

Pet of the Week

By Marty Boerner-Block

When I sat down to write this column, I knew I would have to fight the tears that have swelled in my eyes repeatedly since the moment I met our featured "Pet of the Week" last Wednesday.

I was in the lobby that day. Below the counter calmly stood another incoming, unwanted dog. I could not see the new arrival because my view was blocked by the wall that separated us. I stood digging through a file taking care of other shelter business as Jean, our animal caretaker, dealt with the woman holding the

leash of our newest resident.

I listened as Jean began asking the usual questions to obtain background information on the dog. The woman had been watching this dog for a relative for a short time and had decided to bring the dog to our shelter after the relative had passed away.

At this time the dog stepped further away from the counter, and I caught a glimpse of a long white tail wagging gently back and forth. If I didn't know any better, I thought to myself, I'd say he was a collie. Just as the thought was leaving my head the dog did a full circle and I caught a picture I will never forget. I stopped what I was doing and quickly circled the desk to confirm that this was indeed a white collie.

I became very upset knowing that someone had intentionally bred this dog, because I knew that if you breed two white dogs who were not meant to be white, they would be deaf and

most likely blind. The woman continued with her story of how they bred these white collies and all the puppies were deaf and blind, but people bought them without knowing and therefore her relative made money. She then told us the dog used to have a little sight in one of his eyes but that when they had put him in a moving van with all the furniture, a chair leg or something else had poked it out.

At this point my fists were clenched and I fought tears. Jean had the woman sign the form that relinquishes the animal to our custody and the woman walked out. The dog sat with his tail wagging and then Jean picked him up and took him to his assigned kennel. She returned to him a few moments later with a blanket and a bowl of water, his tail still wagging as if nothing had happened.

An hour or so later, after I had tried to put things into perspective, I went into the kennel and took the dog out and placed him in our kitchen break-room because I had visions of this poor creature bumping into the cement-block walls of the kennel. I thought more space would lessen his confusion.

I went back to my desk, closed the office door, and shed a few of those tears I had been trying to hold in. I knew what I had to do. I tried to stabilize myself as I reached for the euthanasia equipment, and I began the walk back to the kitchen where our "bred for greed" dog quietly waited.

Each person employed here has a special way of confronting the unfortunate euthanasia we are forced to deal with. Jan, our kennel manager, stays silent for a while and then tries to change the subject and tell us a joke or two. If I had to hand just one of the employees a "most valuable employee award," I could not do it. It would have to be all of them.

When I entered the kitchen I took a slip lead with me and then gently placed it around his neck. I would

take him for his very last walk before I returned him to God. I guided him through the lobby and out the front door on to the grass where he would be most comfortable.

He seemed content, actually happy, as he sniffed his way around and then lay down and rolled in the grass. He quickly stood up and shook the grass from his white coat and headed back to the front door from which he had come just minutes before. He obviously had a keen sense of smell. He seemed very confident once he got used to an area. We went back to the kitchen and I removed the leash. He went directly to a bowl of water and took a long drink, then turned around and walked toward me and sat by my feet. I began to pat the top of his head and his tail wagged hard from side to side. The tears swelled and I tried again to cover them as someone walked by the door.

I started to allow thoughts of finding this innocent creature a home. I went back and forth with all the pros and cons of the situation. I kept trying to tell myself to get it over with, because who would want this responsibility? Who would adopt him out of love and not just because they felt sorry for him? Who would have a fenced yard or would faithfully walk him on a leash? Who would be willing to keep his food and water in one area so that he would know where to find it?

On the other hand, he loves everyone, he's housetrained, he seems to adjust much better than I ever expected. Am I wrong for taking a chance? Something told me I had to give it a try. Maybe I am wrong for doing this, but maybe, just maybe, I am right.... ■

Editors' note: This column was originally published in the June 3, 1992, edition of the *Delavan Enterprise*.

The white collie, named Radar, was adopted by a special family, with whom he still lives happily today.



Radar

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