

# Leo U Working Dog Interview

## 1. What are your Leo's names (past and present, registered names and call names), age and sex?

At the Bridge: Nockerl von Stutensee (*Nocki*)—11/01/2002-07/03/2013—female—came to us in January 2011  
T'Freyja von Stutensee (*Freyja*)—11/06/2009-01/07/2011—female  
VL Tyr von Stutensee RA NAP MJP CGC TKN (*Tyr*)—11/06/2009—neutered male  
CH Texas Tango von Stutensee NAP TKN (*Tango*)—11/06/2009—female—came to us in January 2017  
Undomiel von Stutensee (*Domi*)—03/10/2012—female  
GCH CH Tipping's Point's Brynhildr CGC TKN (*Bryn*)—06/05/2014—female

## 2. How long have you had Leos? What originally drew you to the Leonberger breed?

We have had Leonbergers for about eight years. It's important to retire to something rather than from something so I retired "to the dogs." We have always had families of furies; included was Mason, an Irish Wolfhound we acquired when a friend died. I knew I wanted another large dog who liked people. I discovered Leonbergers after repeatedly tripping over Nugget at the local vet's office where I boarded our parrot. I thought she was a "lucky accident" dog until I met D'Nae's Mekka, and found out she was an actual breed—not only that, Waltraut Zieher's von Stutensee kennel was just a town over.

## 3. For you, what is the most appealing characteristic of the breed?

Leonbergers are trustworthy and generally do not offer aggression. And they are fantastic lap sitters. Also Leonbergers are wonderful fur producers; who needs sheep? Leos don't have to be sheared; they drop their fur easily all year round.

## 4. How did you first get involved in dog sports?

Until I retired, my dogs got basic obedience training, walks, and general play. I enjoyed watching weinerdog races on television, but while I fantasized my Nicky racing down the field, I had no idea how one even found a weinerdog race. But I had two sets of friends who ran agility, Rick and Marian with their Ridgebacks, and Paula with her SharPeis. I would go and watch them compete, and fantasize my dachsie Nora running through tunnels. But it wasn't until I retired, and, with Waltraut, joined our local dog club that I got the push I needed. D'Nae with Journey, Waltraut with Tango, and I with Tyr set up private lessons with Teresa Janssen in agility. Rick and Marian led me by the nose through our first trial. Tyr is great; I'm a wuss—I need lots of leading.

While one couldn't call it a sport, working dogs include therapy dogs. Michael very much wanted to do dog therapy visits because while his mom was mostly sleeping the last two months of her life after her stroke, she always woke up to smile and to pet the golden retriever therapy dog who visited. Michael did the research, found the Alliance of Therapy Dogs, and discovered our dog club had Alliance testers. First Tyr and Nocki, then after Nocki's death, Tyr and Tango have, for six years, made monthly visits to outlying nursing homes and care centers.

## 5. What are your dogs' biggest accomplishments in the sport thus far?

Tyr has earned his Masters Preferred Jumpers with Weaves title; he's slowing down so we're switching to rally, where he has earned Novice and Advanced titles so far. As far as I'm concerned, Tyr's greatest accomplishment

was his overcoming his dislike of the teeter, and by the finish of his agility career earning a Preferred Standard Novice title.

**6. Are there certain characteristics that make your Leos well suited to the sport? Did you choose him/her as a puppy with these characteristics in mind?**

We chose Leonbergers with big, gentle dogs in mind; however, we were interested in therapy; not every Leo has the personality to work in therapy, but as a breed, they are usually people pleasers. I chose Tyr as a puppy because he had a strong “follow” response in testing.

I decided to run agility with Tyr because I wanted to play with him, and his idea of play was body slamming—we needed structured play. Luckily Tyr is a light boned male, only about 130 pounds, so he was able to do jumps without too much stress on his shoulders. Agility is not really a big, heavy dog sport. But I’m hoping that Bryn decides she likes agility—Tyr has taught me quite a few skills; I would like to pass them on to Bryn.

Tyr and I are currently working on Excellent Rally; I am too lackadaisical a trainer to attempt obedience.

**7. Do you find that training a Leo is different than training other breeds? If so, how have you changed your criteria and techniques to meet the needs of your Leo partner?**

Training anyone requires that the teacher make some adjustments to the student. Tyr is a sensitive soul; he is absolutely crushed if he thinks I am displeased, and shuts down. I have to use lots of happy voice, and just a perky “uh uh” if he doesn’t quite get it. My proudest moment as a trainer was when I messed up a run, and managed to keep Tyr happy; previously if I messed up, he knew and shut down. On the other hand, Bryn could not care less if I’m unhappy—maybe it’s a girl thing. My former fur families were all made up of individuals who each responded in his or her own way. Some liked happy praise, some liked yummy treats, some liked long sessions, and some did as they damn well pleased regardless—all were loved.

**8. What are your Top 3 Tips for training a Leonberger?**

Have very short training sessions.

Enjoy your sessions—if you’re not having a good time, neither is your Leo.

Adjust to your Leo, don’t expect your Leo to adjust to you.

**9. Do your Leos have guilty/naughty pleasures? (Or maybe they are perfect, but most Leos seem to have that one thing that they can’t/won’t grow out of that becomes somehow endearing over the years 😊.)**

Tyr is absolutely perfect; he never meets a stranger—at least he loves all adults; he is also a momma’s boy, which can be either endearing or frustrating. Tango destroys squeakies and is very needy—most of the time, this is a lovable trait. Domi is the cuddliest Leo in the whole world. . . with those she chooses. Bryn Belly Biter bullies her Uncle Tyr dreadfully, and definitely knows her own mind; she also is highly intelligent and very cuddly.