



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
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In Search of a Good Used Dog

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I borrowed – all right, stole – the term from Tony. It's too perfect not to use.

I have indeed been searching for a used dog ever since Molly died. She was so perfect for me – why can't I simply find another Molly?

Oh, yes, don't bother telling me. I know it can't be and, honestly, I accept that. Trouble is, as time passes and I should be growing more open to possibilities, I am narrowing my search with every day that passes.

Finding an older golden on the internet is impossible. Some breeders might have one whose puppy-making days are over but waiting lists for them are even longer. Animal shelters keep running out of dogs from all I've read. Adoptions were sky-high as Covid quarantined us. People understandably decided if they had to be stuck at home this was the perfect time to get that dog they'd been debating about. Of course, I'm picky enough to aver only a golden would please me.

There are puppies available. The ones advertised here not all that long ago disappeared quickly. (I spoke with a man who was delighted with the two he got.) Still, the question remains: what would I do with a puppy? That's a BABY dog. A baby.



I certainly have the love. I believe I'm a good trainer. I've never allowed a dog to be spoiled because I want to continue to live happily with my choice as well. But I fear I do require patience – something that old girl understood and had in abundance. It's perfectly normal for a baby to want definite times to be fed, to go out and do all those other necessities. I have grown accustomed to jumping for the needs of no one else – just me. And I'm seldom in a hurry.

I know I always felt it took a golden pup two

and a half years – perfectly delightful years, please don't get me wrong – but that long to settle. Nope, I'm leaning toward a used dog.

That, however, doesn't eliminate the primary disadvantage. A golden would weigh almost as much as I. I'm hardly fool enough to believe I could control that whether simply enthusiasm or the desire to chase, be it another dog, rabbit, deer or anything else that might venture on – or near – my property.

My daughter suggested three or four other breeds: small yippy puffballs. Not for me.

I consulted the book I have ('bout time, right?) on dogs: goldendoodles (3 out of 5 for grooming, 4 for ease of training) rate higher than goldens (5 for ease of training but only 4 for good with youngsters and I did have one who bit a child) but even better were labradoodles (5 all the way across the chart except a 4 for grooming) and they come in three sizes with a choice of curly or straight coat and color. My Florida family has two goldendoodles that look far too poodle-y to entice me though I know the pair is well-loved down there. (I also, to be candid, felt like I was sharing space with two good-sized ponies.)

So, as of this writing, my heart is set: medium-sized (about 50 lbs. would be ideal), cream/gold/yellow flat-coated (not curly) labradoodle. Perfect! I think I could order one tonight. BUT . . .



We're back to puppies. It's tempting. I know people with pups. Let me talk to them. While I dream.

I know the enthusiasm and vigor of a baby. It might take years off my life – or add even more. Puppies bite. I haven't forgotten those razor-sharp baby teeth.

IF – and such a huge if it is – I were to go with the one I saw on the internet, it was born in early January which makes it a Capricorn. I don't think I know any Capricorns but in a pup,

this is what it means (do you really believe these things?): “Vanity is not usually a value associated with dogs, but the Capricorn dog is an exception. This pup is image-conscious and wants to be well-thought-of by peers and family. He's preoccupied with the social order. He cares about your opinion of him and hates to be laughed at. This is one dignified dog. Capricorn is happiest when exhibiting excellent manners, grooming and breeding to the whole world. It's as though this dog is always competing for 'best in show.'”

“Don't worry; all this pride still comes with a whopping dose of unconditional love, even in the case where your Capricorn canine happens to be challenging you for top alpha position. Capricorns happen to be very amenable to training and, like their human counterparts, will go for straight A's.”

“Capricorn dogs have a knack for accumulating wealth, which in puppy terms usually has to do with toys and bones. Capricorn dogs love to hide treasures all around the house and yard; it's as though they are saving for a rainy day.”

I've written this on March 20 and intentionally will not revise. Where am I by the time you read it?

New column coming . . . maybe.

Written March 22, 2021