

Ashley – Our New Addition
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After being a one-dog family for the past six months since our elderly Dalmatian, Katie, died last November, we added an 8 month old female Dalmatian to our family. Ashley came to us about a month ago, having been found as a stray in a small town in the southwestern part of the state. She is a beautiful little girl and she is also a “wild child” personified. She has succeeded in humbling us both.

We have had to remember the hard way what supervising a puppy really means. In the past few weeks, we have personally experienced almost every puppy problem we have helped other frustrated pet owners work with.

Not only was Ashley not housetrained, but she had several urinary tract problems. We discovered these after taking a urine sample to our veterinarians when regular housetraining procedures seemed to be going nowhere.

Ashley never met a stranger. Her brand of greeting is taking a flying leap at people from about 2 feet away. She isn't content to just put her paws up - she aims for the chin, and has connected a number of times.

Ashley needs to have something in her mouth most of the time. If we're lucky, it is one of the numerous toys we have purchased for her. Her favorites are Booda bones and any kind of tug-toy she can use to play with Mocha, our other Dalmatian. But if she has the chance it can be anything - shoes, socks, makeup, pieces of wood, plants from our flower garden, pieces of paper from the trash, etc. etc.

One of her favorite games is chasing Buffett, our big male cat. She likes barking at him so he'll hiss and run. Another cat-related game is to clean out the litterbox, which when she attempted, caught herself in a folding gate and knocked over a free-standing jewelry case.

Ashley also likes steak fajitas from Taco Bell, having stolen one from the table when we were not watching. Although Ashley's puppy antics can make us both grind our teeth, we love her zest for life. We are learning a lot from her, and Mocha is a happy boy as Ashley is a tireless playmate.

But we are seeing glimmers of sanity. Ashley is starting to sit rather than jumping up and we haven't had any housesoiling for a couple of weeks. When she rolls over on her back to be petted, or cuddles up close to take a nap, we can see her potential waiting to be developed with our patience, understanding, training, and love. (Oops - Ashley's peeing - that's what happens when we try to get some work done rather than watching puppy!)