

----- Original Message -----

From: Shirley

To: [Elizabeth Ferris](#)

Sent: Monday, September 24, 2012 11:51 AM

Subject: Troubadour doing super great

Hi, Elizabeth.

I hope you have a good week. I wanted to give you a Troubadour update:

As far as we're concerned, we think you brought us the perfect dog. Still! And, even more so!

Troubadour has definitely become Beth's dog, just as we'd hoped and worked toward. Beth is becoming more attached and attuned to him every day, as is he to her; he's really been great that way since about two days after his arrival. He's becoming more comfortable with both us, the house and yard, and the routines of our days. After a few days of running to the side gate and I'm pretty sure, looking for you, he seems resolved to his new lot in dog life, though when we go in the car I think he's sad that we instead of taking him to you, we bring him back here! He doesn't like the sound of the refrigerator dispensing ice, but he doesn't mind the vacuum cleaner at all. He's not sure about the pool cleaner/vacuum because it sprays unexpected water on him. After testing the pool as his large drinking bowl, then moving on to a brief attachment to the water fountain (decorative) at back of yard, he's decided he really likes his own water bowl best. After a couple of days of very light eating and being hand-fed, he's moved on to eating his Premium Edge with gusto. After days of disinterest in a peanut butter packed bone, he gnawed it with great noise and determination last night. He seems to like our daily walks, usually out and about for an hour or so. (This is where I remind you that I need a dog to walk, too!!) He's a perfect walker, staying at Beth's side with nary a pull for miles(except for one area a block away from home that gets his prolonged sniffing attention for some reason we have yet to discern). We walk with a large water pack, and I use him as my excuse to stop and drink often. Beth has had multiple seizures and he stays right by her side during them. It's close to uncanny how quickly he's showing that he understands he's here for her. His toileting has been fastidious...only outside, and only off leash in the backyard. We take him outside quite a few times a day, but he must have a large holding tank, as he doesn't potty very frequently....and seems rather bemused by our insistent, "potty, potty" when he really doesn't have to go. At this point, I've decided he's a big, responsible boy, and can handle his toileting needs without our constant oversight!

He's made visits to the library, grocery store, vet to get more HeartGuard, WalMart, and Beth's dance class so far. He's been a complete gentleman on every jaunt. Overheard outside a store when he wasn't wearing his vest, "look at that dog...he must be a show dog of some kind." That made us smile.

So, please know that all is well in Houston Texas, at Troubadour's home,

shirley

From: Shirley

Sent: Tuesday, October 09, 2012 8:49 AM

To: Liz Ferris

Subject: It's been almost a month

Hi, Elizabeth.

I can't imagine it's been close to a month since Troubadour came to us, but it has...and, it's been *one fine month!*

We are seeing more and more of his loving personality, getting frequent glimpses of his goofy, silly side. He's adapting to our routines in a perfect manner, and we'd like to think we're doing pretty well at adapting to his routines, too. I'm not a mushy, gushy person, but I do tend to wax on about his perfection. Having him has

given Beth a new sense of purpose, a renewed self-image of competence....definitely one of the best things we've done in a long, long time.

He knows the word "walk", and goes to the back gate or back door whenever he hears the word. He's attuned to the sound of his dog food pouring into the bowl, and comes to investigate with lots of eagerness. He took a late night, unintentional dip in the pool a couple of weeks ago. We can now state that he does the dog paddle with the best of dogs, he knows where the steps out of the pool are located, and he runs with vigor around and around the pool after a cooling midnight swim! We were playing, and he got a bit close with one leg, and next thing you knew...voila, in the pool. Beth tried to get him out from above, but couldn't. So, she got in the pool and pushed him out. We all were laughing nonstop at the sight of dripping Beth, dripping and running Troubadour. Because of safety issues, I never leave Beth untended in the backyard, and since Troubadour is always with her, I don't leave him either...so that works well, though now I suspect he'd be fine should he take another unplanned dip.

He truly IS Beth's dog. He knows it, I know it, we all know it. He is always at her heels or resting at the foot of her bed in the house. When outdoors, he is always either nearby or sitting on her feet! I absolutely love him, and I seem to be an acceptable fill-in when Beth is not up and about. Perhaps I've conjured this sentiment out of thin air and wishfulness, but I am convinced that he knows that Beth, he and I are in this seizure thing together, and that we're all part of a working team!

