

## **This Dog's Life** *"I'm a Show Dog Now"*

Being a Dog with Lost Dog history sure has its benefits. After you're back you get a whole lotta' lovin' and your favorite food like it's Christmas -- over and over again -- and if you tear up something valuable it's okay, because you're the Lost Dog, the Prodigal Son, literally come back from the dead.

All good things must come to an end, they say, and it twern't no different with me after I got back from my 8-day odyssey chronicled heretofore. Even the fact that I was a bona fide celebrity around town couldn't save me from the strangeness that descended upon me soon after my picture came down from all the telephone poles in West Dallas County. Bless my soul, about that time these people I'm watching out for signed me up for training, training to be a Big Time Show Dog! No wonder they worked so hard to get me back, they had plans for This Dog's Life that I had no clue about.

Now, ah'd heard some talk about the big show coming to Fort Worth, but little did I know that before I'd enter the ring I'd have to play-show with a bunch of the strangest, four-legged creatures God put on his blessed earth. Sit back, now, and relax gentle reader, let your mind wander, cause it's gonna' take some gumption to picture what I'm fixin' to lay down fer you here and now.



Training kicked off with a ritual that suited me just fine. Every morning Rachael would bring me into the house and cook me a farmer's breakfast, eggs and bacon, toast and gosh knows what else I'd get. I was on the lean side of 60 pounds and everyone said I needed to fatten' up, so there I am, still kind of sleepy, waiting for my breakfast which looks to be just about ready.

As I look back on those days, I guess the only thing that had prepared me for the worst part of show training was goin' to the hospital, where ah seen all kinds of mangy mutts and broken up bags of bones. Too much sickness at the hospital, can't stand to think of it, and being at training put those deathly thoughts in my mind. Only, these weren't no mutts at training, no strays out the barn getting their infections medicated, these were some high-class pooches come in from North Dallas and Highland Park.

So, there I was, regular as the postman, one night a week, the only Bull Terrier for miles around, hanging out at show dog training down in Ellis County. Night after night I was tradin' fleas with the same dogs, but sometimes a new oddity would show up and cause a raucous. One of the regular ones I got to callin' Poofy, cause of the cloud of fur poised on top her head. Honest Injun, this dog was all done up like one of them French Poodles, but way bigger. So I'm feasting my eyes on this silly looking thing, kinkiness poking out all over, and thinking to myself this ain't no way for a respectable dog to look out in public ... when all of a sudden I get this hard tug on the choker ... and whoa, it's time to stand up straight again and get ready for the treatment.

Yea, yea I know how to stand up straight and I know how to run around in a circle, so I guess this whole thing really ain't about me, it's about Rachael feeling like she's got control of this operation. So I pay attention and do what she wants ... look up at that squeak toy she's got in her hand, nibble on the Whataburger she's rationing out to me. But whoa there Nellie, hold up now, I've got French Poodles and French Fries on the brain next thing I know I got this strange gal is peeling my gums back, lookin' inside my mouth like she lost somethin'! And after that invasion she takes a real risk, reaches around my back side and gives my privates a tug so quick-like she caught me off guard. I turned around to take her pinky off for that insult, but before I could she was done and the lead was tugging me away.

Down the line, I see big and tall Poofy, dancing around and making a scene with this sparkling girlie dog collar I hope Moma Rachael never gets for me. But I guess when you got a hair-do like Poofy, the indignity of a silly collar is immaterial. Speaking of Mommas I look up at Poofy's Moma, and I got a start liked to squat my tail down low and set

my ears back. I'll be dipped in poop if Poofy's Moma didn't have the same crazy hair-do as Poofy, that fine curly mop rising up from the back of her head and that same glittery collar around her neck too! Now there was a sight special all to me. A dog and its human Moma getting' their hair done at the same place and getting their rhinestone collars from Sam Moon to boot. Bless my Bulldog Soul ... if that didn't beat all.

But the wonderment wasn't over, no, by a long shot. At training I saw dogs looked like they belonged in the frozen reaches of Alaska, livin' down here with people in Texas, with so much fur you know they's probably hoping to die when that August sun starts beatin' down. Not like Poofy though, their Moma's weren't wearin' their fur, no sir, you know they got more sense than to wear that kind of get-up in Hot as Hell Texas. And I saw big dogs with a face full hair and couldn't see their feet right in front of them. And sure 'nuff, they's pulling around the ring people got hair all in their face too!

