

## *Kasper's Story*



Kasper is a white shepherd who came into our lives about 5 years ago. It all started when I noticed a white puppy tied to the fence at the guard gate at the Boeing plant in Auburn, Washington, where I was working at the time. When I went out to investigate, the guards told me his name was Kasper, and informed me that he routinely escaped from his yard and came to hang out with the guards every day. His owners, who both worked all day, would come to retrieve him in the evening after one of the guards called the phone number on Kasper's tag. He was extremely friendly and gentle, but the guards were worried he would run into the street, so

they tied him up each day with a bucket of water nearby, until his owner was able to fetch him. Kasper willingly accepted the confinement in return for the attention he received from the employees who walked by him on their way into the building.

One dreary day in November (it happened to be my birthday) I couldn't stand the thought of him being out in the damp and cold, with snow threatening, so I went to the guards and asked if I could take him with me and contact his owner myself. The guards willingly let me take him, and since I always carry a leash in my car, I attached the leash to his collar and was rewarded with a wet, sloppy kiss. When I offered him a cookie (also always in my car) he sat up without being asked and crossed his paws in front of his chest. That was the beginning of an ongoing love affair.

When I called the owners, they told me Kasper's story: a story of being owned by at least three other families, and all of them giving him up because they couldn't keep him in the yard. Sadly, he had been abused by a previous owner, and also had a traumatic experience at the vet, causing him to shake, shiver and whimper whenever he was taken to the vet.

His owners begged my husband and me to take Kasper because they feared for his safety. We agreed to find a home for him because, since we already had two dogs and two cats, we foolishly thought we had plenty of pets. In the meantime, our yellow lab, Duke, and Kasper became the best of buddies. They chased, wrestled and played all day long. Of course, we couldn't give him up when the time came, and Kasper became a member of the family.



When we moved to Denver and I started working at The Medical Center of Aurora, we were introduced to the Delta Society and the Animal Assisted Therapy Program. I had heard of Delta when I lived in Washington State and was intrigued about the possibilities for therapeutic interventions for our patients here at the Senior Care Center, a geriatric psychiatric inpatient unit at the hospital. Kasper and I took the Pet Partners Course, and Kasper passed the Skills and Aptitude Screening (in spite of my nervousness). He has only been on a few visits, because the hospital reminds him of the vet's office, and he becomes stressed, but he does enjoy the attention. He seems to understand that he is helping people, and both staff and patients light up when he is on the unit. When he is more confident we expect to make many more visits.

Kasper especially enjoys children, so our goal is to spend some time with school children through Pet Partners. When we take our walks every morning, Kasper insists on visiting with the kids waiting for the school bus. They all know him by name, and he gets lots of hugs. Kasper has always been

friendly to other animals and people, and never showed aggression under the most provoking of circumstances

Kasper's story is one of redemption, possibilities and miracles. And yes, we have contacted the previous owners to inform them of Kasper's wonderful accomplishments. We are looking forward to a bright future as Pet Partners for the Delta Society.