



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
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There Is No Third Shoe

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Hero is full of hell and hormones.

A treasured paper bookmark is taken from my reading table to his mouth. A silly stuffed whatsit, a gift from my kids and then only for fun, became another of his stuffed animal collection. (Not for long.)

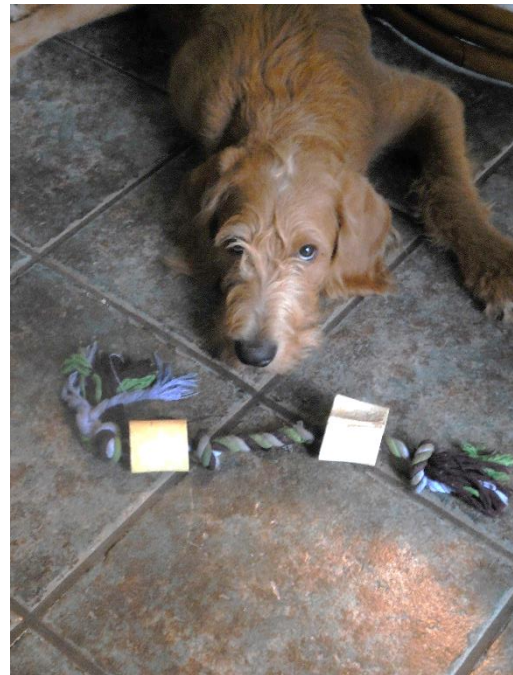
Then he settles (or tires) and is near, if not on, my feet, so filled with innocent love. Those huge black eyes seem to have so much to say. But, as I write, I pause to wonder where he is. It's far too quiet.

What will he bring home this time? We seem to have graduated from sticks to bark. And the chipmunk massacre ended two days ago. Apples are great sport as well. I cut slices so he can see it's more than a toy. Interest lost.

Hero's 100% mischief and another 100% devotion. I'm thankful for the latter, totally returned, and mischief is expected in a pup just reaching six months. To his credit Hero has never destroyed a thing – well, sticks and branches and then those mice and chipmunks. I left a cardigan on my chair when I went out. It “made itself” to the floor – but was certainly undamaged. He wasn't quite as kind to two corks he found upstairs but the gal I was saving them for moved on to different crafts long ago so I have no use – or excuse – for continuing to toss them in a drawer. Still, I do.

I've never had a puppy so calm (well?) and well-behaved (well?) and continue to delight in his every moment. There's always something new.

Shopping recently, I carried in the frozen foods quickly, hurrying on to dress the small (tiny but dripping) cut I'd gotten earlier at the post office. Returning quickly to the car to unload the remainder of my groceries, I





found Hero comfortably in the backseat with a mouthful of green grapes. He'd very carefully picked them one by one, leaving the stems intact. Half a bag easily gone.

"Easily?" My daughter tells me grapes are a definite no-no for dogs. They can cause major stomach upsets and could possibly even prove lethal. Now that I know, I kept a closer eye on the dog until that twenty-four hour "watch period" expired. He's fine. Indeed, he is.

I try to limit his "people food" for I don't want a beggar. So far, so good. In fact, Anne taught him a "trick" which amazes those who observe his

feeding time. Knowing food is on its way, Hero will sit (quietly, I might add) within two or three feet of where I'll place his bowl. I set it down – practically under his nose – but he doesn't move a muscle. "BREAK!" and he's off to inhale the dry puppy kibble.

The food must be doing its thing for Hero is definitely getting huge. All right, admittedly I never expected a cross between a poodle and a lab (both full-sized) to resemble one of those hairy little puffballs I ridicule. Only Hero resembles less a golden retriever than a small (perhaps) pony. He's as lanky as long – far too obvious now that he's decided the world is a far more interesting place viewed from only his back two feet. It's a tendency I expect to break him of quickly (VERY quickly) but, in the meantime, he's close to my height when I do find his. Indeed, his forefeet on the kitchen counter. Conversations with real people are enticing when viewed eye-to-eye. Let me enjoy Hero's round black eyes when he's on the floor.



ALL FOUR FEET ON THE FLOOR. And you don't belong in my lap. (Did he ever? If so, it had to have been for just the shortest time.)

I recall some authority along the way casually remarking he was going to be a BIG dog. Wish I could recall who made that comment for I'd love to ask "Just how big?" I watch him now out in the yard and am surprised by how tall his body has gotten. His legs are long indeed. Overnight? It does seem so. After all, he does have to grow into those feet.

As long as he's gentle, well-behaved and intelligent, all will be well.

I'm grateful he is.

Written September 9, 2021