



Calliope Labradors

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LABRADOR RETRIEVERS ARE PEOPLE DOGS.

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I have been a breeder and competitor in the world of Labradors since 1979. During that time I have met countless families and individuals that tell me how difficult their Labrador has been as a puppy or a young dog. In my moments of story telling, I can pass on some doozies like the female yellow lab that was left in the kitchen and she removed all of the kitchen cabinetry decorative handles, in less than 4 hours.

I love this breed to the depths of my soul, but I am also honest about their upbringing challenges. When a Labrador becomes a "mature" settled friend they are completely trustable, but for the most part while a baby they are inventive, energetic, and very smart. Smart is delightful but a challenge, especially when they learn to open gates or doors. They can empty a cupboard faster than a three year-old. I always advise my clients, that if things get really quiet in your house; that is your first clue the pup is into something really "fun" that you probably will not find entertaining.

Because they are so smart with all these natural skills, they are the most highly regarded breed for Search and Rescue, Bomb detection, Drug officers, and of course Canine-Companions, for folks with physical disabilities, and Guides for the Blind.

These wonderful animals learn quickly and love a JOB to do. They are strong enough to retrieve birds for a hunter all day with energy to spare. In the early days back in the mother countries before being imported to America, they were used as fishing net retrievers off ocean going fishing trollers. The fishermen used the dogs as a way to

retrieve their nets full of fish back to the boats. This is why living in a small back yard *quietly* is not really on their natural agenda.

My handy coined phrase I say often to new Labrador Retriever owners, is that if they run into difficulties with the puppy, it is probably "owner-operator difficulties". These Lab babies need people time. If they don't get it you can have many adventures in repairing the garden, the lawn furniture, the kids toys, the sprinkler system, and anything else that looks like a lot of fun to remodel or re-arrange. My poor daughter had many dolls with no heads, feet or hands while she was growing up with my Labs.

However, the solution is easy. Spend time, and turn off the television. Another phrase my clients hear from me is "you just bought an exercise machine with a leash". There is really not much you cannot teach your Labrador Retriever. But the bottom line is that the more time you spend with your puppy and youngster, the better dog you will have. It is hard to beat the friend that this breed naturally is to small children, other animals and they seem befriend even non-dog-lovers, and usually win them over.

I am extraordinarily proud of the Labradors that have become accomplished dogs in their "JOB", bred at my kennel. Like STAR, who takes care of a 16-year-old boy in Texas. The boy lives on an iron lung with many ailments in a wheelchair. He wanted to go to school with out nurses and aids accompanying him everywhere. Star was trained to know the alarms on the boys' monitors and to carry books, turn on and off lights, open doors, pick up pencils and other things dropped, and ride in the school bus, and guide his owner to classrooms. Star made this boys' dream come true of being more normal. Star even retrieves Frisbees that his charge has learned to throw into the pool, at home. Star is an example of what range of ability that this breed has to be a working companion.

Many of us know that they are the best friends ever, but others have

had the experience of hyper-activity, jumping, digging, barking, and a general destruction derby. This is usually a sign of lack of human interaction on a learning level.

If you have a Lab that is incorrigible and seemingly impossible it is usually a people problem not a dog problem.

The caveat is that generally if there are two or more children in the home, the Labrador will be very busy and mostly tired all the time if the children are outdoorsy and active kids. This may be the one situation that lots of training time occurs by accident, with time spent playing.

A story I tell is of the lady with 5 young boys who took home their black male Labrador, and they spent no time "training". Within the first year, she called me often to share that the dog, 'Cory' played soccer, baseball, basketball, and was the resident skateboard puller of kids, off to the park.

Most of the pups I place into homes are required to be pets and friends to their family and even the other dogs of other breeds that live in the home. Their popularity is well deserved and earned because of all the love they give, and the solid dependable personality traits found in a Lab.

I have had the privilege of becoming the friend to many owners of all walks of life and being amazed at how Labrador Retrievers adapt to planes, boats, race cars, horses, tractors, road trips, motor homes, fishing, bird hunting, hiking, camping, office mascots, doctors offices, therapy dogs, old folks homes, kindergarten baby sitters, swimming companions, Frisbee dogs, agility winners, duck blind hunters, and the list goes on and the many tales are heartwarming.

The moral of the story in Labrador Retriever ownership, is that they are flexible, intelligent, willing, energetic, happy, and reliable, but they

need people to mold them into the greatness that is inside the 8 week old ball of fluffy, wiggly, licking, chewy, pup you bring home. The gift of your time and dedication is repaid every step of the way through a Labradors natural ability to accommodate all that you ask of them and all that you teach them.

The normal healthy life span of a sporting breed dog is 12 to 15 years and the secret is healthy variety diet, lots of exercise and cardio vascular work, plenty of love and companionship, water to swim and play in, toys or stuff to retrieve, and most of all reward for all they do that pleases their human, no matter how small.

Labradors have such strong genetic traits, that even a mixed breed Lab is usually displaying mostly Labrador likeness. Many clients think they have owned a Lab in their past, but when they see a well-bred Labrador dog or a show entry, sometimes they say "my Labrador didn't look like that." Probably not, but the greatness was still in there.