

Reflection: DNA Your Dog by Patty Parks

In May 2020 we got a new puppy. And please don't link us up to "COVID-puppies" adopting a new pet out of boredom or being home in lockdown. Firstly, I'm never bored. Secondly, I'm not in lockdown, as someone thinks I'm essential - I have worked everyday during COVID at my office with 2 or 3 dif masks on a day... and no jewellery ... I really miss my watch and rings but I wash my hands 4-5 times per hour and keep them saturated in sanitizer.

We have always had dogs – large dogs – from show Shepherds to Labrador Retriever mixes. We love large dogs, and we have had great luck (we also work hard at raising a puppy, with training and love) with having quiet (not the barkers) dogs, calm dogs (not the jumpers) and obedient dogs (not the wanderers, diggers or chewers). Apparently, things are different now. Our last LabXRetriever never barked ... at all. Not so much this one.

We are long past selecting a dog from a breeder and are strong proponents of rescue. However, during 2020 it was not as easy to adopt/rescue from Humane Society. So we elected to purchase the next puppy locally, where we thought the puppy(ies) needed the most rescuing. We actually walked to the location (an alleyway on Antrim St. in Peterborough) intentionally leaving our vehicle many blocks away. We were armed with (i) the requested purchase price (too much for a puppy with no shots and no de-worming), (ii) an escape plan if things went sour in a hurry if there really were no puppies and it was a trap, and (iii) a prayer. Four couples/families went in trying to rescue five puppies and the mother, for fear that the owner would just repeat the litter process every 2 months to fund her addiction. We collectively managed to rescue four puppies only that evening. Four puppies won the lottery that evening. She told us what breeds were mixed to create these little darlings. We selected the runt – a lovely "mostly" black lab with a few sneaky neighbour mutt characteristics mixed in. (Our runt now weighs 90 lbs, he has thrived!)

We couldn't wait to get him to our vet for the requisite de-worming and shots and any additional care needed. We named him Jasper Bear. "*Bear*" because he looked like a little bear cub, and "*Jasper*" because for the third year in a row, for some reason, our trip out west has been cancelled. Turns out he just needed TLC, and he loves us in return, unconditionally.

This reminds us of Someone else's love for us, *unconditionally*. Jasper Bear is gently protective of us, even while we sleep, he keeps a vigil by our bed, with his head closest to the door. Again, reminds me of Someone's else's protection. When you go to bed at night you can "*sleep, because God doesn't*". The worries and cares of your day are "SFGTD" *Something for God to do*. Jasper Bear sticks by my side every morning while I get ready for work and sees me to the door, watching me pull my car out the drive. Jasper Bear sits in the front window starting an hour or so before I get home from work, waiting, watching, and he is the first one to greet me when I return.

Back to the DNA part ...

We still wanted to know what other breeds were mixed in with the "Lab" parts of Jasper Bear – some dogs have a pre-disposition to certain illnesses, and some respond differently to training and have other needs. (this one has chewed every harness, leash, and eaten through seatbelts, my compression gloves, every t-towel in the house, most facecloths, and too many socks to mention.

So..., we sent away for "DNA your dog" kit, received the package, did the cheek swabs, mailed in the lab work and waited. When anyone asked us what kind of dog he was, up until that time we used to say 95% bulldozer, 5% lab. Turns out "bulldozer" isn't a breed.

We weren't far off on the 5% lab, though, it turns out. Jasper is approx. 30% shepherd (*which we were led to believe down a certain alley on Antrim street*), approx. 30% collie (*which came as a surprise to us*), 30+% parson russelle terrier (*an even bigger surprise to us, but that would explain the barking, the jumping, and fetching until your arm falls off*), and less than 10% lab. Naturally I questioned the results (see picture – he's ALL lab). DNA your dog was happy to review the results with me, pointing out special features of each of the surprise breeds diagnosed and they all made sense in the end. They reviewed the samples we had submitted and confirmed they were strong samples with no contamination, etc. In hindsight, I thought what a strange turn of events. It wasn't that I went looking to adopt a lab puppy – I went looking to rescue a puppy, and it just turned out to be a lab (or not! Lol). Someone smarter than I tested him and discovered the results – showing me what he really was inside (besides very energetic

and strong). And even when I first challenged the results, after I kept an open mind and accepted the outcome, it became very clear.

God's love for us is like that. He knows our DNA – he knows everything about us. He's very aware of our shortcomings, our talents, our fears, what we do well, what we do wrong. And we can challenge what He tells us, or deny what He shows us, but in the end, He dissects and explains all ... and we know He was right all along. He knows us better than we know ourselves. Some days we can fool others, with our façade – what we show or pretend to be on the outside. He knows what and who we are on the inside.

He is the first one to greet us each new day. He keeps a vigil ... sitting, waiting for us, and protecting us. He knows where we will fail, and still, he loves us unconditionally.





Patty P