I can't do justice to a description of what he does when Beth has a seizure. It's just darned amazing to watch, especially when considering that he's been experiencing this for only a few weeks. For example, last evening we went on a walk. Beth had multiple seizures earlier in the day, and anticipating further events, she agreed that she'd walk ahead and I'd be behind so that I could intervene if needed. (Often I walk ahead) Sure enough, about a mile from home, she freezes, stiffens, starts leaning, Troubadour looks right up at her, positions himself so he's right at her side, and I step up and hold her upright. Troubadour is totally focused on her the entire time, watching and seeming to supervise my response. Fortunately, there was a neighborhood park with a bench very close by. I held Troubadour's leash, and we walked to the bench (during which time Troubadour was constantly touching Beth's side with his body and head). With this kind of focus and what appears to be an understanding that he's here to help her, I'm pretty sure that that his responses will only become more refined and active.

Beth and Troubadour start training classes this Sunday. We're excited about that.

We finally discovered that Troubadour has a voice when he delivered a powerful series of pleasant barks when confronted with someone entering our front door. Most of our guests use the back door (long story, has to do with baby birds nesting IN our front door), and he handles back door entry with only mild interest. But he seems to believe he's been put in charge of that front door, and is attuned to even the click of the lock being turned. He quiets when we tell him "thank you", and we've decided that we like his response, because he does sound potentially fierce, even though I've decided he could have been named, "Marshmallow"...creamy colored, soft, sweet, and and exuding kindness.

His toileting has been absolutely perfect, and he seems a bit puzzled by our "go potty" commands. It's like, "OK, I go when I need to go. Why are you saying "potty" when I absolutely don't need to go right now? Can't you just leave a guy alone about this? Enough already." So, after a month of proving himself worthy, I think it's time that we just let him handle his business without any supervision or entreaties on our part.

Next week we travel to Kansas. We're all looking forward to Jay's dad and my mother getting to meet Troubadour. They are both dog lovers, and were very interested in both the search for Troubadour, and his arrival. My mother has already requested that we tour the nursing home and show him off to residents. He's such a good traveler on our trips about the town, and we have no doubt that he'll be a joy on our trip. He even gets to go to a Friday night high school football game!

In case I've left some doubt, let me sum things up: We are so very happy that Troubadour is a part of our family. It isn't often that something happens that feels unreservedly right, but his presence here feels absolutely perfect. And, the pleasure he's bringing us is a tribute to your professionalism and overwhelming generosity in sharing him with us.

Have pictures to send, but, sigh, I need to find the camera first. Will do so shortly.

Continued thanks,
Shirley

On Sat, Oct 27, 2012 at 10:24 PM, Elizabeth Ferris <elizabethf@charter.net> wrote:

Hi Shirley,

I am dying to know how your trip to Kansas was and how Troubadour was received by the family. I am guessing he loved the road trip. Hope you are well.

I think of Troubadour and all the joy he is bringing to your family and Beth. Thank you for giving him such a great home. Elizabeth

From: Shirley
Sent: Sunday, October 28, 2012 9:39 AM
To: Elizabeth Ferris
Subject: Re: Troubadour

Hi, Elizabeth!

I must assure you that the thanks are all ours for sharing such a wonderful dog. Kansas was great and we continue to think that Troubadour is the perfect dog. We honestly couldn't think of a thing that would have made him a better travel companion.

We were stopped everywhere we went...people wanting to pet him, people wanting to know about him. He patiently tolerated, and we think as he became more accustomed to the random attention, he came to expect what we finally labeled "stranger admiration encounters". In a McDonalds parking lot, we noted a car that actually came off the highway and drove over to inquire about him, then left the McDonalds without a purchase. As you might guess, he was a total hit at the nursing home where my mother lives. She absolutely loved him and was fascinated with both his looks and behavior. My 12 year old nephew was really taken with him, and spent a quite unusual couple of hours (he's typically a kinetic bundle of energy and never at rest) just hanging out on the floor with Troubadour. He loved going to restaurants, shopping, games...he was definitely in his happy element, and we loved having him with us.

