

Patrick, by DELLA MASSENGILL (Reprinted from BTCA Dog in a Kid Suit)

My husband and I are the only true dog people our friends know. To them we are unique because we don't just own dogs, we own Bull Terriers. They often ask us to tell this story.

My husband and I used to travel quite a bit. On one of our trips, we decided to take Patrick along. All of our dogs love to travel and Patrick was no exception. He was shown as a youngster, so he can easily recognize when a trip is being planned. When he wasn't immediately kenneled, he knew he was going too.

Now you have to understand. Patrick was an only child, delivered at the animal clinic where I worked. He grew up going to work with me, thinking the clinic was his second home. My husband loves Patrick but thinks he is a mama's boy. Patrick knows he's a Mama's boy, but he also knows that when Jerry speaks, he better listen or at least pretend to listen.

As we began this particular trip, Patrick was allowed to ride uncrated in the back of the station wagon. We understood the risk, but those big brown eyes make you do things you wouldn't ordinarily do. Fifteen miles from home Patrick sat up, looked at the back of Jerry's head, and began to whine. Jerry was driving and glanced into the rearview mirror where his gaze locked with Patrick's. "Hush, Patrick," Jerry snapped. Patrick continued to whine, grew excited, and barked. "I said hush." Jerry said again. Patrick again whined and began to fidget. I knew Patrick well enough to realize that whatever was on his mind, he thought it was very important. With eyes still locked in the rearview mirror the discussion continued for several more miles. At one point Jerry scolded Patrick, "You don't want me to pull this car over and come back there." You can understand how I felt already so far from home with no crate. I quickly realized my mistake.

I mentioned to Jerry the possibility that Patrick needed a bathroom break.

Jerry replied, "That's not it, he just knows I can't reach him."

Finally, I convinced Jerry to pull over in a deserted field. We stopped the car, opened the door and Patrick shot out of it. At a speed faster than light, he made a run for a tree at the end of a field he'd never seen before. Jerry was still not convinced that Patrick wasn't up to something mischievous. I had faith in my dog. I knew he needed a moment of privacy.

In less than two minutes, a large white body barreled around the tree with ears at attention. Patrick closed the gap and never looked left or right as he leaped back inside the car. Once inside, he again sat down catching Jerry's eyes in the mirror. The look Jerry was getting from Patrick was nothing short of smug. As we pulled back onto the highway, I knew Jerry was trying to come up with something to say. Neither he nor Patrick likes to be wrong.

Jerry finally looked over at me with a frown, as only a Dad could muster and said, "Well, he should have gone before we left the house."