

## Max the Wonder Beagle

I don't think I will ever forget Max. He was the first beagle I asked B.R.E.W. to take in.

I refer to him as a Wonder-Beagle not only because he was quite a character, but because the first time I saw him he was so big I wondered if he was a beagle.

The first time I saw Max he was getting into the family van in the vet's parking lot as I was taking my foster (Colin) to get some stitches removed from his shoulder. If I recall correctly Colin had an abscess that was surgically explored, but I'm not certain, he had the stitches when he came to me from the one of the Rescue's vets (via an Adoption day) with his co-dependent buddy, Gavin.

I assumed that Max was a beagle-mix, I had never seen a beagle that big before. Nor had I seen many Liver-Tan-and-White (as opposed to Black-Brown-and-White) beagles at this point.

When I got into the vet's office Mandy was on the desk. I asked if that was a beagle-mix that had just left. She told me that he was pure beagle. I was incredulous.

When I got in to the exam room with Dr. Kathryn Vickers I found out even more. The family that had Max had adopted him as a puppy. He was now just short of his 6th birthday and they had brought Max in to have him euthanized. "He's fat, barks a lot and now he has a lump on his foot, nobody will want him." is what they said. Dr. Vickers said that she couldn't, in good conscience, euthanize an apparently healthy dog. She asked them to take him home and consider it. She spoke to them about Rescue. She also told them that, in fairness to Max, if they opted to take him to the SPCA they should ask that he be euthanized as he was a nervous dog and being left in a shelter would only serve to stress him out. Per the vet "He's not calm like your beagles."

Dr. Vickers asked if B.R.E.W. would consider him. I called somebody, Missy or Claudette, I don't remember who. They asked me questions: Was he neutered? Was he up-to-date on vaccinations? Was he on heartworm preventative? I didn't have the answers but the staff looked it all up for me. He was neutered but the answer was bad on the rest of the questions. He had only been seen about three times in his almost 6-year life, for ear-infections.

Most importantly, what about the lump on his foot?

In the end I was told that B.R.E.W. couldn't handle the strain on the budget. Money was tight and the foot alone was expected to run \$500 or so. I told the vet's office I would think about what I could/was willing to do.

I spent some time that evening (Thursday) soul-searching and decided that, if the vet's office would work with me on letting me pay the bill over a month or six weeks, and Max was heartworm negative, I would go ahead and take him. I wasn't sure what I was going to do about getting him adopted, but I hated to see what was going to happen to him.

Friday I called the office and told them that I would take Max IF he was heartworm negative. If he was heartworm positive I would have to have him euthanized, I knew that I couldn't afford the treatment AND having the foot dealt with. When the vet's office called Max's family to let them know that a Rescue had agreed to take Max in they were told that Max was at the Montgomery County SPCA. Calls flew from the vets office to the SPCA back to the family who had surrendered him. The SPCA, for whatever reason, would not release Max to the vets office, the family would have to re-claim him (I never did discover the convoluted logic there, as owner surrenders SHOULD be immediately available and COULD be euthanized immediately upon surrender). This was a Friday. The family couldn't get him before Monday. The vet called the SPCA to ensure that Max would be "held" and not euthanized before then, although if he was adopted that was fine.

Much to my relief the office also agreed to let me pay for the surgery on Max's foot over the next few months. In the end somebody (I suspect the vet herself) paid the last \$100 off for me.

Monday Max's "family" re-claimed him from the SPCA and signed surrender papers to the vet's office. (I hadn't even thought of that, but that way the "family" didn't know to whom Max had gone, should they change their mind and decide that they wanted him back). Max's heartworm test came back negative, surgery was scheduled for the mass on his foot and Max was on his way to a new life (at 53lbs!)

When I picked Max up post-surgery he looked like a stuffed sausage and had to stop every three or four steps to get his breath. This was not a side effect of the anesthesia, this was a result of his obesity. No doubt about it, Max was FAT.

The next weekend was a rescue fund-raiser called BeagleFest. It was a semi-annual (now it's annual) event at a facility outside of D.C. (near Dulles airport). I had had his vaccinations brought up-to-date, he was heartworm negative, and his foot had been dealt with (the biopsy showed no signs of malignancy). I figured I'd see about getting Max accepted as a B.R.E.W. dog in person. There were now no costs, except micro-chipping and I could get that done at BeagleFest for \$20. I'd even foster him (I hoped that another foster home would open up, I already had 5 dogs in residence, Benny, Frankie, Sweet Pea &dash; my foster failure, Colin & Gavin. How could I possibly manage another!)