I was especially interested in a pattern that seemed to develop. Strangers would see that he was a service dog, would asked to pet him, would pet him, then ask, "what kind of service dog is he?" Beth's response was, "he's an Australian Labradoodle." After a bit more conversation, there would be the same question, "but, what KIND of service dog is he?"...this happened with enough frequency that we decided Beth needed to come up with some sort of preplanned response that she was comfortable with. We had fun with possibilities...."I'm deaf", "I become violent when asked personal questions and he restrains me"... Sometimes Beth's response was, "I have seizures", but she wanted something a bit less personal. She finally settled on, "he helps with mobility". I think the questioners are expressing interest and concern, and don't realize that the question is perhaps a bit outside the bounds of general stranger to stranger conversation. And, we try to weigh privacy against the benefit of educating the public about disabilities. If our conversations with people lead to just a bit more acceptance, it's perhaps worth giving up some privacy. Anyway, I was surprised by how often that fairly pointed question was asked.

As for the actual car travel, he launched himself up into the back of the car every time we were ready to hit the road, sat down the second the car started, and stayed down until he heard the car shut off. Funny story: at one stop, he overestimated the force needed to launch himself up into the back and managed to propel himself to the back seat -- you could tell he was very surprised to find himself there and quickly he scrambled back to his usual spot! As you know, he is amazingly well attuned to the nuances of travel, Until the ignition was turned off, the only thing that he would stand up for was the wafting aroma at drive-through food places! Our car has a swing window that opens up independent of the large hatch opening. One day we were at a park where we played and we went back to the car to get an extra ball. I opened up just the window part of the hatch, and didn't consider that T would think it was his signal to get in the car. WELL, he launched himself up and through the window. He did a perfect job of inserting his big self into a small slot, but now we're careful to hold him back if we're opening just the window part!!

As you noted when you brought him, he wasn't accustomed to pottying on leash. I had concerns about how he'd handle the toileting part of our trip, since there was no way we were allowing him off leash at hotels (though see note below, we actually did allow that once, very unintentionally). Thinking he might feel a bit more free with more leash and potential privacy (?!), I brought a 30 foot training leash. After a couple days of hesitancy on his part (and we hope not too much discomfort), he clearly adapted to on leash toileting work! So, he remains with a perfect record of clean indoor behavior...pretty amazing for all the newness he's had to face in the past few weeks.

We learned that when happy and playful, he is able to leap from bed to bed (no floor touch-downs in between) in hotel rooms (quite a sight), that he would prefer to not encounter maids' carts (though he tolerated them with true grit), and that sometimes he's just plain silly! Beth learned that he is a bed hog, and that when I tell him, "wake up Beth" he starts by just giving her a nose nudge, then he escalates into standing near her and gently pawing her shoulder, when that fails, he walks on her. It is hilarious to watch and I love it since it frees me from the shrewish mother begging "get up please now" mode! We all just love to watch that large saber tail wag with happiness!

A scary episode with a good ending: The morning after our first night on the road, Jay said he'd take T out for his first morning nature visit. (By the way, the trip was a perfect time for he and T to really become accustomed to one another and it's clear that Jay really, really likes him.) When they returned, he told a story that scared me greatly, but had an OK ending. T had been scared by a big metal trash dumpster lid that had banged down in the wind right as he was walking past the area. Somehow T got his head just right and Jay got the leash angle just right so that T slipped out of his collar and took off running across an empty field. Having already been primed by us on what to do should he ever be off leash in such a situation, Jay knew to not chase and simply said, "Troubadour, sit". Upon which T immediately sat and waited until Jay came and recollared him! I still feel sick when I think about this event, and how fortunate we are that he was so well trained and responded accordingly. We can't imagine losing him--he's already such a big part of our family.

And, speaking of recall, Beth and T have their first obedience class later today. We are especially looking forward to working more with off leash behavior. Jay's dad lives in a very small apartment complex that has great sidewalks and lawns with little activity and very quiet streets relatively far away from the main lawn areas. So, after working a lot on the long training leash, we did some off leash work with T the last few days we were in Kansas. He really enjoyed it, playing with a ball, heeling at Beth's side up and down the long sidewalks, just running between Beth and me, and in general galloping around loving the freedom. I did notice that he seemed to want to keep us well within sight, and if he made a run and decided he was a bit too far away for his comfort, he made a quick trip back to be closer. Beth has had several seizures while we are on walks with T. During those, even if she drops the leash, he's shown no tendency to do anything except stay by her side.

