



JUST ADD WATER!

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*“It’s not about what it is,
it’s about what it can become.”*

— Dr. Seuss

As we were leaving the facility with our new dog, Bogart, we could hear a low rumble of voices. Startled, I turned to see a group of men, all wearing blue jeans and tan shirts, waving and saying, “Goodbye Bogey!” We felt as though we had just stolen the camp mascot. Well, in this case, the prison mascot. The men were inmates in the exercise yard.

We had been searching for a dog for quite some time when we found Bogey’s information online. He was being trained by inmates in prison as part of a program called Pen Pals. He met all of our criteria. He was a medium-sized mixed breed, about two years-old. He looked a bit like a boxer with a long nose. The clinchers for me were his dark brown, velvety ears.

To pick him up at the prison, we had to go through security. As we proceeded, I apprehensively checked off their long list of rules in my mind. Some of these included not being able to reveal our names, no sandals, and only being able to bring in our driver’s license. The program coordinator showed us to a large room. Bogey and his two assigned inmate handlers were waiting. I smiled when I spotted Bogey. He was even more adorable in person.

The inmates who had trained Bogey had been with him almost 24/7 for months. They adeptly demonstrated his obedience to commands and tricks; then, they gently instructed us as we practiced. One young inmate, clearly nervous, began to go through a book the inmates had compiled

about Bogey. The book included medical records, feeding instructions, explanations of commands, and stories from his time in prison.

One story revealed that when the inmates threw a ball, Bogey would grab it and lead the other prison dogs on a chase. In other words, he didn't play "fetch" but loved to play "keep away."

As we were wrapping up the visit, one handler kneeled, hugged Bogey, then turned and walked away quickly. My husband asked if the other handler wanted to say goodbye, too, and he did the same.

Bogey looked out the window all the way home as though he was memorizing the way back. At the direction of his handlers, we kept Bogey on a leash whenever he was out of the crate for the first two weeks. We seldom needed to crate him, but every night around 9:00 p.m., he would go in on his own and settle in. He would look at us as though he was puzzled why we didn't go to bed, too. We realized he thought it was time for "lights out."

One morning, my husband stood watching the news as he tied his tie for work. Bogey came up from behind and walked between his legs, then returned to his bed. We recognized his trick the handlers had called "Peek-A-Boo." Not long after, he did the same thing. And then one more time—each time returning to his bed. We couldn't figure out what was going on until we realized that the news program was reporting on a former Olympic skier known as "Picabo Street."

Once, when we still owned a landline, I was expecting an important phone call but needed to take a shower. I stretched the cord towards the bathroom and left the bulky phone on the floor. After showering, I noticed the phone was off the hook. Wondering, but in a hurry, I replaced it. Later, a friend told me she had tried to call. She hesitantly shared that she thought perhaps Bogey had answered. All she heard was heavy breathing.

Eventually, we took him to visit our friends and their three dogs that lived in the country. Up to this point, Bogey had been quite acquiescent to all we asked; however, when he spotted the other dogs, he attempted to jump out the window of our truck. When I opened the

door, he and the other dogs quickly became friends. Much to the dogs' dismay, Bogey stole their tennis ball to play "keep away."

Fourteen years later, Bogey is still running strong, though less often and not as far. When others ask if we recommend the prison adoption program, we highly endorse it. Where else can you find a dog that is housetrained, crate trained, clicker trained, has all his shots, is neutered, has earned a Canine Good Citizen Award, and comes with his favorite toy, a leash, harness, and dog food? It's like "instant dog." Just add water!