

Dogs at Work
by
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When I was a five year old kid, I wanted an aquarium like Mister Rogers, I wanted a big dog named after my favorite super-hero Thor and I wanted to be an ark-ee-all-gis so I could find dinosaurs.

After I arrived at Apollo Trust Company eight years ago, I decided it might be fun to start fulfilling those dreams at work. I asked the chief if I could have an aquarium. The answer was "yes" but she indicated that she was fresh out of dogs and that I had to be a banker and not an archeologist. One out of three wasn't bad.

Gazing at fish in the middle of a busy day was one way to bring a little serenity to my job. But after living a couple years in the area, I noticed that some local businesses were bringing a little serenity to work in a different way. People were bringing dogs to work. I thought that perhaps it was now time to accomplish goal #2.

My dog odyssey began when I was "just looking" at puppies in Markle. When I pulled into the breeder's driveway, the owner told me that he had five males that I would love. As I walked up to the pen, a little furry golden retriever came running up to me and wouldn't let go of my shoestring. Instead of a big male, she was a smaller female. "Nope, you can't come home with me," I told the puppy. But this puppy was determined. She wouldn't stop looking at me with those sorry eyes as she shredded my shoes. Sometimes puppies choose their owners and mine chose me. The deal was that if I got stuck with her, she got stuck with "Thor". She agreed. My life has never been quite the same. I'm not sure who owns who.

Asking the chief if I could bring a dog to work on a regular basis was beyond the realm of possibility. Banks after all are pretty conservative institutions. But our bank is full of dog lovers and we give away great dog biscuits at all our drive-ups. After I assured the chief that Thor was completely housebroken, she agreed to let her come around on occasion.

Thor was a hit the first few times she came to the bank. I brought her in on snowy days when customers were few. She pranced proudly from office to office bringing smiles wherever she went. But then one day Thor decided to water the chief's shoes right before she was to meet Alan Greenspan. The chief laughed and told me to forget it. I couldn't. I knew that Thor belonged outside during working hours.

So now the mighty Thor joins me occasionally at work on nights and weekends. She is sometimes met by Dixie who is our trust officer's dog. Sometimes our cleaning people beg me to bring in Thor and clumsy, thundering Zeus, the big male golden retriever that Thor talked me into acquiring so that she would have a buddy.

You might think I'm barking up the wrong tree but others really do have dogs at work. Kathy Curran, owner of three companies employing over 100 people in Spring Church is accompanied by her black labrador retriever Sebastian each day. Sebastian follows Kathy wherever she goes.

Sam is the miniature schnauzer that has been hanging out in Allegheny Gallery in New Kensington for over 15 years. Sam began his stint there as a puppy and he's outlasted some employees. Then there's Mavrick and Maxwell at Schultz's Sportsmen's Stop in Orchard Hills. There's Snuffy at Linda Shellhammer's Accounting Services in Kiski Township. There's Sunny at Greg's Gas in Spring Church. There's even a Mr. Smokey at Quarato's Plumbing-Heating and Hardware in Leechburg.

Everyone should experience a dog on the job. They make you realize how great it is to be a dog. Having accomplished my first two dreams at work, I don't have the heart to tell the chief that I think I found the remains of a Tyrannosaurus Rex at the excavation of our new branch in Allegheny Township.



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