

Toby's Tale: *Fostering A "Golden" Is Worth Considering!*

**Golden Retriever Rescue of El Paso
(by Toby's two foster moms and the mom of his forever family and new pack of rescued brothers and sisters)**

When you get the chance to help a Golden in need, it's hard to say "no", especially when you look into the soulful eyes of a Golden Retriever. What makes it even harder for us, is when they are the eyes of an older or sick Golden who, for any number of reasons, was dumped, surrendered or abandoned by their family of many years.

Here comes Toby! It was a rainy Thursday



night in March when Connie, our President of the GRREP, received a phone call from a "gentleman" about a Golden that was sitting in front of his door and wouldn't leave. He explained that it looked like the Golden had gotten hit by a car because he was limping. After getting some more information about the Golden and setting up transportation to pick him up, she asked for the address, but the "gentleman" was not willing to give it to her (or meet her somewhere). Unfortunately no amount of persuasion helped and he ended up calling Animal Control.

The next day Connie and I met at Animal Control to see if we would find him, and with the help of the nice people there, we did. He was wet and in bad shape as we saw him, and our hearts broke. Since he was in the "back area" where all the hurt dogs go, we were not able to get him out of the small kennel he was in until a veterinarian examined the poor guy.

It was not until Monday that we were able to see him again and just by looking at him you could see that this poor and gentle Golden has had a hard life. His fur was matted all over his body and it was covered in dirt and grease. Ticks were

visible everywhere and we could just imagine how many more were hidden underneath the fur. His tail was also something we had never seen before. There was not a hair left on it! We knew that if we are able to get this boy out of there, it would take a lot of work to get him back to health. No matter what it took, we couldn't just walk away and forget about this big boy with his beautiful eyes that just seemed to cry for help. We also knew that nobody would be willing to adopt this helpless boy and give him a good forever home.

When his "time was up", Connie and I went back to take him into our group. We told the Animal Control workers that we came to pick up the old Golden from the back, and where told that it was not a good idea since he was in really bad shape and would probably not survive. We asked to see him anyways, and they brought us to him. He still looked and smelled bad, but was wagging his tail for excitement when he saw us....how could we say "no" to a Golden that really needed our help?

Since he was in dire need of attention, I volunteered to take him home with me and clean him up. Between Animal Control and my house we made a quick stop at the vet to get some advice and blood drawn. We had to find out as soon as possible what medical help he needed. Right after we got home he got a bath where we shampooed him 3 times just to get the worst dirt out and to kill the fleas and ticks that were covering his body. While my 9 year old daughter started working on his fur, I started pulling out the ticks. It took us several hours until we had a good amount off of his body (we stopped counting at tick number 150).

Over the next four days we all kept on working on his fur and pulled more and more ticks from his body. While we were getting all the knots out, we started noticing bruises on the left side of his body. It looked like somebody had kicked that poor old boy.

Toby- The sequel.... by his 2nd foster Mom.

On the fifth day, we were finally done. Toby, that is what we named him, was clean again. By then we had also found out why his tail had no fur. Toby had a thyroid problem and because it was never treated he lost all his fur on the tail. Unfortunately he was also heartworm positive and in an advanced stage.

The new Toby

Toby was feeling much better. His thyroid was being taken care of, and he is finishing his heartworm treatment. All he needs now is a forever home, which will give him the love and attention he had to live without for way to long. We had the pleasure of having Toby as our foster for a couple of weeks, and when he was “stable”, he went to his permanent foster family, where he was treated like the king he is.



Would we do it again?

YES, we would and in fact we did! Toby is just one example of the Golden Retrievers we helped recover. Just because they are dirty, stinky, sick or old, doesn't mean they are not as valuable. Everybody that meets Toby falls in love with this gentle soul.

For my family each and every one of the dogs that come into our house is “one of a kind”. We have been fostering dogs for over 7 years and people keep on asking me how we can do it without getting attached. Who said we are not getting attached. Both of my children, my husband and I fall in love with each one that we come across. I was very worried on the beginning that we would end up keeping our fosters, but the best moment of all is when you get to bring your foster to his forever home and feel proud and happy that you have helped another Golden and even saved his live.

Toby came to me after he had been cleaned up and was in much better spirits. He had no hair on his tail and we referred to it as “the whip.” Kids that saw him on the street asked me “Why does he have such a “little” tail when he’s such a big dog?” He clearly loved children and they were drawn to him, as well.

His coat was clean but very thin and coarse. He was in a late stage of heartworm disease and could only walk for about 5 minutes before fatiguing. He had difficulty getting up and down from lying down to standing and groaned every morning when he got up. His hind limbs were quite stiff, yet he reveled with attention and petting. He loved to be brushed and stood still for all- including baths and blow drying.

My own 40-lb Australian Shepherd, Cindy, is not nearly as accommodating and runs and hides when she fears that a bath is on the agenda. She tolerated Toby and yet was a bit jealous that her mom was occupied with another dog. I tried to give her extra attention whenever I could. Toby, however, had other ideas and became quite possessive of me and at about twice her size could easily push her out of the way. She often relented and would often jump onto the bed where she could be close to me and look down upon this bumbling elderly gentleman guest in her home.



Cindy is my forever dog and was initially not happy about sharing her mom, but developed patience and actually grew quite fond of Toby. Toby liked Cindy as well, and needed to be reminded not to mount her at every opportunity!

As a younger and more agile companion, she managed to slip away most of the time. He was neutered and she is spayed, so the behavior, at worst, was a nuisance and gave me an opportunity to correct him.

