

Ginger's Story



My name is Ginger. I am a seven and a half year old Rough Coat Collie. It is fortunate that my Mom had nothing to do with naming me since she was nine years old at the time and would have chosen something like Princess Mermaidia, Queen of the Fairy Court. Not only does that not fit on a name tag, but makes it tough to communicate if you are going some place in a hurry! My Mom's parents used good judgment and kept the name given by my breeder, a name which matches the color of my hair, and my ears already really perked up in an adorable puppy way when someone called me Ginger.

Tales about my puppyhood become pertinent later on in my life, and some of the stories are just fun to tell, especially about my Mom finding me at a mattress store.

No, really! The name of the place was "Beds, Beds, and More Beds." You know the type of place. Small, with lots of Day-Glo paint on the windows advertising how comfortable and wonderfully cheap were the mattresses being sold. It is, of course, a bit of a strange place to find a dog, but love is love, no matter where you find it.

My Mom had been dying to get a dog ever since she was little. This desire runs in the Lennon family, so her parents weren't really surprised. The little girls skip the pony stage and the boys skip the dinosaur stage, going right to the desire for dogs. It must be encoded in the family DNA somewhere and usually at least begins at about the fifth birthday.

Anyhow, my Mom was a bit serious for a nine-year old, spending every waking moment possible during summer break looking up information about dogs, and had decided a Collie would be best. She practically lived underground in the library, where all the dog books were kept, researching more and more about the perfect dog.

For so long, Mom had wanted a puppy, but her parents thought that she wasn't mature enough, and had said no. On her ninth birthday, they took a drive, needless to say, my Mom was really disappointed when the car was stopped at a mattress store. However, when she saw wiggling puppy tails in the back of a Volvo parked in the lot, her face began to shine. The lady who bred the Collies lived far away from the city, so Mom's parents and my breeder phoned back and forth for weeks before a meeting location was chosen.

All those strange little trips to the pet store which my Mom had been noticing, had been so Mom's parents could collect and hide all the dog supplies I would need.

The lady got my brother and me out of the back of the car, I broke out of her grip and tackled Mom, dousing her in kisses. Soon the sales contract was signed, AKC papers handed over, all in a

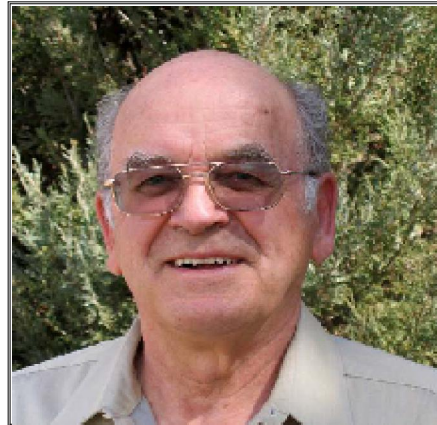
record two and a half minutes after we had all met.

Some people think that Collies are rather timid, and it is true that they can be. But when I was little, my Mom had read up so much on socialization for dogs that I was dragged to every bicycle race her brother went to. There was one every week, and there were people EVERYWHERE! People wanting to pet me and love me. I couldn't really blame them. I was really cute. Since from a young age I had been exposed to every loud, annoying commotion there was, I grew up being loving and friendly, and not afraid of anything.

I was always calm and loving, but my Mom knew I needed a job. I needed something to do, more people to love, especially since I now had a little dog brother. Everyone is always playing with him and cuddling with him, just because he can do some cool things with a tennis ball. I usually had my Mom's grandparent's house to go to, but then they got a new dog, too! I wasn't feeling so special anymore.

I stopped cuddling with my family members- I more or less just ignored them, and pretended I was a cat, and that they just didn't exist. Sure, I would wag my tail when I saw them, but never stuck around any more. I could have made the other dog move (I'm the alpha dog- the other dog is a boy and bigger than I am, but I still rule the roost) but what was the point?

My Mom, ever the dog enthusiast, saw a booth telling about Delta Society at a dog show she had been visiting with her Grandpa. She was amazed to find another dog with the same calm demeanor that I was famous for in my neighborhood. She came home, looked me in the eye and took me for a walk to think about it. More people to love? Lots of cuddles? No little brother? Are you kidding? I would have been crazy to let this opportunity go.



Because my Mom was underage, she took my Grandpa along to the meetings of Denver Pet Partners, a Delta Society affiliate. They both had a blast! They loved meeting the people who were as crazy about dogs as they were themselves and the people were so excited to share what I had to give. My Mom and Grandpa successfully completed the handler training course and we were all assessed for our skills and aptitude for doing therapy work. We passed the evaluation test and became proud Denver Pet Partners' teams.

I go to Littleton Life Care Center on Mondays, and am greeted very enthusiastically by the staff and the residents. Usually when we show up, my Mom fills out all the necessary paperwork while I hang out with the Red Hat Club, or some of my people pals who are doing crafts.

Everywhere I go, people tell me how pretty I am. The residents I visit know and remember everything about me, and my Mom keeps up the conversation, but often there will be silence and the residents pet my long, long, nose and remember about all the dogs they loved in the past. When they see me and remember happy moments and wagging tails, I am just so happy to be that catalyst for helping them recall those happy memories.

There is nothing quite like a smiling face for me, especially when people are generally whispering sweet nothings or scratching my ear in just that special spot. Often times, my Mom's Grandpa will sit

back and talk about how times have changed, and talk about things remembered, like radio jingles or how families used to work together. Together the people analyze the miracle of time- my Mom's Grandpa reminisces about how his father farmed using a horse and plow, walking up and down the fields, making deep furrows in the land, or about the people used to build their own houses. Often times the people are staring out the window, watching cars go zipping by, or watching the next generation of kids playing on the swing sets outside the windows.

My Mom has talked to residents who furiously knit baby blankets for unborn grandchildren (because the good news will come along any month now), and help them celebrate the births of great-grandchildren. I wait and watch patiently close by.

DPP has been nothing but a great experience for me, my Mom and her Grandfather. I am just so happy to have a job now. I do a 'happy dance'. Every time Mom puts my Delta Society vest on me, I jump in the air and twirl in circles, yipping at for us to move faster. When we go home, I think Mom suspects I tell my little brother that steaks fall from the sky and the floor is paved with milk bones where we visit. Of course, Mom will never really know what I do or don't tell him, if I tell him anything.

My Mom and her Grandpa have fun, too. When we finish with our visits, we three always drop by the Dairy Queen where my Mom and I get to hear one of her Grandpa's old stories. My Mom collects them now.

