

## *Midas' Story*



I found him at last! It had been a considerable search, but there he was - a small, white, eleven-week- old ball of white fur with ears so long they needed to be grown into. He was born at a registered Hereford cattle ranch with Corgis living in the barns and Westies in the house. This veritable animal heaven was pricey, and he was one expensive puppy!

He had been home with me about twelve hours when he became a very sick little dog. He spent the next three days and nights in emergency veterinary care as he was treated for a heavy-duty bacterial infection. When I brought him home we had a joyous reunion. When I received the veterinary bill I said, "Whenever I look at you all I see are dollar signs, your name is MIDAS."



He was a lively, inquisitive puppy but very loving and mellow. He was rebellious at the beginning of obedience training. It offended his fun spirit. However, he responded and even became quite competitive. After all, Midas is proud.

Midas led a regular dog's life for a few years. He shared his space with Sky, an older West Highland Terrier, as well as Phantom, a black Miniature Poodle. Midas mastered tricks (he likes the rewards), chased squirrels, took long walks, drenched stuffed toys in his water bowl, and tossed shoes from room to room. He loved his crate but found sleeping in the people bed even better.

After church one Sunday, Denver Pet Partner Jean Talman told me about a program involving dogs and gave me information about the Delta Society's human-animal health connection program. Our life soon changed. We had a mission and a purpose. Midas was to become a working dog!

I gathered information about instructions and schedules for Delta Society certification through the local affiliate, Denver Pet Partners. Midas and I went to work reviewing and practicing obedience procedures. I attended the Workshop sessions which were just for people. Midas proceeded through his tests for certification with a good degree of skill. We passed as a team and Midas was registered as a therapy dog. We soon began hospital visits.

Midas liked everything about visiting at Swedish Medical Center and the people at Swedish liked everything about Midas. He was a meeter and greeter on each visit from the time he got out of the car, as he made his rounds, and even on his when back to the car. He was totally non-discriminatory in his work - men, women, children, staff, patients, visitors, and volunteers are all equally important to him. Each person received Midas'

full, devoted attention. Midas was always an ambassador of love and good will.

Midas and I were among the early Denver Pet Partner teams at Swedish. We worked primarily in rehab on the sixth floor, but also regularly visited the waiting rooms of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) as well as the surgery waiting rooms. Midas has visited a minimum of 3,000 patients and he has had countless additional contacts in the lobby, the halls, the elevators, and the gift shop. That adds up to lots of miles for those short legs and lots of wags for that stubby tail.

On our longer visits at Swedish we would share lunch with each other in the lobby. We enjoyed it, and so did all those who stopped to visit. We went to Ash Wednesday services in the Hospital Chapel (with special permission). After the services, Midas received many compliments on his pious, attentive behavior. It was another great experience for my little white dog and for all the other participants. I have never ascribed any miracles or near miracles to Midas's work. But, I know with certainty that he has provided a welcome break for persons during their many, long, hospital days. He has helped fill the void for those patients who were missing their own animals and that he has brought back fond memories of dogs now gone - but never forgotten. He did tricks, brought smiles and laughter, snuggled on beds, kept pace with walker and wheel chairs, while he enthused over all the attention lavished. He has always just kept his mouth shut and wagged his tail. Consequently, he has become quite famous in his expanded world. People often stop me on the street or in a store and exclaim; "You belong to Midas!" Well, that's just the way it has turned out and I acknowledge it with pride.

Midas is now retiring. Now that he is older, he has become a little lame, and comes home from hospital rounds with a fatigue that is not easily erased. His energy level is not readily replenished. It is time to turn this particular page in his life.

The commitment Midas and I have had to this program has given us an exciting, rewarding experience. We leave with appreciation, satisfaction and enduring fond memories.

