

## Caper Love Everyone and Everyone Loves Caper!

By

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From a distance, it looked like a lion in a cage. I immediately thought of the stories my parents told me regarding traveling circuses. Animals in cages, placed on wagons, pulled by horses, from town to town. Men on the yard stopped talking and exercising as the cart approached. Two women guided it toward our housing unit. There was a brown dog inside the sturdy metal cage. Most of us believed he was vicious because of his circumstances. We later found out he was by hit a car. That was how I first met "Caper." Little did I know I'd be assigned to care for him along with my two teammates Jack and Tobias.

For the first month we put him through physical therapy exercises. He seemed to know we were helping him and loved the attention. Massaging and stretching his injured hind leg brought us closer! He enjoyed relaxing on my bed after short walks up a slight incline. I often had to tell him to slow down and take it easy. We didn't want him to re-injure his fragile leg. After a few weeks his stitches were removed. We kept a watchful eye on his thigh and tummy to be sure the area didn't get infected. He had to wear a "cone" around his head during this period so he wouldn't pick at his wounds. All of us, especially Caper, were happy and relieved when those days ended. We made his overnight crate safe, cozy, and comfortable. It is a restful and peaceful spot for him to relax over night or during count times.

Now that his road to recovery is going well, we have begun his training. He learned the basic commands: sit, come, down, and stay, in record time! Since he is only six months old, he is a playful puppy. Short five-minute training sessions are more productive for him than one long one. In between, sessions I scratch all his favorite spots and give him loving affection. He does get distracted by people walking by sometimes. He wants attention, to be rubbed.

Our team divides our time with him. We usually share the morning hours together. I look forward to getting up every morning, seven days a week. The desert sunrise wakes both of us up. When he sees me coming at 6:15, I get to hear one of my favorite daily sounds, his tail banging in excitement against the plastic crate. It puts a smile on my face just writing about it! I immediately take him outside. He has a big appetite and enjoys a healthy breakfast. He just passed the thirty-pound mark! I groom his beautiful golden fur with a brush. He loves it! We enjoy our stroll around the prison yard. When I stop and say "wait," he automatically sits! Our daily devotion to his recovery has inspired him to get motivated. We walked three laps this past week. He has begun going up and down stairs recently too. The dog graduation is a month away. I'm not sure if he will be adopted this round or if he will continue to rehab with us longer.

The CGC (Canine Good Citizen) test consists of ten items. Caper knows half of them already! He loves to come to you when called, but hates to stay put! Sit and down are easy for him. He looks forward to his daily brushing. He does get easily distracted by people and other dogs walking near him. I believe this will subside as soon as he is well enough to interact with his fellow canines. He can now climb up on my bunk, but needs help getting down. His physical achievements are improving daily. I can hardly wait until the day comes when he can chase a ball and return it to me.

He has a wonderful personality and disposition, easy going and adaptable. When he does get adopted, he definitely won't disappoint the family's expectations! He will exceed and excel in all areas. I hope his courage and accomplishments in life will not be forgotten, from being wheeled in on a cart and us having to carry him outside to go to the bathroom, to him being able to leap up on my bunk is quite a thrilling event to witness. Our motto is, "We work hard so our dogs can have a better life." Caper did his part too!

The men on the yard all love Caper, and I mean everyone. They come from near and far to greet him. He loves them too. Thus, my title was easy. "Caper loves everyone and everyone loves caper."