

# On the Upbringing of PBGV Rescue Dogs



*Peggy Jensen with, from left, J.R., Columbo, Justin and Rufie.*

When our beautiful Brandy passed away in September of 2010, we were left with a very empty run in our kennel. Brandy was a talented little girl and very pleasant to have as our canine friend. After much discussion, we decided that the run needed another inhabitant so we decided that, at our age, a rescue would be the best for us. So we let it be known to several of our friends that we were interested in another PBGV. We still have Justin and Rufus, both well-trained Certified Delta Therapy dogs, and Justin just completed his AKC Therapy Dog title. When we let Cindy Wilt of Napa, Idaho, know of our interest, she let us know that several PBGVs had been rescued in California. We contacted Rescue to see what we needed to do to obtain one of them, and were directed to Cathy Craft. Since we had been involved in PBGV Rescue several years ago, we generally knew the procedure and Cathy provided us with information that we did not have. Cathy said she had obtained these rescues from a shelter near her home north of Sacramento, Calif., and gave us as much as she knew about the dogs. She had already placed several of them but had two that seemed to be very close and, if we could do so, suggested we take both of them. She e-mailed pictures of them and described their personalities. After much discussion, we decided that we would take both

of them, realizing that each carried different “baggage” that we would need to address. After filling out the essential paperwork and with the help of Curt Craft, J.R. and Columbo arrived on our doorstep.

**Issues.** As we expected, each dog had a much different personality. When Cathy’s husband Curt delivered them to Peggy in Portland, Ore., he also alerted us to their personalities. Plus there were other things we needed to consider such as were they housebroken, sleeping quarters, separation issues, their health, nutritional needs and feeding procedures, training issues, meeting and getting along with Justin and Rufus, addressing bad and good habits, and meeting strangers.

Since we are both retired, we did not anticipate problems we could not handle. We live with our PBGVs and are around them all of the time, talking to them and doing things with them. We had been involved in rescue and had fostered PBGVs in the past with no problems. Also, Gitane, a French import and Rufie’s grandmother, had come to live with us for the last year of her life and, while she had fit in with the pack very well, she had a fear of loud noises and big people, plus had other behavioral problems. We were trusting that our PBGV experience would give us success with our new rescues.

### **Kenneling, Introductions and Sleeping.**

We have a kennel building with three runs and had anticipated that Columbo and J.R. could sleep, or stay, in one of the runs when we are gone. We also have several baby gates installed in the house so we could keep everybody separated as needed and for first morning feeding. Introductions turned out to be easy. After breakfast we took all four dogs, Justin, Rufus, Columbo and J.R., for a long leash walk, and everybody seemed to get along just fine. Face-to-face introductions were on neutral ground in front of the house. No problems! On a normal day, once breakfast is over and either Rufie or Justin takes George for a walk, we usually have a training session, then the PBGVs have the run of the house. Since George has devised a way to have a dog door, they are free to go outside if they want.

We have a little fenced area within a big, fenced  $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre back yard. Normally, the gate between the two is open during the day. No problems appeared initially, except that Columbo discovered that birds were to be found in our burning bushes, arborvitae and witch hazel, and his hunting instinct took over. From then on, he has had to check out the whole yard for varmints every morning. We can handle that, except for the first few months we had to catch him to get him back in the house or kennel. With the help of a cookie, he learned to come and he now comes when called with or without the treat — most of the time. When we found that both Columbo and J.R. were “food hounds,” treats became a very useful tool for their training.

When we had to go out the first day, we put the boys in their runs. When we returned, we discovered J.R. in with Rufie! As time went on, we found out J.R. was an escape artist and we had to find out how and where he escaped. J.R. would climb over or squeeze through our wooden deck fencing and go under gates or chain-link fence when he could. He also tore up the screen in our sliding door leading to the back yard. Stopping his escapes involved reconstruction, repair and/or revision of the chain-link fencing plus the use of ex-pens on the deck fencing. Fortunately, the few times J.R. got out of the yard he appeared at the front door and did not run off.

J.R. also had a problem sleeping in the kennel building, and Columbo would bark long into the night if J.R. was with him. After several months of this, we tried taking J.R. into the house after he had spent several hours in bed with Columbo. Lo and behold, both dogs are now happy with us bringing J.R. into the house for the night and leaving Columbo in the kennel.

**Feeding and Giving of Treats.** We trained Justin and Rufie that there are certain places where they are served their breakfast and dinner, and they have learned to take treats like gentlemen. Since both of the new boys seemed willing to please, they learned their place for meals in just



*Columbo learns to sit and wait.*

one day. We simply took them to their places and made them sit. J.R., being somewhat shy, was not much of a problem. He quickly learned to wait for his dinner and will sit until it is placed on the floor. Once in a while he will grab at an offered treat, but he usually takes it like gentlemen. On the other hand, Columbo rushed at his dish and could often knock it out of our hands to get at the food. He was also very grabby and, given the opportunity, would nearly take your finger off when offered a treat. We started informal house training with Columbo using the commands “sit” and “wait” while we put down his dinner, and the command “be a gentlemen” when we offer him a treat. “Sit” was taught by just pushing his rear down and “wait” was taught by placing our hand in front of his nose until the dish was on the floor. He has now learned that he will not get his meal until the bowl is on the floor and we say “okay.” Now both J.R. and

Columbo go to their places and

wait patiently until their dinners are served. Columbo still gets anxious when his dinner is coming, but when told to “sit,” he does and waits until he gets the okay. However, we still have to be careful giving Columbo a treat. He still grabs at times and, while that is a problem, he is learning.

