



Toby's Happy Ending - 11-11-06 Update

Dear Debbie: I just wanted to give you an update on Toby, your first rescued beagle. Toby has made a lot of progress since you saw him last time. He opens up more and more every day and brings a lot of joy to our lives. We think of you often as we watch him blossom and are very grateful to you for helping us to bring him back home. Attached are a couple of recent pictures.

Sincerely, Iva

Toby's Happy Ending - After eight months of living in a shelter down in Virginia and his time running out, Toby was brought to an animal rescue league in Massachusetts. We first spotted him on the shelter's website in October of 2005 but we were not actively looking at the time. Accidentally, we went back to the same website in December and realized that while most of the other dogs got adopted, poor Toby was still there. So, we went to take a look at him. He was very sad and shy. His medical notes said: obese, should lose at least 10 pounds (that poor dog was 50 lb heavy!), greasy fur, heavy brown discharge in both ears. Despite his poor appearance, after we spent a few moments with him, we knew that we could not leave him in the shelter and had to bring him home with us. Toby had a really hard time adjusting at first. He would not eat and was beside himself in fear anytime there was a loud noise or when we tried to reach out to him. Our trips to the vet's office revealed that the poor dog had cuts on his paws, needed steroid injections for his sore skin, antibiotics for Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted fever, and de-wormer for tapeworms (and let's not forget the impacted anal sacs that made him smell like a little skunk!). Toby's blood test showed that he was hypothyroid and needed medication twice a day for the rest of his life. Throughout this ordeal of repeated trips to the vet's office to take more blood and get more meds, Toby's sweet personality started to come through. After Toby got healthier and lost a lot of that extra weight, we realized that we had a beautiful pure-bred, very smart beagle, who never resorted to aggression, no matter how scared he was. Toby quickly adjusted to our daily routine, learned his name, and was a model citizen when he was home. Never chewed up anything, never messed in the house, and did not even jump on the couch, unless invited. However, he was still very fearful of strangers, ate only late at night when everyone was asleep, and preferred to stay inside the house on his bed where he felt safe the most. After a visit to a behavioral specialist, things got a little better and Toby started to spend more time with us rather than wanting to be left alone. He also started to enjoy walks to the park and around town.

Then, on one of our evening walks on May 12, 2006, Toby wiggled his way out of his collar (one quick head twist, that's all it took!). At first, we were not too worried thinking that he would come back to us as he never showed any desire to run away. But when he started moving further and further away and crossed a busy intersection, we knew things were really bad. He then went running in the opposite direction, away from us and far away from home. We were beside ourselves standing there with the leash and a collar with all his tags, watching him disappear with no IDs on him in a strange

neighborhood where he has never been before, far away from home. We stayed up all night looking for him. The next day, we took time off work, printed flyers and posted them all over town. We called the dog officer, local shelters, animal hospitals, etc. The next day at night, we got a first call that Toby was seen crossing a busy road quite far from where he has disappeared and very far away from home. The people who spotted him had one of our flyers and were sure that it was him. After their car almost hit him, they pulled over and called his name. He stopped but when they tried to catch him, he ran away into the woods. With flashlights we searched the woods, but there was no sign of Toby. We held a search party that weekend in the neighborhood where he was seen last. We found many people who told us that they spotted him at night when their dogs started to bark but he was too scared to come to them and ran away. We actually saw him on Saturday morning and he started coming to us but then he got spooked by something and ran into the woods again.

At that point, we knew that things were really bad. People who saw our flyers were trying to help by attempting to catch him which was making him even more scared and trapping became our only option. We tried to go through the official channels but they were not equipped to help in situations like ours when the dog is too scared to come to strangers. Then, through the word of mouth, we found Debbie Hall. Debbie came right away, even though we live quite far away from her home. She set up her trap and in the area where Toby was seen last and we drove home to get some sleep. At about 11:30 my neighbor knocked on our door telling us that he just saw Toby outside our house! We could not believe it! We were some 10-15 minutes by car and two busy interstate highways away from where he has been hiding out for the past 4 days. We went out looking for him and confirmed the sighting. It was true, Toby somehow managed to find his way home and was hanging out in the woods by our house coming out after 10 o'clock at night, leaving at 4:30 am, and hiding during the day. Debbie came out pretty much every night giving us hope and trying to catch him. Every night, Toby came to the trap, but never went deep enough to set the trap off. Then, after two weeks on his own, Toby finally got himself caught at 10:30 pm on pizza crust! (After meatballs, chicken, cheese, bacon, hotdogs, and peanut butter failed to work:=). Toby came home with 52 ticks all over his body, hungry, and with his paw pads all worn out, but otherwise unharmed. He lost 5 lbs while on his own, but he survived. He is now a healthy 37lb and very happy to be home. Somehow, the experience of being on his own made him resolve his trust issues and become even more attached and loving towards us. He follows us everywhere we go, he jumps on our bed to sleep with us, plays with his toys, and eats the minute we put the food in front of him. He has become the little love bug that we always wanted.