

Lucy's Letter



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Lucy's Story:
How she came to live
with Chandler and Dee

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Lucy's Story

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The phone rang. "Hello?" I asked.
"We're on our way Dad!"

It was my Daughter, Susan, letting me know that she was on her way home with Lucy. I don't know how, but she had managed to convince my wife and I to take in a very special golden retriever. Let me tell you a bit about Lucy and how she came into our lives.

Lucy was found abandoned ten months before in Middletown, Ct. Her rescuers discovered that she didn't have the use of her back legs and took her to Pieper-Olson Veterinary Hospital, a nearby Vet clinic. After a thorough exam, the veterinarian felt that she had suffered an injury at birth and she would probably be permanently paralyzed. He suggested that she be euthanized.

In the short time that her rescuers had known the little golden, she had wormed her way into their hearts. Her brown eyes were so soft and warm, her demeanor was gentle and loving. One look from her and you were hers forever. It didn't hurt that she was only about five weeks old and about as cute as any golden puppy showcased by Madison Avenue.



There was no question that this little puppy deserved to live. The rescuers knew that there was a golden retriever rescue that covered all of New England, Yankee Golden Retriever Rescue. They decided to give them a call and see if they would be interested in taking in this bundle of golden fur. Before they called Yankee, they needed to find a name for her. This, as it turned out, wasn't as hard as they thought. From the moment they set eyes on her, there was one word used to describe her. "Precious" So Precious it was.

The call was placed to Yankee and in a few hours a volunteer phoned to see how she could help. The rescuers explained the situation and without hesitation, the woman from Yankee said, "We'll take her!" Lucy, now known as Precious was safe.

Lucy was taken by a transportation volunteer to Fremont Animal Hospital in Fremont, NH where Dr. Audrey Karamourtopoulos examined her. Dr. Audrey didn't see any evidence of injury although she knew that she didn't have the high tech equipment needed to make a definite diagnosis. She asked Yankee to allow Lucy to be taken to Angell Memorial Animal Hospital in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, where a CAT scan could be done. Yankee readily agreed and soon another volunteer drove Lucy to Massachusetts. Angell Memorial is one of the leading animal hospitals in the United States. If a cause, and possible cure for Lucy's paralysis could be found, the doctors at Angell would find it. For two days Lucy had blood tests, a CAT scan, and a thorough physical exam. The final results were neither welcome nor typical. It seemed that Lucy suffered from a canine version of Spina Bifida. While this disease isn't common in dogs it does occur from time to time. Dogs that are found to be paralyzed at birth are usually euthanized. The fact that Lucy had been thrown away probably saved her life.

Now back at Fremont Animal Hospital, Lucy's Game Plan changed from diagnosis to treatment. Dr. Audrey,

always the optimist, was convinced that Lucy could regain some use of her back legs. Lucy had some feeling in her rear and even though she couldn't move her legs or wag her tail, she could move her hips. She amazed everyone at the hospital by walking on her front legs while holding her rear end high in the air. She looked like one of those circus dogs as she wobbled around. Watching her walk around only confirmed what Dr. Audrey had suspected. Lucy was not one to take her disability lying down. Audrey started Lucy on aquatic therapy, using her own swimming pool. With the help of a canine life jacket that held her rear end afloat, Lucy swam.

One of Dr. Audrey's vet techs' was our daughter, Susan. Susan had fallen in love with Lucy from the moment she arrived at Fremont. Because of Sue's fondness of Lucy, Dr. Audrey put Lucy's therapy in her hands. Day after day, Susan worked with Lucy, moving her back legs or standing in Audrey's pool while holding Lucy. Lucy would try to swim, her front legs paddling like crazy while her back legs hung motionless. After a few days, she somehow figured out how to move her hips but the legs remained paralyzed. Slowly but surely Lucy gained strength in her front legs. She became quite good at walking. She figured out that by sticking her head out and moving her front legs back, she could alter her center of gravity, which allowed her to keep her back legs off the ground. As good as she was at this, her rear end and tail continually bounced along the ground opening wounds that required daily dressing. Dr. Audrey was sure that eventually scar tissue would form making the skin much tougher than normal. There was one other problem that needed attention. One of Lucy's back legs stuck out to the side, totally useless. The decision was made to remove it. This would accomplish two things. One, it would allow Lucy to move around without catching her leg on chairs or door frames and two, it would lighten her rear end make it easier for Lucy to hold her rear off the ground.

