



The Katharine Ordway
Natural History Study Area

Box 216
Inver Grove Heights, Minn. 55075
(612) 455-6204

ORDWAY BULLETIN
No. 75

MACALESTER
COLLEGE

located at 9550 Inver Grove Trail (Dakota County Road 77), Inver Grove Heights, Minn.

"TAWNY" at ORDWAY.

"Tawny" was something of an orphan. Perhaps "disowned" was a better description for her status. The circumstances of her having spent the first three years of her life in a household in the city had come to an end and a change was necessary for her. This change brought her to Ordway with the understanding that she could remain only a short time since the normal activities of an active dog are just naturally incompatible with our operating policies. So we became an "interim foster-parent" of a most unusual creature and painted into our experience a vignette of a humanlike animal-friend.

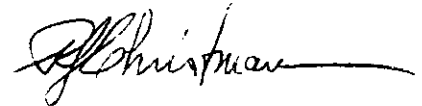
She was a Golden Retriever and her long, silky coat had just enough russet hue to justify her name; and she was both graceful and gentle yet she lent a friendly touch by her presence. She was a large dog but not clumsy; actually she was badly overweight - not surprising since she seldom had much outlet for her strength and energy, which were now almost at a peak in her fourth year. She was almost instantly amenable to a master-friend relationship and seldom did she break the rules which quickly developed between us. She ran well - in that almost-flowing manner of field dogs - and was tireless in breasting the newly-fallen deep snows; and yet she contained herself very well and patiently trod the slower foot-steps of her companion whenever she was called to "heel". She could be cagey at times, lagging behind me in very deep snow so that she could bound from one of my tracks to the next, thus conserving her own strength.

She was most facile in her facial traits, displaying a surprising gamut of expressions from dignity and patience to abject glee. A twice-daily expression of her intelligence was when she would come and nuzzle me or begin her little side-stepping, tail-wagging, tongue-puffing indication that she was ready for a trip outdoors; if I was less than prompt in responding she would increase the tempo of her little charade to include some raising of her front feet from the floor and increasing her tail-wagging to a violent thumping. When at last I would respond, asking her "Do you want to take a walk?", she would absolutely explode into almost dizzy rapture, jumping high off the floor several times and moving toward the door. In her response to "nature's calls" she was usually quite prompt and I easily got the impression that she was being considerate of me, particularly on dark evenings or when the inclement winter weather included high winds and low thermometer readings; at other times she liked to saunter about as dogs have done for ages; still she usually kept within sight and control and this not only endeared her to me but also made her almost compatible with the surroundings.

It had to come to an end - but I had known that from before the very beginning. On an occasion when I had to be away for three days "Tawny" was taken by a friend to board with a family which included small children and another dog plus a cat - a

rather full menage. Upon my return they asked if they might keep her in spite of my fear that she might be too much of a super-cargo for the already-established household. Of course, I was wrong for she not only did not intrude but rather she blended perfectly into the new picture, completing it rather than upsetting it so that it very soon appeared that the family scene was now as it should have been from the beginning.

Someday someone with an insight into words and their meanings may come up with an appropriate expression for Tawny but until then she requires many words, all of them inadequate. Ordway is no different now because of Tawny but that is a tribute to Tawny. She was not here very long and she left no permanent marks on the place but for a month or so she graced the surroundings with her presence. Dogs just do not mix well with a natural history study area but somehow Tawny came close to doing so at Ordway. Largely it was because she was kept under control but I think a lot of it was because of her intelligent and gentle nature. She was some kind of a dog!



R J CHRISTMAN,
Naturalist
Katharine Ordway Natural
History Study Area.

5 April 1979