



## *Margot and Jeet Hunjan with Dudley*



It all started on Aug. 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005 – We had lost our Golden Retriever more than two years before that, and I felt I couldn't live without a dog anymore. My friend Janice and I started looking around local animal shelters for just the right kind of "mutt" – small, scruffy, and sweet natured, preferably a female. My husband Jeet gave his blessings but wanted to just stay home and wait for us to come back with the perfect dog.

After two weekends of looking and not finding the desired one, we went to the Humane Society

of the Pikes Peak Region in Colorado Springs. Again, each dog we thought might work, turned out not to be the right one for us – either they didn't like other dogs or cats or children or had some other behavioral issues. Just as we were ready to give up, an assistant told us to go to the park across the highway where they were holding an adoption reunion. A van with a couple of dogs and some cats was on site for potential adopters.

When we arrived we saw two men standing in front of the van, each holding a dog on a leash. The older female yellow lab was so sweet. The other one was a smallish black dog, all curled up and sleeping. I got down on my hands and knees to look into his face. The dog looked up and licked me on the nose. **Love at first kiss!** I signed the papers and we took this one home with us. He was not small, nor scruffy, nor female, but boy, was he sweet! As a ten months old underweight Flat Coated Retriever, he had been owner surrendered because of "intolerable" puppy behavior. His name was Oscar, which we promptly changed to Dudley.

A few days after Dudley joined our family, he developed a cough and high temperature. The vet diagnosed him with distemper! We were devastated. However, after some days of aggressive treatment and high calorie food, he recovered and we were able to take him home. With the help of a caring vet and a will to live he had beaten the odds!



Now we found out what a wonderful dog we had. Yes, he was still a puppy and liked chewing things, but that's what puppies do! What so amazed us was that, when we went to work in the mornings, he would make it out of the fenced yard, walk up the driveway, and lie down on the dirt road watching for our return. Our neighbor tried to put him back in the yard a few times without much success, as she would just have to repeat the process. Dudley never ran off but would just get up when cars passed by and then lie down again... waiting. Am I glad that we live on a cul-de-sac! After a few days, he gave up this habit and waited for us in the yard. He had found out that we would always come back to him.

A few quirks in his initial behavior clued us in to the fact that, in addition to having been deprived of adequate nourishment, he had also been neglected and possibly even mistreated. However, it did not take him long to leave these memories and fears behind. He got along well with other dogs and cats and was very respectful toward the horses. And did he ever love our two-year-old granddaughter! He made it his mission to protect her from harm.

He took to any training like a fish to water; he absolutely loved it. We could see that he wanted to just be with us and please us. Obviously he excelled in obedience.

I had heard about the great work therapy dogs do, but did not know how to get involved and pursue the necessary training and certification/registration process until 2013. By this time, I had retired and was looking more into any possibilities for Dudley to share his gentle and calm nature with others. A dog trainer in Castle Rock mentioned Denver Pet Partners, and we have not looked back since! I attended the handler training in Oct. of 2013, and Jeet followed about a year later. Dudley did well during his first evaluation, although he was a little nervous and uncertain of what was expected of him. The second time around he evaluated at a complex rating.

We were invited to start visiting with special needs children at a local elementary school. The children cuddled him, brushed him, talked to him, read to him, and Dudley soaked it all up. One particular 11 year-old- boy was extremely afraid of dogs, especially black dogs. He was non-verbal autistic and would have nothing to do with Dudley. After a few weeks, he started to come a little closer and would quickly touch our dog on his tail before he stepped away again, still apprehensive. Sometime later his hand started to rest on Dudley's head, and it wasn't long before he signed to his teacher,





asking when we would come back. On the days of our weekly visits, the boy would get very happy and excited and could not wait to pet our sweet and patient dog. Not too long after, as we were getting ready to leave, this non-verbal child pointed to Dudley, smiled and clearly said, "Dud!". There wasn't a dry eye in the place. Never had they expected anything like this to happen when they had agreed to have a DPP therapy dog come to visit! Unfortunately, different ideas by the new leadership in the special Ed. Dept., meant that Jeet, Dudley and I had to stop visiting the school.

It did not take long for other opportunities to open up. The three of us were asked to visit at a memory care facility in Castle Rock. Again Dudley won a lot of hearts by his easy going and kind mannerism. When our friend Janice asked us to fill in for her for a few months at another facility, we added that to our regular schedule as well. Our sweet boy really enjoys



interacting with the residents at both places and they are always glad to see him, even though he is new to them every week. When we turn into the parking lot at either facility, Dudley's tail starts wagging, and we know that he is ready to make others happy.

Dudley is also registered as a R.E.A.D. dog, and in October of 2014 we started to participate in the "Paws to Read" program at the Monument public library. The children that read to Dudley on a regular basis have become his devoted friends. Through DPP, our team has participated in the Colorado Dept. of Ed. Reading Event in Denver a couple of times, and Dudley has always been the perfect listener to children who are eager to read to him.

On Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> of this year, Dudley collapsed and had to have emergency surgery because of a ruptured tumor at his spleen. We received the devastating diagnosis of *Hemangiosarcoma*. This cancer is incurable but, as it is blood based, it is not painful. The vet encouraged us to continue our work for DPP and to keep visiting in order to avoid depression. So Dudley continues to bring joy to people wherever he goes. He has given so much and won't stop until he decides when it's enough.

We have often wondered what the people who gave up this "intolerable puppy" would say if they found out what an incredibly wonderful dog he has always been. How much they missed, and how much we have gained by having him in our lives for the last ten and a half years! We are so grateful to Denver Pet Partners for helping us unlock his great potential. The only regret we have is that we did not find out about this great organization sooner. Thank you, DPP.

**And thank you, Dudley. You will be in our hearts forever.**



Additional facts about Dudley –

- He loves to go for car rides and long walks and gets very excited when we get ready to leave and very dejected if he is not coming.
- He has always enjoyed retrieving, and when he was younger, he jumped very high in order to catch Frisbees and balls.
- In the mornings, he goes up the driveway to get the paper. If it isn't there, he'll bring the neighbor's.
- He helps me bring the mail from the mailbox and gives it to Jeet when I ask him to.
- He loves his food and any treats he feels he should have; in fact, he really drools while waiting for rewards or food.
- He is extremely tolerant and patient with our other two dogs, letting them push him around, grabbing his ears or legs and endures their licking his mouth and Lucy's mouth around his while singing to him.
- He has never bothered the cats or horses but prefers to just ignore them.
- He is very protective and won't let any stranger come into our yard.
- When Jeet and I hug, Dudley wants to be in the middle. When we cuddle the other dogs, he pushes his way into the middle.
- He has a tough time deciding where he should go when Jeet and I are in different rooms.
- He loves to roll in the snow, but otherwise prefers to be inside with us.
- He gently says, "Please" and offers his paw when offered a treat.



*Margot and Jeet with Sweet Dudley*