

## Bronson's Story



*Bronson's story has a very Happy Ending!*

Bronson vom Traumhof was one of our Valentine's litter, 2007. The "B" litter was a special one for us right from the start, because this was Xenia's first litter, and because the puppies were one of the earliest litters sired by Sherry Kirschtal. We didn't own Sherry at the time, and Xenia had been bred to him in Germany.

Bronson was one of 7 puppies including: Banner, Baron, Bruin, Brina, Bronwyn, and Brielle, our "Bunny". The puppies were all beautiful, with deep mahogany red and black color. They were a lively, social bunch, an excellent litter.

Bronson was the explorer and the one with the most curiosity and focus. He didn't miss a thing, and he was always trying to figure things out. When we placed the puppies in a small fenced pen, Bronson was fixated on the older dogs playing in an adjacent larger yard. He sniffed, pawed, climbed, dug.. he tried everything to figure out how to get in with the other dogs and out of his pen. When we played with toys, if one rolled away or we hid it, the other pups would lose interest and play happily with something else. Bronson would continue to search for whatever had grabbed his attention.

As I was interviewing potential homes for the "B" puppies, a woman contacted me, hoping to find a puppy who would be a good fit with her family and could be trained for search and rescue. She was referred by someone I knew.

I had a feeling Bronson would be an excellent candidate for SAR work. He was also a handsome puppy, with nice conformation and a sweet character. The woman came and tested Bronson for SAR aptitude. I told her I felt he was the best suited puppy, but I also left it open for her to test the other males, as well. Bronson was a fit, and he would go home with this family and begin training to be a SAR dog.

The woman who would be his handler also hoped that one day, he might sire future SAR dogs for her group.

At 8 weeks old, Bronson only had one testicle descended. We hoped it would still drop, but we couldn't be certain & we told the family as much. If both testicles were not down, he should not be used for breeding. Bronson's new family opted to take him anyway - he did show promise for the intended work. His potential in work was more important to them than the possibility that he couldn't be used for breeding.

At 8 weeks old Baron, Bronwyn, Bruin, and Bronson left for their homes. I was so enamored with these Sherry puppies, I decided to keep Brina, Brielle the Bunny, and Banner.

Within a couple weeks of Bronson leaving for his new home, I began to feel that his new owner was unhappy with him. She corresponded with me to let me know his testicle hadn't dropped, and she felt Bronson's purchase price should be refunded. I declined to do so; he had been sold first and foremost as a pet, at the same pet price as the rest of the puppies. She had known his testicle might not drop, and she had chosen to take him anyway. I did offer to take him back - I had a family who had really wanted him, but I had placed him in the home where I felt he was best suited to their needs. I offered to place a different puppy with this family, but the woman said that after 2 weeks, she had " Too much training into him to give him back."

Thus, our relationship had a tenuous start.

As time went by, I received frequent photos and had regular correspondence with the other "B" puppy owners. I rarely heard from Bronson's owner, except when she emailed me with little barbs about things she found lacking in him. At one point, she complained his drive was not high enough. At another point, his drive was super, but his character was bad. I was very sad about this; the litter was so super, and I had THREE siblings here who I thought were absolutely wonderful puppies. I felt awful for Bronson, that his family didn't think he was a shining star.

Still, the woman put him into training, and every once in a great while, I did get some photos of him working. For some time, I heard no news. And then, one day, I got an email telling me the owner no longer wanted Bronson, and she was letting me know because my contract stipulates that if at any time an owner can't keep a dog, they must offer to return the dog to me. Did I want Bronson?

Of COURSE I WANTED HIM! I felt this was my chance to rectify what I felt was one of the few times I had made a mistake and placed a dog in the wrong home.

I was a little shocked at this turn of events, considering she had been unwilling to give Bronson back at 10 weeks old for a replacement, and considering she had now fully trained him for SAR.

My first thought was "Who did he bite?" It is my experience that often, when a dog bites someone, a family reacts by planning to give up the dog.

