



POLITICAL PUP

PETER DEFazio BRINGS
HOME A RESCUE DOG

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

When politicians visit *Eugene Weekly's* offices for endorsement interviews, I have been known to judge them on how they interact with my dogs, who snuggle in their kennel by my desk.

On a recent visit to *EW*, Rep. Peter DeFazio promptly got down on one knee to greet my crop-eared rescue pit bull, Biggie, while my Rhodesian ridgeback, Aksel, snoozed.

The congressman wasn't stopping by for an endorsement. Instead, he interrupted his busy schedule to talk about one of his own dogs, Mandy, that DeFazio and his wife, Myrnie Daut, adopted in May from Greenhill

Humane Society.

DeFazio is not just a dog lover at home. He's used his clout in Washington, DC, to help the furred and feathered. He's a member of the House Veterinary Medicine Caucus, has fought the federal government and the USDA's Wildlife Services for years over the use of toxic poisons that kill pet dogs as well as coyotes and other wildlife, and he was named a 2018 Humane Society legislative champion, with a 100 percent rating for his votes in Congress.

DeFazio and Daut have two dogs and a cat. Rusty is a 13-year-old (or so) Chesapeake Bay retriever, Gimli is a fluffy grey cat, and Mandy, the newest addition, is an older brindle mutt of vaguely uncertain origins — Retriever? Lab?

Mandy's not much of a swimmer, DeFazio says of his pup's possible Labrador genes. She needed a diet when she first came to Greenhill as an owner-surrender, weighing around 100 pounds, so she may or may not have any Labrador at all in her. She was down to a trim 78 pounds by the time she was adopted by DeFazio and Daut and is now at 71 pounds, heading toward an ideal doggie weight of about 68 pounds.

The couple had recently lost their last older dog adoptee, Bilbo, a Newfoundland mix (with "hairy feet like a hobbit") and had endured a lot of trips to the vet when they saw a cute dog in the paper.

DeFazio saw the dog was listed with medical concerns, so he suggested his wife get a pet without any health issues. Of course, he says, she came home with Mandy, who was wearing an Elizabethan cone of shame for flea dermatitis as well as dealing with her weight problems. She still cries for more food at mealtimes, he says.

Greenhill listed Mandy as 8 or 9 years old, and her muzzle is going grey. Why adopt an older dog? "Dogs over 5 or 6, people don't want," DeFazio says. But they are well-trained or trainable, he says, and are "great animals who need a home." Mandy adjusted to life in the DeFazio-Daut home quickly, with a little training to get her used to the cat, also a rescue. "She's so food-oriented, she's easy to train," he says.

Mandy has the basics down — "Sit, stay, down, paw," he says — but the congressman muses that something in her past life makes her anxious if she's told to "Go lie down." Instead, it's "Go to your bed."

Mandy won't visit D.C. anytime soon, as flying is too hard on dogs. DeFazio's office in the Rayburn House Office Building has two canine regulars, Sophie and Elsie, who are ready to greet dog-oriented visitors to the congressional digs.

"It helps in D.C. to have animals," DeFazio says. "Most people like it." ■

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