

Sunday Column – Please Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood For publication 4.16.17

Each week a few of the PAWS Humane staff members meet to discuss the dogs and cats in our care. The majority of our animals don't stay with us more than a couple of weeks which is exactly what we're going for.

However, we almost always have an animal or two...or even four (out of 120 on any given day) who we can't seem to get out the door. Either they keep coming back, often for reasons that have nothing to do with them; or they never leave. Fritos falls into the second category, always a bride's maid, never a bride.

The other morning I said a little prayer for Fritos which made Dave laugh because he thought I was talking about corn chips. I really meant this beautiful 4 year old, 50 pound, tortoise shell Labrador/Shepherd/Retriever. March 17, 2017 was the one year anniversary of her coming to PAWS Humane.

Fritos is a staff favorite but that doesn't mean she is all hugs and cuddles. We love her for her intelligence and her playfulness. We know she would be an amazing dog in the right setting. She truly loves the people who interact with her on a regular basis but she gets spooked easily by those with whom she is unfamiliar.

Fritos makes me think of Joe Cocker singing, "If I seem edgy, I want you to know, that I never mean to take it out on you." And then, "I'm just a soul whose intentions are good, Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood." We have no way to know what Fritos has been through and why she is the way she is. But we believe she is redeemable.

The fact is that Fritos has a bite history. She is not alone in that. Lots of dogs have bitten at one time or other. On the Dunbar Bite Scale Fritos has not surpassed level 2 which is the most common type of dog bite and it is not at a level where you would label a dog as dangerous. On the Dunbar Scale this level is considered treatable, however, it can be difficult to work with this behavior effectively in a shelter setting.

This is the reality of animal sheltering and different shelters have different responses to dogs like Fritos. At PAWS Humane we will work with them as long as we believe a safe adoption is possible.

Several staff members have taken a special interest in Fritos. They let her spend time in their offices, they take her for walks, and they throw the tennis ball for her in the play yard, giving her time away from the monotony and the noise of the shelter.

With so many animals in need of loving homes you may wonder why we would spend so much time trying to help this one. It is because we have come to know Fritos, and what we know is that she is a good girl even if she is not suitable for just any placement. We believe there is a

home for Fritos somewhere out there and the more we get the word out the more chance we have of finding that home.

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.