

MY VALOR INSPIRATION DOG

CHEYENNE

- Cheyenne was adopted from the Wake County SPCA at the age of 5 months.
- She was extremely fearful and was the puppy quivering in the back of the cage that you know you shouldn't take home, but you do anyhow
- Cheyenne was a submissive wetter, with a strong flight response and about *zero* fight response, so that made her fear issues much more her internal problem than anyone else's around her
- I remember when we got her home that her heart rate and breathing were so rapid that I called the vet and took her in. They told me that there was nothing wrong with her, other than she was just "scared"
- I also remember trying to take her for a walk around the block and having her dig her little toes in the dirt, not wanting to leave the safety of our yard. Once I did manage to get her to walk, she would make very wide arcs near any car or storm grate.
- I took a few obedience classes with her, and she really perked up. Giving her definite behaviors to do in public helped her focus on those tasks and not worry so much.
- Still, I'll never forget the time we were in the training building and a student walked in with a very friendly, but large Newfoundland. Cheyenne screamed and broke free from my grasp and went yelping into the corner of the room, under a chair. We all got a chuckle out of it, but it was an indication of how much more work I had ahead of me.



- Then, there was the unforgettable day when a speaker came to our club meeting to tell us about the brand new sport of “dog agility”. Bonnie Buchanan, now a good friend of mine, told us that she was opening up a brand new agility center and was accepting new students. I had only one question for her: “Can agility help a dog build confidence?”. “Sure! She replied, its great for that!”. I responded with the now infamous response “Well, I have no desire to compete, I just want to help my fearful dog out”.
- Needless to say, Cheyenne LOVED agility! Each obstacle was a personal triumph for her and got a huge celebration response from me.
- Of course the teeter was the toughest challenge, and it took her a very long time to trust it, but when she did, it was the ultimate turn-around for her.
- It seemed that after we started agility, Cheyenne found a new inner confidence. She began to greet people willingly and even sniff other dogs. She began enjoying her walks and even became quite the “squirrel chaser” in the yard.
- Eventually, she overcame her fears to the extent that in her senior years, she passed her Therapy Dog test, and became a therapy dog for senior citizens. It never ceased to amaze me how she navigated around slippery floors, walkers, wheelchairs, and oxygen tanks, as if they were just another agility obstacle.
- While taking agility classes with Cheyenne, I learned that I did indeed, want to compete after all. I got hooked on the agility bug and started to enter competitions.
- I remember the first agility trial with Cheyenne. It was very cool, fall day, and I was sweating like it was the middle of July. We entered the ring and Cheyenne went promptly to the corner and sniffed the ground. I had to go get her and we left the ring, one of us in tears.
- After that, I learned the value of making sure we had fun – and keeping competition like practice.
- I learned that it was more important to come out of the ring with a dog’s tail wagging than it was to come out with a ribbon.
- Cheyenne ended up finishing a Novice title before I realized that she had congenitally fused vertebrae and spondylosis. I retired her from agility competitions, and she focused on her therapy work.

