

Rescue Duncan

by Karen Shaffer

Duncan unofficially entered my life in January 1998. I had been reading through computer messages on the Chessie-l@apple.ease.lsoft.com list for some time, and had noticed the significant number of rescue Chesapeakes needing new homes. The idea of taking one of these dogs and giving it a second chance appealed to me, but most of them were too far from where I live for me to act upon. One day though, I read about an adult male who had been found running loose on Long Island, New York. At that time, he had been rescued from the pound by Terri Grodner. 'Lost dog' ads had been placed in the newspaper, but no one had called to claim him. All I knew about him was that he was large, brown, friendly with people, and possibly dog aggressive. Something about his story drew me to this dog, and after much deliberating I contacted Terri to find out how to go about adopting him.

Upon contacting Terri, she informed me that Duncan had some medical problems including a large tumor on his right front leg and entropion. Was I still interested? I told her it didn't matter, I wanted him anyway. The tumor, which turned out to be quite extensive, was removed by Terri's vet. Once Duncan had the surgery, then I could have him. The only problem was how to transport him.

At this point, Katherine Wilson entered the story and made Duncan's transportation possible. She lives on Long Island, and transported him from there to where she was attending college outside of Philadelphia. I met her at the college carrying Duncan's new collar, leash, and license on Feb. 15, and he was finally mine.

Once home a new set of challenges arose. Duncan needed more medical attention, a lot of training, and a lot of love. Once the stitches were removed from his leg, Duncan had surgery to correct the entropion and was put on medication for allergies. Then came the challenge of integrating 3 Chesapeakes and a Shibu Inu and the challenge of getting him under control. From the beginning, Duncan didn't seem dog aggressive, just unsocialized. He didn't know how to act around other dogs, so he barked. I started integrating him by letting him out with my first Chesapeake, Tess (Redlion's Turnpike Tessie CDX). The two of them did well together, and Duncan began to figure out how to act like a dog. A week later, I introduced him to my other Chesapeake bitch, Kate (Pond Hollow Country Kate CID). And after that, introduced him to Reno (Snowy River Renegade). I now had a pack of Chesapeakes who got along together just fine. As for the Shiba, he and Duncan still don't get along, but it's the Shiba's fault, not Duncan's.

Getting Duncan under control wasn't nearly as easy as teaching him to act like a dog. Duncan knew nothing when I brought him home. He didn't know his new name, he didn't know any obedience commands. After being drug down the road while trying to walk him, Duncan was fitted with a prong-style training collar and immediately registered for classes.

The first few classes were quite challenging, with Duncan barking and lunging at other dogs. He stayed on the outskirts of the group for a couple weeks, and then adjusted enough that he could be with the others and even play with strange dogs without any problems. I worked with Duncan daily, and he quickly learned his new name and basic commands. As we worked Duncan also began to bond to me and became eager to please. By the beginning of summer, he graduated to the advanced obedience class and I began entertaining ideas of competition. Duncan continued to improve in obedience and so I got his ILP number from

the AKC and planned to enter obedience trials. Duncan earned his first two obedience legs in August with scores of 190 and 186. He finished his CID title in October with a score of 192.5 and second place in the class!

While the obedience training was going on, so was informal home training. I discovered early on that Duncan loved to chase cats and could jump our 4-1/2 foot fence from a standstill. He also would jump the fence if I was outside it so that he could be with me. To control this, parts of our fence were built up in Duncan's favorite jumping spots. He also was taught that 'no' meant to stop whatever he was doing immediately, and that included jumping fences. Of course he was always rewarded with treats, affection, and praise when he would come away from the fence and back to me. The fence is no longer the attraction it once was and jumping it is a rare occurrence.

A year with Duncan has quickly passed and his training continues. We are now working on Open level obedience and hope to be in competition by the end of this summer and hopefully be at this year's National Specialty. Since Duncan likes to run and jump, I have also started him in agility classes, which he loves and is doing well in. He has definitely become 'my' dog and accompanies me almost everywhere from walks in the woods to working in the barn. Whoever failed to claim this wonderful boy a year ago gave up the joys of the love and devotion that only a Chesapeake can give; and that Duncan gives to me in such abundance.