

Let's remember to enjoy life as puppies do!

by MARK PAVILONS

All his life, he tried to be a good person. Many times, however, he failed. For, after all, he was only human. He wasn't a dog. - Charles Schultz

Dogs' lives are too short. That's really their only flaw.

Dog owners know that once you have one, it's hard to live without one. They are what they seem - curious, loving, mischievous, intelligent and well, crazy, at times.

Sounds a lot like people.

The classic saying, money can't buy happiness, was crushed recently when we got not one, but two new puppies. But you have to remember, money can buy you a great dog, but only love makes her wag her tail.

Our intention, after back-and-forths with the owners, was to pick one of the girls. When we arrived, the owner said they were overwhelmed with nine dogs, so they offered us number two for a song. We couldn't resist. Plus, we thought taking a pair of sisters would help them adjust and reduce any separation anxiety.

And so the adventure begins. It's been some time since I cleaned up after a little one, but everyone's on board with our newest additions.

People have asked me the breed, and I pause, think hard, and say it's a cross between an Australian Blue Heeler (Cattle Dog) and Yellow Lab. We've had Labs most of our lives and currently have two seniors - Harley (13) and Lola (10). The newcomers, who we aptly named Luna and Nova, have really grown on us.

But boy are they busy little tyrants! One is a bit more passive, while the other is simply nuts. If I only had their energy and could take dog naps like they do!

My wife is a pro at crate training and in a matter of days, they already picked up a lot. I don't think they've seen a lot of grass where they came from, so our backyard is a wonderland of sights, sounds and smells.

Kim also bears the brunt of the late night, early morning cries and whines, while the rest of the house slumbers.

My first work day after the long weekend was the start of my official morning puppy duties. I worked up a sweat just entertaining these two monsters for half an hour.

Charles Schultz, who created Snoopy, said there's nothing better than cuddling with a warm puppy.

At first, these two were really snuggly, but now they just want to bite my face!

Being surrounded by dogs (any loving animal) is really selfish. We bring them into our homes to add a distinct flavour to our lives and give us unconditional love. They can't help it, it's in their nature!

Dogs can lift us up in our darkest moments or humdrum times when we're lost in thought. Without really trying, they can wipe away stress in an instant, with that weird head tilt, or when they leap across the ottoman or engage in human head grooming. Way better than a therapist, in my opinion.

Apparently dogs can show love in some 300 different ways, from talking to wagging. I know if I had a tail, I'd be using it constantly.

For those of us prone to goofiness, dogs are the perfect fit. You can get down and act weird and silly, and they will just join in. I'm not sure how they draw this out of mature, reserved humans, but they do. It's like they're tuned in to our inner frequency and with a simple gesture, you're tuned in, too.

We may ask our dogs to become more human-like, but in reality, they want us to be more dog-like. Maybe they know something we don't.

My senior dogs are pretty smart. They listen to my very intelligent rants and seem to get it, each and every time. They appreciate my genius!

Our dogs are notorious for acting like nothing is ever wrong. They apparently don't have any guilt, or at least refuse to admit it. Right after an 'incident,' Lola will come up to us, toy in mouth, wagging away, as if nothing ever happened. When you address her in a stern voice, she walks away, but she'd do it all over again.

It's hard to tell how the newcomers will grow and mature, but I'm sure they'll be fiercely loyal and great companions.

I also heard that pet owners tend to live longer, and boy, I hope that's true. I just picked up a double dose of health care!

There's a great original 'Twilight Zone' episode about a farmer who dies while trying to save his dog drowning in the river. He's walking down a country laneway, looking for the Pearly Gates. When he comes upon the first one, the gatekeeper welcomes him, but says dogs are not allowed. The farmer knows right away, this is not the path to take. He reaches the next one, where the gatekeeper welcomes both he and his dog. This is Heaven.

We didn't get the pups to 'replace' our old dogs, that's simply not possible. We got them to further expand our hearts.

We all think we have the best dog, and the thing is, we're all right!

We sometimes question our decision when this rather large animal sits on our head or mid-section, wondering why we're so lumpy.

I may be weird, but I love the smell of a dog, wet, dry and in between. It reminds me that I'm a dog owner, a person who experiences a unique kind of love. If only our kids smelled like that! There will likely be some trials and tribulations in our near future, as these two spastic critters learn, grow and mature. But those puppy times - there's nothing quite like it.

I hope, as they warm the cockles of our hearts, we spread that among one another, and bring out the best in our family members.

Yes, there will be 'chores,' but it's all hands on deck and our offspring assure us they will step up to the plate.

Maybe it will put a renewed spring in my step, back pain permitting!

I want to be like a puppy, and forever frolic, leaping through the grass, right into the afterlife!