

Rescued dog's abilities amaze

I find myself awake in the darkest hour of the morning. As the fog of sleep clears from my brain, I realize something out of the ordinary has roused me.

Listening closely, I hear Ali, snoring ever so softly in her crate. My boy, Frankie, rarely makes a peep other than the long, contented sigh when he first settles in for the night. There it is again, the sound that brought me from my repose ... the soft jingle of dog tags. It is my newest foster, "Magoo," as he lifts and turns, once more snuggling into his warm bedding.

My eyes finally focus and I can see only blackness — it occurs to me that I have slipped into Magoo's world.

A rescue in every sense of the word, Magoo was found staggering in the middle of a country lane near Pueblo — alone, blind and in unfamiliar surroundings — I can only imagine his terror. His Good Samaritan takes him to her groomer where the severe matting is clipped off his thin body. Long neglected, his hair comes off in a solid pelt.

Since his Samaritan cannot keep him (she already has three large dogs, all rescues),

she contacts me, the state rescue coordinator for the American Lhasa Apso Club.

We meet in Castle Rock for the hand-off in early April, just missing the spring storm that blows through a few days later, closing roads.

Magoo is an enigma — he literally has no eyes. The vet and I cannot tell if he has been blind from birth or if his eyes have been removed. Recently, I found scarring deep in the hair that covers his face suggesting an enucleation (removal of the eye), most likely from trauma, glaucoma or some long-standing infection.

At some point in his short life, he was loved and well cared for, a far cry from the circumstances that brought him to Loveland. Indeed, he is house trained, crate trained and a perfect little gentleman.

We humans are wholly dependent upon sight as our main sense and, as such, I find it hard to wrap my head around Magoo's impairment. I consult with other rescuers who have dealt with blind dogs. They tell me it is his ability that will amaze, not his disability.

Sight is the least of a dog's senses, coming in after smell and hearing, and I am advised



Vickie Kuhlmann
In My Own Words

that a blind dog will learn in two months what it takes a human two years to adapt to and learn.

Generally, my fosters stay two to three months — I settle in for the long haul with Magoo as there are not many folks lined up to adopt a blind dog.

Lying motionless, I ponder the lessons learned from this happy, trusting little dog.

Even without sight, one can still "see" the world around him or her. If I close my eyes and sit quietly, I can visit his world, if but for a brief moment. ...

Some lessons: When lost in a corner — keep moving, keep trying — eventually you'll find a way out. The best thing in life is not food, a treat or a toy; it is a kind word and a gentle touch. Holler for help when you think you're all alone and the silence is deafening. A romp in the yard, a roll in the grass and the sun on one's face constitutes joy in its purest form. Don't take the stairs — they are not

good for one's health! Greet everyone as a long-lost friend, whether you know them or not.

The day moves slower with Magoo, as he requires a bit more guidance and supervision than my sighted dogs. We're teaching him a vocabulary — "step," "this way," "bite," "kennel up," "touch," "outside" — and he's a fast study. Amazingly, he's not a clingy dog and is content to be on his own when the need arises. The consummate couch potato, he loves nothing more than to be close to his human — a bed on the floor will do.

Someday, someone will open their home and heart to you, Magoo.

Until then I shall keep you close to mine.

Vickie Kuhlmann, an 11-year resident of Loveland, serves as west central coordinator for the American Lhasa Apso Club Rescue. She has owned Lhasa apso dogs for 20 years and has been rescuing them for five years. She owns two of the breed, as well as a cat. To learn more about adopting Magoo, call Kuhlmann at 663-5910. For more information on American Lhasa Apso Club Rescue, see LhasaApsoRescue.org.