Over the next couple of weeks it became apparent that there was yet another problem that needed attention. Lucy needed to be housetrained. This would prove to be the most daunting task so far in her short life. The vet techs at Fremont were used to cleaning up various messes from all the residents but they were unprepared for the constant work involved in keeping Lucy clean. Everyone knew that in order for Lucy to be adopted, she would need to be housetrained. Because of her disability, Lucy had very limited feeling in her hind end.

This included the nerves that told her that she needed to poop. Despite all their efforts, Lucy continued to soil herself with disappointing regularity.

Lucy was now three months old. Everyone at Fremont and YGRR felt that it was time to bring her down to Yankee's kennels. Once there, the staff would work with her and try to match her with the right adopter. However, finding a way to houstrain her would be their top priority. She was loaded into Yankees Rescue van and driven to the kennels.

Yankee Golden Retriever Rescue, being a well run and funded organization, owns its own kennel and headquarters. It's on twenty-two acres on the banks of the Assabet River in Hudson Massachusetts. The property was once a stately residence complete with a circular driveway and a portico. Several years ago it was purchased by a Sharpei breeder who built a small kennel adjacent to the house. The original intent was to build a large "U" shaped building. The foundation was poured but only one wing was ever built. Yankee bought the property with the intent of completing the kennel but that would have to wait until the money was raised. The property was fenced and each kennel had its own outside run. It was a very beautiful facility that was staffed with caring volunteers.

Lucy arrived amidst high hopes. Everyone at YGRR had heard the amazing story of her rescue and the subsequent diagnosis of her paralysis. She won their hearts in minutes but their noses had yet to be won. To say that Lucy was a challenge was a gross understatement. She had to be bathed three or four times every day, seven days a week. Yankee featured Lucy in mailings in hopes of attracting a special adopter. Soon appointments were made and Lucy was prepped to meet the public.

Lucy was now a gangly adolescent. At six months she was a bit small for her age, about 30 pounds, and her rear end was so thin with no muscle mass. It was her eyes, though, that made her special. Have you ever seen those stuffed animals with the oversized doe eyes that tug at the heartstrings? Lucy had those eyes. So much expression emanated from those deep brown eyes. It was if Lucy could speak directly to your heart.....No words needed.

The people came. Everyone loved but she remained unadopted. Week after week the cycle repeated itself. Wash Lucy day in and day out. Show Lucy to prospective adopters. Listen to the reasons they couldn't

take her. Repeat. Yankee was getting desperate. Living in a kennel..even one as nice as Yankee's...was no life for a dog, especially a golden retriever. Yankee was faced with a hard choice. If Lucy didn't find a home soon, the decision might have to be made to euthanize her. Everyone agreed that if Lucy were housetrained she stood a much better chance of finding an adopter to take her. Dr. Audrey heard about this and asked Yankee for the chance to train her. Yankee agreed and once again Lucy found herself in a van on its way back up to Fremont New Hampshire.

Dr. Audrey already had a plan. She knew that there was one chance for Lucy and it lay with her vet techs parents. We found out about this diabolical plan in a phone call from our daughter. Of course we knew about Lucy but we had never met her. When Sue explained that this was Lucy's last chance at life, how could we say no? My wife Dee and I have had Rescue dogs for the past 20 years and through those years we have had to work the dogs through many problems. Listening to Sue's plea, I felt that we could work with Lucy and not only houstrain her but perhaps find the right person to adopt her. When we told her that we would take Lucy, I had no idea that my life would never be the same. This little golden was about to leave paw prints in the lives of hundreds of people.

This story chronicles Lucy's life as she triumphs over her disabilities, wins the hearts of strangers, and challenges people of all ages to rise up to their true potential. Over the years I have written many short stories to friends via email and I am including some of these sandwiched in between chapters. Hopefully they will open a window to the past as they were written as the events happened.

Dee and I waited. We knew that it took about a half an hour to drive from Fremont to our home in Hampton Falls. I was on pins and needles. Lucy was a celebrity and I knew there was a lot on the line. Dr.Audrey and Yankee were placing her in our hands. Now, in a matter of minutes we would begin the training that would save her life.

We had two other dogs, Maggie and Bennie, both goldens and both Rescue dogs from YGRR. They were now sitting next to us in the front yard. Suddenly Maggie started to bark excitedly. She knew the sound of Susan's pickup truck and she was telling us that it was coming up our street. Seconds later, Sue's truck came into view. Sue was driving and her boyfriend, Eric was in the passenger seat. We noticed that the windows were down despite the near freezing temperatures.

