

Nellie's story by Dorothy Reeman

NELLIE (kelpie X)

She was the first to come into my life and she's the only one I know the date of birth of. So I have to say it: 15/04/2006. That makes her the matriarch of our pack. She came to me at five months of age and she was the smallest of a litter of four. She was being bullied a little, always pushed away by her siblings when people were coming around so she mostly stood back. That's how I started to take her home, to give her a little one-on-one time. And she stole my heart. She has grown from being a very timid-snappy-with-strangers puppy into a caring gentle dog, who ended up visiting and comforting people in a nursing home.

But she is MY dog, and no one else's. She's got eyes for me only. She's my buddy, the most loyal companion you can ask for. She will be by my side no matter what and would follow me through hell and back if she had to. At a time when I was suffering panic attacks, she would come and sit or lay by my side, staring at me, supporting me with silent words and worried eyes. She would let me hang on to her until I got over the crisis. My girl. And on a few occasions where I have been very sick, she would lie close to me and literally take me in her arms as to make me feel better.

She's a little lady, well-behaved with good manners, and she helps me to keep the boys in line. And the cats! They all know she's in charge.

Nellie, my very special dog. The one you have once in your life. She's never too far away from my touch and I'm always in her sight. Except when she's chasing the ball.

Did I tell you it's her favourite hobby? That and chasing Jam around the yard to show him who the boss is.

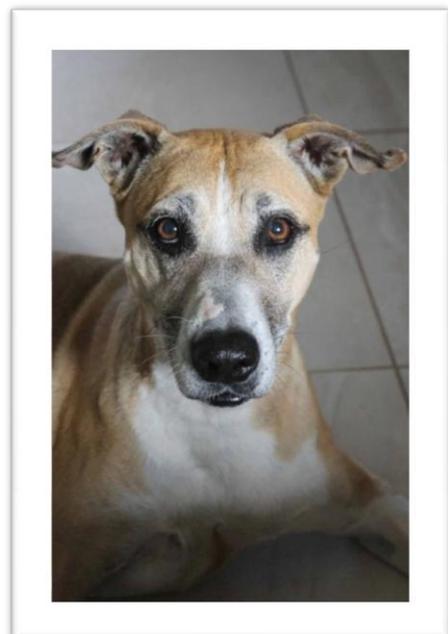


Mel's story by Dorothy Reeman

MEL (whippet X maybe?)

That boy had a rough start in life. Rescued from a nearby community, skinny and mangy puppy, he was the only survivor of his litter when he was found, hiding behind a car tyre. It took a long time to get his trust and not risking a bite when I needed to examine him. Today I can do anything to him, even sweeping without him attacking the broom. It took a long time though, baby step after baby step.

But at eight, he's a more relaxed dog. I think he finally understood he was safe with us. To me, he's the most vulnerable of the pack and I feel more protective towards him than towards any of the others. I saw him fleeing in panic when he got attacked by a dog on the beach one day. It was heartbreaking. He blindly ran home, which luckily wasn't too far. When he was younger, he used to jump up at any loud sound and was always so tense, as if someone was going to come and



hurt him out of the blue. He's also physically weaker than the others. Malnutrition and maybe abuse... he had both knees operated on before his first birthday and he's developed arthritis when he was still pretty young. But despite all of that, his sore legs and his fears, he proved me at a few occasions that if I was ever in trouble; he would stand up for me. And for our home.

He's an independent soul, he doesn't require constant attention but I know he loves me as much as I love him. I can tell when I return from a holiday. He's the clingiest of all... He can also be the biggest goof at times; he makes me laugh a lot. And he's smart. He finds ways. He's the sort of dog that will open doors or drag you where his ball is stuck so you can retrieve it for him.

Did I mention he's obsessed with the ball? I think Nellie taught him...

Jam's story by Dorothy Reeman

JAM (wild dog X)

How can I write a short paragraph about Jam? The last three years have been my biggest canine challenge ever. And to this date, there has not been a day going by without a "Jam event". A funny one or a hair-pulling one... This boy is one of a kind and despite all the mischief and destruction, I love him to bits.

His background is quite a harsh one: he came to me at five weeks of age, skinny, mangy and with two broken back legs. He was also terrified of anyone he wasn't familiar with and if I had a visitor coming around, he would hide until the person was gone.

The physical injuries healed quickly and he's now a strong and healthy looking dog. However the mental scars are forever present. I did a lot of socialization with him from day one, I took him to lots of different places, he attended puppy school, obedience and did agility and he gradually became a more confident dog. But he is still very timid and get easily frightened. Part of it is genetic, and part of it comes from his past experience with humans. So this is work in progress and will be for a long time.

When he is in a familiar environment though, he is a different dog. He is super smart, too much for his own good at times. And he's got a cracking sense of humour. He makes me laugh a lot, when he doesn't make me cry in despair! He needs a lot of action, and if he doesn't get it, he finds ways to busy himself. That includes chewing sofas, mobile phones, trees, plants, bras, sunnies... anything he can find. But his favourite hobby is to perch himself on the bench by the back fence and check out what is happening in the park that is backing the property.

He drives us crazy, and I'm talking for the rest of the pack too, but we couldn't live without him. He's Nellie's best playmate, Frankie's loyal bodyguard and Mel's biggest pain in the back!

As for me, he is the one who constantly teach me about dogs and what amazing creatures they are. But if anything, he taught me patience and perseverance....

