

It all started with a telephone call...

He had been a "Christmas puppy" bred by a well respected and reputable breeder in British Columbia, Canada that was purchased by a family of four in Kodiak, Alaska. The breeder regularly made telephone calls to Kodiak to get updates on his progress and always got comments like "...he's good...everything is fine". But everything wasn't fine.

The Rescue co-chairs of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Alaska, Randy and Ruth Johnson (now of Washington state) fielded a call in July 2003 from the family in Kodiak, Alaska. They were enroute to Anchorage with a "totally uncontrollable dog" that if the club didn't take him they were "going to dump him at Animal Control". That ultimatum made the decision easy for Randy and Ruth, sight unseen he would become the next rescue of the Alaska club.

Randal and Carrie fielded a call one evening from Randy and Ruth Johnson that would change our lives. It started out with "...have you ever thought about an older Berner". We hadn't. We had been on the waiting list for a considerable time for an Alaskan born and Alaskan bred Bernese Mountain Dog. Why would we want an older Berner? Why wouldn't we? We agreed to take him for a "test drive" of sorts as that weekend a very large fundraiser was occurring, called the "Dog Jog". It is huge, annual event put on by the Friends of Pets non-profit to bring together Anchorage, Alaska pets and their owners for a day of both human and pet activities.

It was very early in the afternoon when we realized we hadn't listened as closely as we should have during that call with Randy and Ruth. He didn't know his name. Didn't react to it in any way. But for some reason he reacted to us. The very first picture we took of him, which is still on our refrigerator, is one of him curled between Carrie's legs while at the Dog Jog. His actions which preceded the pic said to us "Protect me, I'm with you guys, I'm yours". So you can imagine at the conclusion of the day how difficult it was for us to return him to Randy and Ruth. But a previously planned trip to the "lower 48" would require him to stay with the Johnson's for a bit longer, but we made sure that everyone heard "WE WANT HIM" before we left.

We immediately decided that if he was going to have a new life with us he needed a new name, especially if he didn't know his original name. We decided on Tapper. The first 3(three) letters of his name stand for what he was- a Throw Away Puppy. He knows his name now!

We learned that it had taken a total of 4 (four) baths and multiple grooming attempts to get him to the appearance we first saw him in. His coat was filthy dirty and his chest turned red from the scars he had on his neck from the training color he was restricted to while living in Kodiak. Although he was nine months of age he had no bite inhibition and was essentially more a nine week old puppy than a nine month old in all of his social skills.

We immediately enrolled him in obedience classes and weekly he watched from the sidelines at drafting clinics held about Anchorage where local Berners were preparing for the annual draft test held in Alaska. Within 6 (six) weeks we tried him in a harness and he suddenly had his first job! This week he will attempt again to become a Novice Draft Dog but even if he doesn't pass he will have done a good job!

At the 2005 National Specialty in Gettysburg he passed his CGC with both Randal and Carrie in tears of joy. A "totally uncontrollable dog" had just flown from Alaska to Chicago then driven to Gettysburg to do another good job and his first AKC title!

At the 2006 National Specialty in Frankenmuth he achieved his second leg towards his Rally Novice A Title. Later in 2006 he would attain his final leg so that RN is at the end of his name. Another good job done.

Look for him this week about Louisville, he knows his name. He'll be the Berner with the big smile on his face! A smile that all started with a telephone call. Go Tapper!

# Tapper

Carrie Roos and Randal Dowler