As her truck pulled to a stop in the driveway, Eric jumped out saying " Let me out of here! I can't breathe!"

Sue opened her door, turned and reached in saying, "Come on sweetie...let's go."

She picked up the little golden bundle wrapped in an old towel and cheerfully announced " Dad, Mom, meet Lucy."

I looked at Lucy and at that moment the smell hit me.

Have you ever smelled an old diaper or a cat box that hasn't been cleaned? They smell good compared to what hit me.

"Now you see what I have had to put up with. I've never smelled anything that bad before in my life!" Eric said laughing.

Sue, standing there holding Lucy said, " Dad, we need to get her in and washed. She's making a bad impression."

Lucy was wrapped in the blanket, only her head sticking out. She was being very good as only a dog who has been through what she has can be. I noticed her eyes. Big, brown, soulful eyes. They spoke to me, asked me for help. I felt an electric current run through me.

"Wow!" I thought.

"She's getting a bath before we do anything!" exclaimed Dee.

Sue carried Lucy into the house and up the stairs to the bathroom. Lucy was amazing. She accepted everything without question. After she had been bathed and dried, we brought her into our living room where Bennie and Maggie could get to know her. Sue set her on the floor and she immediately did something that caused me to laugh out loud. Lucy got up and walked over to Maggie.

I have to explain this carefully. It's one of those things that you have to see to believe and understand. Picture a dog in a sitting position. Lucy looks like any other dog sitting down. Now, watch her stick her head out and move her front legs back. This alters her center of gravity which allows her rear end to come off the ground and off she goes! Looking at her in her walking mode it looks like her front legs grew right out of her belly. Lucy does this without any apparent stress or difficulty.

I watched Lucy as she made her way over to Maggie. She looked like a walking circus act! I was amazed, as I watched the two of them interact. I was surprised that Maggie tolerated her as well as she did. Maggie spent a good deal of time sniffing Lucy's rear end. She knew that there was something different with Lucy. Next it was Bennie's turn. At his young age (he was two) Bennie was a bit rambunctious. We worried about how he was going to take Lucy but our fears were unfounded. Actually, if anything Bennie was more interested in Lucy than Maggie was. He seemed to understand that Lucy had to fight for every day and it seemed to me that he respected her for that. Right from the start our Alpha male gave in to this diminutive female.

Our first order of business was to houstrain Lucy. We knew from experience that puppies couldn't hold it for very long and the best way to avoid a mess was to take them out every couple of hours. In Lucy's case, things were complicated by the doctors report which stated that Lucy lacked feeling in her rear end. We guessed that she just couldn't feel the need to pee or poop.

"Where do we start?" Dee asked.

I thought and said, "Let's take her out now and see what she does. If she goes now, we should have a few hours before she needs to go again."

I walked over to her and bent down to pick her up. Lucy looked up at me with those big expressive eyes and without a care, allowed me, a complete stranger, to lift her into my arms.

Susan, who had been watching this meet and greet remarked, "I don't know what makes you different from other men, Dad, but Lucy doesn't really like men."

"Why not?" I asked as I held Lucy.

Sue smiled and said, "I think it's because everyone in her life up to now have been women. Maybe one of the doctors at Angell was a man but as long as she has been at Fremont, she has only been with women. She has seen a few men at the hospital and you could see it in her eyes. She would get all nervous, even backing away from them. That's why I was surprised when you walked right over to her and picked her up."

"She must sense that I'm here to help her." I replied.

I looked at Lucy who was now resting comfortably in my arms and told her, "Come on sweetie, let's go outside."

From that moment on Lucy fell into a routine that showed us she not only could be houstrained but that she would be adoptable. We found that as long as she

was taken outside the moment she woke and again around midday then finally around 10 at night, there would be no accidents in the house. It took a few weeks but we felt very comfortable with her.

Now that the most important part of her rehabilitation was done, we needed to socialize her and find her a loving home where she could live out her life to the best of her ability. I had, from the moment I met her, felt that she would be great as a therapy dog. Little did I know how right I was.

One day at work, I was repairing a lift truck. I was standing on the roll cage about ten feet above the concrete floor. As I was loosening a hydraulic fitting the wrench slipped and I was thrown from the truck. I fell, headfirst, onto the hard concrete floor where I landed on my right arm and head. I looked at my arm and saw that it was severely broken. The doctors told me it was a compound fracture, one of the worse they'd seen. It took a device called an external fixator to hold the bones in place. I had no feeling in my hand and nobody knew the extent of the damage or how well it would heal. I was facing months of rehabilitation. My livelihood depended on my hands and if I only had one, well, you can imagine my thoughts.

