

Emma's Story

by Penny Petrone

I am delighted to have been asked to write about Emma's rescue - primarily because being a rescue family has been a long time hope of mine, and now that dream has been realized! My ideal rescue dog was exactly what Emma is...an older Berner in desperate need of a loving home. However, because we have had Berners for many years, and because there have been health concerns with each of them, I have been waiting for "the time to be right" to bring in a rescue dog. Little did I know that on November 11, 2004 my hopes would be realized - with absolutely no consideration given to whether the time was right or not!

The morning of the day that Emma came to live with us, I received a call from a fellow club member who, in turn, had received a call from club rescue chair, Anya Wittenborg, asking if someone in our area could go to check out a ten year old Bernese who had been dumped at a nearby vet's with the request that he put her down. The vet had refused, and had asked the owner if she would pay for four days boarding to give him a chance to find her another home. She agreed; the vet called Nashoba Valley rescue, and the rest is history.



The fellow club member asked me to go with her, so together we went to meet the dog, wondering if she really was a full Bernese (after all...who in their right mind would give up a ten year old Berner?) As we walked out of my house, my husband said something to the effect of "we can foster her...but only foster, because we have two dogs already."

She was lovely. A ten year old Berner is a national treasure in any case, but Emma was exceptional. She was lying alone in a kennel run...with nothing but a rug that the vet supplied her with. She had been abandoned with no collar, no ID, not a toy or bone - absolutely nothing. She perked up when we approached her; when we asked to take her outside for a walk, she was delighted! She bounded around the property like a young dog - looking like one too...hardly a gray hair on her! She was dirty, her ears were a mess, her teeth were worse and her left rear leg had clearly been injured and never properly treated. But her eyes were bright and alert, her tail was in perpetual motion and she bounced around joyfully, despite the condition of her bad leg. It was a no brainer - after gathering what few records the vet had for her, we loaded her into the car and brought her to my house. We simply walked through the door. Hunter and Jenna greeted her with no problems; Emma greeted them respectfully, but hopefully, and within five minutes I heard my husband talking to Emma saying, "Do you like it here, Emma? This is your new home!"

The first order of business was to secure a release for her from the previous owner. Because the release was to Nashoba Valley, Emma became an official BMDCNV rescue dog. In going over her vet records, I found, in very small print, a reference to a call made years ago to Judy Cons! I called them at once, knowing that their sales contract must have stated that Emma should be returned to them if her former owner couldn't keep her. Suddenly, Emma had two families concerned with her well being and wanting to take her in; a happy turn of events for a dog that had been so recently abandoned! Thankfully for us, Jon and Judy agreed to let us keep her; she has been a wonderful addition to our family ever since.

The reasons that her former owner gave for wanting to put her down were "barks too much and is incontinent." Well...I took her to my vet the next day for a urine test and, sure enough, she had a UTI - that we cleared up completely in two weeks. As for the barking, the only time she ever barks is to ask for dinner or to ask to go out. (She has never once puddled in the house; I can't imagine how the former owner could have had any problems from Emma's "incontinence".) Her records showed years of references to chronically inflamed and infected ears, as well as repeated comments about her owner refusing treatment or not showing up for appointments. At no time were the ear problems connected with possible allergies. I switched her to a raw diet and put her on antihistamines for about two weeks; that has been the end of any and all ear troubles. After those issues were addressed, we had to put her under anesthesia to get her teeth cleaned. They were absolutely loaded with tartar; her former owner had been refusing for the past five or six years to get them cleaned. While she was under the anesthetic, I had her leg, hips and spine x-rayed. As expected, her injured leg was severely arthritic, but her hips were fine, as was her spine. I have been taking her for acupuncture and chiropractic adjustments for the past five weeks, as well as working on building muscle strength in her rear legs by walking up hills and stairs as much as possible. She is moving very well, all things considered. She never misses a walk and is the first one to the door when it is time for a car ride!

After experiencing life with an elderly Berner in the past (Mary Beth lived to be 13), it is wonderful to have an older Berner in the house again. The older ones are so dear and so special; I have learned some of the most important of life's lessons from Mary Beth and expect that Emma will teach me many more.

In closing, it is with the greatest pleasure that I announce that this beautiful girl, once someone's throw away dog, has recently embarked on a brand new career as a certified Delta Society therapy dog! She will join Hunter (who has been Delta Society certified for four years) and soon-to-be-certified, two year old Jenna, as my pet partners. Emma has already been visiting in convalescent homes where, without fail, she brings happiness and smiles to everyone she visits. I am about to start training as a pet therapy hospice volunteer. When I took her to our interview (we both had to be interviewed), she just sat in turn by each of the people in the office, soaking up as much love and petting as they could give her. They declared her perfect for the job!