



The Puppy Chronicles or the Diary of a Crazy Rescuer

by Debby McMullen

The Call

I got the call late one morning about 2 weeks after placing my last foster. He was a touch case with his sudden illness and my dogs and I were enjoying the peace of a foster free home. The message said that there were SIX young Doberman puppies at a southern WV shelter and did my rescue want them? Oh, boy, the opportunity to make a difference in a life so young but oh, so much work! Surely, they could be placed rather quickly at that age? Who wouldn't want them? The qualified apps would be abundant, right? Hmmm, well, I spoke with my WV volunteer and the shelter was offering inexpensive altering prior to transport so I called them and offered up the credit card numbers. They would arrive freshly up to date on DHLPP and spayed and neutered. That would save time and money so that they could be placed sooner. I was getting ready to attend a weekend seminar so I arranged to get them the following week. My WV volunteer would drive down to Charleston on a Friday and pick them up and keep them until we met on Tuesday. Piece of cake, right? I got another phone call after he got them that there were 5 blue puppies and 1 fawn. 3 males and 3 females. All skinny, one with bent legs. All recovering from worms. ~sigh~ Well, they are now warm and safe and fed. And soon to be here. What have I done????

The Trip for Puppies

I thought that I was prepared to transport 6 puppies to my house but obviously, I wasn't! Whatever possessed me to think that this would be easy sans crate, I don't know. Anyway, I was a bit late due to going the wrong direction on the interstate at first (long story, not a pretty one!) but I made it and Dallas was carrying one puppy and saying Laurel wanted her, so I was to only have 5. Not a problem! But seeing how well Dallas had transported them in a crate, I was sorry that I had not brought one. They were adorable and tiny and in need of a bath and lots of food and love. And surprise, surprise, they were crawling with fleas. So a trip to the vet on the way home was in order. In addition to that, I started frantically calling around for a place to bathe them. I don't have a tub. After picking up Frontline, I raced straight home to the kitchen sink. Bath time! Not well received by them, I assure you! Then Frontline applied and they are ready to meet my adult dogs. Of course, by the time they have all had their baths, they have piddled and made piles all over my kitchen. Thank doG for paper towels and Clorox.

Meeting the adults

It's been a while since we have had puppies in this house and then only for a couple of days so this is going to be interesting. I let them all out into the yard together and Merlin and Trent find them somewhat interesting, although Trent is far more interested than Merlin. Merlin has already raised Siri, so no more, thank you very much! Siri is rattled and stays away at first but then discovers that she is revered by them and decides to "instruct" them with her mighty "grumbles". With her grumbling, she "teaches" them all she knows of the dog world. Or so it sounds like. Trent is happy to have more orifices to lick and get away with it so he takes them in stride, happily licking without end. Kera wants nothing to do with them and will give all kinds of warnings to stay away, most of which they ignore. She moves around a lot. And she is not happy about it. She sticks to high surfaces inside.



Siri, Kera & Merlin

Feeding the crew

Feeding 5 puppies at once is quite entertaining. But the entertainment value grows because they have been left to their own devices during feeding time in the past. The bigger puppies got more food and the smaller ones were almost malnourished. No more. I held Leo to make sure he ate enough. Same with Page. They all got dishes, although they certainly seemed to prefer to rotate because you know that their own dish was never going to have as good as food in it as their sibling's dish. That is just life. So rotate they did. But supervised and successfully. Leo and Paige learned that they get to have full tummies too. They are all happy. Time for a nap.

Accommodations

I have rigged up a huge x-pen and attached it to a huge crate and the whole thing is on a huge tarp covered with numerous layers of newspaper and bedding in the crate itself, along with stuffed toys. A water bowl completes the décor, in the x-pen side, of course. It is amazing how fast 5 puppies can trash this set up. Mind you, they didn't at first. Their tummies were full, they were sleepy from baths and travel so they all piled on top of each other and crashed. Peace and quiet for a few hours while I feed my crew. Only the calm before the storm.

