



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
and the *Jamestown Post-Journal* on Saturdays



The Hero has Landed

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I have a dog!

Well, to tell the truth, my daughter has the dog,

“Hero” (yes) is another mail-order pup. Only this time once I'd sent my money, they sent the guarantee. Part of the stipulations were that this dog could not be exposed to parvo until two weeks after his fourth shot.

Readers know my home and grounds are contaminated with the deadly parvovirus –

particularly deadly to those who haven't been totally inoculated which of course is any pup. Howie sadly brought it with him and died from it. It's a pretty good guess that wouldn't make Hero safe till mid- to late-July. What then?

The puppy people were willing to allow him to stay with his owner – but not for anywhere near that long.

Bless her sweet heart, my youngest agreed with her oldest sister's suggestion to be puppy housemom for close to two months. Some readers may see this as a delight. (I might have as well.) But let me add a little detail (besides that not being housebroken bit): Anne already has two dogs she loves dearly. Anne already has a good position she's hoping to keep but the economy and business threaten so she isn't really sure where she'll be by the end of the year. (I can't imagine living under those circumstances.) Anne also loves her part of Vermont – the hikes, trails, and challenges. (I don't plan to write about her bear(s) but do want to “muse” on the porcupine sightings we've both had.) So, yes, Anne works from home but her working days are long and fraught with anxiety and pressure.

Add to that an acreage which she has turned from wild (and rocky) into loving gardens which she enjoys every chance she gets and you see that this is not an idle daughter (none of mine are) who needed an extra diversion.

“Diversion”? Like an infant, a nine-week-old pup is a full-time experience . . . and joy. (I haven't for a minute forgotten my recent Howie.) As I write I am also reading the column from this morning's paper about meeting Howie. Makes me feel quite fickle (I wouldn't treat a man that way – I don't think) but – well, there's that emptiness in my heart and knowing just how much I do have to give.



So, let's meet Hero. (How I wish I could – RIGHT NOW – but Vermont is pretty far away from Cassadaga so, sadly, that's not in the cards at this point.)

I'm sure I had a choice – I always do in these circumstances – and probably jumped back and forth checking out the pictures but I always came back to one: white feet, white chest, white on the top of his head and what others claim are blue eyes. (I see it as a reflection from the camera.) In one shot he's standing, feet splayed like this wasn't what he expected at all. Is that white beneath his chin under a black shiny nose and mustache? He

looks quite masterful, ready and able to take on the world. The photo that sold me on this dog is where his head is tilted down a bit and, for some reason, I smile every time it appears. That's my dog!

As I write “my dog” is hundreds of miles away enjoying his first full day of freedom. I don't see a leash or even a collar in the latest pictures. Howie had neither. Hero's got his head cocked off to the right. Is it a quizzical look or is he telling me he already has things well under control? (He has always looked intelligent. Hey! Not all dogs do.) Except for the parts already mentioned (and probably more I haven't been able to notice), his coat is a gorgeous light tan, long floppy ears. And yes, absolutely the flat coat I insisted upon. I encourage all the traits the poodle mom should pass on including her hypoallergenic coat – but am grateful he'll get his looks from his Labrador dad.



Then again, I'm staring at a page I ripped out of something that says getting a labradoodle is like opening a birthday gift – you don't know exactly what you're going to get.

May all the surprises this time around bring smiles.

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