

Loki's Story

By Kathy Johns

Loki looked up at me with his golden eyes and gave me a puzzled look. Loki was our red Norwegian Elkhound, given to my parents as a Christmas present six months earlier by my brother, Jim. We were assured that he would be a small to medium size dog, not more than 50 pounds at most. We had looked at each other that Christmas day as the puppy displayed gigantic paws and equally large ears. Loki grew and grew and grew as he chewed through socks and table legs, hors d'oeuvres and carrots and anything he could get his mouth around. He became a "bull in a china shop" with his tail wagging eagerly for attention knocking down shelves and their contents.

Finally one night Mom and Dad had a conference. "We have to do something with this dog" was the consensus. "We will sign him up for the dog obedience class in Saginaw next month." It was agreed that the three of us would work with Loki at least a half hour every day to bring some control back into our lives.

Loki's first lesson did not bode well for things to come. He shook the leash with his mouth and refused to follow along beside us. The female instructor hurried over to give advice. "Why don't you try a choke collar?" Then she added, "Maybe you should work with him several times a day; his attention span is pretty limited." Great...we had an AHDD dog!!

Every week between classes we would diligently work with Loki, trying to get him to heel, sit, come, lie down, stay, to do ANYTHING! He loved the attention and the treats when he was done but despite numerous attempts to get him to come to us off the leash, Loki just loped away in the opposite direction as fast as his four legs would take him. In week number five the instructor finally said, "Please don't let your dog off the lead; I don't want to chase him again." Needless to say, we were discouraged and disheartened with Loki's seeming lack of progress in obedience training.

One Tuesday in the 6th week of the training program, Mom was working with Loki in the backyard under the old Chinese Elm tree. "Sit, Loki," Mom urged loudly. Loki sat! "Heel, Loki." Loki got up and followed alongside. She did it again. "Sit, Loki." Again, Loki sat. Mom couldn't believe it. It was as if a light bulb had finally turned on in the dog's head. She couldn't wait for Dad and me to come home to show us Loki's transformation.

That evening we took turns repeatedly taking the dog around the backyard giving commands. Each time Loki immediately responded. We were ecstatic! WOW!

Eagerly that Friday we climbed into the car anticipating the incredulous look from the dog obedience instructor. This day was the “tryout” for the city-wide dog obedience show in Saginaw. Each dog would be given a chance to be selected as one of the top three in that class to compete against the other six classes in the city.

The instructor started at the far end of the row, having the Dalmatian and the Shitzu demonstrate their obedience skills individually. Slowly she worked her way down the line toward us. Loki looked at me expectantly. The instructor looked at us but passed by to go to the next dog down the line. I stopped her and said, “We would like to give it a try, please.” She sighed, looked me deeply in the eyes and said, “I am not running after your dog, understand?” I nodded.

We stepped out onto the track and smartly executed a clean sit and heel. We were able to even do a long down and Loki never so much as looked away once. The instructor approached me as we took our place back in line. “OK, where did you get this dog, and what did you do with Loki?” I just smiled and said “Loki finally got it.”

She reluctantly agreed to place Loki as one of the three dogs from her class to represent her at the city meet. She just said as we passed going home that night, “Please don’t embarrass me at the meet, OK?” I nodded.

The Saturday of the meet was a cloudy late summer day. The excitement of having new smells and new dogs to see made Loki hyper. Mom couldn’t come so Dad and I looked over the dog obedience field and I took the last number. We watched as the dogs sat and heeled and came when called. One by one they paraded by as we watched. I drilled Loki every ten minutes, putting him through the paces so he was on his best behavior. Finally our turn came. Dad said he just couldn’t watch and went back to the car.

Loki and I entered the obedience ring and I snapped at him like a drill sergeant. “Sit” and Loki sat! We went through the entire obedience course with no points scored against us. At the end of the course we received our score of 200 points. Loki was the only dog with a perfect score! When I was handed the trophy I looked down at Loki and I swear that he smiled up at me and winked.