

On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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The Circle of Life

New Puppy Comes Home

By Dick Ellis

This outdoor life is so good. It just that, for a dog man, the bad must come and we all know it, like the hot July morning when my brother John and I dug the deep grave and lowered Soldier Blue to a final rest. Lori and Taylor painted a headstone and the tears fell on it and since then, the rain and the snow and the sun of

the passing seasons has too. The hard goodbyes are never hard enough to even partly diminish those great memories of 16 great years of running wild with Blue over Wisconsin. Living it is so...so worth eventually losing it.

Two years have come and gone and no "new" Blue. I've thought now and then about a new dog. Even looked. But

I've hunted hard with and written about Gunner, my sister, Barb's yellow lab and Blue's hunting buddy, ever since I lost my mongrel. For a decade, Soldier Blue and Gunny Boy had hunted together for ringnecks in the grasslands of southern Wisconsin, for grouse in the unbroken forests of the northland, and for ducks east

and west. In their prime, in particularly targeting pheasants, they were something to watch and double trouble when running down even the wiliest of wild roosters.

Gunner, one of the great ones, died last week at 14. Hearts were temporarily broke here again last week. My sister asked if she could bury him beside Blue, on our



For 16 years, Ellis wrote about Gunner and Blue and just about Gunner when he lost Blue two summers ago. On the morning Gunner was laid to rest last week next to Blue, the Ellis family brought home Micah, a nine week old Golden Retriever. And the life cycle continues.



Dick Ellis continues recovery from aortic aneurysm surgery in his backyard by welcoming Micah, the family's new Golden Retriever puppy and the family's first addition since Blue.

property. My chest is still broke too as I recover from aneurysm surgery, so John handled the grave digging duties alone this time as we laid Gunner to rest with Blue. Lori is planning new headstones for the Dynamic Duo. But behind the final good-byes, behind the temporary sadness of life, a nine-week old bundle of tan fur and needle teeth is already reminding us that new memories are waiting on the horizon.

On the day Gunner took his last journey home to his final resting place, Micah, our new Golden Retriever came home too, on my lap. His father lives in Marinette County and we traveled south to Racine last week to meet his mother and brothers and sisters. At first we drove home without Micah, but by the time Lori had returned from the theatre with “the girls” the following night, she walked in the door and said, “I couldn’t stop thinking about him during the performance....we have to go get that puppy...don’t you think?”

Well, yes, as a matter of fact, I did think. But you may recall, the last time “we” made a dog decision two decades ago in our home “he” was a blue-eyed mongrel that traveled home on my lap in my truck from the inner city of Milwaukee after walking out of an alley collarless and looking for a meal. This time, I thought I would sit it out and see what the girls came up with...as long as it wasn’t a poodle or some other French-related dog that yipped (letters can be sent to your local editor).

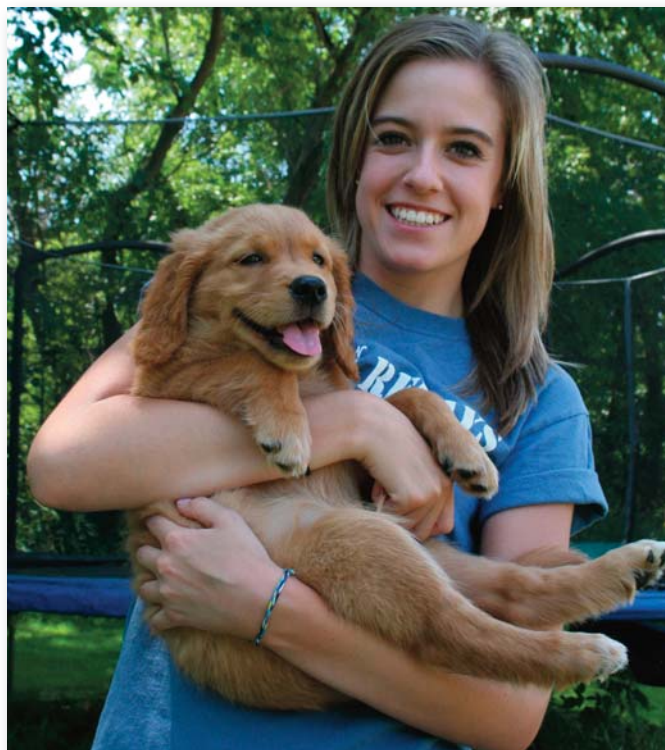
According to our breeders, Christine and Gary Ballewske, the Golden Retriever was developed historically as a gundog to retrieve shot waterfowl like ducks or upland game. As such they

were bred to have a soft mouth to retrieve game undamaged and to have an instinctive love of water. The temperament of the Golden Retriever is a hallmark of the breed and is described as “kindly, friendly and confident”. They are not “one man dogs” and are generally equally amiable with both strangers and those familiar to them. The typical Golden Retriever is calm, naturally intelligent and biddable, with an exceptional eagerness to please.

Golden Retrievers, according to the Ballewskes, rank fourth in Stanley Coren’s *The Intelligence of Dogs*, being one of the brightest dogs ranked by obedience command trainability. These dogs are also renowned for their patience with children. By the time they reach maturity, Goldens will have become active and fun-loving animals with the exceptionally patient demeanor befitting a dog bred to sit quietly for hours in a hunting blind.

Other characteristics related to their hunting heritage are a size suited for scrambling in and out of boats and an inordinate love for water. Golden Retrievers are exceptionally trainable—due to their intelligence, athleticism and desire to please their handlers—and generally excel in obedience trials. In fact, the first AKC Obedience Trial Champion was a Golden Retriever. They are also highly competitive in agility and other performance events. Harsh training methods are unnecessary as Golden Retrievers often respond very well to positive and upbeat training styles.

All of information on Golden Retrievers served as a great foundation for a hunter looking to start a new life with a new dog. But it was the words of Christine Ballewske



Taylor Rae Ellis, 16, told her Dad that nothing would help his recovery from surgery like bringing home a new Golden Retriever puppy. He gave in with Micah, nine weeks old and ready to rock the roosters in the fields of Wisconsin.

that ultimately made us want to bring Micah home on my lap.

“We have loved these puppies as if they were our own,” she wrote. “We expect you to continue to treat them as well as we have. Please don’t hit them or be angry with them. They are after all babies and they need the same kind of love and teaching as a baby does. Be good to them and they will give back tenfold the love and caring that you give them.”

“Piper has been a wonderful mom. She took very good care of her puppies. Still to this day she is very much a part of their lives. She makes sure they are okay every morning and at various times during the day, she tries to clean them and she still loves them. She shows this by the way she plays with them and snuggles

them and kisses them. Rest assured they were given the best start and all the love that we could for the short time that we have had them. Please continue this when you take your puppy home. This is all they know.”

“If there ever comes a time, God forbid, that you cannot keep your puppy or dog, for whatever reason, however old they are, please do not give them to just anyone. Give them back to us. We will find them a new loving, caring home. We promise this to you.”

So Wisconsin. The beat goes on. In my chest, thank God. And as I write this...snuggled on my lap. Life is good. Let’s get on with it shall we? ^oW_o

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