

Man's best friend helped Islander hear

By Jim Hanson

Islander Correspondent

Bandit is out of work. Everyone is happy about it, no doubt including Bandit since he's as smart as most people. He may even realize he participated in a semi-miracle.

For six years he did all the hearing that was done for Jim DePorre of Anna Maria City. DePorre was deaf, and Bandit was his ears.

Bandit is a border collie, a breed that in Bandit lived up to its reputation as the smartest of all dogs. Best known for herding sheep with uncanny comprehension, they fill many other roles in dogs' romance with mankind.

For this one, it was serving a master particularly hard hit by deafness. DePorre had normal hearing and was a successful lawyer and CPA in Michigan until, 12 years ago, for no known medical reason his hearing just shut down.

He closed his legal practice — “a lawyer without a phone is like a crook without a gun,” he said — and began learning to deal with a silent world. Since it was so difficult to carry on a conversation with people, he turned to the Internet and various computer online services.

“The Internet,” he said, “provided a means for me to stay connected to the world without having to hear.”

And Bandit lent a hand, or a paw, or an ear. He alerted DePorre to a wide variety of sounds such as the alarm clock's buzz, the knock on the door, the ring of the phone, wife Gail's call that dinner was ready.

DePorre began trading stocks online, using the enormous resources, instantaneous information and brain power on the Internet to trade fast-moving and volatile stocks, he said.

It didn't take him long to begin developing his own approach: He is a certified genius, member of Mensa



Jim DePorre and Bandit. Islander Photo: Edna Tiemann

and of Triple Nine, an organization of those with IQs in the 99.9 percentile. He began questioning the dicta of “experts” in the field, and applied his technical analytical ability to the market under the computer identity of Rev Shark.

He set up computer bulletin board called the Shark

Attack, which built a large following among cyberinvestors. No wonder. His trading has put him up as much as 70 percent, with remarkable gains in some new funds.

Two years ago he married the ex-wife of an heir to the R.J. Reynolds fortune, and she has put money into his trading funds, as have some of her Hollywood friends and relatives. They moved to Anna Maria, where he works four souped-up computers in a neat home office.

Two months ago surgery at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor implanted an electrode into his inner ear that connects to the auditory nerve that transmits sound to the brain. When the microphone picks up a sound it is digitized by the computer and transmitted to the electrode in the cochlear which enables him to hear.

The sound “is something like a robotic Donald Duck,” he said, “but now I can easily hear conversations and all the noises that Bandit previously heard for me.”

As his brain learns to process all the new input, noises should become more and more natural sounding, he believes.

He still conducts his business in silence, operating the Shark Attack Short Term Trading forum on America Online at keyword “Traders,” as well as several web sites dedicated to active trading including one at <http://www.revshark.com>.

Meanwhile, Bandit is out of a job. Except for that all-important one of being man's best friend.

“This has been an overwhelming experience for me and seems almost miraculous,” DePorre said. “I'm thrilled to once again be able to explore the world of sound.”

You can bet Bandit will be there to share it.