

Where have you been all these years!?

My husband and I worked overseas for years where we had no pets on military installations. When we returned home we often visited PetSmart to “play with other people’s dogs”. We enjoyed the fun part while their owners have to do all the “work”.

Right after Christmas we visited a pet store to play “with other people dogs” as usual. The Store manager pointed out a group of puppies and asked if we wanted to play with any of them. That’s when we saw a Bugg - just a huge head with eyes and four little legs. Once we took him into our arms we could never let him go. Needless to say he came home with us the same day.

While Buggy was pretty easy to train we felt as he trained us even easier. We jumped with every noise he made at night, every time he moved in his kennel and on any signs that he might want to use a bathroom. Buggy proved to be a very active, happy, little boy craving attention 24/7. It seemed natural to try to find him a matching playmate.

I searched the MidAmerica Boston Terrier Rescue ( MABTR) rescue postings for months with this mental image of a “picture perfect” black and white Boston Terrier that would be able to keep up with Buggy all day long and that’s when I came across the photo of Paige: five years old, “red head”, puppy mill rescue...nothing like what I had in mind. But, there was just something about her. MABTR informed us that Paige is coming from a puppy mill and that she is extremely timid. After a lot of correspondence exchanged between MABTR and us, Mike and I requested to visit Paige to observe her reaction to Buggy.

The foster family warned us that Paige is good with other dogs but she is very shy and might not be able to function well at this point in a busy environment. We gave it a shot and met Paige. Not once, but twice. Buggy was playing like crazy with all the dogs in the group while we watched Paige carefully and learned how timid she truly was. She preferred to keep her distance, did not like the human touch, could not walk on a leash and had no idea what peanut butter is!? What? Every dog should know what peanut butter is, right?

But, while we were visiting the foster family I noticed that Paige was interested in my husband and she expressed some curiosity here and there. She came across as very gentle, dying to play (just had no idea what to do) and showed NOOOOO defensives or aggression whatsoever. My thought was “As long as her curiosity can beat the fear, she will be able to learn and experience new things.” We signed the papers and took Paige home with us. Oh, yes, let me mention that Paige could not even get into a vehicle by herself. Try to pick up a dog while she is terrified of human touch. Imagine how that makes her feel about getting into a truck!?



Soon we had to take her on a four hour car ride and she did great! She stayed in the back seat, did not look too comfortable but not overly concerned either. To our delight, we learned that she used the bathroom only outside when we made a few stops.

Now, we had this little person at home that we knew nothing about except the fact that EVERYTHING must be very new to her. She could not climb a stairs, could not walk through the doors with a person walking next to her, knew nothing about treats, could not walk on a leash, did not allow us to pet her, could not jump into a car and we are supposed to teach her something while she does not really care much about us!?

That evening Bugsy was cranky from the long ride. He had to share his toys and attention for the first time. He did not look very interested in Paige. She did not know what to make of the leash, did not like anything to touch her belly and back (so, harnesses were not much help), could not walk through the doors with a person, had no understanding of basic commands, no concept of “outside” and no reason why she would not go in the house. Every so often she ran back to her kennel. Mike and I looked at each other afraid to admit what we were thinking. “What have we done!? What should we do with her?”

For a long time, instead of using a conventional leash, we used light, loooong strap. As long as Paige did not feel any pressure on her harness she decided to ignore the fact that the long strap was connecting her with a human. I had to prop open the doors, walk outside and call her to make her leave the house. She was afraid to walk through such a “tight opening” and she would NOT walk through with person walking next to her. When she felt pressure from the leash she would start thrashing around like a mad bull in an arena. It was so hard to watch. While she was not soiling the kennel she had no problem soiling the house. While we wanted Bugsy to have someone to play with we had to keep them both in a kennel to establish a routine. We were so good about taking Paige out that she did not have a chance to soil in the house for weeks at time, but we were struggling to make her proud of herself and how to prize her when she is scared to death of a human touch. We discovered a training treat from Nature’s that worked great with Paige! At one point we thought she is going out only to earn her treat without making a direct connection about being rewarded for what she does outside. It seems like she was thinking: “I go out – I get treat.” She started going out on (what we call) “fly by(s)”. She would get out of the house, turn around, come right back in and go straight to the place we keep her treats.