I asked a lot of questions, but the owner claimed Bronson didn't bite anyone. He had done some things that made her worried she couldn't trust him in certain situations. She said he was untrustworthy with children, and that while on leash, he had outbursted at people aggressively on a couple occasions. Children flailing about seemed especially to set him off. Once Bronson had reacted aggressively when a visiting Grandmother put her arms around the owner's daughter.

The owner said she would not keep a dog she couldn't work, and she could not work a dog she didn't trust. Fair enough.

We arranged for Bronson to come home.

Bronson arrived, and other than a bark at me as he jumped from the car, he seemed fine. He was not aggressive or nasty, and he had grown into a handsome dog.

Because Bronson had been gone for over 2 years, I could not just plunk him down in my house with our established "pack." I had to temporarily house him in our training/boarding kennel.

As his owners left, he watched in utter dismay, head cocked, inquisitive expression. He obviously had no idea why he wasn't leaving WITH them, and he obviously thought he belonged with them. My heart broke for him.



He was restless at first, pacing and panting. He displayed no aggression, he simply seemed uncertain as to what was happening. I took him out to a fenced play yard, and he was quite happy to run and chase a ball.

Bronson needed friends, so I brought two of our very social girls out to meet him. They played happily in the yard.

After Bronson had been here a few days, and seemed to acknowledge that I was the resident Chef/Waitress/Activity Coordinator, I started to give him some commands. He was 100% responsive. His family had obviously put time into teaching him Obedience.



I had several people/ families interested in adopting Bronson. I felt that he needed to stay with me long enough for me to evaluate any issues he might have. I waited to see aggression or fear or neurotic behavior. Nothing.

Bronson would bark as a new person approached when he was on lead. I gave him a command to sit or Platz, and talked to the person. When he relaxed - which took less than a minute, I told the person to approach. He never made a peep or even attempted to get up.

Bronson seemed to be a happy dog, a sweet dog who was unsure of what was happening to him. He craved attention. He seemed a little "tuned out" as if he had not had all that much human contact in a household.

I interviewed several families, and each time, I couldn't see placing Bronson with the hopeful candidates. I felt I owed Bronson for my previous mistake, and I was going to be very particular.

One possibility for Bronson was to go to a home with a K9 handler as a Narcotics Detection dog. Right about the time when a Sgt. contacted me to tell me Bronson might be perfect, and they were interested him as a particular handler's new narcotics dog, a young couple contacted me about a puppy. After talking to them, I had mentioned Bronson. I felt he might be perfect for them, even though he was 2 years old, not a puppy.

They were interested. When they came to meet him, Bronson liked them right away. He was very friendly, played with his ball, and didn't bark at all. I was a little concerned that the couple had minimal training experience, and I know Bronson felt happiest with a secure, clear leader. The couple really wanted him, and they seemed like they would be such loving, patient, and fun parents.

When they went to their car, Bronson jumped in without a backward glance at me! HE seemed to have chosen THEM.

Bronson rode home with his new Mom next to him in the back seat, while his new Dad drove.

Within a couple days, I received photos of Bronson. He was SMILING. He had a new bed, a LOT of toys, and he was out exploring the Blue Hills trail system with his family.



I offered free remedial training classes for Bronson as needed, and checked in frequently. (Probably more frequently than the new owners had expected!) Bronson settled in without a single hitch.

Every time I get photos of him, Bronson looks blissfully happy.



I am so grateful to Chris and Pamela, who decided to give Bronson a chance, and who have shown him what it feels like to be completely loved and appreciated.





All of our puppies and dogs are special to me. Since Bronson's siblings who remained with me are some of my all time favorite dogs, I was particularly distressed about his plight. I KNOW the character of his littermates. I couldn't imagine Bronson, such a wonderful puppy, had morphed into a dog who couldn't be trusted and had a weak character.

I am very cautious about placing our puppies. I try my best to place puppies in the RIGHT homes, where they are well matched to a family. Sometimes, people are upset by my application procedure or by my decision to deny them a puppy. I have very rarely regretted where I homed a puppy. I am happy to say that not only did I learn from my experience placing Bronson the 1<sup>st</sup> time, I was also able to make it right, and Bronson is now in his forever home!

*Chris and Pamela you two ROCK!*