Pups Awake!

If you have never heard a litter of puppies scream before, you are in for a treat. I picture a bunch of baby birds in the nest when they are hungry when I hear them. You want nothing more than to make that sound go away as soon as you possibly can, although I did try and capture it as a ringtone. It inspires fast running and a scurry of puppy feet moving around in anticipation of your arrival. I let them out and like the pied piper, lead them outside to potty. Pottying, that is a success so far. They have soiled their pen, of course, but the not so short course from their room to the yard is left unsoiled. They follow the leader and plop their little bums in the grass (or leaves as the case may be) and pee. Or the boys take the stance. How cute is that! I jump up and down and clap and tell them how wonderful they are. They look at me as if I am crazy. I am. How many people spend a 1/2 an hour every day chasing puppy piles all over the yard, trying desperately not to miss one hidden in the leaves. I really need to get these leaves raked. Life would be so much easier. I promise I will find time for that. Really.

The Daily Routine



Siri

I now have it down pat, well, sorta. Wake up according to the day's schedule, cuddle with my dogs for a bit, sneak downstairs reaaaaally quietly and let my crew out. Go back up and let the puppies out and while everyone is pottying and Siri is "teaching" the puppies, I clean up the pen. I tried doing it several times while they were in the kitchen eating and that results in a river of pee and many mountains of poop, as well as serious threats on the baby gate and cries loud enough to wake several zombies. They like the outside better and it is secure and they have all my gardening to undo. How could life get better? So I get everything tidy and invite them in and the feast begins. They prefer eating supervised and now that Leo feels so much better, he guards the food. Great. However, after the first couple of days, this mostly entails simply a big bunch of growling and nothing more. The others do not take him seriously. Everyone eats now and everyone shares. When they knock over a bowl, it tastes so much better on the floor. I also notice that they are hungrier if I am in the room.

Stark Reality

I don't think that anyone can realize just how fast puppies use newspaper. At first, I was relying on my daily habit of 2 newspapers a day and my recycling that still had not been taken to the Paper Retriever bins. That was used up in 2 days. My cries to friends for their newspapers fell on deaf ears. Everyone needed them for something. A fellow rescuer supplied me with the number for a woman who works for a local paper and she has old editions delivered when rescuers have the need. I had used her nearly 6 years prior, when my Siri was a pup and I was fostering her litter. I waited and waited but the delivery took a few days. In desperation one day I bought several papers on the way home. The day of my darkest hour was when I made a withdrawal from the Paper Retriever bin rather than a deposit. I wondered all the way home if one could go to Hell for stealing used newspapers from the Catholic Church. I figured I had made enough deposits that maybe God was willing to overlook this minor infraction. After all, it was for the cutest puppies ever! Finally, the day after my "theft", many stacks of lovely sweet newspapers were delivered. I was saved! I cannot even imagine what my garbage men must be thinking. I have gone from maybe 2 bags per week to over 10 very stuffed bags that have an odd odor. I avoid being outside when garbage is collected.

First Puppy Outing



Wyatt

The first weekend after getting the puppies held 2 large dog events. What luck! I can attend each with a puppy in addition to the dog of mine that I was already taking. The first of those was a Pet Expo. Let me tell you, a puppy is heavy! Even a 10 week old puppy. Especially when said puppy has no interest in walking on its own and the adult dog with it is not a puppy fan. So carry said puppy, I did. I now have an exceptionally strong left arm. But he got a lot of socialization. He was scared to death at first, poor thing. But tasty treats will go a long way towards changing that perception. Everyone wanted to touch him. And if they were not busy calling him a Weimereiner, they were calling him a Vizla. He is proud to be a fawn Doberman, thank you very much! Keep those houndy breeds out of it! Little Wyatt also got his picture taken on the lap of a King, wearing royal threads. It was a photo competition to be the next cover dog for a great sounding place called K9 Kingdom. Can't wait until they open, even if little Wyatt didn't win.

