

THERE AND BACK AGAIN

CAROL AND JEFF DUNTEMANN'S CHRISTMAS LETTER FOR THE YEAR 2007

QBit isn't alone anymore! 2007 kicked off with the (final) arrival of Aero, our Christmas puppy. Aero came to us early in December 2006 but went back almost immediately to Jim Henton's kennel until we returned from our ramble to Chicago for our new niece Katie Beth's baptism and then Christmas. Like QBit, Aero is a purebred Bichon Frise, but unlike QBit, Aero is "show quality;" that is, he meets all breed standards and can compete in the show ring. (QBit has a slightly anomalous coat and "walks funny" but is mighty handsome all the same.) Aero wasn't "Aero" immediately. His kennel name is "Jimi's Admiral Nelson," but he didn't reveal his "call name" to us for almost a month. Then one night, with his ears sticking straight out on either side of his head like a Bleriot monoplane, we realized that he was telling us his name, and we only needed to speak it. "Aero!" I said, and he came right to me.

He's all grown up now, and 10-pound Aero differs from 14-pound QBit in many ways: He's small-boned and skinny, and nowhere near as outgoing. His shyness has actually been a problem that we're constantly working on. When Girl Scouts bearing cookies or other people come to the front door, we often hold Aero out to them and say, "Cuddle a puppy!" Nobody refuses, and Aero has gotten much more at ease with people he doesn't know. QBit prefers to lie on the floor with his nose between his front paws. Aero's preferred leisure posture is flat on his back, with his legs in the air and his tongue hanging out. But however he lounges in private, in the show ring he's all business. In his very first show in Denver this past May, he won Fourth Prize in the Puppy Dog 8-10 Months category, and got a big silver ribbon that now is now magnetized to the back door. He's been in a few more shows since then, and Carol and I are proud of his growing ribbon collection.

2007 saw the completion of an 18-month odyssey for us: Selling Carol's mom's house in Niles, Illinois, (just outside Chicago) and buying a *pied-a-terre* in nearby suburban Des Plaines. The project was a *huge* amount of work, and more notably, required that we drive from Colorado Springs to Chicago and back several times over the course of the year. The first such 1,100-mile jaunt occurred in March, to clean out the house and put it on the market. We were there for a month, and split the house's contents into two lots, one for garage-selling later in the summer, and the other for storage. We drove back again in mid-June for a couple of weeks to conduct the garage sale and shop for nearby condominiums. Alas, no sooner did we return to Colorado than we got word that my sister had been diagnosed with cancer and needed major surgery. So back we went in late July, and spent much of August there looking after Katie Beth—and changing diapers—while Gretchen recuperated. (By the way, she's completely recovered and is her same energetic self again.) Just a couple of weeks after returning we drove back yet again, this time to close on a condo in partnership with our older nephew Brian. It's right near the Des Plaines Metra station, a block northwest of the famous Choo-Choo hamburger joint, where the kitchen sends your order out to you on a Lionel model train! 10,000 miles was enough driving for one year, but we made one last long-planned trip in November—by air—to spend Thanksgiving with family. (We apologize to many Chicago friends whom we did not see this year. It was not all pleasure travel!)

As you might imagine, we've mostly memorized I-80 by now. In the process we made one spectacular discovery: Lake McConaughy in Western Nebraska, just north of Ogalalla. It's a 25-mile long lake with clean water and white sand beaches, where they allow you to drive your car on the sand right up to the water, and don't mind if your dogs jump in with you. Which they did: QBit with some hesitation, but Aero with manic enthusiasm. We ran along the sand, flew kites, and blissfully stood up to our necks in 78-degree water. There are wineries in both Nebraska and Iowa, and we visited several along the way. QBit and Aero became seasoned travelers, and me—egad! I drove so much that I actually learned to enjoy it. We decided that we need to see more of the country than we have, and have begun laying plans for exploration well beyond the I-80 corridor.

With so much of the year spent in Chicago packing boxes and changing diapers, there isn't a great deal more to report. I did some restoration publishing work (a sideline for me) and got four volumes of "tutorial fiction" from the 50's and 60's back into print. (Anybody remember Carl and Jerry from *Popular Electronics*?) Carol did some gardening and supervised some tweaks to our landscaping, but for the most part, when we weren't going to or coming from Chicago, we were trying our best to put our feet up here in Colorado!



Above, Aero as he was the day he arrived, ears sticking out both ways. At left, he's lounging (appropriately) on an Aero airbed, and below left with Carol, at the Bichon Frisé National Specialty Show in Denver in May, where he took Fourth Place in the Puppy Dog 8-10 Month category.



Carol, her mother Delores, and her sister Kathy pose by the house that the family had owned since 1958.



2007!
To see the photos online, surf to:
www.duntemann.com/christlet2007.pdf



We spent a lot of time with Katie Beth this summer. Above, a perplexed-looking Jeff tries to puzzle out the instructions for assembling an end table while Katie unselfishly offers her expert assistance.



Lake McConaughy in Nebraska is a day's drive from Colorado Springs, and we spent some time there during several trips on route to or from Chicago. You can camp on the beach and drive your car right up to the water!

Merry Christmas and don't be strangers in 2008! — Jeff and Carol (with QBit & Aero)