Yessir, the dog training is one of them mixed bags of good and bad, good that so many funny looking dogs show up with their look-alike human companions, but so bad in the way us boy dogs have. I don't know what these teeth checkers get out of lookin' in my mouth, but it sure don't make a lick of sense to me.

But like I said I'm a good dog, I don't lose my cool over stuff like that. Elsewise, there was always some nice dogs there that sniffed my rear and told me hello. "Yea," I'm thinking to myself at that training, "I'm probably the cleanest dog here, ah git a pedicure at least once a week and I get my teeth cleaned too. Ain't none of these dogs cleaner than me, no sir. So go ahead sniff away, look at these pearly whites. Ain't nothing wrong here."

For sure, I was probably the cleanest dog at the once-a-week training, but as it turned out, not even close to the best at staying still at the right time, holding my head right, and walking right on the lead, and since we already talked about the looking-in-the-mouth incidents, well, you get the picture ... my potential as a Champion Show dog is at least in some doubt.



Show dog or pot licker, I knows ah come from Champion Show Dog stock, so after many long hours in training, I was about to get the chance to strut my stuff. Finally, the big show come due and I was all signed up.

First things first, here I am getting groomed by Papa James Davis. I can still hardly keep a dry eye thinking back to that day, when Papa James, for the first time, groomed me up like my Daddy Najera and all my show-dog kin on the D-Bar Ranch. Sure enough, when I got to the show there was all dogs I knew from the D-Bar Ranch, including my sister Pepe and cousin Lou.

I almost couldn't believe it, getting all that attention from Papa James and seein' so many friends and family.

But there I was, something I never thought I'd be, a D-Bar Show Dog getting groomed up and ready for the big-time, dirt ring at the world famous Stockyards in story book Fort Worth, Texas. I was getting ready to butt heads with dogs showed all around the world, handlers and breeders, people who been around Bull Terriers all their life. There I was, taking my place among all them experts and know-it-alls ... taking my rightful place with all them storied D-Bar dogs. Me, Cooter Brown, Lost Dog come back from the dead, starting a new chapter in This Dog's Life.



Well, after the grooming it didn't take long before my time to get in there and show my teeth. Here I am, me and Rachael that is, waiting our turn and looking as good as any out there, I believe. And the best thing ... it wasn't anything like training. We was surrounded by English Bull Terriers, none of these foreign dogs from the Great White North and them other Devilish places like France.

Ah still get a funny feeling when I think of myself as a show dog now. Thinking how I went from regular dog on the D-Bar Ranch, to Lost Dog famous across Dallas County, and now to Show Dog, humbles me.

It's a special thing, being in that ring with Moma Rachael. I'm all done up and she's looking good too. We make a good team together, I think. Two rookies in there with all these experienced folk, been doing this for years, and there we are. No matter to me though, what people, what dogs and what judges are in that ring.

Confidence is important, Rachael kept tellin' me. I was confident cause I'd been to training, but as it turns out, probably not enough training. I didn't do so well in the ring that weekend. Fact is, I plumb lost every day except the Sunday, when I took a Third Place ribbon. That was the highlight. The lowlight was one day before, when this one woman judge come face to face with me and I jis' knew she wanted a good look at my teeth. Ah was so excited and so eager to please, that when she came down to me so friendly like, I jis' reached up, put my paws on her shoulders, and figured I'd get face-to-face with her, lick her ears a little, and give her a good look at my clean teeth.

In hindsight, that turned out to be a very bad decision on my part. I nearly knocked that lady judge back on her fanny and it didn't make things better that she was wearin' a fancy dress and fancy high heels. After that, she told Rachael I had bad "ring manners," and if it wasn't bad enough hearing it from Ms. Fancy Dress Judge, I had to hear it from Rachael time and time again. And just so you know, I won't ever do that again.

So here ends this chapter in This Dog's Life, the new life of being a show dog. I learned some new things, met some new friends and got more sure of some of the old, important things ... one that I'm D-Bar Cooter Brown, come from a long line of quality-bred English Bull Terriers. And two, that I ain't bowing down to no dog in the ring and expectin' no special treatment from no one. I'm gonna compete best as I know how, win or lose ... cause to me the most important thing is taking my rightful place in the D-Bar history of show dogs. And that's what I think about that.