**Formal Training.** So far we have only talked about the initial training we did with our rescues when they first arrived. Since we are at home all of the time, informal and formal training blend together. We have had training sessions with our dogs in the house and, at times, outside in a more formal manner for years. We believe that a formal training session nearly every day is good for our PBGVs and usually do it right after Justin or Rufus takes George for a walk. Our formal training sessions are fairly short, between  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour for all four PBGVs.

Justin and Rufus know all of the drills for novice, open and utility, although we do not train all of them every day. They also know “beg,” “give me five,” “roll,” “say,” (bark loud or soft) “bang,” “say prayers” and so forth, and will do these for patients and staff at the hospital. We have also done some work with agility and rally although we have not competed. Clickers are used for both formal and informal training as appropriate. We are careful to both use the same commands for whatever we want the dogs to do. That is important or the dog will become confused and not do what is asked of it.

Because our initial observation was that the new boys did not seem to know basic commands, we integrated formal training sessions with J.R. and Columbo into the routine we use with Justin and Rufie. We believe that the every dog should be taught to “come” on command, “sit” when told to, “down” on command, “heel”

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*Left: J.R. responds to "heads up." Above left: Columbo practices his heel on lead.*

(at least on lead), "wait" (as needed), "stay" (when told to), "be a gentleman or lady" when getting a treat, "pay attention and heads up," "off" (as in off people or the furniture) and "leave it." They also need to learn what "no" really means. Having formal training sessions reinforces the informal use of the same household commands and teaches new ones.

Puppies are a "blank page," so training is much simpler. However, with an adult rescue you are dealing with baggage that the dog carries from its previous home. More often than not, you do not know what the baggage is so you need to be very observant, patient, careful and positive during training sessions.

Many commands are incorporated into our daily routine, like "off," "wait," "sit," "stay" and "heads up." These are taught informally as a matter of course. As mentioned, we taught the dogs to sit by just pushing their rears down, then placing their dinners in front of them or giving treats, chewies or other items. J.R. is a soft dog and will shy or run away, so we needed to be very careful not to give him a command too loudly or get rough with him. Columbo, on the other hand, is a "knot head" and at times needs a very stern "no" or "AH" or a little force when given a command. Also, Columbo has an attention span close to zero, so we are working on that issue also during the formal training. Since both PBGVs seemed to handle well on our first leash walks, we assumed they were used to being on leads. Also, we do not use collars but train the dogs using harnesses initially.

**Teaching "Down."** "Down" is a very important command that the PBGV needs to do well and reliably. Keep in mind that "down" means "lay down." It is different from "off." "Off" means get off of me, off the furniture, off whatever you are on. We are teaching it to J.R. and Columbo as a part of their informal household training.

There are many methods to teach "down," but George prefers to be as gentle as he can. Normally, he sits either J.R. or Columbo in front of him and says "down," then pulls their paws out from under them and gives them a treat. Using a clicker works well in training "downs." When the dog is in the down position, immediately click and treat. The dog will soon learn the word's meaning and will "down" for the treat. You can expand the use of the "down" command to include it in your training to heel by stopping and giving the command "down." One should work on "down" as a part of informal training as well — it can save your dog's life if it will "down" anytime it is told to.

**Teaching Heel On Lead.** George teaches "heel" as a first exercise because if the PBGVs are going to be in any AKC venue, working as Therapy dogs or just be out for walks, they will need to know this command. Along with "heel," he teaches "heads up" to get the dog to look up and pay attention. Initially, with the dog on loose lead, he just walks in straight lines, stopping every few steps and saying "sit," having the dog sit and then saying "heads up." On either the command, "sit" or "heads up," he gives the dog a treat (or clicks and treats). Once the dog gets the idea, George starts making left turns, stopping and having the dog sit occasionally. Once the dog does left turns correctly, George starts adding right turns and about turns, and goes fast or slow. With practice, each PBGV learns the exercise. He does not rush this training and believes that the dog needs to do this every day. Basic learning can take up to two months.

**Teaching Heel Off Lead.** Once the dog is heeling on lead well, we start working off lead using the same procedure. Here, however, we initially use a mechanic's pick-up tool with the treat in the tongs and lead the dog around. We also use a two- to three-foot piece of ½-inch



Above left: J.R. takes the dumbbell.



Right: Columbo rolls over.

Below: Columbo gives five.



plastic pipe with a 45-degree "L" to hold the treat in front of the dog's nose. Using the commands "sit" and "heads up," we make right turns, left turns and about turns. Once the dog is heeling off lead well, we only train with the dog off lead unless we need to address something the dog is not doing it well, then it is back on lead to correct the problem. We work on the "heel" command every day. Keep in mind that if your PBGV does not perform off lead correctly, you can always go back on lead and train where needed.

