

Geekette

by Gayle Haarr

While we were off checking out MacWorld in Boston in early August, Ulff was stuck at the kennel.

Just in case any of you haven't heard already, Ulff is my 11 month old St. Bernard puppy. You can find a couple of pictures of her on my web page.

I dreaded leaving my baby at a kennel. So, I checked with our dog obedience school trainer and with some other people in the area to find out where the best place in town was to leave her. Hands down, I was told of one specific kennel in the area. I figured if it was good enough for everyone else's dog, I guess it would be good enough for my Ulff. Anyway, I called and made Ulff's reservation to stay with the kennel for 4 nights and 5 days while we were away.

This kennel is located a ways outside of Rochester inside one of the area's larger parks. Andrew, Toby, and I went to check out the place before leaving little Ulff there. The place was like a doggie resort. You drive a mile or two into a wooded park with ponds and hiking trails before you finally see a house, a barn, and a building surrounded by many large and small individual kennels. The place seemed like an enormous doggie playground. There were three fenced in play yards. One was full of slides, ramps, beams, and seesaws. It was a giant doggie jungle gym. None of us had ever seen such a thing in our lives. Another play yard was full of tennis balls, rubber balls, and a few kiddie pools. The last play yard was empty except for a few watering buckets. After I saw all this, I figured it must be an okay place for my best buddy to stay.

I went inside to check her in while Andrew and Toby stayed outside to scope out the place a bit more and play with Ulff before we had to go. As I was checking her in, they explained her kennel to me. She would have an indoor/outdoor kennel. Outside there would be almost 30 ft. for her to run and she would have a dog on each side of her for company. They even went so far as to separate the large dogs from the little yappy things (dogs). They put them on two separate sides of a large building. Hey, this place wouldn't sound all that bad to me if I was a dog, especially since Ulff loves other dogs. Also, in each kennel, the dogs would have a blanket to sleep on. At night the workers go around and put a biscuit on all their blankets. That was just too cute, my pup was being pampered.

Next the woman asked me if I wanted anything special for her. I asked the woman what she meant by special. She asked if I wanted Ulff to get extra special treatment during her stay. I wondered what were my options? Boy, did I have options! She gave me a whole list. For \$1.75 someone would take Ulff on a 5 minute walk and give her a biscuit at the end. For \$3.25 someone would take her out and play or do something fun with her for 15 minutes with a biscuit at the end. The ultimate was for \$15.75. Someone would walk her for an hour. What, no biscuit?

For \$15.75 she should get a slab of beef or something. After that, I asked if they had any job openings available. Heck, I'd make more money walking dogs there than I would sitting at my desk. This place even offers doggie day care if you can't bare to leave your pooch at home during the work days. This was the K-9 Club Med, they had everything covered from geriatric care to puppy playtime.

So, I signed up Ulff for 6 little 15 minute play times and a one hour long walk through the park. I hoped she would be so preoccupied with all the other dogs that she wouldn't even know that I left her. She could have a little race with another pooch in the empty play yard, or a stroll through the kiddie pool, possibly even a game or two of fetch. The options at this place were endless. However, we agreed the first play yard with the beams, slides and stuff was much too advanced for 110 lb. baby Ulff. We would have had some major problems if she fell off, especially if she landed on a Chihuahua or something.

Well, eventually it came time for us to say goodbye to Ulff. We kept it short and sweet. A quick pat on the back, kiss on the head, and she was on her way to her suite on the lawn. We were off to MacWorld now, minus our slobbering friend. Andrew was kind enough to lay an enormous guilt trip on me the entire ride. He managed to do this while subjecting Toby and me to 6 straight hours of the Grateful Dead. (I know there are a lot of Dead fans out there, but there is such a thing as too much!) Andrew sang along replacing the already depressing words with ones that would fit poor Ulffy's situation. I knew all along she was in good hands though. But Andrew had a valid question, "How do you know you get what you paid for?" I certainly didn't know, I guess you just have take their word that they would walk and play with her. I'd have to wait and see.

The morning after our return, I went to get my buddy from the resort. When I arrived, they handed me a pink report card

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he report was to let me know how she behaved while I was away. Which, as you can see, was

quite well. Doggie school is paying off I guess. The notes were from the girl who walked her through the park for an hour. From all the descriptions, I knew they definitely did what they promised. Their descriptions fit Ulf's actions to a T.

They brought Ulf out to me and boy was she ready to come home. I think she had an exhausting few days at the puppy palace because she was pooped. After all, she probably kept some late hours with her new buddies. Plus, she spent a lot of time wading through the pools, playing ball, and getting showered with attention. I'm sure she did much, much more because, once she got over being upset with me for leaving her, we napped on the floor together for hours.

By the way, after Cajun heard all that the kennel offered, he decided to take a ride up there. With \$3.25 in his pocket, he went in and asked if someone would play with him for 15 minutes. He'd even skip the biscuit at the end. Funny, they shut the door on him and asked him not to return without a pet!