I was seeing a physical therapist in Exeter and it dawned on me that perhaps Lucy's niche was in this field. Over the days I tried to convince my therapist to look at Lucy and see if maybe she would be interested. No luck. She just didn't think she could handle a special needs dog on top of her work schedule.

Back at home, I was sitting in our family room. Lucy was lying on the couch, her head resting on the arm. Her eyes were closed and her rhythmic breathing told me that she was sleeping. I gazed at her and contemplated what I saw. She was small but her front paws were huge. Her head, covered in velvety soft golden fur was small for her body. Her snout was thin and long, terminated by a small black nose. She had ears larger than she should and eyes that, even though closed at the moment, looked more human than canine. She was unique in more than one way. As I watched her sleep, her front paws began to move. Behind her eyelids, her eyes darted back and forth. Muscles in her rear end twitched in concert with her front legs. In her dream, she was running! I watched her lips quiver and listened as small yips escaped through puffed out cheeks. I felt a surge of emotion run through me.

In her dream, Lucy was being a normal dog, barking at some unknown prey, running after it in full stride. I realized that somehow, her mind knew what her body would not. She would never feel the wind as it rushed past her. She would never get to chase a wayward rabbit or run after another dog in a game of keep away.

I rose from the chair and slowly moved closer to her. Despite the seemingly random way her body was put together, I saw symmetry and beauty. Here was a living creature with a mind and a will to live. I was spellbound. Suddenly her movement stopped. Her eyes opened slightly, tentatively. When she saw me so near, they flew open in surprise, then visibly softened as she recognized me. I said nothing but I smiled at her reaction. She then did something that went straight to my heart. She slowly leaned out and licked my face. Like the Grinch, I felt my heart swell. I knew, at that moment, Lucy had found her forever home. No more searching, she was here to stay. I also knew that she had a destiny. A destiny as sure as any. She was sent to us for a reason and I knew at that moment I would do what I had to do to achieve it.

Chandler Rudd

Camp Lucy 2009!

Mark your calendars, Camp Lucy will be held the weekend of September 12, 2009. The same great location, Camp Robin Hood, <http://www.camprobinhood.com/> and gourmet dinning! Come join the fun in of relaxing with your dog(s) and seminars and workshops that will enhance the lives of you and your canine companion.

The camp itself will be even better next year. The cafeteria will be brand new and below will be more semi private housing. We also have the use of their waterfront apartment building with it's own private beach. To read comments and see pics from last years Camp Lucy, go to: http://goldstockfund.org/tgf/camp_review.html

Stay tuned for more information in the months to come!

Wee Dog Camp Spring 2009!

Yup, a Camp for those smaller canine companions with the big hearts. We are very close to having a date and location for this event. Workshops and activities specifically for the small dogs. Watch the website as details should be available after the first of the year.

Don't forget the Lucy's Token of Love Raffle!

Learn more about the Lucy's Token of Love program, providing pet food to clients of Meals on Wheels Program and buy raffle tickets to support the cause at:

<http://goldstockfund.org/tgf/token.html>

You could win a Beautiful Hand Carved and Painted by a Vermont Artist, Wooden 3 foot by 2 foot running Golden Retriever mounted on top of a 28 inch Copper Weathervane. The weathervane equipment can be easily removed and then this piece of art standing on a 28 inch high stand makes a beautiful decorative piece of art either inside a home or outside in the garden, patio or can be a unique Golden Greeter at your Motor Home or Trailer at dog shows or on vacations.

But hurry, drawing is January 5, 2009!!

Still Holiday shopping??

Don't forget all the nifty items in our on line stores. The hot item..... The Eco friendly tote bag! Buy one and you will be back for more. The perfect stocking stuffer or great gift for that dog friend that has everything! Check it out and all of our items at:

<http://goldstockfund.org/store/index.htm>

Want to be first to know TGF/Lucy Legacy's updates?

Come join us at our Yahoo group TGFCampLucy. A fun place to keep in touch, make new friends, and be a part of a group that makes a difference.

Go to

<http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/TGFCampLucy/>

and be part of the fun!

Happy Holidays

All of us at The Goldstock Fund/Lucy's Legacy wish you and yours, two and four footed, a healthy and happy holiday season.