We all were eager to see how T reacted to being back home. He ran around the backyard as if he were king of the world, checked his favorite drinking bowl, sniffed a couple of his favorite spots, came inside and ran upstairs with Beth, leaped on her bed, wagged his tail and seemed to say, "OK, we're home. What's next?"

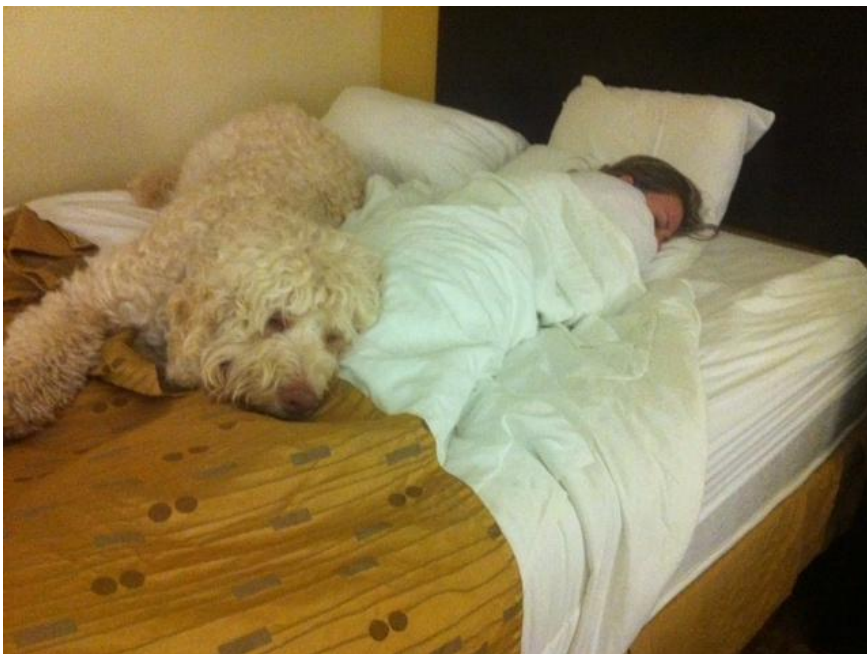
If my trip doesn't get stormed out by Sandy, I am planning to go to NY midweek. Jay will be at home with Beth and Troubadour. I feel quite confident they'll do well without my presence. And, I admit that I will miss Troubadour's wonderful self while I'm gone!!

We remain completely amazed at how much T has clearly made himself Beth's dog, while simultaneously being a wonderful and willing part of the family. It is absolutely fascinating fun to watch!

Speaking of family (notice how I tried to casually segue into this question??), do you have any encouraging words about a second addition to our family? I have been surprised by how much I adore the size of Troubadour -- any reservations I had about a big dog are long gone; matter of fact, we're all hoping for a big 'un!

I'm attaching a picture of Beth and Troubadour at a hotel on the trip. Notice how he has himself pasted at her side. That is the way he is always at (or on?!) her side, even when she is asleep.

Forever thanks, shirley



From: Shirley
Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2012 8:42 AM
To: Liz Ferris
Subject:

Hi, Elizabeth.

I'm getting more and more eager for the day Rio arrives. I can't wait!

I remain jaw-dropping amazed at Troubadour. He has become attuned to the sound of rustling sheets that indicates Beth is having a seizure while in her bed. He hears the sound, becomes very still for just a second,

then becomes totally poodle-prancey and dashes up to her (sometimes giving one very low and quiet "woof", then dashes to get me. At this point he is practically dancing in front of me, with front paws lifting ever so slightly off the floor, doing all he can to say "come, come, please come". I come, he jumps up on the bed, and positions himself at her side, with his head pressed against some part of her, and there he stays. The part that is such a delight to see is how he goes into a very different dog mode -- hyper vigilant, very assured and focused, he practically quivers in response. When she has a seizure while standing, he essentially freezes in place at her side. If she drops things while having the seizure, he sometimes does skit away because the dropping things scare him. I am fairly sure he'll become accustomed to that, but I'm not sure service requires him to stick around to get things pelted onto his dog head! When he is on leash while she has a seizure, she often grips the leash very, very tightly. He shows no tendency to pull away, rather just sits in place by her side. If she does release the leash, he still stays at her side -- even outdoors on walks.

