

Ulff's First Christmas

by Gayle Haarr

Well, just in case there is anyone out there who doesn't know this by now, Ulff is my 15 month old St. Bernard puppy. I received Ulff last year on Jan. 14, 1996, so this was Ulff's first Christmas as a Haarr.

Our Christmas plans were to spend almost a full week at my parents house with the whole family. Since most of the family hadn't seen her in a while and she was looking a little shabby, I decided a pre-Christmas Eve trip to the groomers was in order. She really didn't like my plan for a bath and a bow, but she tolerated it and behaved herself at the groomers.

Now, it was time to go over the river and through the woods to Grandma and Grandpa's house. I should explain that since I have probably confused most of you by now. None of my siblings, who I might add are significantly older than me, have children and probably will never have children, so my parents have latched on to the idea that they have a Grandpuppy now.

Much to my and everyone else's amazement, Ulff was not at all interested in the Christmas tree, lights, ornaments, and presents. Well, that last one is a bit of a lie. She was very interested in one wrapped up box of dog biscuits that we left under the Christmas tree. By the time we discovered her interest, that one gift had a little added bonus of drool and slobber marks on the wrapping paper. It eventually got so bad that we just took that one gift away from the tree until it was to be given.

Christmas morning with Ulff was nothing like what we expected. We all thought she would be in the middle of everything, running around with bows and paper in her mouth, being a general doggie pest. Christmas morning came and Ulff wanted nothing to do with any of it. She was interested in all the good smelling yummys that we were eating while sitting in the family room around the tree. However, as soon as the yummys were gone and the paper began to fly, her interest in the family tradition went out the window. She left the room entirely to sleep on the nice cool foyer floor at my parents house. She would wake up occasionally when we would call and she would come see why we were interrupting her sleep for.

For Christmas, Ulffie made out like the spoiled Gandpuppy that she is. She received a new stainless steel bowl from my sister, a ceramic bowl from my brother. A nylabone, a giant box of dog biscuits, and a doggie hiking packs from my parents. From me she got the dentabones, a real meat bone, a Buster Cube, and a mat for under her water bowls. Okay, the mat was more for me and my roommate to keep the extra drool from traveling across the kitchen floor and onto our feet.

The only real Christmas presents she was interested in was the extra large dentabones and the real meat bone from the butcher. Also, of course, she liked the box of dog biscuits and the nylabone. She was a great sport with the dog packs. She stood patiently while we placed the empty packs on her back and then she moseyed around the house with it for a couple hours without whinny or fussing. I think she was simply humoring us because she knew she would get some good people food out of my family if she did the stupid things they asked.

However, the big Christmas disappointment was the buster cube. In case you don't know, the buster cube is a new toy for dogs that they roll around with their nose or paw and food occasionally falls out of it. This is supposed to keep their interest and stimulate their brains to avoid boredom and the destruction that comes along with it. Christmas morning we unwrapped it, filled out with some small dog treats and pushed it around for a few minutes to show her how it worked. The noise of the food rolling around inside scared the heck out of her and sent her running. She will not even come into the room that it was in!

My brother has decided my dog has no brain to stimulate and my sister just thought she was a huge wimp after the Buster Cube experience. My folks just love her for the great pet that she is. I guess she is a true Haarr now because everyone has something to pick on her about. By the end of the week she was ready to go back to home. Well, that was Ulff's first Christmas.

Ed Note -- Gayle is using more creative words these days. Words like "Drool" and "Slobber" are part of her everyday vocabulary. Soon, we predict Ulff will soon be known as "Damn Dog" rather than "Swee Pea" and "Widdle Ulffie."