



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

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



The Second Shoe

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I have no idea if the thought is universal though, the story I heard growing up, pertained only to my maternal grandparents.

When my mother brought home a beau, she was allowed to entertain him in the parlor. (I hate to say – much less think so – but this would have been a good ninety years ago.) When her parents (nervously waiting upstairs is the picture I was given) – anyway, when they decided it was time for the young man to leave, they would drop a shoe above the parlor. If their subtle message wasn't heeded in a prompt style, the second shoe would be dropped. It must have worked.

Perhaps I am too fatalistic (bad things do happen) because, whenever things are 100% sunny, I tend to wait for the rain. (Snow? Not yet, thank God.)

Right now, I'm in the pure sunshine and treasuring every second while being at least a little fearful. Of what?



This is Hero's third day with me and what can I say? He's absolutely perfect!

He got here late Friday afternoon and was home. We don't know how he knew but it was obvious. He walked in and over to settle beneath the table, complete relaxed and, yes, “at home.” Sunday, he watched Anne, who had taken such good care of him for the last nine weeks pack up, her two dogs in the back, and drive away. He watched them go, turned and returned to the house, his home.

All I know about labradoodles I'd read – or seen – on the internet. Some may develop undesirable traits (shoe #2?) but all seem to have immediately wormed their way into the hearts of their new owners.

What's not to like? Hero is brimming over with affection – enthusiastic kisses cover my face. He's super-bright. Anne taught him to SIT and DOWN and STAY. He can't have his food until after a SIT/STAY and then a BREAK to release him. All this in a four-month-old pup! We worked today (if “work” is the right word for something so simple and enjoyable) on STAY where I'd walk out of view. Once I caught him “bellying” closer to me. The rest were all one could ask for.

Hero and Gloria have met. She won't leave the basement when Anne's two are here but things look good

now. My dog and cat were inches away from doing the nose-to-nose until Hero barked at her. Later she sat on the counter where I feed her and loudly hissed at him. Last I checked, he's still terrified. This would be at least the fourth dog to come into Gloria's life so I'm presuming all will be well . . . soon.

Anne's two chased the geese out of the yard on arrival. Hero tends to be more of a watcher. He sat for the longest time about halfway down the hill simply staring at the eight geese here now. I'm sure at least one had a keen eye on the pup but none were flustered. Obviously, his kingdom is peaceable.

So what's with the second shoe?

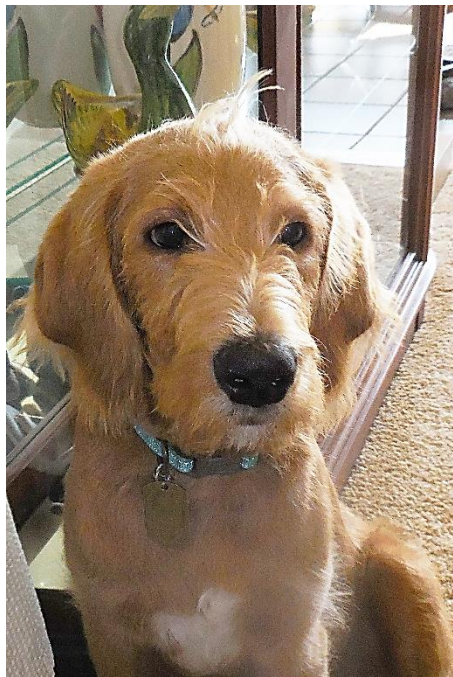
Adolescence. I've read the books and pamphlets and heard people talk. In fact, one woman said to enjoy those first four months because then it gets wild. Hormones are raging. "The teen years." Remember? I of course was a perfectly behaved young lady during my high school days – oh, sure. It was only my girls who could exasperate me.



I outgrew it and my parents survived . . . more-or-less. (There was my brother too.) I ended up with three beautiful, successful, amazing women of whom I could never be proud enough.

Then there's Hero. I don't remember any bad stages with any of my earlier pups but can be on the lookout.

Hero is housebroken, easy to train and . . . well, just filled with enthusiastic love – and remarkably easy to live with.



In fact, on arrival he was shown the doggy door and has used it unflinching ever since. What could be easier? So why ask for trouble?

My only comment (and I'm not complaining for it was part of the package) is Hero's looks. I've always had goldens and my heart would swell anytime I'd see one – such a beautiful animal. Hero isn't. I wanted – and got – a flat coat which is a couple shades darker than a golden. No poodle-y look for me please. His tail is remarkably long and always in motion. His head looks to me more like an Airedale or Wolfhound, neither of which should be in the blend, but with a white cowlick that prefers to strand straight up.

One-of-a-kind.

Nothing wrong with that.

Written July 27, 2021