Second Puppy Outing

The second public dog event that weekend was called Howloween and I attend this every year with my dog Merlin. This year he was appropriately dressed as a Devil. I thought that it would be a breeze to add a puppy to this equation. How silly of me! Had I forgotten that Merlin goes into super high strung mode at Howloween every year??? Have I forgotten how hard it is to keep Merlin's costume on and intact let alone adding a tiny puppy's?? Oh, I was soon being reminded of these things! I finally made it up the driveway of the event at a local park, when the check in person, a friend of mine, said "You look stressed". Oh, great it shows already. We just got here. But it got smoother. Why? Because everyone wants to help with a puppy. Today, I had Cole, a blue male and his only costume was a black and orange chiffon scrunchy decorated with sparkly bones so there wasn't much to mess with but he looked cute as it gets and cute puppies in neck scrunchies are magnets. So help soon arrived. Good thing because having uneven arm muscles was not really one of my life's goals! Cole was the hit of the event, although again, no prizes to be had. But cute has its own prize and so does tiring out a puppy!

Our First Group Socialization Attempt

I have 3 friends come over and we all leash up 5 puppies and attempt to take them on their first walk. They are 12 weeks old. They have never been on a leash before. Can you say chaos? Fortunately, the weather has been mild. I live in a “transitional” neighborhood so there is no telling what we may encounter. All in the name of avoiding future reactivity. We intend to go out the gate armed with treats. Wait, first we have to get out of the door! The puppies are having none of this. They are very unhappy about this development and I make a treat trail that they follow to the porch. The next treat trail goes out the gate. A couple of us double up on puppies. Once we get past the gate, they are for the most part moving but a couple needs to be behind the “leader” puppies, so that they see that we are not planning anything bad. What a procession we must look like! Of course, we run into no one at first, and then a man waiting for his girlfriend has to pet them all. Exactly what we want. He gives them treats and they meet a kind stranger. Bingo. We proceed at a snail’s pace, encouraging sounds all the way. Treats when need be. We go past a convenience store and they see life in the “hood. Oddly gaited person walking on the other side of the street, more treats. Happy puppies. We go around a short block and it’s getting dark but we see a group of kids with what appears to be a small dog. We head that way. “Hood kids are rightly suspicious. Only a couple will come close and pet them. Good enough for me, more treats. We head past a neighbor’s dog who is not terribly good with other dogs but she knows me. More treats. We are back at home with tired puppies wanting their dinner. Who knew that a 5 minute stretch could take an hour?

First Meltdown

Well, it was inevitable. I had a meltdown. It rained for about 3 days straight and no one wanted to go outside, adult dogs and puppies alike. There were mountains of towels that got washed; there were even larger mountains of newspapers that I went through because no one wanted to potty outside or even go off the porch. Well, the adult dogs did but it’s never the run enthusiastically into the yard trip that dry weather creates. And puppies need a leader and when the leaders are standing on the porch looking like the might melt, that causes puppies to do the same, sadly. So melt down I did. I cried pretty much for 3 nights in a row, after everyone was put to bed. Well, the puppies. The adult dogs just looked at me and shook their heads. I promised them to not do this again.

First Vet Trip

To say that The Three Stooges were less funny would not be an understatement. There was a man in the waiting room who could not stop laughing. I’m glad that someone got enjoyment out of this. We needed help to get them all into the waiting room. Five puppies outnumbered two humans and none of those five puppies had any intention of walking in the same direction as any other. This being their second time on a leash and all, en masse. So one or two were carried, while the others walked. Or their version of walking. We were quite a sight in the waiting room. We were able to check the “uniform” off the puppy socialization list after the mailwoman came in and told them that they would forever love mail carriers. We got them in and they had all their stuff done and they were all wonderfully accepting of everything but the chipping. Unhappy chip recipients! Some really good lungs on these puppies! They got hugs and kisses and lots of attention in between every procedure. Back out to the waiting room to pay and get stuck wrapped in the middle of multiple leashes while the man clutching the Chi laughed so hard he had to wipe tears from his face. Back out the door, only to see that the shortest route to the car is partially blocked with a ladder that, in order to go that way, we would have to walk under. Not needing any additional mishaps, we opted for the longer route. About 20 feet took us about 10 minutes. Finally having packed the puppies in, we head for Anne’s yard and puppy play time with her dog. Their first foray out into the world playing with dogs other than mine!