My son and his fiance were here last week. They both were smitten with him. Asli has some very definite opinions about what constitutes a good dog -- so I hoped she'd find Troubadour acceptable. By the end of the visit, I heard her say, "if we ever get a big dog, I'd like him to act just like Troubadour." We had several other rounds of company during the week and Troubadour was a perfect gentleman to every guest (including four year old twin girls and a rather inebriated friend of Jason's who just couldn't seem to keep his hands off Troubadour).

Counting the days, and remaining very thankful for Troubadour,
shirley

From: Shirley

Sent: Wednesday, December 12, 2012 12:59 PM

To: Liz Ferris

Subject: Things couldn't be better

Hi, Elizabeth.

Just a note to tell you that we are doing very well...each and every one of us! Our walks are even more of a pleasure now that I have a purpose beyond trailing behind Beth and T! Rio does very well with the halti collar, very limited pulling. I am mindful of his sometimes tendency to take a rightward turn into me, and am being especially careful (this means less window and yard peeking for me as we go about the neighborhood), and working to get him to be the smooth walker T is.

Troubadour's interactions with Rio are perfect -- he's showing his alphaness when needed. There have been no squirmishes, just a few low and short growls to put the young one in his place when he was out of bounds. They have several backyard play sessions each day -- we are seeing T leap and frolic as never before (and it was pretty impressive before). He got wound up yesterday, and I think even Rio was rather overwhelmed and amazed. In the evenings, they spend a bit of time taking one another's toys back and forth...T comes to get Rio's from the game room until he has them all stacked up on Beth's bed. Then poor Rio goes to the study to get what he has there, stacks them in the game room, and T takes them too. Should Rio go get them, T allows that. Very funny.

Rio just might be scary-smart. Within a day he was opening the gate leading to the catwalk upstairs, using his head to pull it forward, then dashing his head in to push it aside. He thinks he should be able to operate doorknobs, reaches for them, and seems displeased that he can't wrap his mouth around them. I had him long-leashed to the kitchen island table while I was cooking last night and Beth came in and pointed out that he had just finished successfully untying the leash. He already knows the daily routines very well. His house training habits have been perfect. He has bouts of extreme puppy enthusiasm, that we're both enjoying and trying to regulate so that he doesn't become a 70 pound jumper. I am with him all the time, so I try to anticipate his moves...most of his day he is very calm, relaxed, watching, helping, and napping. He does not like his night time crating. I have to pick his gangly Ghandi-like self up to put him in it. He is OK once he's there, but clearly

he would prefer a premier spot on the couch by my side. I couldn't ask for a better boy! And, best of all, he makes me laugh many times every day. It's been a long time since I've experienced such joy as he brings.

Jay really really is enjoying him a lot, and I'm especially pleased about that. I anticipate that next summer they will be great lawn work pals. Rio and I laid down some crushed granite on backyard paths this afternoon. He had great fun, whipping the empty plastic bags about, attacking the broom....wonderful to watch.

Beth continued her work with T until he was perfection on Sunday, when we gave him a bath and his coat became, as you had said, a beautiful batch of curls.

We gave out a bunch of your cards at Best Buy yesterday. T was a magnet for well over a dozen people who came over to find out about him!

Well, that's it for now. Just wanted to assure you that Rio is great and T -- I'd say that if anything, Rio's presence has even more sealed his devotion to Beth. He remains the amazing dog he is! And, Rio was a perfect match for me!!

Thanks, thanks, thanks, shirley

Hi, Elizabeth.

Oh, my...just as precious then as he is now. Thanks for the wonderful pictures. It's so good to have them; we almost feel like we've known him forever!

Things here are back to mostly predictable, after a mildly schedule-offsetting holiday time. Had the dogs been smaller, I would have been bound to check baggage to be sure that our son didn't take one of them back to NY with him. He had limited time with T at Thanksgiving, but was here for two weeks in December and became very attached to both T&O (more on that in a minute) during that time. He says that he will be (probably not so) subtly work to convince Asli that they should have their own Australian Labradoodle. Of course, I assured him that I know just the place where he can get one.

