

Day 15 - Last day of the Summer Session of Beagle Camp!

Day Fifteen - The Last Day of the Summer Session of Beagle Camp - In which I am very happy, but also very sad. It feels like I have had the puppies with me forever, and yet, they've only been here a short time. Warren and Garrison are going to meet their new mommy and daddy this afternoon. They know something is different about today. How is it that beagles are so intuitive? I roll up the drop cloth for the last time, and get everybody's food ready. All six of the dogs are eating in the kitchen together. This is something new to them, and they look at me like I've maybe lost my mind. And what is even more interesting is that Buster, who is usually VERY protective of his food, allows Warren to come over and sniff at it. Any other day, Buster's bark would have sent Warren sliding on his backside half way across the room. Everyone knows something is different today. And I'm feeling like I haven't taken nearly enough pictures to remember this experience!

The resident four are being especially playful with the pups today. Buddy has them both running around and tripping over themselves as he chases them around the yard. Buster is the referee, running and barking, monitoring all of the activity. Potsy, usually the resident grump, is instructing them as to the proper way to pee on a tree stump. Daisy allows both Warren and Garrison to lick her face and her ears. Perhaps she knows they will be leaving. She leans down to lick Warren's ear, and he looks so solemn, I can't help but think she's also giving him motherly advice! She licks Garrison's ears as well. And then the three of them head to Doghouse Mountain. Daisy dug herself a very nice cooling pit next to one of the bales of hay, and she is now instructing Warren and Garrison in the art of pit digging. There's dirt flying everywhere, and Daisy looks young again, with an intense look of concentration on her face as she digs - and then an approving look as the boys join her in the effort. The end result is that there are several canine craters under the structure. But at least I don't have to mow there. Warren then climbs to the top of Dog House Mountain - joining the list of puppies who have reached the summit. Garrison tries, but fails to get to the summit to join him. He's distracted by a moth, and begins chasing the moth across the yard.

A bit later, the dogs are all inside, running around, playing, and then retreating to their various neutral corners for naps. Garrison prefers the crate. I catch Warren snuggled up with Pam for a nap, and what a cute picture that makes! Warren then decides that he likes the bottom shelf of the coffee table in the TV room. The resident four take up their usual spots on the various couches and chairs around the living room and TV room. I unfortunately, have cleaning to do!

John calls to let me know that they will be arriving to pick up "the kids" at around 4PM. That's less than 2 hours from now. Suddenly, it hits me. Beagle Camp will be over today. No more drop cloths, no more piranhas, no more barricades. No more soulful yelps for attention in the morning as I stumble around amidst the newspaper and goo to make coffee!

In anticipation of the end of Beagle Camp, I've taken apart the barricade, cleaned and folded up the metal crate, cleaned the kitchen floor, and now the remaining crate is sitting in the midst of a clean kitchen, and Crate Inspectors Buddy and Potsy take a moment to inspect it to be sure it has been properly prepared for the close of Beagle Camp.

Over the course of Beagle Camp, I've learned a few things. Beagle puppies are among the cutest critters on God's green Earth. I can still function after only three hours of sleep. Soft leather slippers are not to be made available (accidentally or on purpose) as chew toys. Especially if feet are involved. Sneakers are best to prevent toes from being bitten by beagle puppy teeth. Beagle puppies have an inexhaustible store of energy, and a strong desire to explore the universe. Because I had multiple puppies in the house, I restricted their exploring to the area of the kitchen behind the barricade. This was not always 100% effective, which resulted in the need for the puppy containment system (necessity IS the mother of invention!) when I had only two, against what SHOULD have been my better judgement, I lifted much of that restriction, with the predictable result that the puppies were EVERYWHERE in a matter of seconds, or so it seemed. Beagle puppies are FAST. In the blink of an eye, they were under bed, behind and under the couch, then behind the TV...

I've also learned that when you love a beagle, you understand and accept their distinct characteristics and while you may train them, you don't really change them. And why would you want to, anyway? It's those very characteristics that make a beagle so exasperating and yet so loveable.

Over the course of Beagle Camp, I've lost several pairs of socks, some underwear, a pair of slippers, I've used about a hundred pounds of newspaper, twelve drop cloths, a couple gallons of Lysol, and several quarts of enzymatic cleaner. (Maybe I went a BIT overboard while cleaning) I've sprained an ankle, I've been mistaken for a chew toy, I've been bitten and scratched, and I've lost hours and hours of sleep, but I have also been licked, snuggled, slept on, cuddled, hugged, howled at, and puppy-loved. I've heard the puppies sounding like they were killing each other one second, only to see them all sleeping in one contented pile the next second. I've heard the beagles singing as they've rolled around on the floor nipping at each other. It has been worth it!

And even though it has been hard to let each of the puppies go, I know that it's the right thing to do - fostering is one of the most heartbreaking, rewarding things I can think of. I'm not going to win the Nobel Prize for peace, or prevent world hunger, I won't end global warming or save the rain forest. But I can rescue a beagle. I can make a difference one beagle

(or one litter of beagles) at a time.

The Summer Session of Beagle Camp officially ended at 5:20PM August 25, 2001. The moment John, Kinn, Warren and Garrison pulled out of my driveway. I waved goodbye, and then went inside, had a good cry, and took a nice, long NAP.