We learned the foster Mom did a great job with petting Paige’s face. To this day, she prefers her face to be petted over her belly or back. Paige also knew her name before she arrived at her new home. She has always been very responsive when we call her name.

When our immediate neighbor, an 80-yr old lady met Paige for the first time she commented that Paige has very sophisticated name. We all feel as it matches her perfectly. She is very sweet.

While Paige and Bug don’t show any food aggression we kept individually dedicated food bowls for them to be able to monitor what they ate. They share everything else...or almost everything. While Paige used to hoard toys at the foster home she does not care to collect toys at home. She likes to check the toy box from time to time to see what’s in there. Bugsy drags his “security blanket” everywhere he goes and he appreciates that Paige has no interest in his blankets. While Bugsy looooveeees to play and wrestle Paige is not much of a wrestler herself. She prefers tug-a-war and snatch it and shake it game. We usually cheer loud and encourage her to continue to play when we see her showing initiative or being competitive. She is very considerate and giving. We feel as sometimes we need to watch to make sure that Bugsy does not take an advantage of her. When Bugsy realized that she is following him EVERYWHERE, he came up with this little trick: in the morning when he rings the bell on the door to go outside, Paige will run to the door thinking they are going to use the bathroom together, but Bug runs to her treat that she leaves behind. Now, we usually give her one treat and when Bug goes after it we give her another one. He has only one mouth. By the time he finishes eating her first treat Paige has a chance to eat hers, too.

The first few months Paige preferred to sleep in her kennel. Sometimes she ran there when she was looking for a safe spot. After awhile she learned to jump on a couch and lay by our feet while we were watching TV at night. In the morning we would take her directly from her kennel outside and she was



doing well with not soiling in the house. Then, Mike decided to let her sleep in our bed. She woke up every time someone moved and barked and kept us all awake. But, as time went by she started to love the fact that she can sleep together with her family. We noticed that she is doing a little bit better with us passing her next to the dining room table or other places where she would normally turn around and run. Mike used to leave his socks or T-shirt in Bug's kennel when he was a puppy. For some reason he decided to do the same with Paige. I think it was a good idea to help her to bond with us on a subconscious level. She could learn more about us without a direct physical contact, which was the biggest stress factor in her case.

Paige is pretty quiet around the house. We hear her barking when she is "backing up" Buggy's house-watching sessions or when she gets wound up while playing. She has a funny, husky bark. Oh, yes, it's no fun to hear her growling. If one of use gets up in the middle of the night and wakes her up on our way back to the bed she growls like she is ready to fight for her life. We turn the lights on and ensure she recognizes us before we come back into the bed. She is sweetest girl ever with no signs of aggressive behavior, but there is no reason to test her nerves in the middle of the night in the darkness while she is awakened from a deep sleep.



You heard of the "Snoring like a Lumber Jack" phrase, right? To apply this to Paige's case would make no justice. She can awaken the dead with her loud snoring. I always wondered how the foster Mom could even let her go when Paige is so sweet. But, her snoring explains everything.

Paige snoring: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xX0HFFS4KIk>

While Paige does not show much interest in commands and does not seem to have a talent for tricks one of the first words she learned was – home. We can stand around the house or get out of the vehicle if I tell her: "Go home, Paige. Go home." She runs toward the entry doors as fast as she can. Who knows what home means to her...but she always runs like a train when we tell her to go home.

Bugsy and I used to go for a walk every day. When I come home, I pick him up and walk for two miles to Mike's office where we jump in a car and come back. It sounds pretty simple except when we add Paige to this story. She despises the leash and she does not like long walks. Oh, well, it looks like any walk turns into a looong walk for her. After 10 – 15 minutes of walking she would just sit down and refuse to go on. If I take the leash off she would bounce happily, but if I try to make her walk with us she would act



like a stone statue. I had to pick her up and carry her home several times. For the fact that she does not like to be picked up it is awfully strange that she would not mind me carrying her around when she decides that she is too tired to walk any further. Instead of attaching the leash at back of harness where it was flopping in the wind behind her back I started to hook it to the side where she can see it. Sometimes she would not mind, sometimes she shows us clearly how she feels about leash.

When Paige finally made peace with leash (she still gives us evil eye, but she'll let us walk her on leash)



she learned to walk only on the right side and jump in the vehicle only through the driver's doors. She starts to thrash if she feels the leash is tightening up and would run around the vehicle in circles until we open the driver's doors. When we took Paige and Bug to PetSmart for bathing I bet personnel thought that we were joking with them when we told them that she only walks on the right side and to make sure to keep her leash loose. If they remove her leash, Paige will happily follow Buggy wherever they take him to.