I've begun calling Rio, Oliver. I hope that's OK. A bit of background: our Yorkie, who we had during most of the time we had the Lhasa who recently died, was a very special dog and I always told her we would get another Yorkie and name her Olive, in her memory (because of her dark eyes, just like little olives). Well, I remembered that, thought about it a day or two, and had a eureka moment...Oliver. So, now the extremely larger Rio/aka Oliver will carry on a bit of her memory, just as Troubadour carries on Libby's memory with his coloring that looks much as hers did. (After we clipped him, it took me days to quit calling him Libby -- never mind a gargantuan size difference.)

T & O are hours of watching fun...backyard, walking, playing upstairs, downstairs....so very entertaining. T effortlessly retains his alpha dog status vis a vis Oliver. Those interactions are such fun to watch. They spend countless hours watching and plotting how to take the toy the other is playing with. They do an exchange, then sneak to take them back, and on it goes. In the mornings, while T is still in Beth's room, Oliver will take multiple trips downstairs to secure his loot in the great room. At night he prepares for bed by hauling everything he can round up into his crate. You were correct that any concerns about Oliver's presence might interfere with the T/Beth work were unfounded. T acts pretty much just as he had -- he seems to like the idea that O is around, but his primary focus remains always Beth.

And, about Oliver: We weighed him a week ago and got a weight of 48.5. When he sits next to T (which they do a lot, since we often train them side by side and that is so very funny -- we think they compete), he does seem to have grown a bit in height too. He won't stand still long enough for an accurate measurement. He is eating well, sleeping well both at night and after exhausting play or walks, and often seems to be intentionally

just plain silly. At night, when he senses the signals that crate time is nearing, he "hides"...nosing behind couch cushions, going to a far corner of the room. He hates going into the crate during the day, when we leave the house and don't take him with us. We've kept such trips rare and brief, but I've had several lengthy dental appointments the past two weeks and Oliver clearly hated it! His on leash walking continues to improve. He just prances on that leash, and funniest of all is that after sedately prancing for maybe a mile, he suddenly has this mad streak of exuberance, and just dances off to the side, leaping and bounding. Great Oliver moment: We were all sitting opening gifts, T was watching the strange event, and Oliver was trying to be busily helpful but was mostly being ignored. So, I look up, and see him trotting from the kitchen (where a basket holds dog stuff, like his red treat bag you gave us) into the room we're in, carrying the treat bag, hanging by the strap from his mouth. He heads straight to me, and drops the bag at my feet..."enough of this ignoring me, the cutest thing around. Now, a treat, please, NOW." He's just doing spectacularly, and is a great fit. As I think I said before, I'm especially pleased at how much Jay obviously likes him. I, of course, love him a whole bunch, and since he still sometimes cries (still working on that) when I leave the room, I think he likes me OK, too.

The scissors came maybe ten days ago, and the crate late last week. We've used both, continuing to neaten up on T, and to trim the face on O. I am able to keep O's coat smooth with a three/week brushing sessions. T is still easy with the short cut, but I'm encouraging Beth to brush more often than needed, just to get in the habit and keep T accustomed. The table we used the first time this weekend. It is so great -- rainy, so set up in the great room, stayed cool and dry, and got the job done much easier than working on the floor (or in the Saab trunk, as I was doing). Those scissors are some seriously well-made things. Thanks for telling us just what we needed and ordering for us.

Question: With no exceptional dirtying events, how often do you think we should be bathing the dogs?

Attaching one picture of T&O with Jason and Beth... getting ready to go play golf, and T went, too. I need more good pictures of Oliver. I take lots of shots, but he's typically a dark brown blob of either moving or less likely completely still fur. T, on the other hand, appears to primp and hold poses for the photos. We have weekend ad hoc football games at the park nearby, and I need to take them down then for pix -- your idea of kids playing nearby for good shots was a super idea.

We continue to have inadequate words to thank you for finding the two most perfect dogs imaginable for our family, and extend continued gratitude. Hope you are doing well, Shirley



Hi, Elizabeth.

