

Hi Everyone,

I have been away from my mail box for quite some time showing, training and trail riding and don't know if any of you wrote in with something you want me to discuss. I just thought I would tell you something that I am involved in with my person Kathleen and her D@#! puppy, Cracker Jack, the 10 month old Jack Russell Terrorist.

Eight months ago Kathleen told me that she was thinking of getting a new puppy...I groaned just thinking about what that would mean for me....endless walking rides with her calling the puppy in a loud voice [and me with super hearing] and then having that same puppy in between my legs and in front of me when I actually am able to trot or canter - YIKES! The entire subject gave me a headache.

Well, it didn't matter what I thought, Kathleen got Cracker Jack anyway and my life ALMOST went to hell immediately. The thing that saved me was that Cracker was too small to come to the barn all winter. That didn't last for long, unfortunately! This spring he was Kathleen's constant companion. However, I was able to get a little rest because of the puppy. Kathleen took him to training classes [clicker training] during some of the time she would normally spend with me and Joey, my cute little sister.

I heard Kathleen talking to her friends and besides normal obedience she wanted to teach Cracker to ride in my cart while we go down the road or when showing! Can you imagine....I will have to pull a DOG around as well as my person Kathleen....who would have thought that it would come to this? How demeaning!!!

Well after several months of training classes that D@#! puppy still had too many insides for his skin to hold in....he just wanted to explode in every direction. His favorite thing is to jump up very high on anyone who pets him and lick inside their mouths or if he is licking your face and sitting on your lap at the same time he tries REALLY hard to lick inside your nose...he is a TOTAL pest. One day we were nose to nose in my turnout and he actually licked my nose too...the indignity of it all!

Well, back to the story....to save my feelings, I think, my person started training the puppy to sit in a wicker basket on the floor at home. Kathleen bought this basket because it would fit on the cart seat and it also was woven so that a strap could be threaded thru it that would secure the basket to the seat back of the cart. Cracker progressed to jumping into and sitting in the basket when it was on the floor while he waited to get a treat. Then Kathleen put the basket on the bed and sat next to it. The pup would jump in and sit and then Kathleen would bounce up and down like it was attached to the cart seat and I was driving...how WEIRD. Kathleen told me that David, her husband, caught her at this more than once and couldn't stop laughing at the sight!

Well, that D@#! puppy got used to it all...who would have thought. He even likes to sit in the basket! The next step was to attach the basket to the cart seat and teach Cracker to jump up and in and just sit there. Now you understand that even I thought that this dog was quite small [12 lbs] to be able to jump up the cart steps and into the cart and up on to the seat but I watched the

entire process and that D@#! puppy “got it” right away. Even when the shafts are on the shaft stand and the D@#! puppy is loose he goes right for the back step and jumps up and in and sits there like he was born to do it. Of course he got lots and lots of little treats when he did it right.

So there I was watching all this happen and I KNEW that it wouldn't be long before I was hitched and that D@#! puppy would be riding with Kathleen and sticking his tongue out at me. It happened sooner rather than later. No one could keep Cracker out of the seat basket and so we went for a short drive...only at the walk and my person made that Cracker sit each and every time he stood up...he was a bit nervous [snicker]. After about 3 short and slow drives, thank you very much Cracker, we progressed to a slow trot and Cracker again had to be reminded to sit over and over again. All this time I was on my own. I was in charge because Kathleen had her hands full restraining the puppy from jumping out and telling him to sit and pushing his butt down in the basket dozens of times during the drive.

Well, as it usually happens, slow and steady training really works....Cracker got trained to be a carriage dog. Several weeks ago we entered our very first “Carriage Dog Class”. Cracker, dressed in a bow tie to match Kathleen's driving apron, had to stay in his basket without being tied or jumping out for an entire pleasure driving class....and he DID! I was actually proud of him for being able to keep all his insides inside his skin for the entire class...not an easy feat when you are a 10 month old Jack Russell Terrorist. He almost lost it when the judge inspected us in line up...I could see out of the corner of my eye that Cracker REALLY wanted to lick inside the judge's mouth or up his nose <GRIN>. After all, they were on the same level and he wouldn't even have to jump up to do it. Cracker won the class and besides a blue ribbon he was given a HUGE basket of doggie goodies that included a stuffed toy and several kinds of goodies as well as shampoo, and chew bones and I don't know what all....he is a lucky dog!

Since the show Kathleen and I have taken Cracker for some really nice drives and he has learned how to jump out and run when it is allowed and safe and also how to jump back in when I stop trotting. We all went up to the Saratoga State Park for a pleasure drive and picnic with 3 other horses [a single and a pair] and their people. I was the only one with my own dog! Cracker was able to keep his mind and stay sitting in the basket for a 2 hour drive and he wasn't even tied...who would have thought! I guess I am proud to have such a nice dog.