



SPOTLIGHT ON RESCUE

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Shelter to Show Ring

Promises Made, Promises Broken, Promises Kept

by Jan Bramhall (Beau Geste Golden Retrievers) and Carol Allen (Rescuer)

PROMISES MADE

JAN BRAMHALL: She was a beautiful puppy, born in March 1996. I named her Beau Geste Blue Water Sapphire. The "Blue Water Sapphire" was the stolen necklace in Percival Christopher Wren's novel, *Beau Geste*. Jewel, her mother, was gorgeous and sweet, and "Sapphy," like every breeder's pick puppy, was a vessel of hope for future greatness. She held lots of promise – and she barked a lot!

I received a call from a couple en-route home from vacationing on Cape Ann. They had seen Sapphy's sister and wanted to visit the kennel to meet my dogs and me. They were already Golden Retriever owners, and hoped maybe they could get one from me. When they met Jewel and Sapphy, they begged and importuned me to sell Sapphy to them. They convinced me they were a good home, and they promised to meet all my criteria, including a co-ownership with show and breeding rights. Had she not been so vocal, perhaps I would not have acquiesced, but in the end we ironed out a co-ownership agreement that I was to print out and mail. They signed a basic sales contract, and they took her to Ithaca, New York.

PROMISES BROKEN

JAN BRAMHALL: After only one phone call with the new owner (and the reports about Sapphy were glowing) there was no more communication. My calls were unanswered. The co-ownership contract that I mailed was returned as "undeliverable." I was distraught. I didn't think I had been hoodwinked; I thought something terrible had happened. I didn't know how to find them and gave up, always wondering.

PROMISES KEPT

CAROL ALLEN: Fast forward ten years to 2006. The Cortland (NY) SPCA phoned Golden Retriever Rescue of Central New York. A 10-year-old female Golden had been there for two weeks without being adopted. I was there within an hour, and found a very stressed, vocal, apparently well-bred Golden that

had been surrendered to the shelter by her most recent owner because of allergies of the grandchildren. It isn't rare to find a senior Golden in a shelter but this was different: with this dog came the 1996 sales contract, and pictures of her sire and dam. We have been able to piece together that the original owner had died very soon after returning from Massachusetts with Sapphy, that his widow moved almost immediately after his death and then eventually gave Sapphy (now Sassy) to another person in the area. This second person had her for at least five years before surrendering her to the Cortland SPCA.

Sassy was fostered in my home and settled in very quickly. Much needed and neglected veterinary care was begun. Her thick coat contained a very pervasive yeast infection that would take over a year, with frequent medicated baths and oral medications, to completely conquer. Previous owner(s) and shelter, noting the unpleasant odor, often bathed her without the necessary drying. As a result, the odor and infection only became worse. As the odors increased, Sassy spent more and more time crated in the garage because "she liked it." Knowing how Sassy hates a crate today, it is hard to believe she would have liked it then or to be isolated from her humans. She had been spayed, but we have no idea when or where.

The next step was to write to the breeder listed on the sales contract. Jan Bramhall responded by phone the minute she received the letter and I'll always remember her response. "I've been looking for her for 10 years. I'll be right there to get her." I assured Jan that Sassy was safe, that we had begun veterinary care and asked her to "slow down." With hindsight it could be said that my request to "slow down" was disingenuous. I have had 14 Golden Retrievers in my life and I know a "special connection" when I feel it. Within a few weeks, GRRRCNY and Jan Bramhall agreed that I could adopt Sassy.

JAN BRAMHALL: When I got a letter from Carol Allen informing me of the presence of a dog in their rescue program, I knew instantly it was Sapphy. Three cheers for rescue! I was

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Spotlight on Rescue, *continued*

beyond thrilled to know that she was alive and, at least safe and secure now. I wanted to rush to central New York State to get her! I called Carol immediately and told her I was on my way, but she calmed me down and pointed out that "Sassy" was under veterinary care, and seemed settled, comfortable and content. We agreed that another change would simply be another stress. I realized that, to her, she would not be "coming home."

I remain filled with disbelief, tinged with sorrow and shock, that my sales contract and her name (Sapphy/Sassy) had traveled with her through several ownership transfers, yet no one, until Carol, had called me nor respected the clause in my contract which states unequivocally that if for any reason the dog could not be kept, she was to be returned to me. All that information was available all those 10 long years!

Mark and I donated funds for her care, and Carol sent me photos and talked of a special bond. We agreed that Sassy would remain with her.

CAROL ALLEN: Within six weeks of being adopted, Sassy earned her CGC and soon completed basic obedience. Her medical conditions continued to be resolved and she lost 25 pounds over the next six months. The Bramhalls graciously sent a check to GRRRCNY for the veterinary care it had provided for Sassy. Sassy gets along with everyone and everything including the other Golden Retrievers, permanent and fostered, in my home. When I foster puppies they instinctively move to cuddle with Sassy. What a mother she would have been!