**Stay and/or Wait Command.** There is a subtle difference between "stay" and "wait" and each needs to be taught separately. "Stay" means stay where you are. "Wait" means wait patiently in place because you will get another command or something else is going to happen, like you

can eat your dinner, get a treat, go outside, get a toy or react to another command. Since each dog has its place for meals, Columbo and J.R. were initially shown their places and told to wait. Our hand was placed in front of their noses on the command. If they moved, we said "AH!" or gave the command again. Then we placed their dinners on the floor and said "wait" again, placing our hand in front of their nose. Release was with the word "okay." It did not take long for them to get the idea. This command can be used for a lot of things when something else is going to happen.

When we give the command "stay," we mean stay in place until we come back or specifically call you with the command "come," like "J.R., come!" or "Columbo, come!" To teach this we tell the dog to sit. Then we tell it "stay," put our hand in front of its nose and take a step or two back. The dog can be on lead or not. If the dog stays in place, we step forward and turn to stand beside the dog with the dog on our left side and say "heads up" and give it a treat. This process is repeated with us moving further and further from the dog and standing for longer and longer times until we are at least 30 feet from the dog. In time, we can tell the dog to stay, then we hide from it where we can see it but it cannot see us. We then either come back in front of the dog, to the place where we left, and call the dog, or we call the dog from where we are hiding. In time, the dog learns to come to us wherever we are. If the dog moves, we return it to the spot where we said "stay" and start over.

**Get Dumbbell, Phone, Etc.** Justin and Rufus both get things for us like the dumbbell, the phone or a toy, and we are teaching J.R. and Columbo to do the same. "Find it" is a fall out of the "get it" command. We started by using the dumbbell. Initially, we carefully placed the dumbbell in J.R.'s or Columbo's mouths, saying "take it" followed by "hold it." They are slowly getting the *continued on next page*

Rescue *continued from page 37* idea. Once they take and hold it for about a minute on their own, we will start lowering it in steps until it is taken on the ground or floor and they pick it up on their own. When they will do that, we will throw it about two or three feet from us, say "get dumbbell." We slowly increase the distance until they will get the dumbbell from 20 to 30 feet away. Once they are getting the dumbbell reliably, we will teach them to get other things the same way, like the telephone or a toy.

**Tricks.** Most of these are easy to teach and often they will do them naturally for a treat. For example, "beg" (sit up), "up" (stand on back legs) and "paws up" can be taught by just holding the treat in front of the dog and saying "beg" or "up." You will need a chair or stool to teach "paws up." When the dog does what you want, give it a treat. By repeating the command and saying the command enough, the dog will soon know what you mean and will do it on command, and sometimes voluntarily for the reward. Brandy actually learned to beg on her own. One evening when we were putting the dogs to bed, much to our surprise Brandy was sitting up on her own, begging for her cookie. "Roll over," "bang" and "say prayers" are taught once the dog learns "down." For roll over, give the command "down." When the dog is down, roll the dog over on the command "over" and soon the dog will do it on command. "Say prayers" is simply a variation of the "down" command as is the "bang."

"Shake hands" or "give me five" are easy to teach. Sit the dog in front of you, have a treat in your hand and give the command "give me five." Initially, you pick up the dog's paw and give the dog a treat. Once the dog begins to lift its paw, encourage it by rubbing its leg to lift its paw and then give the dog a treat. Soon it will "give you five" and will enjoy the activity. This can be combined with "beg" and "high five" in a similar manner.

**In the Future.** Both J.R. and Columbo are beginning to ask for formal training, and we encourage it. They are not ready for the obedience ring at this time, but we may try the Canine Good Citizen (CGC) pretty quickly. There are many other commands that we will be working on with both in



*Our talented Brandy could speak her mind on many issues.*

the future, but first we need to get them over some of the baggage they are still carrying. J.R. is very soft and willing to please but will react negatively when we get even a little harsh with him so we need to be careful working with him. On the other hand, Columbo is very out going, extremely anxious to please and food aggressive, so we need to calm him down to pay attention. We are making sure both are comfortable being with us so we are giving them the love and attention that they seem to need so badly. They are both very nice PBGVs and a lot of fun to have around. They have also come a long way since they arrived at our house close to two years ago. Both love their toys and play with Rufus and Justin to keep us entertained with their antics.

The part of the day all of our PBGVs seem to like best is when Peggy is in her study knitting and they can all be up on the futon napping. Life does not get much better than that. ■

## Next Saber Tails deadline: January 15

### Your PBGV can be in *Saber Tails*!

Candid photos of PBGVs are needed to illustrate future *Saber Tails* articles and club advertisements. No show photos and no photos of dogs in clothes or in odd situations, please — we just need nice, clear, 300-dpi scans of handsome PBGVs being themselves. Photographers will be given a photo credit when their photos are used.

E-mail your photos to Editor Jane Swanson at [sabertails@gmail.com](mailto:sabertails@gmail.com).