

I'm a Dog Like No Other-Appreciate My Differences!

By Chris Shaughness

A Golden is a Golden, right? Every one looks the same and acts the same? Of course not! There are colors ranging from mahogany red to the lightest cream. Short thick curly hair or long flowing locks, black noses or pink noses, big square heads or narrow delicate heads . and so on. Just as looks differ, so do personalities. I have met more than three hundred Golden Retrievers in the many years I have volunteered at DVGRR and remarkably, each has had a unique personality. Some are energetic and playful; others are more reserved and quiet. Among the playful ones, some covet tennis balls while others would rather rip apart a soft toy to get the squeaker out! The differences are endless.

And yet, many potential adopters come to DVGRR in hopes of finding a Golden who looks or acts "just like the one they lost." Many of us have had a dog who touched our hearts more than any other canine companion. And when he or she passed away, it was like losing our best friend or even a child. It could be that this dog had certain behaviors or personality traits that we adored, and that fit seamlessly into our daily routine. Perhaps he or she never had any bad habits, or maybe those indiscretions were just too long ago in the past to remember clearly! Whatever the reason, some of us (perhaps without even realizing it) feel the need to try as hard as possible to replicate the dog we just lost, the one dog for whom we will grieve forever.

While such a desire is understandable, we must be careful not to set impossible standards for the dogs who may come into our lives in the future. Some people compare every dog to the "perfect" dog and no other dog is ever as good. Sadly, that can lead to frustration for both the owner and the dog. It's just not possible, nor is it fair to the new dog who wants to be loved and appreciated for who he or she is.

Each dog's appearance and personality is derived from his or her genetic background and how they were raised, just like humans and all other creatures. No two people or dogs are alike. Instead of trying to recreate the looks or behavior of a beloved dog, realize that every dog has his or her own special kind of love to give you and something new to teach you. Honor the memories of your previous dog by knowing that your old dog's love will always be with you, but strive to appreciate your new dog for his or her own uniqueness. You will not be disappointed! And know that one day in the distant future, this "new" dog will be the one holding that spot in your heart that feels like it can never be replaced.