Puppy Play Date

Well, Izzy, Anne's dog, doesn't quite know what to make of the pack of tiny (but not far from her size!) creatures that have invaded her yard. She seems a bit overwhelmed at first but quickly realizes that she could have a tug mate. However, the puppies steal her tuggy! She handles it well and steals it back when possible. If at all possible, Izzy may actually be equal in energy to the puppies! Can she tire them out? Oh, please let it happen!



Puppy Social Hour

I decided that it would be a good thing for them to socialize with other puppies their age so I packed all 5 into the SUV (not an easy task and I have not had to do any weights since I got them for a very good reason!) and drove to the shelter that I volunteer at to attend their Puppy Social Hour. Five friends were kind enough to meet me there so there were more than enough hands this time to appropriately walk 5 puppies. Not only that, 2 of those friends brought small clip leashes that they donated to my rescue! What gems! May every rescuer be this blessed! We leashed them all up and herded them into the shelter. The big doors were another first for them so of course they were suspicious and had to be persuaded with treats. We waited in the hallway with another attendee and their puppy which was HUGE compared to our 5 little ones! Were we in the wrong place? But as we were permitted in, other smaller puppies trickled in and they were appropriately sized. And the larger Labradoodle (sigh!) was well behaved anyway. At first, the puppies did not know what to make of the atmosphere but with encouragement and treats, they played. Babeth even showed them how to go over, under and on the agility equipment. Piper will be a start someday because of Babeth. Piper definitely showed an aptitude for this dog sport and it will be a requirement of her adoption. Or some sort of dog sport. Piper needs to be kept busy. That girl is far too smart for her own good! Surprisingly, there were not as many potty accidents as there could have been. Finally, our time was done and everyone got leashed and ready to go. All except little Leo, who made a break for it when another puppy left the indoor room. I caught him and leashed him and outside we all headed. Only Leo would go potty in the grass so maybe that was the reason for his attempted escape? We loaded then back up and they feel asleep on the way home. Back out to potty once home and 5 happy sleepy puppies headed to bed far easier than many other nights.

Home Visits Begin

One by one, home visits were done for interested appropriate adopters. The first of those was by a volunteer with my group and consisted of me bringing 2 puppies to "work" with me at the shelter so they could be picked up by Joy and Doug. Thinking that they would be lovely puppies in class, all I brought was a blanket and their leashes and their food and a couple of toys. But Piper did not want toys, once safely ensconced in her x-pen. She wanted to be out of the x-pen, doing anything other than what she was doing. So, I taught a class with a puppy whining for the 1st half hour. My students were remarkably patient with me and Piper. Thankfully, there were 2 Doberman owners in there! Kudos to those students and their dogs who paid attention to class with a puppy with a great set of lungs having her say! As far as the home visit went, the volunteer's car broke down so she had to reschedule both of them! Yikes! I have to do this again next week.

First Successful Home Visit



Cole

Well, the “take puppies to work” comedy was repeated and this time, both home visits occurred. One went superbly and one didn’t. It looked as if Cole was going to have his forever home. But wait, there is a hitch. They can’t come get their puppy for 2 weeks. Yikes! Of course, we will hold him, but let’s recap on life with 5 puppies in the house. I’m tired! Wah! Okay, back to the adult behavior. I will rest after they have homes. Homes are what is important. Please God, help me make it to that point!