Saturday arrived; I loaded my dogs into the car, except for Frankie, and headed off on the several-hour drive to Chantilly, VA. Once I arrived I made quite the sight walking from the parking area down to the (enclosed) field. I had a leash around my waist with 5 beagles attached, one of whom was obese and most noted by having an IV bag and a plastic grocery-store bag wrapped around his front paw.

At BeagleFest Max was officially accepted as a BREW beagle! This meant that he would be posted to their web-site for potential adopters to see, along with a biography (written by me).

Max was indeed a challenge. As he had grown and was less the cute puppy, he got less and less attention. The way he dealt with this was to bark, incessantly, trying to get attention. In order to stop his ear-splitting bark he had, apparently, been given food. So now Max barked for and at EVERYTHING. I invested in a sonic correction device called a Barker Breaker. When a dog barked above a certain level (you could adjust the sensitivity) it would trigger an equally ear-shattering electronic squeal. When the dog stopped barking the squeal would cease. In theory this would &ldquo;teach&rdquo; the dog not to bark. It did actually have some success with Max, as did a squirt-bottle filled with water.

Max wanted ALL my attention ALL the time. He was also somewhat obsessed with licking other dogs's mouths &dash; it looked like he was trying to clean their teeth with his tongue. In addition, despite his weight, he thought he was a cat. At least his favorite spot to hang out was on the back of my couch. No mean feat for a nearly 60lb dog. And when he would roll off and land on my stomach or back as I was sleeping, let me tell you, I knew he was there!

Over the course of the almost-year that Max was with me he was placed and returned twice. He lost weight, and became a very attractive &ldquo;copper&rdquo; beagle, but his barking and food-seeking behavior only improved marginally.

The first placement was with a couple in their late-50's/early-60's with an adult son who lived with them. Their son was no thrilled with the idea of getting a dog, but since it was his parent's house he agreed to go along with their plan. I was very clear and upfront about the fact that Max had a very strong personality, and that since they were not experienced dog owners they HAD to take Max to an obedience class or he would be running their house soon. I had several phone calls from them, as did Claudette (to whom they lived closer). Max was barking a lot. We had covered this pre-adoption, but I talked them through the whole squirt-bottle and coin-can as deterrent again. Their son was NOT happy at this noisy intrusion into what had been a quiet house. Things seemed to be calming down when I got the phone call that, on the first heavy frost, Max had pulled his new dad off the porch and down the steps. Max was just &ldquo;too strong&rdquo; and they were afraid that one of them would get hurt. This was when I learned that they had never signed up for, let alone started, any obedience classes.

The second placement was a family of Mom, Dad and 6-yo son. They met Max when I went to do the homevisit and decided that he was the dog for them. I did not feel that it was a good match. They had no experience as dog owners, and Max is not an easy dog. I made them meet other dogs, talk to other fosters etc. After all that they still were set on Max. I didn't want to do him out of a potential home based on nothing more than a feeling (I've learned to listen to that &ldquo;feeling&rdquo; since then), so proceeded with the placement. Max went to his new home on a Friday evening. By Sunday the phone call came that they couldn't keep Max. Apparently Max had found a used sanitary napkin and taken his treasure under the bed. When his NEW, new Mom had tried to take it he had growled and snapped at her (another thing we had covered, about Max being food-aggressive, apparently hadn't taken firm root), and now the 6-yo was afraid to be in the same room with Max. When I went to pick him up Dad was the only one home. Mom and brother couldn't bear to be there when he left. (I will note here that while they did not end up adopting a BREW beagle, they did take in a friends beagle and KC was a fit from the start, I still hear from them and KC is a happy, appropriately spoiled and well cared for family member).

Following the two failed adoptions Max was sparking no interest from adopters, with the exception of one &ldquo;southern&rdquo; adoption day I took him to.

I was transporting a returnee (Raisin) from New Jersey down to DC where there was an available foster home for her. Since it was an Adoption Day and I was taking Raisin there to meet up with her foster parents I decided that Max would ride along and make a &ldquo;surprise guest appearance&rdquo;. Max was quite to shock to the southern members whose memory of him was of an obese dog with a bag on his foot (since they had only ever seen him &ldquo;live&rdquo; at BeagleFest). Max was now down in the high-30's, the foot was entirely healed and he was, indeed a good-looking, confident dog.

While we were there a potential adopter met Max. Imagine my surprise to learn that he was from Pennsylvania! He was down in DC visiting his fiancée and they had decided to come to the PetCo and check out the beagles. Unfortunately (or perhaps for the best, I'll never know), this adoption never happened. When taking a long, hard look at their lives & schedules for the next few months they decided that there was not enough time to include a pet.

