



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
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Meeting Winston

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Let me tell you straight off: There is no Winston. That was the name his breeder chose.

I checked the meaning of his name: basically “Victory-town.” Could anything have been more blah? Besides, I know his groomer would abbreviate it to “Winnie.” No, thank you.

My second choice was Wilbur. Good name, the name of the good pig in E.B. White’s “Charlotte’s Web,” and nothing wrong with “Willy.” I could get used to that. But then one of my kids reminded me every male I’ve had from the start was given a name beginning with the letter “H.” “Penny (my first) and “April” were the girls, an exception to my rule. But there was also Honey (I remember men working in the house who loved to call on entering “Honey, I’m home.”

Hoover had the misfortune to vacuum anything in his path which included a child’s plastic charm I’d never seen before. Sadly, it killed him. Then there was Henry, a true oddball in spite of his sterling pedigree, whose cancer broke my heart.



Name? Looking at that baby face when I was first handed my pup late Wednesday night, April 7th: How the H did your impeccable genes combine to create you? “Howie” it was and “Howie” it shall be.

Combining a yellow (obviously) lab and poodle does not guarantee handsome. Howie has extremely long legs and his vet says he’ll stay narrow and lanky. I tell my daughter with the two poodles that Howie looks like her Lexie without hair. If I wanted beauty, I could have gotten another golden (the sixth at least). Nope, I knew what I wanted and got it. Plus.



I wouldn't pick a man for his looks either. It's character that counts: basically, having a good heart, being straightforward and very intelligent that matter to me.

Howie is 100% love. And devoted to me. Let's add a smiley face here. If I want someone to adore, I prefer to have that emotion returned. He sleeps within a foot of mine when not crated. He's obviously very intelligent for he figured his way around the house (which isn't easy and has stymied more than one adult) and would prefer to sit in my lap. We did try – at least a couple times each day but, truth be, I simply don't have that much lap. Did I mention also obedient? All right, it does take three calls but he comes running from wherever he is. Not far, I assure

you, just out of my sight.

He hates being latched in his crate. (I don't blame him but that's hardly the point, is it?) He has to spend a couple hours there in the late morning while I shower and dress, probably check email and, sometimes, make a quick run to the post office. Crate at bedtime isn't as much of a problem. We're both too tired by then. (As I pen this, I've only had him for two whole days.)

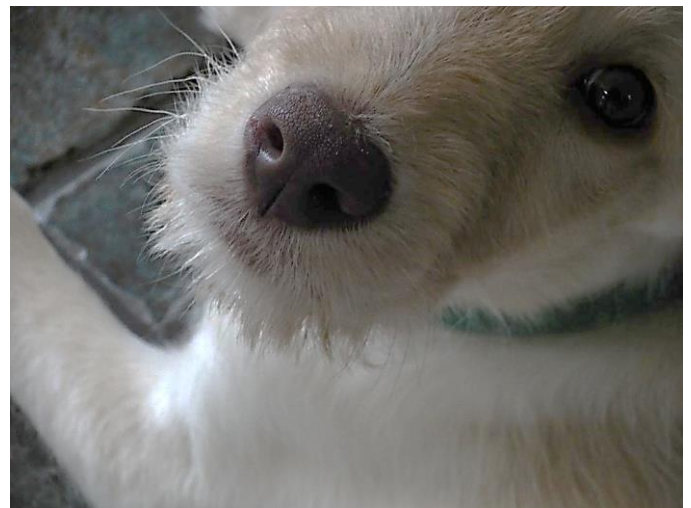
Until the time comes when I have to go out (and it will – soon), he has been loose with me in a somewhat enclosed area. Generally – as now, asleep on my feet. He has a great collection of toys – soft to snuggle and chew and other “toughies” just for exercising those baby teeth.

Until his nails were cut, I was a bleeding pin cushion, changing bandages daily. I won't annoy you with the count. Too many anyway. (I have very thin skin.)

Is my life perfect? Well, there is the blood-letting but, more to the point, dear Howie hasn't a clue about being housebroken. He's just days away from being three months old but, obviously, those months were spent pretty well confined. He was given excellent care and arrived in perfect health. Full of love with a bright curiosity but no idea why I take him out so often. The weather has been ideal allowing us both to enjoy many hours outside but . . .

A memory I assure you I haven't redeemed in over sixty years of betters and worsers: My religious ed teacher saying “You don't know what love is until you've had to clean up your husband's vomit.” Mine realizing how deep my love for Howie is when I'm trying to put the foam pad back in the fabric crate liner.

If my words haven't convinced you, let me just say in plain language: I love this little guy. It doesn't matter what he looks like (or how he got that large beard). Heck! Maybe Howie will turn into the handsomest dog in the area. (But I'm not counting on it.)



I figure I hit the jackpot.

Written April 10, 2021