Q&A WITH A LOCAL DOG OWNER

Unexpected surprise becomes best gift

By Stephanie Jones
Special to The Examiner

Owner: Jim Hess, executive director of the Office of University Events at George Washington University

Dog: Louis (pronounced Louie), Labrador retriever, 9 years old

Residence: Shepardstown, W.Va.

How did you name your dog? He’s named after St. Louis where I got him. All my family is from there. I went to visit relatives and my uncle had a bunch of Labrador retriever puppies. I ended up unexpectedly coming back to D.C. with Louis.

How did you pick him out of the litter? He was the shiest of the litter. I just said, I’ll take the quiet guy over the rowdy guy.

How did you train your dog? I did that myself. I did spend a lot of time doing that. I got a few books and read up on training techniques and really spent the time when he was a puppy to teach him the basic commands plus a little more. No tricks, that shyness has never left him, tricks are not his speed. He’s a really mellow dog. He’s very good off the leash. He’ll heel. When I stop at the street corner, he sits down at the corner and waits for me to cross the street.

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Does your dog have a favorite toy? He likes Nyla Bones. It’s kind of a hard plastic, they wear down slowly.

What does your dog like to eat? He’s pretty straightforward; he eats Pro Plan dog food and Pro Plan dog biscuits.

Where does your dog sleep? He sleeps on his dog bed next to my wife’s and my bed. We now have a 2-year-old daughter so it’s been a difficult transition for him. He got almost all of our attention up until Maddie was born. Of course Maddie took a lot of attention away. He’s starting to come around, it was actually pretty tough on him. But they get along great and she likes to play with them.

What is the worst thing your dog has ever done? When he was younger, he did chew up some furniture, a couple table legs, chair legs. One of the tables that he pretty much ruined was actually a very nice piece of furniture. By the time he was 2 years old, he kind of grew out of that phase.

Does your dog have any funny quirks? He is shy and nervous, especially for a Labrador retriever. He doesn’t like to go through doorways at the same time as a person.

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BOOK REVIEW

Fear factor: Calming canines

Worried about Fido’s reactions to holiday guests and hubbub? Wondering how to travel with Lucky when she’s terrified of car rides? Frazzled by Fluffy’s separate anxiety fits?

Canine fears require intervention for the animal’s well-being, for our own sanity and for safety’s sake. Since dogs can’t say, “Please don’t approach me, I’m scared,” canine responses have the potential to escalate to growling and biting. Even if the aggression is defensive and not offensive, it’s still not acceptable in human society.

So what do you do? Turn to Nicole Wilde’s new “Help For Your Fearful Dog: A Step-by-Step Guide to Helping Your Dog Conquer His Fears.” The California-based certified pet dog trainer shares insights, management and behavior modification programs to help dogs and their owners. Wilde’s new book’s thick with insight; thankfully, it’s easy to flip to the most relevant chapters and return to others later. The payoff: a dog who trusts you, and a dog you can trust. - Robin Tierney

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PETS may be an acronym for:
* Pet Travel Scheme, which allows animals to travel internationally without quarantine
* Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act
* Paediatric Emergency Transport Service, an ambulance for children

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