

Thoughts on Maxx

Just after Christmas, 2008 we went to meet Maxx. We loaded Cinnamon into Liz's car and drove down to Inver Grove Heights to see if the two dogs would get along. Cinnny waited in the car while we went inside briefly, and there was Maxx on the couch. He looked enormous. That was the first "tiger-striped" Dane I'd ever seen, and he was quite a sight. We decided to get Cinnny, bring her in, let them meet and then take them outside into the backyard to get to know each other. Everything went pretty smoothly, and Maxx was a real charmer, so we made the deal then and there. Next problem: getting both Danes in the car. Our solution was for Liz to ride in the backseat with Maxx, and Cinnny sat in the reclined passenger seat next to me. It worked.

After we got home, we let Maxx sniff around the yard a bit and headed inside. He looked around very little, and settled himself on the floor in the dining room. He was initially very stand-off-ish. It really took him quite awhile to open up. Also, he didn't bark, growl, or make any noise at all at first. And he wouldn't set foot in the back half of the house where the bedrooms and bathroom are; only the living room, kitchen, and his favorite place in the dining room. We did discover, however, that he liked to play with pull-toys.



Shortly after arrival.

Slowly, he started to warm up a bit, and began to explore the rest of the house. One day, out of nowhere, he just strolled into the bedroom like it was no big deal. And then he really started showing the Maxx traits we would marvel over. First there was the odd habit of pulling a blanket over his head when he wanted to sleep. At first, I thought it was just an odd accident when I saw his head buried, but one evening, as he was settling down for the night, I saw him intentionally doing it. He'd pull the blanket up, throw it in the air and hide his head underneath.



Sleeping (and falling off the couch...)

Unfortunately, he really liked to eat pillows and blankets. He pretty much ate all the back cushions off of his couch, went through about four blankets, and chewed through a myriad of other pillows and such. On one memorable occasion, he found a pillow that was evidently full of feathers, chewed off the corner and filled the living room with its contents. Picking up foam, fabric and the like was a normal part of every day.

After demolishing another blanket, Liz gave him one that had Green Bay Packers logos all over it, which he immediately started eating. Being a Vikings fan, it always made me smile when cleaning up the dog doo in the backyard and encountering the Packers logo in his turds.

He also had a real knack for interior decorating. He was constantly re-arranging pillows, cushions, blankets, anything he could. One weekend afternoon, I came around the corner into the living room and discovered that he had completely emptied the couch of its cushions, pillows and blankets and built himself a fort in the middle of the floor. I had to get a picture of that one. I played no part at all in it: that's all Maxx.



Couch-Fort.

His relationship with Cinnamon was complicated. They had a relatively minor tiff shortly after he arrived, and it appeared that Cinny took a higher position than Maxx. But by and large, they got along pretty well. They played together once in awhile in the back yard, but they never seemed real close, although one of Maxx's favorite things on Earth was sniffing her butt. As time went by and Maxx came more out of his shell, there was a certain competition between them for attention. If you spent too much time with one, the other would come over and demand their own. I think she misses him now.

Speaking of coming out of his shell, who knew that the dog who wouldn't utter a sound when we first got him would turn into such a vocal boy? I remember Liz and I looking at each other rather stunned when he finally let out his first bark; we'd never really heard his voice before. As time went by and he became more sure of his home, he became increasingly vocal. He barked, whined, howled, growled and yes, even sang a little.

Then there was the dancing. It became known as the Maxxican Food Dance. When breakfast or supper time came, and the food preparation began, he would get all excited and pace back and forth in the most ridiculous way. It was hilarious. And if you didn't move with enough urgency, he'd start rearing up on his hind legs and vocally berate you.



On the Patio.

Maxx definitely became a part of the family. We had Miki the cat when Maxx came to live with us. After taking a long time to get comfortable with any of the previous dogs, Miki was completely un-fazed by Maxx and pretty much walked right by him as soon as he arrived. Weird. When Miki passed away, and the two new cats came in her place, Maxx was the one un-fazed; except his fascination with the big furry-white-squirrel looking one.

Speaking of cats, Maxx was the only dog I've ever known who purred when you petted him. And he loved to chase the laser pointer too. He was an odd fellow.

Always gentle with Liz, Maxx liked to do a little rough-housing with me. Generally, I'd end up getting bruised and battered, but it was all in good fun. I started out walking the two Danes separately, but one day threw caution to the wind and began the "Double-Dane" walks. Combined, the two dogs easily outweighed me, and could've no doubt dragged me wherever they wanted, but luckily they were never coordinated in the efforts, so I managed to remain in control (most of the time.)

On one particular walk, as we ambled through the park, a young girl asked about what breed Maxx was. After I told her he was half tiger, her jaw dropped and I heard her telling her Mom as we walked away. Made me laugh.

Liz decided to dress up all the animals for Halloween. The cats were flowers and space aliens, Cinnamon was a giant moth, and Maxx was a purple butterfly. He was a pretty good sport about it, but the wings didn't stay on for long.

Right at the end, Maxx made his one and only trip north to my Mom's farm for Thanksgiving. I adapted the back seat of the car with foam and blankets so that there were no longer foot wells, just one big seat/shelf. That allowed both Danes enough space in the car to comfortably ride. Before that method, one dog would usually end up lying half on top of the other anytime they both went anywhere. That had limited our mobility.



Playing on thanksgiving.

Maxx was on his best behavior that day, and met my Mom's dogs, the horses, and even got to run around the woods and field on his own (with my supervision.) I think he had a great time. It was only four days later that he was gone. Happy, I guess, that it was short and quick demise, and not a long, drawn out, painful one. Maxx was just shy of his eighth birthday. Rest in peace, big guy.



-Thanksgiving



Hunting rabbits -



-Gardening