



SPOTLIGHT ON RESCUE

by: Carol Allen, Chair
 National Rescue Committee
 (315) 469-7926
 E-mail: carosal@twcny.rr.com

We are pleased that Rita Robbins is sharing with us the story of "Harry Houdini". Her story reminds us that untapped potential exists in so many of our rescued Golden Retrievers and that what is needed is a chance – and a committed and knowledgeable adopter. Thank you, Rita.

The Amazing Harry Houdini

by Rita Robbins

In May of 2005, my good friend Lynda Williams contacted me about a young male Golden she had been asked to evaluate for Golden Retriever Rescue of North Texas (GRRNT). The rescue was looking for another foster home for this 14-month-old dog as his current foster family was going on vacation for three months. GRRNT were looking for someone who would work with him and try to make him adoptable as they were having a difficult time due to his high energy and ability to climb fences. Lynda kept saying, "You have got to meet this dog – he's right up your alley. Just go look at him." I was not in the market for another dog, but agreed to foster him for the summer.

My first introduction to "Sydney" (as he was then called) was as he bounced four feet high and spun in circles all the while carrying a bumper in his mouth. His foster mom said, "He is a bit out of control but loves to retrieve." We tossed a few bumpers in the back yard and yes, he did like to retrieve, but couldn't be still for a second. He just wiggled and wagged and spun and jumped. I kept thinking "What have I gotten myself into this time?" but loaded him up and off we went.

Sydney and I immediately began basic obedience. He loved the attention and was a quick study. I knew if he'd just settle down a little, he'd be a wonderful addition to someone's family.

During one of our weekly field training sessions, Lynda talked me into getting Sydney out of the kennel just to see what he'd do. Incredibly, after the third retrieve he was marking over 100 yards, going straight out and straight back. I kept shaking my head saying, "It's a fluke – beginners luck – I don't need another dog." All the while Lynda just said, "You need *this* dog."

Back to obedience, and more obedience, and more obedience. I knew if I just kept after it the average family would want

to adopt this charming and delightful guy.

The next time our field group got together I was once again talked into running Sydney, only this time on water marks. At the line I signaled for the mark, the gun went off and the bumper hit the water with a huge splash! I found myself on my rear end holding half of a tab watching this dog hit the water



"Harry" receives his reward from Rita Robbins for a job well done. Photo by Studio 2 Photo

Spotlight on Rescue, continued

like he'd done it every day of his life. I thought "The entry was nice, but what about the return? I'm betting he runs the bank." Low and behold the bumper was retrieved and he headed back to me staying in the water the entire time. I kept shaking my head saying, "It's a fluke – beginners luck – I don't need another dog." All the while Lynda just said, "You need *this* dog."

As Sydney became familiar with his new environment he showed signs of additional talents. He was an escape artist! He climbed 8-foot fences, opened doors, unlatched crates and would appear from nowhere. On more than one occasion, I'd be training a dog or working in the garden and he would scare the life out of me as he ran up to wherever I was and joined in. Even worse, if I turned my back for a second he would vanish, only to be found swimming in the neighbor's pond or following some unknown scent in the adjoining pasture. I put a top on his run and began locking the kennel gates and building doors only to find him sitting on the grooming table looking out the window, watching the other dogs being trained.

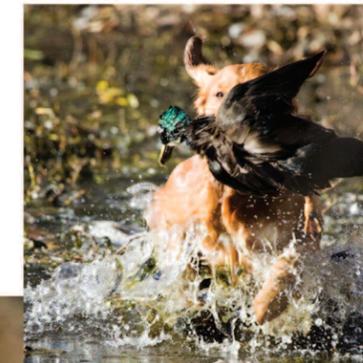
What was I going to do about the escaping? If he was adopted by a family in the city and got out, he'd be hit by a car or picked up by animal control (for the third time at least). How to confine an animal that didn't want to be confined? I began long walks with him around the property daily, letting him run and romp and release energy. I also began putting him on a tie out whenever I worked another dog so he could see where I was and what we were doing. Ever so slowly, he was added to

the daily training regime that not only included obedience, but land marks and water work. All the while I thought, "I don't need another dog."

In November of that year, I acquiesced and accepted the fact this dog would never fit in with a typical family. He had too much drive, energy and natural talent to ever be happy living the suburban life. He needed a job – one he would perform daily. He needed space – lots of space to run, retrieve and swim. Even as I wrote a check to GRRNT for the adoption fee and changed his name to "Harry Houdini," I thought, "I don't need another dog."

We have learned together. I no longer leave him in the kennel. He is now patient and no longer opens his crate at hunt tests or obedience trials. I do not to turn my back on him when we're outside. He stays close by and comes when called. I know his greatest pleasure is being at my side. He understands being there is safe.

Harry (commonly known as "Who" or affectionately as "Whoody") not only stole my heart, but also continues to capture the hearts of others. Obedience and field competitors are amazed he was a rescue dog. Harry has attained his



Photos by Sirius Photography

AKC Senior Hunter title, Utility obedience title and Rally Excellent title, his UKC Hunting Retriever Championship and Utility obedience titles as well as a WCX. He was the recipient of the DFWMGRC's Field/Obedience trophy and Utility trophy in 2010; the Open Obedience trophy in 2009, and the Novice Obedience trophy in 2007. He is presently working toward his UDX and MH. Pretty amazing for a dog thought to be unadoptable.

There is something uniquely different about a rescue dog. They seem to know they are being given a second chance. It is extremely rewarding and humbling. It's not about the titles, success or the breeding – it's about doing something good for the breed, one dog at a time.

Lynda was right...I did need *this* dog! ❖

About the author: Rita has owned and trained Golden Retrievers for over 25 years. Her first Golden was a four-year-old rescue named "Rocky" who introduced her to competitive dog sports and achieved his UD, SH and WCX titles. She has titled multiple dogs including CH UD TD SH HRCH WCX one DDHF and VCX. She and her husband, Gerry, typically have one or two rescue dogs in their clan and she tries to find an activity the dogs enjoy. Last month, eight-year-old "Buddy" joined their family. "Buddy" is currently on a weight loss and exercise plan so he can join in, too.



Photos by ZMC Design