When Toby came to me, he was taking Doxycycline, in preparation for the heartworm treatment, and thyroid medication, daily. And regardless of what he had been through, he was the happiest, most faithful companion anyone could want. He followed me everywhere and lay down next to me. I bought some high quality dog food and he seemed very happy with two square meals a day and treats that were hidden in his Kong toys.

Toby's heartworm treatment

I had a few weeks to get to know Toby before he had his first heartworm treatment in mid- April. I have never been through heartworm treatment with a foster and it worried me. I watched a video on Youtube of a vet removing over 90 heartworms from a dog's heart. It looked like a plate of spaghetti. Those heart worms are huge! Where did they go when they died? I imagined pieces of them embolizing to his lungs or his brain. I worried about what I could possibly do if that was to happen.

I took him for his first treatment and worried all day about how he was. He did quite well. Later that day I was reassured, by the veterinarian who treated him, that with the Doxycycline pre-treatment and steroids following each treatment, the only thing I had to do was keep him quiet during his recovery. The first night he was very restless and obviously uncomfortable from the injection site. I took him out on leash to pee and poop and kept him in a crate for the first week or so. He adjusted quite well and I let him sleep on various dog beds around the house. He observed his "sedentary" activity precautions and never once violated the rules.



A month later he went for another heart worm treatment, this time two injections, 24 hours apart. He groaned as he laid down, a clear indi-

cation that this one really hurt. A few days later, he was back to his happy self. After another 6

weeks of restricted activity, Toby was raring to go! We noticed that the hair on his tail was actually growing back now, too. I just had to take this picture!

On the road to good health

At the same time, we began Previcox for his osteo-arthritis. We began to walk outdoors on leash and he really enjoyed it. He eventually increased his endurance to 45 minutes. He was happy to meet everyone we encountered and "helped" me to remember to walk with him every chance he got.

We began looking for a foster family for Toby and he had a few "interviews" before he was offered a position in his forever family. He joined 5 other previously adopted dogs in a wonderful home, where his new owners are crazy about him. He is the only Golden Retriever in the bunch and works that to his advantage, I'm sure! I am so thrilled for him that he has found a wonderful loving family where he will live for the rest of his life. Read on for the third part of this great story!

Why foster? Altogether, I fostered Toby for about 6 months. Although we don't know what his life was like in his younger years, we know that he suffered greatly just prior to his rescue. And yet, his spirit could not be crushed by all he had gone through. His resilience was inspirational.

Do I miss him? Yes, of course. I think about him every day and smile. I am proud that I helped him to become adoptable, to succeed and to ready for a wonderful forever home. I took him as a foster with the intention that this would be the outcome, and it was!

Would I do it again? Definitely, without question and I have. Toby's story will hopefully bring many more dogs and their people to Golden Retriever Rescue of El Paso and help potential foster homes to embrace these opportunities and recognize their valuable roles in the lives of dogs who need this pathway to their final homes.

Toby: The Forever Chapter by his forever family

It is such an honor to write this chapter of Toby's life, and to have the comfort of knowing that he has found his "forever home" with us. My husband was first introduced to Toby at Crossroads Animal Clinic, where he was being treated for advanced heartworm disease. His foster mother, provided some information about his background and current condition, and reported that following completion of his treatment, he would be available for adoption. Although my husband and I both agreed that we did not need another dog in our lives, we could not stop thinking about this sweet needy dog. After much discussion and consultation with our



five other dogs, we contacted Golden Retriever Rescue of El Paso in order to inquire further. Our application was submitted, an interview scheduled,

and the rest is history. Here we are on the first day Toby came to us last September.

Toby has now been living with us for approximately 10 months and he has blossomed into a majestic and wonderful boy, with a charming personality. His stamina has returned and he delights in joining BJ and I each morning for an early morning run. He also loves playing ball, although his willingness to retrieve and return the ball, is sometimes questionable. Toby has a voracious appetite and like his siblings, has a special fondness for bananas which he receives each morning. We are pleased to report that Toby's coat and tail have filled in, and he looks especially handsome after his daily brushing, which he tolerates well. He has bonded with his siblings and has special friends within the pack. Toby has also charmed us with his "singing"

which he uses to tell us that another dog has something that he wants. Unfortunately, we have been unable to train him to "sing" on command, since his voice is so appealing.

We have learned many lessons from this sweet dog, one of which is that we never want to be without a Golden in our lives. Toby's gentleness and sensitivity to others was recently illustrated during a visit with an elderly neighbor who lived with dogs during most of her life. She now lives alone and greatly misses her companions. Upon entering her house, Toby seemed to know instinctively just what to do. After a quiet greeting consisting of tail wagging and a few nose nudges, he went over to her and sat down by her chair so that she could pet him. He then lay close to her feet so that she could experience his warmth and the closeness of his body. Although I have worked with many therapy dogs in the past, I was amazed by Toby's calmness, gentleness, and ability to know just how to act in this situation. It was as if he understood that he had a job to do, and I wondered if in the past, he had been trained as a therapy dog. Before leaving, the neighbor reached over and presented Toby with a kiss on the top of his head. Her happiness and smile of gratitude showed Toby and I both how special this visit had been for her.



My husband and I look forward to sharing many more wonderful years with our sweet Toby. We will remain forever grateful to the volunteers of Golden Retriever Rescue of El Paso for their determination to rescue and help this sweet dog during his time of great need. We are extremely grateful to the foster parents who took Toby into their homes so that he could receive the medication, care, and rest that he so desperately needed. My husband and I are honored and blessed to be Toby's forever parents and our pledge is to give this sweet dog the life and love that he deserves.