

# The Evolution of a Super Model

by Alex Ratliff, DSA

I adopted my mom and dad on September 25, 2010 when I was about 14 weeks old. I lived with someone else initially along with my biological mom and siblings. Then one day our first human took me and my bio mom to a big field in the country. It was a huge field and so much fun to play in, although my bio mom seemed nervous about it. Turns out our first human had left and forgot to come back. We weren't out there too very long before a nice human came along and was concerned that we were in the big, fun field without a human. She took us for a ride in her car to her very own house. She spent the next few days on the phone a lot and making these little posters that she put up in her town. I don't know what that was all about but after she had done this for a few days, we then got to meet our next nice human. Her name was Melissa and she took us and said we were GRRNT dogs now! I don't know what that meant but it involved other dogs that looked a lot like my bio mom and me and a lot of really nice people.

My bio mom went to live with another nice family and I heard that she ended up going to live with a whole family of her own for her whole life. I went to live with my next nice human, Carol, and her family. Carol had dogs that looked like me and enjoyed playing with me. One of the dogs I lived with named Maddie was extra pretty and, I didn't know it at the time, but I would grow up to look so much like her that Mama Carol would later say I was her spittin' image. I don't know what that means and I swear I never spit on Maddie or anybody else!

So, I camped out with Carol and Maddie and the crew for a little while and then, like I said, I adopted my Mom and Dad so I could live with them forever. They called me their Wild Child. I can only imagine that this is the very best compliment a puppy could ever have. I was able to train my Mom and Dad pretty quickly to give me treats. I rewarded them by doing silly little things they asked me to do. It was no skin off my hide since everything came easy for me. I don't think Mom and Dad knew just how smart I was but I was smart enough to get them to give me treats. A LOT! And I just kept rewarding them by performing little feats for them.

My life kept getting more and more exciting. About two months after I adopted my folks, we all went to this place called Mini-Camp. It was loads of fun! There were so many more nice humans and lots and lots of dogs but they didn't all look like me. I got to experience all kinds of fun stuff, including wearing booties for the first time! We called them my Groovy Shoes. They were way too big for me and Mom said I sounded like a Clydesdale when I walked but I didn't care. I knew I looked awesome and I think this may have been the first time people began to recognize me for my sense of style.



Image by Mom, Cindy Ratliff



Image by Joanne Weber

I learned all kinds of things at this "Mini-Camp" thing and at the end, I had a title bestowed upon me. People called me a Dog Scout and everybody was excited about it. I wasn't really even a dog yet, I was just a 5-month old puppy, but whatever. They all seemed excited about it so I went along. It was easy after all. I just did a bunch of those feats that I had been rewarding my parents with the last two months. It was a breeze but the folks were happy so I was, too.

Flash forward... turns out this Dog Scout thing came with a lot of perks. I made all kinds of friends, both four-legged and two, and we'd get together every month to have fun. I kept training my folks to give me yummy treats and I kept doing little tricks and stuff for them in return. They were so cute how they'd get excited about it all and take pictures of me. I'd hear Mom on the phone telling people about all the little rewards I did for them. It was funny to me that they made such a big deal about it all because I knew so much. Sometimes when Mom would ask me to do something, I'd play a fun game with her like I didn't know what she meant. It was funny. You should have seen her scratching her head and changing up her plans and doing things differently to help me to "figure things out". It was hilarious because I knew all along, I just liked to watch the humans get these confused looks on their faces. If I had opposable thumbs, I would take all the pictures of them and talk to my friends on the phone about it. Eventually, I would do whatever I knew Mom wanted me to do to begin with and she'd get so excited. Parents can be so weird.

## The Evolution of a Super Model (cont.)

So, remember that Maddie dog I told you about? I grew up to be an adult just like her. And I grew to be a pretty girl just like her, too. Frankly, this was no surprise since I was a pretty puppy. I was quite sure I was going to be a pretty adult.

I have had so much fun over the years seeing dog and human friends every month and going back to that mini-camp thing every year. My folks have found all kinds of different treats to give me and I like them all. I have continued rewarding them by doing all kinds of tricks in all kinds of environments, with props, with other dogs, all kinds of things! But last summer I started a whole new adventure.

