

Sunday Column – Do I Have a Dog for You!
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His name is Sampson. He is black and tan. If I were going to guess I'd say he could be part German shepherd or blue heeler or Aussie. Only God really knows. Whatever he is, he is a devilishly handsome chap with a charming and playful personality. That is, once you get on the right side of him. He has been my office foster for at least 6 weeks now and it is an honor to be a member of his esteemed inner circle.

Not everyone gets this status and it is hard to say definitively what makes you "in" vs. "out". Gender and the wearing of hats may play a role but are not necessarily an absolute either way. I'm pretty sure that with enough effort anyone can be part of this boy's special club. Strangers, however, may always pose a threat to his level of serenity and whoever decides to adopt Sampson will need to take this into consideration.

It is a common misconception that dogs end up in shelters because there is something wrong with them. I have three shelter dogs and there is nothing particularly wrong with any of them except they are all spoiled rotten. They never bolt out the door or the gate when I leave it open. They are sociable with people and other animals. They know basic commands and they usually come when called whether I pay them with a treat or not.

Most of the dogs at PAWS Humane are here because of human dereliction, not their own. We could write a somewhat entertaining book listing the myriad reasons people give us when they surrender their dogs. One woman recently brought back one of our dogs within a matter of days stating, "It's not the dog. It's me. I'm too crazy." Another young family adopted one of our puppies bringing him back before he was even 14 weeks old saying he was "attacking" the children and chewing things up.

We encourage adoption by people who have no previous experience with a pet and we will support them through the transition, especially with behavioral concerns and questions. We provide 2 sessions with a licensed dog trainer and we go well beyond this if a more serious problem comes up and we think we can save the relationship. Even though the presenting problem is always the dog's behavior it takes two to tango as they say, and our behaviorist will make sure both parties get what they need to succeed.

A couple of us were talking about Sampson recently. Though he displays behavior that can be hard for the average person to accept, we believe he is savable. He is going to need a savvy and patient adopter who is looking for a challenge. We were joking that our ad for him should start out by saying something like, "Are you single and want to stay that way?"

It's not that Sampson doesn't like people. He LOVES his person and will become your jealous boyfriend within a matter of days. He thinks his job is to protect you from people, yet he loves other dogs unequivocally. We think he would do very well in a home with a mature, calm and confident dog. We have found that he is far more bark than bite, and when others stand their ground he will back off and settle down. He will even make friends.

Sampson will be a great dog in the right home and we are committed to finding this no matter how long it may take.

Bobbi Yeo lives in Opelika, AL. She is the CEO of PAWS Humane in Columbus, GA, an animal shelter and veterinary clinic offering low-cost spay/neuter and other services to the public. Email her at byeo@pawshumane.org with your comments and story ideas.