Another drought in interest followed this. Feeling somewhat discouraged by the lack of interest in a dog I felt was very special, I did some soul-searching. The result of the soul searching was a request from me to Kent and Rita to foster Max. Kent and Rita are a long-time BREW foster home and are both held in high esteem within the rescue. I was very grateful when they said yes, they would foster Max and get him some exposure to a new group of potential adopters by taking him to the DC area Adoption Days.

It wasn't very long after Max moved to Herndon with Kent and Rita that I heard that there was interest in him, and not much longer after that he was adopted by a previous BREW adopter. Max was the second beagle in the household, he now had a beagle brother Kingston (also a BREW alumni), two human brothers and another new Mom (Debbie) and Dad. Within the first week of Max taking up residence in his new home there was a semi-panicked phone call from Debbie. She had cleaned up some broken glass and put the shards in the trash-can. Max had dumped the trashcan and while she was fairly certain that he had no EATEN any glass he was favoring a paw and she feared he has gotten some in his pad. I doubted it, as there was no blood and Max was a bit of a drama queen. I encouraged her to palpitate his pads and see if there was anywhere that felt like a lump or made him jerk the paw away. If there were he probably should be seen by the vet in the morning, otherwise not to worry.

Kingston had his own web-page and pictures of Max were soon added. In this manner I got to keep an eye on Max from afar. There were things I wasn't happy about him being allowed, such as standing at the counter) and I mean on hind legs with nose ON the counter) as food was prepared, but if his new family found that acceptable, so be it.

They didn't seem to be particularly successful in keeping the dogs from getting loose, but again, there was not much I could do about it, they did catch them and bring them home safely when it happened. It just seemed to happen a LOT. Somewhere in all of this Max's family moved to West Virginia.

Over time I heard less often from Max's new family, but all seemed well. They tried adopting a mastiff-mix into the pack but that didn't turn out well, with Kingston being bit, and other aggressive acts directed against both canine and human family members. They did eventually add a lab-mix found running as a stray at the kids bus-stop that nobody ever came forward to claim. Around Thanksgiving '06 I got an e-Mail asking if there was any chance that Max could stay with me over Christmas. They were going to kennel Kingston I said yes (what else would I say? This was MAX!). A few weeks later I heard from Debbie again. The dogs had gotten away and Max and Kingston had returned safely but the lab-mix had not. Would I consider letting Kingston come along so he wasn't boarded alone? My answer was "Of course" and the lab-mix over the holiday, but Debbie really didn't want to have to kennel Max, she didn't feel he would do well in that environment. So on the agreed upon night Debbie and her husband and sons drove up from West Virginia and I drove West on the PA Turnpike and Max and Kingston Norristown for the holiday. Kingston had an ear-infection so he came with an array of meds, but that was no real big deal. I was going to DC for a few days, but had a pet-sitter coming in for the dogs I wasn't taking with me. All went well. Kingston and Max had a wonderful visit, other than Max starting to show signs of an ear infection, too, so I treated him to try to catch it early since I already had the meds. After their visit Max and Kingston came to stay in went home and I didn't hear from Debbie again.

In late April/early May '08 I got an e-Mail from one of the BREW Board members that Max and Kingston were being returned. Giving them the benefit if the doubt I will say that something was going on that they didn't want to talk about. The reason that was given for returning the boys was that they "just couldn't handle them." I immediately said that I wanted to foster Max. Once the boys were vetted (shots brought up to date, heartworm tests done and general check up), Bob was kind enough to bring Max up from Blue Ridge, once my house was pronounced safe (I had a bout of canine influenza go through the pack in residence at just about the time Max could have come).

Max came "home" as if he'd never left. Took one look around, claimed a corner and that was that. At bedtime he would beg, plead and try to insist his way onto "the big bed" and most nights that was where he slept until morning when I made all dogs get up and go outside, whether they thought they needed to or not.

After about 3 weeks he learned to open the freezer drawer on my refrigerator. I knew he had learned to open the regular refrigerator and the oven in his "adoptive" home, I didn't count on his persistence with the new type or door (or in this case drawer). This over-confidence was quashed one morning when I came down from my shower to find all the dogs feasting out of the freezer. I put a toddler-lock on the door, he still managed to open it, so I got another kind of toddler-lock and he still foiled it.

Max stayed with me, quite content. Being in on the rotation of going to the dog park, pet supply store, etc. with the rest of the pack. Max accompanied me to a Gift Wrapping fundraiser at Barnes and Noble for Mother's day (or was it

Father's Day?), and had to go home early & I couldn't walk out of his sight without him setting up a ruckus. He displayed the same behavior at Adoption Days, but there it wasn't expected to be quiet.

