

Borzoi

A Borzoi Serving in a Special Way

Not all Borzoi fit the stereotype. For years this column has been about breed type and temperament of a Borzoi. However, for next several columns I will share

with you several Borzoi who break that stereotype. When we do genetic testing on breeding stock, a positive for an inherited defect doesn't have to mean the end of that dog's contribution. In the case of one Borzoi, it was just the beginning. The following is edited from an e-mail from Alicia Miller who was kind enough to send me this story.

A Borzoi named Trident—or Tru, as she is known—was rehomed by her breeder due to being tested positive as being a carrier of DM. Her new home was as a service dog for a veteran with PTSD.

Tru's new partner Mike was a volunteer at the Southern AZ VA Medical Center. Mike not only learned her behaviors from her previous owner, he learned to listen to his dog and followed her instincts. Tru was trained as a psychiatric therapy dog.

One day, Mike and her owner were standing in as ICU staff when Tru suddenly alerted—standing up, whining, and pulling. Mike told the VA security guard, "This isn't right; come with me where she goes." Tru led them to a woman who was out of sight by a service elevator, who was having a heart attack.

That was enough for the VA hospital to love her. Tru only knew that she was on the job with her elderly vet volunteer.

A few months later, Mike was helping at the large, semicircular service counter in the main entrance of the building when a rough-looking man came in and demanded to use the phone in an abnormal way that made the vet think the man was in an altered state.

Mike tried to explain to the man that all phones were internal only, but another disheveled-looking man distracted him a moment before the first intruder picked up a heavy internal phone and threw it at the elderly volunteer.

As soon as Mike recovered from

dodging, the man was already coming around the counter to attack him.

What came next happened too fast for a blow-by-blow. Without a hint of aggression, Mike's service Borzoi Tru somehow "hugged" the attacking human, who was twice her size, and stood on him without command until police security came. No blood was shed. This is the same dog who is trained to "hug" distressed adults and autistic children until they calm down. Even with this elderly veteran with PTSD, Tru has a secondary task of taking care of his autistic stepson.

She also alerts to drugs and signals where they are on people—she learned this all on her own, but it was confirmed by law enforcement. She is still less than 3 years old and has saved at least one life and helped many others.

She is a drug-sniffing, veteran-hugging, lifesaving, life-protecting Borzoi who provides love and comfort to autistic adults and minors. You can't get better than that. Thank God she was DM+/- with an ethical set of breeders, or else lives could have been lost.

With all the new roles and events for canines, we are seeing Borzoi participating in all kinds of tasks outside the stereotype of a sighthound. In the next column we will look at other Borzoi who are accomplishing tasks outside the normal behavior for a sighthound.

—Jon Titus Steele,
jonauroal@gmail.com

Borzoi Club of America, borzoiclubofamerica.org