

Poko's Story



On July 9th, 1996, I was blessed.

I came home from work that day and Osa, our St. Bernard/Newfoundland mix, was waiting for me with a certain look in her eye. I knew immediately what she was trying to say. She was pregnant and it was time. As I scurried around frantically trying to remember what I was supposed to do next, she calmly walked into my roommate's room, lay down on the comforter on the floor next to the bed and started to give birth. I gave up on whatever useless errand I was trying to accomplish and sat down next to her to offer my support. Less than a minute later I met Poko for the first time.

I had known I would keep one of the puppies as soon as we knew Osa was pregnant. It wasn't a planned pregnancy - at least not by us. But fate intervened with a large, very determined and very un-neutered neighborhood dog who broke into to our house one evening during Osa's second heat and enticed her out into the darkness on an un-chaperoned date.

I spent every day with the pups - 7 in all. Right from the beginning, I knew Poko was special... somehow different from the other puppies. There was a calmness about him I hadn't seen in a puppy before. He was also very independent for a youngster and would often venture off by himself to go exploring. And he always seemed to know where I was. We had an instant connection.

But what to call him? I struggled to find the perfect name for my perfect puppy. I finally gave up and called my mother. Fate had not only given me 7 beautiful puppies, they had been born on my mother's birthday. I asked her if she would name my boy for me. She called back 2 days later with Poko: a Hopi Indian word that means an animal who is a loyal friend. Finally, the perfect name for the perfect puppy.



Poko spent his first year as a country dog in Vermont. He was allowed to go to work with me during the day and we came home to 13 acres and 2 ponds. Dog heaven! When he was about a year old, I took a job in Boston and he had to learn to be a city dog - and stay at home all-day in a yard the size of a small postage stamp. We tried to compensate by walking the streets of Boston, swimming in the Charles and riding the subway. And a couple of times we made it out to the ocean to swim. On the weekends, we did agility training and hung out in Harvard Square. It was nice, but we missed the country. In December of 1998, I had the opportunity to transfer from my company's Boston office to their Denver office. We didn't even hesitate. Poko, our two cats and I packed up a U-haul and we were off!

By now, Poko was bored with agility. We tried tracking but he didn't seem to take to that either. I knew there was a special job out there somewhere for him but couldn't seem to find it. I kept looking. I began to come across articles about dogs visiting nursing homes and hospitals. The lights went on! Of course, this was what my beautiful boy was supposed to be doing.

After much searching, I finally stumbled upon the Delta Society and found Diana's name. I got in contact and signed up for the training. Poko easily passed his part of the test! All the time we spent in Boston walking the crowded streets combined with his agility training had prepared him for anything. As we prepared to start our visits at Swedish, I found out about a program starting up at a local school, Sabin Elementary. I jumped at this opportunity - it was a perfect fit! Poko loves children and they have a natural attraction to what they see as a super-sized stuffed animal. And I work for a group called Assets for Colorado Youth, a non-profit group dedicated to positive youth development.



We started our visits on October 2nd. Right from the beginning, Poko seemed to know what to do. He walked up slowly and greeted each child. He lay there quietly, letting the children pet and brush him and hug him. Poko loves to be with the children, play ball with them and go for walks with them. We help the kids to work on a range of skills and behaviors - everything from speech and motor skills to social skills and reading and writing.



He especially loves to spend time with the kids from Miss Bohn's class - Ashley, Casey, Cole and David. That's them in the picture with Poko. This winter, they are helping me teach Poko new tricks like "Find It" and "Hug". They are great trainers!

Poko is a born greeter. He lives to say hello to everyone and everything. His loving nature shines throughout his whole being and brings a smile to the faces of all he meets. If you don't love him immediately, he wins you over slowly, always seeming to know just how. His calmness, gentleness and infinite patience continue to amaze me. Poko still always knows where I am. And he knows and loves his new job.

I have, indeed, been truly blessed!