JAN BRAMHALL: I met Carol at the National Specialty in Kansas City, in 2006. We remained in touch, but it wasn't until she brought Sassy to Rhode Island for the National Specialty in 2008, for the Rescue Parade that I had my first meeting with Sassy in 12 years. I knew her instantly and was moved to tears – tears of joy and tears of regret – for her 10 lost years. I went to my knees and hugged her and petted her and felt a joyful relief. I wanted to show her off and tell her story to everyone! She was sweet and beautiful, and everyone could see how Carol loved her. The circle was finally complete.

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN

by Judy Smith

*No one wanted the older dog
But you brought me home.
Thankful for the time we'll share
And I will be grateful to you for as long as I can.*

*My face is whiter now, and I'm not so limber
But you are patient
Taking it easy and slow
And I will walk with you for as long as I can.*

*You'll never know about my world "before"
But that's okay because the rest of my life
Will be spent at your side.
And I will stay with you for as long as I can.*

*My eyes tell the story
Of love lost and found
Safe at last, I lay happily at your feet
And I will be your friend for as long as I can.
Time knows no reason
But hearts know no bounds
We were meant to be together
And I will love you for as long as I can.*

CAROL ALLEN: The 2008 National Specialty was a wonderful experience for us. Reintroducing Jan to Sassy was a highlight. Joan Puglia, co-founder of Yankee Golden Retriever Rescue, who was also the owner of Sassy's great granddam, accompanied Sassy and me for the Rescue Parade. The responses of fanciers at the Specialty were heartwarming. After "how old is she?" questions followed asking about her lineage. A frequent comment was "she is everything we look for in a Golden." Clearly this included longevity.

The National Specialty experience led to me wanting to enter Sassy in the Certificate of Conformation Assessment (CCA) that the Golden Retriever Club of Central New York was to hold in April 2009.

I tried to obtain the AKC registration papers using 1996 litter information, but was told by the AKC that they couldn't help me. I then filed for and obtained the ILP and with this entered the CCA. The CCA evaluators were very complimentary and the scores reflected that. Now, at age 13, it was Sassy, CCA, CGC.

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Sassy is examined by Sweepstakes judge, Julie MacKinnon, at the YGRC Specialty, May 2009.



Judge Mrs. Mary Ann Alston presents a ribbon to "Sassy," and breeder/handler Jan Bramhall at the Yankee GRC Specialty.



Sassy and Carol Allen (her adopter) are shown sharing a quiet moment together.

JAN BRAMHALL: While watching Sassy strut her stuff in the Rescue Parade in 2008, I considered that I must still be listed as her co-owner with the AKC, and there was no reason I couldn't show her in the Veteran class. Then this spring Carol told me she had obtained the ILP to enter her in a CCA evaluation. We both were proud that the evaluators loved her!

I don't know why I hadn't done so earlier but I contacted the AKC and discovered that the original registration had never been changed and that I was listed as the sole owner. Why the AKC blue slip didn't travel with Sassy when my sales contract did is a mystery. Regardless, I got a new registration certificate re-issued for her.

I offered to show Sassy in Veteran Sweepstakes and Veteran (12+) classes at the May 29, 2009, Yankee Golden Retriever Club Specialty. Carol brought her, beautifully groomed, and off Sassy and I went into the ring. She showed as though she was an old hand at it as long as I proffered the bacon flavored treats. Her first dog show! She was 13 years old, competing in the ring for the first time! She placed under both the sweepstakes judge and the regular class judge, both of whom, although not knowing her story, seemed just as proud of her as Carol and I were. She had now in every way fulfilled the promise she held as that 12-week-old puppy; a sweet, beautiful, showgirl with a heart of gold! And now she is Carol's dog in every way.

CAROL ALLEN: Jan has now transferred the AKC registration for Beau Geste Blue Water Sapphire CCA, CGC to me. I am now planning to show Sassy in Veterans Sweepstakes and regular veteran (12+) classes at independent specialties. Like Sassy in May, I have never before been in the show ring but she'll show me what to do.

WHAT SASSY HAS TAUGHT US:

For what is lost there is always hope of being found – one day, somewhere. Some things were just meant to be.

JAN BRAMHALL: Over the years I have amended my contracts, adding costs and enforcement clauses, among other modifications. Technology has certainly made it easier than it was in 1996 to trace someone. Would it have been possible to find out more details somehow? I can think now of things I didn't try then that might have helped. At the time, I thought of only a few possibilities, none of which panned out.

CAROL ALLEN: Sassy's story pinpoints several ways that ethical and reputable breeders and Golden Retriever Rescue programs need to and can rely on each other. With the current nationwide network of rescue programs we can accept Golden Retrievers and contact the breeder wherever that information is known and communicated. We could also do "home visits" with potential puppy buyers if there is considerable distance between breeder and potential puppy buyer. We have a strong desire to work with and have meaningful dialogue with the ethical and reputable breeders, while trying to avoid and stay away from the "others." If it were today and not 1996, could a local Golden Retriever Rescue program have helped in "tracking down" this contract violator?

It's never too late to start something new – for dogs or humans.

Considering that a dog can become the bridge to friendship between two humans remains a constant source of joy. Jan and Carol both realize that Sassy has made them good friends. "Doing the right thing," is always a good basis for a friendship. ❖