Hope all is well with you. Enclosed, find a picture of Oliver/aka Rio. He's waving a birthday hello to you with his very long and floppy, furry paw. I knew that learning to give his paw on command would come in handy for something, so here we go!

We are having the time of our lives with our wonderful dogs. I helped Beth give T a good brush out yesterday, and he remains mat free. Oliver, he gets a brushing almost daily, at least every other day, and I'm loving the grooming work. I'm getting more efficient and sure of myself as I work. We are handling all the baths and frequent grooming. I absolutely can't see well enough to cut Oliver's nails or face area, and thought it was a good idea that he be accustomed to someone else grooming him, should I some time not be able to do so, so I have been taking him to a local groomer, only for trimming around his paw pads, nails, and face. At first he was very hesitant about that, but he's become adjusted and tolerates an occasional foreign hand--something that seems important. As you will see in one picture, I am still using the Halti on Oliver for long walks--as I left it dangling when we returned from a long morning walk. He walks very well without it, except for the first block or two leaving the area, and the last several blocks as we return home...still using the Halti for that reason. Do you think that's a good idea?

O loves our daily routines, and lets me know when we've skipped a step which he enjoys. He does everything asked of him quite willingly almost always, except going to his crate at bedtime. That....well, he's become the Ghandi of dogs, turns to jelly, rolls over on his back, and pleads, don't, don't don't take me!. I have not yielded to his desire. After a munch on a pair of my glasses (which I carelessly left on counter edge while I showered with him shut in the bathroom with me), rendering them unrecognizable in under two minutes (and ending well since, who knew, the \$10 year warranty covers a dog chewing up a \$1100 pair of glasses?), and for which I took complete blame since I had not left him with his usual shower time chew toy, he has not had a single 'nother episode of wanton chewing...so, I think he's probably getting somewhat closer to house-ready, but think we'll keep the crate at night in effect. He mostly goes with us when we leave the house, but if he stays, he does go to his crate. He seems content to be in it during the day for a couple hours every once in awhile.

He's a smart and eager dog, with a good heart, and an independent streak that I love. I have to work to stay on top of life with him, and I love every minute of it. He is my wonder dog, and I can't imagine a day without him.

Troubadour remains amazing. He's such a stately and wonderful companion for Beth. At present, he is still standing or sitting against her when she has a seizure, often propping her up or keeping her head safe. Interestingly, Oliver is picking up on events, and now barks when he hears a seizure beginning. He then runs with me to Beth, we find T "sheltering" Beth, and O hovers and frets while I try to help. Just yesterday, Beth was having a horrid day, multiple, multiple seizures. One time O and I responded, and T was already at Beth's side and had his big dog head pushed on her lap, shaking as she shook. So then O jumps on the other side of the couch where Beth's seated, and honest to God puts his above noted floppy, furry very long dog paw on her shoulder and held it there. Unbelievable empathy and concern, wouldn't you say? I stood to the side and cried.

OK. Done with the grateful, grateful so happy I cried thing....

I think you can see from a couple of the pictures that Oliver is beginning to fill out to his dog-manly self. He weighed an even 50 pounds when we went to the vet about five weeks ago to get some flea treatment meds. The vet said he thinks O will mature at 60-65 pounds, which I think coincides with your estimate, too?

When we walk or go into stores, both dogs cause evidently irresistible petting stampedes, and lots of questions. More than I could count on all my appendages, on walks, we have heard, "hey, stop, what kind of dogs ARE those dogs?". And, invariably when people meet T&O, the comment after how beautiful, is how very well mannered they are. It doesn't get much better than that! Honestly, most of all, T gives Beth the knowledge that

on her very bad, terrible, awful no good days, she has a steady companion, and me...on those same days that I especially hurt for Beth, O lets me know that here are wonderful things still in this world!!

So, just wanted to take the occasion of a birthday, to let you know that all is still well in our little corner of the world, that T&O are getting and giving loads of loving care, for which we are daily grateful. We hope you are well, also!

Shirley & crew

PS: Here's a rather uncanny coincidence, that I choose to think reinforces that T&O were meant to be ours: T's birthday is my mother's birthday, and now I realize that Oliver's birthday is the same as that of our new daughter-in-law, Asli. What are the chances of two dogs matching two birthdays of the closest seven living relatives in our immediate family?