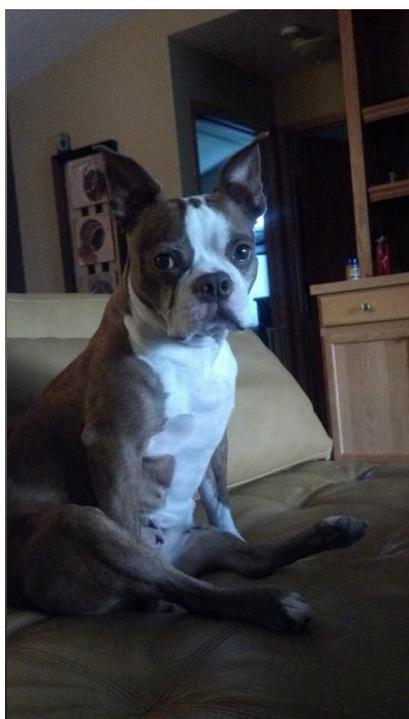
Did we give Paige a break and let her acclimate slowly? Not really. Considering the fact that she might have never been in a vehicle before she became a ride maniac (trying to jump into every black truck parked down the street that reminds her of ours), we took her for a canoe adventure in the first few months of having her at home, visited the dog park, stayed at Mike's parents place (full of other dogs and cats), dressed her in hoodies and organized fire pit nights with friends... While reading about timid dogs that are coming from puppy mills I feel that we are pretty fortunate. Paige's progress might be at slow pace but she is doing pretty well. We are lucky that she is not afraid of storms and does not run away from strangers. She is very interested in new faces and dying to meet them, she just likes to maintain her "safe, personal bubble".



Paige is not overly gracious or athletic (no joke, who knows where and how she spent the last five years). At the beginning when she just learned how to climb on the couch she would sit by the edge and happen to roll off. Instead of landing softly she would fall down like a little stump. Thump! On one occasion, while Buggy and Paige were playing she grabbed a toy and jerked her head back to pull it out of his mouth. She hit the edge of the bed with her eye wide open. Needless to say, we had to take her to vet. We were given drops to use twice a day. While Paige was not crazy about receiving drops she seemed to have short memory loss as soon as we show her a treat. She did not back off and run. In matter a fact, we felt

that drops helped her to like human contact. The vet suggested we can use artificial tears if we think this is helping.

We had to go back to vet for a few months before her ulcer healed completely. If the vets are allowed to have their “favorite patients”, we believe Paige will be their favorite. She stands still and lets the vet complete their exam with no trouble. She is the easiest and the sweetest patient they can have. She usually forgives them with all of the trouble they put her through as soon as she gets her treats.



Despite her less than athletic moves and unbelievably loud snoring Grandma says that Paige is a real girl. And she is right. Paige sits funny on her own feet, has a little pigmentation on her face that makes her look like she is wearing lipstick and she is amazingly sweet. We don't know if we learned to read her facial expressions over the time we have spent with her or if she developed some facial expressions while she was with us. We recognize thus when she is ready to jump in a bed, when she is pouting her lips for some reason or when she is trying to understand what we are saying.

The best thing of all is that Paige and Bug get along so good, like they have spent every day of their lives together. When one goes to vet – they both go together. If Bugg goes outside to use the bathroom – she follows. She is following him everywhere, but she also has her favorite spot on chase next to window and she likes to spend some “Paige time” snoozing on that chaise.

Playtime is something else. Playing fetch for us looks like this: one long pass for Bug while Paige is chasing HIM around, then throwing ball straight into Paige's mouth to make her feel a joy of “fetching”. She trashes ball around a few times before she drops it. Bug picks ball up and brings it to us for his long pass.

While it looked very possible that Buggy will show her how to use the bell to get our attention to open the doors she had no idea the bell is hanging on the door. She does not know how to alert us to open the doors for her. Even now, nine months later she would just act funny: give us a silly stare, walk toward doors until she realizes they are closed or wait silently until someone decided to offer her the opportunity to go outside and then she runs out in a hurry to do her business. Oh, and forget a cold weather. She is not a cold weather kind of girl. When we open the doors and she feels a breeze on her face, she squats down and goes before she steps out of the house while we don't even get a chance to say: “No”.

