouth though he often resisted. Days turned to weeks; weeks to months and slowly Drew rebuilt his masticator (chewing) muscles and to this day, no one is wiser that at one point in his life, his jaw was locked like a steel trap.

Through it all Drew and I continued to play at home in agility, obedience and rally. This kept his mind, body and spirit nimble while not overtaxing him, in anticipation of the time he would let me know if he still wanted to play these games with only one eye. The novice rally classes are very slow paced and visual acuity is not always necessary; it was in these classes that Drew was able to jump back into the show fray with his previous verve showing me he did indeed want to continue to play. In November 2005, nine months after his enucleation, Drew earned his first title as our "one-eyed wonder" and hasn't looked back. Currently Drew is: **High In Trial, AKC Dual CH Sinbaje's Picture Perfect**, CD,

CDX*, JC, SC, **FCh, RN, RA, RE**, NA, NAJ, **OA, OAJ, NAP, NJP, OAP, OJP, AXP, AJP, NCC, OAC**

Bold face titles are those titles Drew has earned as a 'one-eyed wonder'

* Finished title with a 1st place score of 196.5 (out of 200) over 26 all breed entries.

Post script: A few months back Drew again flared with VF, which again created eye inflammation. Thankfully aggressive treatment has been successful and Drew is back to doing what he loves best. Currently he is half way to his preferred Masters Agility titles and has 3 legs towards his Preferred Agility Championship title...will one-eyed wonders never cease?

On the Tube

Some of the disciplines Drew competes in:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_H_OLcSoRM

Training a Basenji the weave poles

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9DGDZM55cs>

A Basenji competing in agility

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfkSnbIWqvg>

NEWS FROM MT MONGREL

Be careful what you teach them !

I have a brown dog staying with me , he belongs to friends who are working in Russia. He is a pound dog, and we could all take a guess at his breeding and still be wrong ! His Name is Josh, and when visitors ask what kind of dogs they are running in the front yard , the roll call usually goes: Foxhound, Basenji, Foxhound, Brown Dog, two more Basenji pups and the walking slipper you can smell from 10 feet away is called Rocky!

When Josh first came to the farm he was fascinated with all the animals , he had always been a suburban dog, so it was all a great adventure, which made him want to bark constantly !! Now one of the reasons I love the Basenji, is that they DONT BARK !

So while Josh was very sociable and well mannered in every way , the barking was doing my head in ! He particularly liked to bark at the pigs , and as one of my old sows was at that time walking over her electric wire and trying to unhinge her gate , on a daily basis, I decided to teach Josh to bark whenever she got near the gate .

He is a smart boy and it only took a few days , and once he understood the job , he would lay quietly until she touched the gate , and then charge at the gate and start barking to let me know she was at it again. I was very



pleased with myself, until the day came to move the sow into another paddock! I dropped the electric wire, opened the gate, called her name and shook my little bucket of feed. She trotted up and we started to move through the gate , when Josh sprang into action, barking and charging at the fence . The old girl got such a shock, she spun around in the gateway , and all 280kg of pig bum connected with my legs. I flew through the air and landed on some lovely rocks (if you have ever been to my place, they are impossible to avoid) Josh was wagging his tail at me waiting for me to give the usual "Good boy Josh", but he had to wait until I was able to catch my breath that day.

So ends another day of "Old dogs and new tricks" and "flying granny's" at Mt. Mongrel .