Another Potential Home

A family who I had done a home visit on early after getting the puppies, who had initially wanted to crop her choice, had a change of heart and decided that cropping was not important. So I was scheduled to drop in on her again and discuss things after seeing a training client near her home. I called on my way and was told that is was a good thing I called as her hubby, who is a truck driver, came home from Missouri (the puppy mill capital other than PA!) with a present for her the day before. A 6 month old blue Doberman female with cropped ears and could I still stop by and see her and give my take? Of course, these are great people but my hopes for being one puppy less take a nice splash in cold water. Keep the end prize in mind, Deb. Great homes for all. Great takes time. Yes, yes, yes. Chanting positive affirmations and downing Rescue Remedy at rapid rates. I can do this!

Second Pup to be Claimed

The same day as my hopes for Paige are dashed, Joyce and Alan arrive to take Wyatt to his home visit and they take Piper for the ride. Of course, all of the hopes are on Joyce deciding that she could positively not live without Piper as she is WAY too smart to go to just anyone and Joyce is a trainer. Please, please, please let puppy lust rear it’s insistent head while they are home visiting! They take them both and are on their way and about an hour and a half later, they call and proclaim that Wyatt is perfect for these wonderful people and they will come collect him in just one week. One week to one puppy less! Could it be? The saga could be progressing as prayed? Oh, glory, what a wonderful bit of news. Let me make it through this week without running out of Rescue Remedy!



Wyatt

Piper & Joyce

Sadly, Joyce is being sensible and wants to give all aspects of this long thought. She is really not considering it seriously but we persist in hoping.

Cole & Wyatt Go Home!



Wyatt’s New Family

Wyatt’s family, including the not very happy at the moment, little ones, come to whisk Wyatt away. Wyatt loves the kids. Mom is calm and patient, despite all the chaos. This is gonna be great! I happily snap pics and sign contracts. The next day, Cole’s new family comes swooping in for him. More pics and contract signings and they talk of talking him to meet the horses that very day! Success for 2 puppies. 2 more to go. More Rescue Remedy but less newspaper than before. Hurrah!



Cole’s New Family

Paige



Paige & Izzy

Just prior to my second visit to the potential home for Paige, Anne and Steve revealed that they had been considering giving her a home if she was still around in a week or so. Since Paige has once again become available, they decided they were delighted. They have never had 2 dogs at once before and are worried about Izzy and only want what is best for her and Paige. I agree. It is decided that they will take Paige to a trial evening. I wait with my breath being held. What a stroke of luck that would be to have them adopt Paige! She would be close by and I could see her and I would be totally sure that she was in an amazing home for her. But sadly, Anne calls the next day to say they are heartbroken that Izzy has pouted after the play was done. They don't want Izzy to feel second class in her own home. They are very sad. I console them that Paige will find a great home.

