

WHAT'S WITH BAUER?

By Fred Hobbs

For the second year in a row, Bauer has come to spend a week while his family vacations...this time in Cancun. Bauer is a strange guy. Being in charge of him for seven days causes me to wonder and to worry a little bit. He seemingly can't take his eyes off of me.

When I sit in my easy chair to watch TV he fixes his gaze squarely my way. When I go to the kitchen to pour a glass of iced tea, he follows me, when I go to the bathroom I have to close the door behind me hurriedly less he intrude on my privacy there. When I sit down at the computer where I am located as I write this piece, he squeezes under the table and plops down on top of the wires leading to the modem, the printer and the telephone. I worry a lot about that, and wonder why he would choose that confined area. He is gently, but firmly invited to find another resting place.

Bauer's home base is in a big three-story house with a full basement, which he shares with my daughter, son-law, two teenage grandchildren and three cats. He has the run of the place. My apartment must seem pretty confining to him. Why then, would he want to be even more confined by sticking so close to me? I wonder. It's puzzling and a little un-nerving.

Bauer gets his imposing, Teutonic-sounding name from the suggestion made by my 18-year old hockey-savvy grandson, Tanner. Bauer is a brand name for hockey equipment.

On his visits, Bauer is admired, especially by the ladies of Windsor Gardens, not only for his big, soulful brown eyes, but also for his handsome white coat complemented with a few tan overtones.

Most of the time, Bauer is quite docile. On walks along the Highline Canal, he sniffs the ground cover, sometimes abruptly stopping apparently to savor the smell of some weed or scent of an animal that had previously occupied the space. Basically, he ignores the others of his species, some of whom want to engage him in a rumble. He enjoys the stops at one of the benches provided for rest and nature watching. For some strange reason, he is not interested in attempting to chase any of the dozens of squirrels that he encounters along the canal trail. But I was amazed at the sudden, almost violent tug of the leash in our walk near dusk last night when a bunny rabbit hopped into view. Wonder if he knows what an impossible task he would undertake to get anywhere near that speedy hare.

Taken from an animal adoption facility about three years ago, Bauer was said to be about four years old then. The family agrees that estimate was off a couple of years. He is probably eight or nine years old currently and entitled to be a tad eccentric.

You see, despite his sweet disposition, Bauer has one quite annoying proclivity. When he is left alone, he likes to chew toilet paper and deposit the wads at various places around the house. With a family of four in a big home, the habit is not so noticeable, but in my much smaller apartment, his choice of drop off is severely limited. Consequently, when I leave him alone, I have to make sure the bathroom doors are closed firmly. He never bothers newspapers or a napkin left on a table, only toilet paper. Hmmm...I wonder if this trait is peculiar to cocker spaniels and if he'll ever grow out of the habit.

But, really no need to worry too much. Bauer, the dog, goes home next week.