

## *MY VALOR INSPIRATION DOG*

### *AZTEC*

- Aztec was adopted from Aussie rescue at the age of 10 months.
- He was extremely dog reactive and was a resource guarder of food, toys, attention, and spaces
- It took 12 weeks to fully integrate him into the household because of his issues and constant monitoring thereafter.
- Aztec and I began working on obedience for control and he finished his CD and U-CD. We stopped there because there was absolutely no way I was going to take the risk of out-of-sight stays.
- I had taken a few group obedience classes with Aztec, but in one class, when we were working off leash, another dog managed to go to the end of the leash to sniff our treat bag and Aztec left my side to attack the dog. The dog wasn't hurt, but that was the end of group classes for us.
- Aztec and I began to take private lessons in obedience and in agility. I had hopes that if I chose specific environments, that we could get in the ring, stay in the ring, and leave the ring without incident.



- For the most part, we were successful in this because of all the attention and focus training I had done with him in obedience. I give credit for this help to my obedience coach, Sally Glei.
- However, getting to the ring (lining up 3 dogs deep) was a very stressful experience. There was lots of food being given out, left on the table, and people tugging with their dogs, which Aztec always misread as a threat to him.
- I let the gate steward know I would not be going in the ring until the other dog was out (not a rule back then) and the person behind me know that they really didn't want to come in until my dog was on leash.
- I used to tell people "he has space issues"
- Anyhow, somehow, we made it through without major incident. We could never run that fast because I needed to keep Aztec's attention at all times and wanted him to be close by.
- We did manage to get Excellent Standard & Jumpers titles, Elite titles, and Advanced titles in our day.
- However, I remember the incredible stress I felt just getting my dog to the line – hoping my fellow competitors would understand the need to give us a little more space.
- There were many, many "thwarted almosts" that I don't even want to think about.
- However, despite all my stress getting into and out of the ring, that little red dog ran for me and with me – because all that time training together had built such a strong bond of trust.
- In his senior years, and after finally being helped with meds, Aztec was able to become a therapy dog (he never had issues directed at humans, but I always worried about seeing another dog).
- We also did some Rally, and he finished his RE title.
- Aztec also eventually went with me on behavior consultations and would walk with his gaze completely fixated on me while I worked with dogs who were like the young Aztec, barking and lunging. He had come full-circle, but it was a long journey.