So one of the nice humans from our monthly thing named Michelle works at a place called Chewy.com. It is a wonderful, magical place and it turns out they have a LOT of treats there! AND they have humans that are just as amused by how smart and pretty I am – just like my folks are!



Last summer, Michelle told my Mom about how she could sign me up to go to work where Michelle works at the big treat place. If they chose me, I could come in to get lots of treats. While there getting treats, I would just let them take a lot of pictures of me. That was no biggie since Mom does that all the time anyway.

So, Mom filled out the information they wanted and then a little while later, Mom told me they had picked me to come in for glamour shots to see how I would do “on set”. Well, of course they picked me. I don’t know why my Mom thought they might not. I will take treats from anybody and I could teach them all kinds of cool stuff I’ve learned in Dog Scouts.

So I got an appointment time on a day last June and Mom and Dad took me to the big Chewy place. It was huge and I could smell every kind of treat under the sun. It was A-MA-ZING! Mom filled out paperwork while a “wrangler” (person who gives treats that I reward with tricks) took me inside and someone with a camera, bigger and fancier than Mom’s phone, took pictures of me. They told me I was pretty and what a good girl I was. And I was. I didn’t play the games with them like I do with Mom sometimes where I make her think I don’t know what she’s asking. These Chewy people were brand new and I thought I might need to take their training a little slower.



So, my new Chewy friends were so impressed with how much I liked getting treats that they contacted my folks less than two weeks later and asked them to bring me back for an all-day photo shoot. And because they realized how much I love treats, they started putting money in my folks’ bank account just so they never run short on keeping me in treats at home. Mom said she even had to fill out a tax form so Uncle Sam could get some of my treat money. I don’t remember ever meeting this uncle at any of our family gatherings so I’m a little irritated that he thinks I want to share my treats with him.



*Images by Chewy Studios*

## The Evolution of a Super Model (cont.)



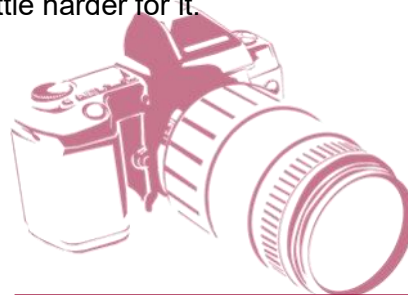
Since that all-day photo shoot day in July, they have called and called and called and just keep wanting me to come back and hang out all day and take treats from them. Of course, I am happy to do it. And I'll tell you this – it isn't all just about the treats. They have these individual rooms there where I get to take naps during the day. And outside of my room is a dog park. I've heard Mom and Dad talk about dog parks before and they said that it's a place I don't need to go because there are dogs there that don't share as well as I do. But this place is like my own, personal private dog park. I get to play during the day with toys and with my wranglers. They let other dogs come during the days when I'm there, too. They get their own private rooms, too, and they get to play in my park when I'm off busy getting treats and having my picture taken. I think they invite the other dogs because there are so many treats at this Chewy place that they know even I couldn't eat them all, so they have to bring in other dogs to help.



Besides eating treats, taking naps in my room and playing in my park, my wrangler friends also take me on walks outside four times a day. I go out and look around to see if anybody else like that uncle is trying to sneak in and take my treats or horn in on my fun. I see other dogs that are there that I let play in my park and have their pictures taken and I'm nice to them all because I know they're there just to help me cut down on the treat inventory at Chewy. And I have some of my monthly meeting friends that get to help on the treat inventory, too. My friend, Michelle, that works there – she brings her dog, Panda, and another friend, Leah, brings her dog Kira Kitsune. And my friend, Nancy, brings her kitty, Jasmine, sometimes, too. Our Moms have even talked about us having some of our pictures taken together on a day when Chewy needs both the dog AND cat treat inventories to be reduced.

And now my Chewy friends have started sharing my pictures all over the world! They put them on some kind of web that I guess holds pictures and then all the dogs' humans can see them. They see how pretty I look in an outfit or how much I like a toy or a harness and the humans can get Chewy to send them these things of their very own so their dogs can look as pretty as me!

I have so much fun on my days out at Chewy. Mom and Dad used to always tell me I needed to get a job to pay for my own treats and now I have. See?! I told you I always know what my folks are asking me to do. Sometimes I just make them work a little harder for it.



*Images by Chewy Studios*