As much as Buggy does not like doggy clothes Paige enjoys wearing her hoodies. I thought that she likes staying warm, but it could be that it is just giving her a nice secure feeling like a calming wrap. We never had a reason to try use the calming wrap for any of them, but I can see how it could have a positive, calming effect. She usually wears a hoodie, but if we are leaving the house she wears a puffy vest on the top of it.

Paige is the sweetest girl ever...if we want to take her outside and play – she'll play. If we want to sit on couch and watch TV she will become a couch potato.



If one was looking for a cuddly, affectionate companion, she certainly would have not been one. But we were looking for a companion for Bug and she could not be a better choice! They act like they never spent a day without each other.



Paige still likes her space and loves to sit in sunny spots in the house by herself, while Bug is more “Velcro” type. She went from looking for the safe spot and sitting in the kennel by herself to sleeping in our bed and looking for attention when we play with them or when we pet them. Recently, she decided that she was going to move from the back seat in the vehicle to the mid console (leaning on the seat and sniffing our face and hair). If we go to the carwash she even jumps in our lap (the carwash seems pretty scary to her).

Paige likes to smell the flowers like they are some little miracles that she has never seen before. She runs up and down the yard from pure joy (just because), gets thrilled about car rides (even if they are only grocery store runs), and she looks lost when snow covers the ground and hides her potty spots.

We hope that one day we will be able to trust her fully with leaving them alone in the house. For now, we limit our time away for a no more than a couple of hours and make sure that Paige uses the bathroom before we leave. But, if this is the only issue we have to deal with – we have already found a good system. We cannot be happier to have her. We feel we are very lucky that Paige is not holding grudges and she seems to be very curious. She is not near to being a bad example of timid dog. We feel as she left her previous environment on time to learn what the real life is about.

If we would put her potty training in some timeframe it pretty much looked like this:

First month or two Paige ran for a safe spot from time to time when things became overwhelming for her. So, we never even tried to school her. About two-three months later when she learned to jump on a couch and snooze by our feet while we are watching TV, we decided to let her sleep in our bed. We noticed that she is becoming friendlier, but she was still quite timid. We waited a good six months before we used any correction words toward her. She does not like to be in trouble. As soon as we say: “Ah’-ah’!” she freezes for a second and looks back at us to see what she is doing wrong. Since we could not school her about potting in the house we created a routine that helped us to avoid accidents in the house. But as soon as things get out of whack we found a little puddle. It was a sign that she is not getting potty trained just by going outside when we take her out (every few hours). With this system in the place Paige just has not had a chance to soil the house. About six months into her arrival (after she started to sleep in our bed) Paige would wake us up every night by jumping off the bed to use the bathroom. Often, we are

able to hear her jumping off of the bed and we take her outside, but even more often we used a spot cleaner in the middle of the night. Six months after arriving home I decided to wait until I saw Paige jumping off the bed and waited for her to start to pee in the bedroom. Simple “Ah'-ah'!” worked great and we were able to stop her in her act and take her outside. We took several attempts before she realized that we don't like her doing her business inside. Now we have a baby gate on bedroom doors and she barks for us to take her outside if she needs to go. We just don't know why she is not using any signs to alert us when she needs to go out through the day. She acts like we can read her mind.

When Paige first arrived home she got attached to Bug in a “mother like”, protective way. If we were playing with Bug it was always under her watchful eye. We think Bug was like a bridge between us. She could see the way we were treating him and noticed that the noise we would make actually means something. A few months into living with us Paige realized that we come “in a package”. She did not only find a “puppy” she adopted, she found her family.



We are looking forward to some sunny days. We would like to take them for a bike ride this summer. We hope Paige would not mind to sit in a kid's cart. She already experiences canoeing. She got a little life jacket and we had to hold her in our arms until we set down in canoe, but she found her comfy spot and after 10-15 minutes she was ready to snooze. We don't know if she is going to be interested in swimming at all but she seems to like “floating” down the river on our “slow water”, “effortless as possible” canoe “adventures”.

Every so often we can see her “smiling” and we love giving her a reason to smile. She is incredible little person and we are looking forward to learning more about her.



Before



Paige on her way home...

After



Paige now days...