

A WORKING DOG (ROSEBUD, CONTINUING THE LEGACY OF SOPHIE)

By Ted Slupik as told by Rosebud

Among the groups of dogs recognized by the AKC is the “working group”. Although this is a somewhat subjective term, working dogs could also include therapy, herding, guard, search and rescue, and comfort dogs. The herding group was once part of the AKC working group up until 1983 when it was separated out into its own group.



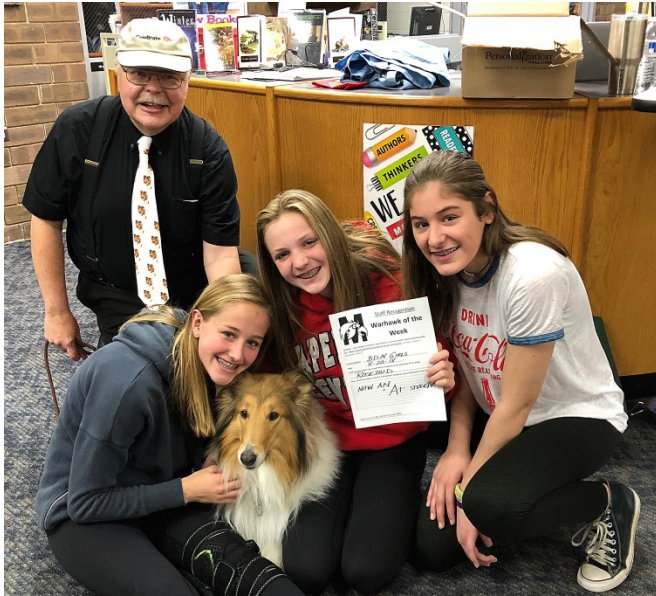
Sophie and me as a puppy

I am now a five year old sable and white rough coated collie and part of the herding group. My name is Rosebud. I am fortunate to be the little sister of Sophie, the best therapy dog ever for over 13 years. As Sophie is now gone, I am continuing her important work and tradition.

One of the things I get to enjoy doing is going to middle schools to talk to the students about volunteering and helping others through animal assisted therapy work. I have had lots of fun doing this and the kids really like me and look forward to my visits.

I have talked to as many as 250 students at one time and they pay extra close attention to me in class. At the school, we demonstrate and create “virtual visits” with one student pretending to be a patient and another student pretending to be a handler. Usually it ends up being pretty funny, like when we imagine that the patient is in the hospital because of a dog bite. Some of the students were so interested in my therapy work that they came with me as junior handlers to a local nursing home to watch me work as a therapy dog. I have now taught twelve junior handlers.





When my owner first started taking me to schools and talking about me, he told everyone that I was his “C” student and that Sophie was his “A” student. I have worked very hard at getting better in my work and this year the middle school students presented me with an “A+” certificate. I have finally moved up in the rankings!

During these school visits, I also get to visit with handicapped and disabled students which I enjoy very much. I don’t know how, but everyone tells me that I have an extraordinary talent in reaching these special kids.



My beginning was simple. I came from a litter of 8 collie puppies and we all looked the same. Can you tell which one I am?



I tried being a “real” working dog for a while and learned sheep herding. I went with a group of 12 collies to sheep herding class. Three of the collies wouldn’t even get in the ring and three others got in the ring and rolled in the “you know what”. I actually herded the sheep, first with smaller ones and then with the large ones. The trainer said that “I was special” because I was the only collie that could herd both clockwise and counter-clockwise. I got an “A” in sheepherding!

Although I liked herding, my main job is animal assisted therapy work. I perform my job weekly at a local nursing and rehabilitative care facility on Sundays. Some Sundays, I work alone and other Sundays I work with my friend, Brody. (More about that story next time.)

I also help teach and train other dogs to be animal assisted therapy dogs. My owner and I have taught and graduated almost 40 dogs from during a one on one class during the last 4+ years. Many of our therapy dog students are also senior dogs. I worked with Sadie, a puppy mill dog that was rescued after spending her life in a crate. She had to learn to walk; first on carpet and then on hard surfaces. Then there was Frankie, an abandoned white German Shepard dog who was found with buckshot in his chest. Originally, he was very afraid of people, especially men. He eventually was very sweet and learned to like everyone again. Then there was Bella, a seven year old blind poodle. Being blind did not deter her from becoming a therapy dog. First Bella followed me around by scent, into each room at the nursing home. Then she learned to follow her owner’s voice commands, following her instructions and the sound of her voice to know where to go. Once Bella graduated, most residents scarcely realized that she was blind. Everyone tells me what a great teacher I am after they graduate.

I have had lots of fun working at the nursing home. I still have a ways to go to catch-up with my sister Sophie who, over 13 years, spent over 2,000 hours doing therapy work. Gosh, if I did therapy work **every day** for an hour and a half for the next four years, I might get there!

The residents at the nursing home that I visit enjoy the holidays the most. I dress up for all the major holidays including St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas which makes everyone I meet smile. Looking forward to participating, the residents invite visiting family members to enjoy us dogs too. For any children who may feel a bit uncomfortable visiting relatives in a nursing home, seeing us dogs in fun costumes is comforting. Over the years, I have developed a special connection with these people.



I love my work. I get to see so many happy and smiling faces when I greet them. Most of my dog friends that come with me also instinctively know how to live life to the fullest every day. I try to teach this to whomever I meet. My goal is to be an incredible impactful therapy dog that achieves something few can say they did; bringing joy, hope and warmth to people without uttering a single word. My owner tells me that "every dog that visits is special and **every day is a gift**"!