



Diamond, almost 2, Katrina Rescue

Diamond, according to his new owner (we'll call her Melanie), was afraid of pretty much everything. A man wearing a hat walking a well-behaved dog 50 feet away would send Diamond into convulsions. Crazy barking and pulling on the leash, hackles erect, Diamond needed literally to be dragged away from unfamiliar people, dogs, noises and household objects (Diamond very much disliked luggage, and for owners who travel frequently, this was a problem). The more Melanie tried to soothe Diamond during these outbursts, the more intense Diamond became. Although his growls appeared to be for show, who really knew? Any animal, especially a dog, can be provoked to biting.

So when Melanie called and asked me to meet Diamond and give her my 'expert' opinion about his unacceptable (and possibly

dangerous?) behavior, I was more than happy to meet a new friend, a Katrina Rescue no less. Practically a celebrity!

When I knocked on the front door to the house where Diamond lived, I was greeted with a series of wild yips and barks, which quickly transitioned to a full-fledged pummeling from the other side. (Goodness. Someone feeling a little threatened in his territory perhaps?) Where's Mom? I could see through the window that Mom was sprinting down the stairs three at a time yelling "Diamond! Noooooooooo! Stop scratching, Diamond! You're ruining the door! I TOLD you NO SCRATCHING!" to which Diamond responded by increasing his intense assault on the barrier between him and whatever interloper loomed on the other side (that would be me). Melanie lunged at Diamond, pulled him off the door by his collar, and breathlessly opened the door. "See what I mean?!" she cried. "I thought he was going to kill the FedEx guy the other day!"

Whether it is characteristics of Diamond's All-American breed heritage (his particular breed mix appearing to be some kind of herding dog blended with some kind of terrier) or his life experiences as a Katrina survivor that drives his wariness of the unfamiliar, it doesn't really matter. As a dog, all Diamond cares about is right now: How do I fit into this group? Who's in charge? Who will make sure I have food and water and a safe and comfortable place to sleep? Who will alert me to danger? Diamond needed to learn that strangers on the street do not necessarily represent a threat, and suitcases and crinkly trash bags don't predict impending doom. And regardless of his tidings, the FedEx guy isn't interested in taking over the homestead. In order to learn these life skills, Diamond needed Melanie's help. Melanie needed to let Diamond know that *she* is in charge, *she* will protect Diamond, and *she* will manage the pack with rules and warmth.

Through leadership exercises and positive reinforcement training techniques, Melanie was able to learn how to give Diamond what Diamond needed, in a way that Diamond could understand. Diamond was not a naturally dominant dog and found comfort in someone else bearing the responsibility of 'pack leader'. Within a few weeks, Diamond was being invited on outings with other CompliantK9 friends and bravely venturing into the unfamiliar during playtime at the lake. Best of all, Melanie and family got to enjoy a well-mannered, zesty little dog knowing they rescued him and are giving him the best forever-home possible.