### **This Dog's Life** *"An Itch I Gotta' Scratch"*

In between being a Show Dog and Lost Dog and every other kind of Dog there was to be, once I made it to the city, I came down with an itch that I couldn't hardly scratch, no matter how I twisted my head around or what I found to rub up against. It could have been the seven-year itch for all I know, it sure seemed like I'd had it for seven years before anyone really took notice.

Now I don't recall ever getting itches back home on the ranch, so logically thinking this must have been a newfangled, city ailment. As part of this malady, I came down with hives so bad I once got a fever and for some reason I became obsessed with licking my feet. All this went on to the point where I to go to the doctor vet. Of course, his remedy included sticking a needle in me and making me eat nasty pills for three weeks. Pretty much his remedy for everything, I suppose.

The problem worried the Brian and Rachael of my story to the point where they began doing research on allergies and skin conditions, especially with white dogs like me. Whole books was read and all kinds of internet searches done on dog allergies and remedies. Months went by and my condition improved and then got worse. The doctor vet didn't have the solution and by then I was startin' to loose some fur here and there and also loose a little patience with the situation entirely.



Here I am weighing in at about 55 pounds, pretty light for a full-grown Bull Terrier. Check out at the base of my tail there's some fur missing, Stud Tail the vet called it. Kind of a bad spot I had back then due I think to this whole scenario.

I did my best to help the situation by thinking back to my days on the ranch, which weren't complicated by allergies and what not. Why now, was the question everybody was asking. The food I had been eating in the city now was okay, but for some reason I wasn't getting anymore raw beef, the thing I like the most. I couldn't figure what the deal was and it wasn't like I was in control of the situation, but when my health began to deteriorate what I was eatin' began to concern me and everyone else.

Just about that time ah suppose all the research began to produce some conclusions, one of which was that, basically, I'm a carnivore, tracing my ancestry back to a long line of meat eaters, primarily. Some grains I guess were consumed by my dog ancestors millions of years ago, but best as I can tell they ate mostly meat.

Now I ain't no expert on what all's that dry dog food, but it ain't hard to figure that if there is real meat in there it's in some drastically changed form and is of little benefit to a dog like me. The research told of my need to eat fresh, raw meat and how it contained enzymes and sich that helps convert it all quickly into the nutrients I need to stay healthy, especially maintaining good skin and a shiny coat. And these omega fatty acids -- pretty important in a dog's diet as it turns out -- are also a necessity. The end result of that was that I began to get about a third pound of ground beef with a couple cups of dry food and even fish once a week for a natural source of oils and minerals. And I began getting raw vegetables and fruits for snacks.



About this time there was some terrible commotion in the house and for a month the whole place was a disaster zone. One good thing to come of it was that I got a new place to sleep on the outside for a few days. Here is a picture of me snoozing in my new little spot, inside a cabinet. Too bad it only stayed out there for a few days before I had to go back to sleeping in the house, made especially for me. One of these days I'll tell the wonderful story of my house and how it got made for me and all.

So, after months of itching and suffering and research my new food began to make me feel and look a lot better. I love the carrots, broccoli stems, lettuce and especially tomatoes I get now. Sometimes Rachael holds an apple up to me and lets me nibble off bites off the core. I also get yogurt sometimes and lots of crunchy cookies.

In addition to that, I started getting regular candy vitamins before meals and then they really kicked in the good stuff, cut up steak and raw chicken necks! I can't tell you how much I like those raw chicken necks cut up in my food. Turkey necks too. When all that started appearing in my bowl I was a changed dog. I stopped itching, so I stopped scratching, and I didn't go back to the vet either. And, I gained the weight I needed to look good in the show ring.



By the time this picture was taken I was out of the woods. The whole allergy and skin condition episode was resolved. As soon as I started getting the nutrition I needed the itching stopped, my coat got shiny and the spot on my tailed filled in completely. And I started eating more and gaining some weight.

Here I am at home with Rachael, taking a break from playing with Garfield, one of my favorite cats to torture.

I was feeling better for sure, as good as I had ever, and all thanks to a bunch of good people who took the time to write books and post articles on the internet and everyone else who helped Brian and Rachael get to the bottom of this itching and scratching mystery. What seemed to be an allergy at first, might have been, but the cure wasn't so much keeping me away from certain things in my environment, but making sure I was healthy enough to fight off everything I was exposed to in the grass and in the air. I'm all better now and hope what I learned can be of some use to someone else.