

Hansel & Lana's Story

One of my "set in stone" rules is that I do not sell puppies outside of the New England area, where I can offer support, training, and keep in touch with each family & puppy. I also do not ship puppies; especially not to people I have not met in person. These are my rules, and while they have disappointed some folks across the country, they have also enabled me to stay in the lives of most of my dogs.

Hansel is a very special puppy. All puppies are special in their own unique ways. Hansel endeared himself not only to me, but to every animal in our home and everyone who met him while he was here. He always seemed like an old soul in a puppy body; a dog who understood things, and listened to every word a human said, with an expression of concentration. Through a

string of events, Hansel ended up available after his litter had all gone to their waiting homes. I had homes arranged for him several times, but something kept coming up and he wound up staying. I grew very fond of him. Hansel needed a special home... and I preferred he stay close by, so I could see him often. I had no intention of breaking my rules when I placed Hansel. However, Lana Davis is no ordinary person.

11 years ago, I came across a book called "The Good Shepherd." The book was the story of Lana, her son Jeremy, and their very special dog, Grizzly. (Later, the story also included Dave Davis, who became Lana's husband, and Kody, Ella and Bailey, the Davis' other Shepherds.) I was working on some articles for USA's Schutzhund magazine. We were planning a large issue for the GSD's 100th

Anniversary and we were searching for German Shepherds in special jobs.

I decided to write an article about Grizzly, and honor him as the first dog in our new column, "Amazing Dogs."

I was so very pleased when Lana, who was enjoying some fame, and was very busy doing television appearances and press, as well as continuing her work, agreed to talk to me.

When the article was complete, I felt as if Lana was an old friend. I later wrote another article on Therapy dogs and their work, and I interviewed Lana again. We exchanged letters and photos and Christmas cards.

We kept in touch periodically, and then, I lost track of her. Several years passed, and I came across an old email address for Lana. I tried to reach her and could not find her. I contacted the organization she co-founded, the Utah Animal Assisted Therapy Association, and a day later, I received a reply from someone who knew how to find Lana.

Within a few days, we were back in touch. For the last few years, Lana and I have corresponded periodically. Lana's last Shepherd passed away several years ago. The breeder Lana trusted so much, who had provided her dogs, no longer bred. Lana told me she was waiting for the right time and the right dog. I told her I would keep her in mind.

Recently, I sent out a mass email appealing to my dog friends, for help placing a puppy I didn't even know. The puppy had been taken in a puppy mill raid, and adopted by a family. The family unfortunately, was not a good fit for the puppy. At 9 weeks old, the puppy needed a home again. I wanted to help, so I sent an email & told everyone of his plight. Within hours, five people responded, all willing to adopt the puppy. One of these people was Lana Davis. Unfortunately, (or fortunately) the puppy had been placed already. He found a home, and no longer needed my help. Hansel was in my lap as I read Lana's email. I looked at him. I thought about Lana. I looked at him again. Hansel would be perfect for Lana. I emailed her to tell her the original puppy had been adopted... and then I told her about

Hansel, and how I felt he could potentially be her next therapy dog.

I felt a little sad, as Hansel trotted around at my feet all day, and later, as he snuggled into me when I got into bed. My feelings were mixed: "Lana sure lives far away. I sure will miss Hansel." But, underneath the sadness, was a deep intuition that Hansel was SUPPOSED to be Lana's dog. I went to sleep, wondering if she would want him.

When I woke up a few hours later, Hansel was upside down, legs in the air, asleep beside me. I kissed his face and his tail thudded once.

First thing the next morning, Lana and I spoke. She was going to spend some time trying to arrange a flight to come

meet Hansel. If he was as perfect for her as I believed, she wanted him! Hansel looked up at me, wagging his tail the whole time Lana and I were discussing his fate. He watched me with his human like eyes, and listened carefully. I hung up with Lana, and told him "Lana says to tell you Mommy is working on coming for you." Hansel stood up, put his paws on my knees and licked my face.

Lana visited with us for almost a week. She watched Hansel interact with his canine family and with people. Hansel has an uncommon poise for a puppy his age. He is always sensible, and nothing makes him nervous. When Lana left for home, Hansel went with her. While we will sorely miss him, we are excited about his new life. We know Lana will give him

a super home, and we expect that Hansel will be doing some important work! Stay tuned for updates!

In the near future, we will be posting my articles on Lana and her work, first published in 1999 in USA Schutzhund magazine!