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Lifestyle

Pet Wellness

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Meet Trish, a Dog Who Survived Hoarding, Abandonment and Cancer

Once withdrawn, Trish now spends her days with her fur brother and devoted owners.

BY: DIANA BOCCO



Trish's road to a new life began in early 2009, when she was rescued from a dire hoarding situation in Pennsylvania. Trish was one of about 90 dogs taken from "a dog rescue gone wrong." While details are scarce, the place where Trish lived (most likely in a cage) had started as a home-style shelter that couldn't handle the number of animals coming in.

When authorities intervened and seized the animals, the **Humane Society** took charge and put out a call for rescues to take in some of the dogs, which were mostly Chows and Chow mixes. That's when Frances Pu, Trish's future pet parent, first heard the story. "The call went out to [local] Chow rescues to take in and foster the dogs that were not quite ready for the general public to adopt," Pu says.

At the time, Pu already had two dogs: a red male Chow named Mooshu and a Chow mix named Cocoa. Because the rescue group that originally fostered Mooshu was one of several that answered the call from the humane society, Pu heard about the dogs early on.

"I had two dogs already, so I was only looking to foster a female because Mooshu didn't and still doesn't like male dogs his size or larger," Pu says.

Once Pu got to the shelter and started walking along the row of kennels, Trish immediately stood out.

"I looked up and down the row of dogs and saw this white thing that seemed to be very cute," Pu says. "I saw her as I walked along the row of kennels, but when I got close, she ducked outside to a part of the kennel that I couldn't see." Intrigued, Pu asked to meet her.

Trish was a very thin 37 pounds when Pu met her - a healthy Chow or Chow mix should weigh in the high 40-to-50 pounds. "She was incredibly cute, though, and quite friendly," Pu says. Plus, she fit Pu's criteria: she was female. Pu loaded Trish into her car and drove home to New Jersey.

The Bumpy Road to a New Life

Although Trish was given a clean bill of health (aside from her being underweight), Pu soon found out that there was much more going on.

“During the first few weeks at home, I realized pretty quickly that she wasn’t house trained,” Pu says. “I also found out she was food aggressive and started fights with the other dogs over food.” Because these issues were likely connected to cage living and lack of socialization, Pu decided to take things slow and feed Trish in a separate room or in her crate.

Trish had another major issue: aside from Pu, she didn’t really like any other humans. “My mom would visit me and we could not have a conversation, because Trish barked and growled for hours on end,” Pu says.

Pu tried to get her friends to visit to help socialize Trish, but that didn’t work either. “She barked and growled so fiercely that my friends stopped coming and said I was hallucinating, describing a sweet dog that nobody except me had ever seen,” Pu says.

At this point, Pu made the decision that Trish would stay with her permanently. “I figured anyone who adopted her would return her within a few days,” she says. In addition, Pu’s other dog, Cocoa, had been diagnosed with a very aggressive form of cancer that couldn’t be treated, so the timing of adding another pet to the home felt right. “I decided that she was the right dog for me and Mooshu, and adopted Trish.”



Trish's Many Surprises and Challenges

When no one else was around, Trish was sweet and a pleasure to have around. "She was also that rarest of all things: a cuddly Chow who really was as cuddly as the teddy bear she resembled," Pu says.

Pu soon realized something else: Trish was a very smart dog. "I soon found out that she can open doors because I left her in the bathroom and went out on a brief errand and she greeted me at the door to the garage along with the other two dogs when I got home," Pu says. "I also found out she can get out of dog crates because the same thing happened when I put her in a crate and left the house briefly."

Eventually, Pu met somebody. "Despite the fact that she barked and growled at him for hours the first time he came over, he kept coming back," Pu says. It took two years of dating and the boyfriend moving in before Trish started to relax. The move, although stressful at first, proved to be a good thing for Trish. "She's much more comfortable around people now than before he entered my life," Pu says.

Two years after her adoption, Pu noticed a small lesion on Trish's nose. Although she first thought it was a bug bite or scratch, it didn't go away. Even though both Pu and Trish's vet didn't think it was anything serious, they had the lesion surgically removed and biopsied.

It was canine melanoma.

Trish immediately got additional surgery to remove the area around it and received canine melanoma immunotherapy, Pu says. Trish is now cancer-free and on a six-month recheck and immunotherapy schedule.

In addition to living a comfortable, cancer-free life at home with Pu, Trish can add dog model to her resume. “On a lark, I submitted Trish [for America’s Top Dog Model] because everyone who has ever seen Trish think she’s totally cute and adorable,” Pu says. “And she actually became a finalist and Ms. September for **America’s Top Dog Model** 2018 calendar!”

Not bad for a dog that was once withdrawn from the world.



Diana Bocco is a full-time writer and adventurer, whose work has been published in DiscoveryChannel.com, Yahoo!, & Popular Mechanics. [↗ Website](#)
