

SPORTING GROUP

ability in their breed programs and are proud of it. This is truly a dual breed.

—Audrey Austin,
audreyaustin@cox.net
 American Chesapeake Club

Curly-Coated Retrievers

TRAINING SHORTCUTS

It is when we travel that I think of good ideas for our Curly columns. It is also at this time that I realize training is often easy to incorporate into our everyday life.

I was fortunate to have found an obedience training class with my first Curly those many years ago in Miami. This led to conformation, tracking, rally, barn hunt, and many training ideas.

Our travels in the motor home make a change of routine and possible additional learning situations for the dogs. It is very pleasing for me to own dogs who are used to being around other dogs in many different situations. I cannot recall how many times, especially in the past, that with three Curlies we have had to wait in an RV service center for repairs. The waiting area has usually been fairly spacious, but there have been times when this has not been true. I spread out the mats for each dog to lie on, and there were times that this happened to be an all-day situ-

ation during which the girls have to down-stay for many hours. A dog who will comply is a great traveling companion.

Then we have the ritual of post-meal exercising, and this is when, for me, the use of the flexi-lead is a big help.

I do stress here that one must practice and perfect the use of this type of lead before leaving on a trip. In the hands of an inexperienced handler new to the use of this type of lead, one must be careful!

For safety and good control, I always take one Curly at a time and have found that standing still and allowing the dog to circle is a good method for me and saves space, energy, and time. If one of my Curlies veers off, I say “turn,” and this is a good command for the activity of upland field events. Also this command is a good one to use when walking straight ahead and my Curly is approaching the end of the lead.

Good manners in the motor home are a must. When traveling, one is on unfamiliar grounds when taking out the dogs. Therefore, when I am going to exit the motor home, each dog must sit at the top of the stairs and wait until I have descended the steps, have opened the door, and am on flat ground. It can be dangerous if a dog pulls the handler down any stairs or steps.

Last but not least, whenever traveling in any

vehicle it is very wise to have your dog sit/stay in the crate while the leash and collar are attached before being allowed to exit the crate.

So, the next time that you take your Curly for a ride in any motor vehicle, try to incorporate good manners and control. Repetition leads to good behavior—something that we all strive for in our Curlies.

—Ann Shinkle,
annshinkle@aol.com
 Curly-Coated Retriever Club of America

Golden Retrievers

GOLDEN RETRIEVER HEROES

The Golden Retriever breed proudly embraces one of their own, Ruthie Comfort Dog, as the ASPCA Dog of the Year for 2016.

As a member of Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) team of specially trained therapy dogs, Ruthie carries a business card that states, in part, her mission: “[to] live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, and patience bearing one another through love.” (Ephesians 4:2)

On December 14, 2012, after the tragic shootings of 20 first-graders at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, Ruthie followed that call when she and five LCC K-9 Comfort Dogs were

deployed to provide comfort and affection to traumatized children and adults. It was Ruthie’s first assignment, and she proved especially skilled helping the children open up about their pain and sadness.

“There were some children who just could not speak at first,” recalled Dona Martin, co-director of the LCC K-9 Comfort Dog ministry and one of Ruthie’s handlers. “But after three or four days of just sitting and petting the dog, they could start expressing what they had gone through. There’s something about having the trust and unconditional love of a dog.”

Ruthie and the K-9 Comfort Dogs spent several months in Newtown, comforting students, families, and friends of the victims. She connected on a special level with 9-year-old Freddy Hubbard, who had lost his 6-year-old sister, Catherine Violet, in the shooting.

Freddy’s parents, Matt and Jenny Hubbard, said knowing that Freddy could spend time during the school day with Ruthie and the other Comfort Dogs provided them with a sense of comfort and reassurance. Whenever Freddy visited with a Comfort Dog, the dog’s handler gave him a card like Ruthie’s, bearing the dog’s photograph and special message. “If he came home and pulled six cards out of his pocket, I knew he was dealing with some heavy stuff that day,” Jenny said. “But if he pulled out only a couple of business cards, I