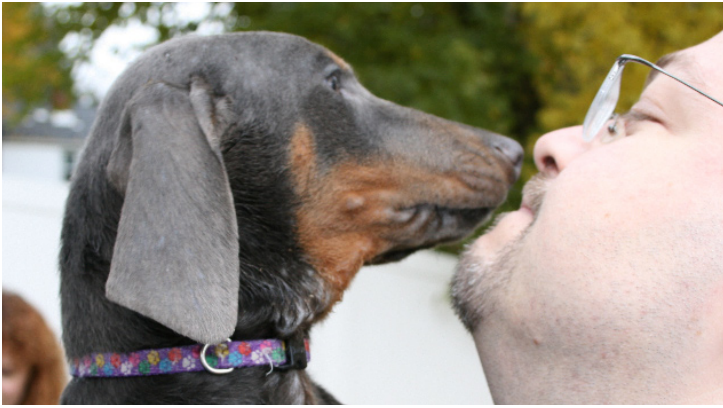
A Home Visit for Paige

Well, that is what it was intended to be but it turned out that they wanted Piper more. I did ask Anne to join me so she would feel comfortable about where Paige might go. The family is wonderful. They have had a Dobe before and they are above and beyond people. But it is obvious that they are more taken with Piper. At that point in the game, Joyce is now seriously considering taking Piper for a trial weekend so I tell her she must make a decision now as I believe that with some direction, this family would make a great home for Piper. Joyce decides to take Piper for the weekend and the family wants to discuss which dog they prefer amongst themselves and they will call me. They do. It's Piper and only Piper. I have already told them about Joyce and they are willing to wait the weekend to see what transpires. The next day, I talk to Joyce and one of her dogs is extremely unfriendly towards Piper so sadly, she is not staying. A sad moment for Joyce and Alan, but a happy moment for the Dee family. They will come adopt her that day. More pics and contracts and happy kisses. They are thrilled beyond belief. Piper starts a fight with Leo just before leaving so it works out well that she goes to her own place. Our miss Piper is the smartest of the bunch and needs a special home to call her own! No sharing affections for her.



Piper

Second Thoughts on Paige



Paige

Anne and Steve still want Paige badly and are making puppy dog eyes at her, at every play date. So they ask me to bring her over alone and observe Izzy with her. I do and Izzy is appropriate and not resentful at all. Izzy just plays verbally and that is normal. It sounds like a murder is being conducted in my house, when my crew plays. I think she will be fine. They are hopeful and make a strong decision to go forward with the adoption. Applications are suddenly completed. Crates and toys are purchased and furniture is rearranged and announcements are made! Paige has a new home and will go there on Thanksgiving AM.

I have just 2 puppies for 3 days. How odd it is to go from 5 to 4 to 3 in one weekend and then to 2 the following weekend and then it will be just little Leo.

And I get a great application on little Leo that I schedule a home visit for on Friday. They had also initially wanted Paige, or the woman did but her boyfriend wanted Leo and they are thrilled to get the chance to meet him finally!



Leo

Two puppies all week

Two puppies are way easier than 5 puppies! They are cleaner, they are sweeter but they are LOUDER! Two puppies don't keep each other company as good as 5 or even 4 or 3 puppies and they want out of that pen every AM as early as possible, thank you very much! And they will go out of their little hearty lungs way to tell everyone! But my dogs are much happier with 2 puppies than more. Far fewer submissive kisses and wiggly butts are being thrown their way.

Paige Goes Home

Thanksgiving comes and Anne and Steve arrive to take Paige home. Leo is not as bothered as I expect. It seems that little Leo is quite pleased at getting all the puppy attention to himself! Now he can remain downstairs with the big dogs during the evening and learn how to conduct himself in a living room. I promptly teach him how to climb on the couch. Probably not what every adoptive home would appreciate but hey, I have one puppy all to myself for one night. I am enjoying it! He learns the couch thing rapidly. I fall asleep Thanksgiving evening on the couch with a puppy on my lap/chest and my dogs scattered in various places around the living room, Siri on the other end of the couch. What a lovely warm and cozy feeling. I will remember this holiday forever.



Paige's New Family

Leo Has a Home!

Leo and I pack ourselves up with a blanket and a Kong for him for the long drive to Uniontown. Of course, there is a road closed that I am supposed to go down but it all works out. They come and meet me and escort me safely there. They never expected me to bring Leo and are enchanted with him. I have told Leo along the way, to let me know if he likes them and wants to be their puppy. Leo makes it clear from nearly the moment that he steps through the door, that he likes it there and considers it his home. Once in the family room, he promptly climbs up on the couch. Oops! They adore him, he adores them. The trip back to complete the adoption begins. They get the rest of the bag of puppy food, I lend them a crate so they can buy another one for the bedroom, more pics and contracts and they are on their merry way back home!



Leo's New Family

I have no puppies! My saga is over! I am not sure how to conduct myself. My dogs and I reconnect and we are vegetables for the rest of the day. This the day I did this for. ~sigh~