

## **This Dog's Life** *"Meet Brian and Rachael Bourque"*

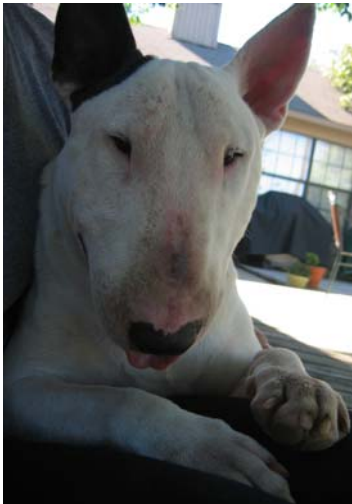
So time passed on and I crossed a full year in this Life. Then one day I moved away from the Ranch, away from the only place I had known and my entire family, three generations of D-Bar dogs all there together. Now I wasn't the first to leave the pack, there was some before me went off down to Houston and Amarillo and God Almighty Oklahoma and I forget where else, but my time came and I faced it like the strong-willed dog my Daddy Najera had taught me to be.

This new beginning began with the appearance of Brian and Rachael Bourque, who come out to the Ranch one Sunday afternoon. I remember the first time I saw them, they were walking around the place with Papa Davis and Mama Kay, staring at some of us dogs and I swear they didn't much care for the site of me. I was jumping and barking, barking and barking and for all that they hardly noticed me. They took one of my kennel mates out for a walk and he was just a pup. They loved all over him, but back he went into the kennel. And then the lead came down off my gate and I got to go out to run with them.

I was so excited. I was jis' over a year old, still a puppy for the most part, and these new people seemed to be interested in me after all. I was rearin' to go and I know I liked to pull that boy's arm off when I bolted from the kennel area. I wanted to show him right off the bat I was a strong one, maybe the strongest on the line that day. I showed him around, but I wasn't even half done with where I wanted to take him, when he got to pulling me back to the kennel and I obeyed. That was it. They left. And I was a little confused.

I forgot about them in a day or so and it was life back to normal. But it wasn't too long after that they showed up again, snooping around the kennel and looking real hard at me this time from a distance. I figured I'd bark some to keep their attention and it must have worked.

There was a big deal at the Ranch that day. There was lots of people, those Britts I told you about before and others and they was having a good time visiting. It was a special day. Papa Davis bathed me up good, one thing led to another, and the next thing I knew it was getting dark and I found myself in the back of a Jeep (which reminds me of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang come to think of it) heading toward the big city. Big D.



After what seemed like a long trip, I barked most of the time, we made it to my new home. In the city and just as strange as strange can be. There I am, no other dogs around I know, nothing I know for that matter. Little did I know everything was about to be different for me from there on out.

This is a photo of me taken on one of those first strange days of my new Life with Brian and Rachael. It was right about Halloween and still hot as I recall. Those first days were kind of rough. I was generally hungry all the time 'cause there was nothing good to eat, but never thirsty. And then there were visits to the hospital and shots and pokes up my butt and down my ears and all sorts of God-awful stuff you never tell a puppy before his first check up. But of course, I was as healthy as a horse before and still am, so it's all the same to me, but apparently was a big comfort to the baseball fan and his main squeeze that the doctor said I was fit as a fiddle.

Yep, those were interesting days, that first, long stretch of being away from home and my entire family. I remember missing my moma and daddy and all the familiar smells, Papa Davis' kind voice, my long walks around the D-Bar Ranch and all the people and other animals I would bark at day in and day out. And sleeping outside on cool nights, listening to the coyotes howl in the distance and the other creatures rustling in the barn. The ranch was a fine place to call home.

Everything was strange about the new place, but little by little, day by day and week by week I got more comfortable with my new surroundings. It was still very boring because there weren't no other dogs around and these new people didn't exactly know what I wanted to eat. But they made up for their lack of understanding by caring for me in a way that I knew showed their interest in my well-being. So I got lots of grooming, especially from the girl, who paid a lot of attention to my ears and my feet and my teeth and my fur and I guess every other part of me that I can't even say I've ever gotten a good look at. Before long I suppose I was all cleaned up, but with no where to go. I was stuck in this new place, but as I soon found out, adventures would be plentiful.



My new home was in the middle of a bunch of other homes that look a whole lot alike and every day I went on long walks with Rachael. She was home with me every day, when the Brian guy left before the sun come up and came back at about dark. These walks were nothing but fun and I got to meet lots of dogs, but none of them looked anything like me. Come to think of it, I don't think there's another Bull Terrier within 10 miles of me, none that I could find and soon enough I'll have for you the proof.

One of the best things about the new place is our neighbor Mr. Taylor. I like two things about Mr. Taylor. One, when he goes out to his mailbox during the hot part of the day, I bark at him and he brings me two cookies. And he has a tabby cat named Bubba. Bubba sneaks into the back yard occasionally when he thinks I'm sleeping. Stealthy as all get out, he creeps around looking for what, I don't know, but half the time I let him be, the other half I give him a run for his money to one of the escape holes they have for him in the fence. I think God put cats on this earth for the strict pleasure of dogs and that's what I think about that.

So, before long, I began to relax at the new place, mainly because there were two people there who obviously cared deeply for me and my well-being. Bull Terriers know this, when they're around people who love them and care for them. And in This Dog's Life, there ain't nothing more important than being loved. Being loved trumps all. Well, a handful of cookies might give a big hug a run for its money. The time would soon come when I'd be short of both those things, hugs and cookies, for eight of the longest days of my life.