Being a BREW foster Max of course was one of the dogs that accompanied me to the 1st ever Northern BeagleFest. He proved the capacity of his lungs any time I was on the opposite side of the fence from him. He even caught the eye of a potential adopter. His volume did not appear to bother her in the least.

At last, a home that sounded almost ideal for Max! Nancy lives alone with her 10-yo beagle Georgie, in a single family house. She works nights 4 days a week, during which time the dogs would be crated. She comes home after work, lets the dogs out, gives them their breakfast and then goes to bed. Her dog shares her bed when she's home and Max would be welcome to join them. That didn't sound like a bad schedule for Max who, after breakfast, would stay in bed until whatever time I felt like getting up.

Nancy had to travel for a week, but was planning on putting an application in for Max upon her return. Fate apparently had other plans.

A week ago Sunday Max was favoring his front-right paw. Monday it was fine, so I assumed that he had stepped on something or twisted it while playing with Puppy, a 3-4 year old Bichon Frise who is fostering with me. When I got home Wednesday evening, he was limping on the same paw. I e-mailed Missy for authorization to take him to my vet Thursday. She replied OK, but if x-rays were needed he would have to go to Glenolden, the vet that the rescue uses up here in PA. Sometime very early Thursday morning I e-mail Missy and said forget my vet, he needs to go to Glenolden, he's in pain. So, Max and I spent Thursday morning at Glenolden, and I left with several drugs, Rimadyl, Tramadol, Robaxin-V and Acepromizine (the Ace was at my insistence since Max can't be crated while I'm home without trying to dig his way out of the crate, so I needed to be able to sedate him), along with orders to keep him quiet and confined and avoid stairs (not very practical in my house).

I immediately called a friend for the name and number of a Veterinary Chiropractor and made an appointment for Max for the following Thursday.

By the following Monday, the day of Max's re-check, he was not only not improved, but in even MORE pain. They gave him Fentanyl patch (heavy duty pain-killer). Tuesday morning I woke to Max screaming in pain and found that the patch had not stayed on. I used a "Mark Out" wrap like an ACE bandage to try to get it to adhere and made an appointment for him to see my vet to get it re-applied.

Tuesday evening Max was in even more pain, despite the fact that the patch had adhered. It was quite obvious that the Fentanyl wasn't sufficient so my vet gave Max a double-whammy of Bupren and sent me home with a syringe to give him in the morning. I called Missy and said that Max needed to get to Blue Ridge (well, actually I said a lot of stuff and she managed to understand that was the necessary solution, I wasn't that coherent).

Laura, the founder/director of BREW called me while I was delivering a large crate I had offered somebody on FreeCycle who discovered when she came to pick it up (in the midst of these phone calls) it would not fit into her car. I wasn't articulating much very well by then but Laura, too, managed to extract that Max needed to be at Blue Ridge. She contacted Bob who luckily was off Wednesday, and he and I agreed to meet at the Golden Ring PetCo at 10:00am Wednesday. Well, I wasn't going to need to take the ½ day off I had schedule to take Max to the chiropractor Thursday, so why not use it Wednesday and get him to where he could get some help?

The morning did not start off well with Max, for the first time ever, refusing to eat, even Pill Pockets! I gave him the injection of Bupren, loaded him into a crate in the car (not my usual mode of transport for him, but the crate gives added security if I had to stop suddenly or swerve), Benny, my 14-yo beagle, into the passenger seat and headed south. Or I should say I TRIED to head south. Traffic was conspiring against me. What should have been an hour and 45 minute trip took over 3 hours. The only saving grace was that apparently the traffic around DC was just as bad and Bob and I got to the PetCo within about 15 minutes of one another, an hour + later than the agreed upon time, and both of us had been shooting to be early.

The orthopedist was, coincidentally, to be at Blue Ridge that evening. He examined Max and ordered a new set of x-rays (Max had been sent with the ones from Glenolden) and a myelogram for Thursday.

Rita kept me up to date on what she knew about what was going on at Blue Ridge.

The myelogram told the story. Max had a tumor around his spinal cord. It was inoperable and there was nothing left to be done. Laura called to tell me Thursday afternoon. I don't envy her having to make that phone call, and the others like it she has had to make and will have to make in the future.

Friday Kent went to Blue Ridge to be with Max as he went to sleep for the last time. I was too far away to make the trip.

I will always be grateful to Kent for seeing that Max wasn't with strangers.

I don't think I will ever forget Max. He was the first beagle I asked B.R.E.W. to take in, and when he left he took a part of me with him.