

A Dog in a Dog Suit - Bruiser the Worlds Biggest Dog comes to the Lawrence Busker Festival

At first glance Bruiser seems to be a big dog – a REALLY BIG dog. He walks, sits, rolls over and barks like a dog. Kids hug him and adults pet him. He must be a dog. Right?

Well yes and no. Bruiser is the creation of Estes Park Colorado Puppeteer Bob Aiken and was intended as a way to get people into his puppet shows playing inside a downtown theater in the early 90's. "Estes Park is a tourist town and I had a stage show open to the visiting public in a little theater tucked away from the main street" Bob recalls. "Bruiser was created to attract the crowd over to the stage". It soon became clear, however, that Bruiser was meant for bigger things.

People would stop just to see the dog, which was really Bob in a very well constructed and cleverly designed costume. What made it special was the way that Bob became Bruiser and moved like a dog would. He even began to think like a dog would. "I would get into that mental state that just doesn't get bothered. A place where you just get love and give love. Probably where dogs are most of the time," Bob explains. "I also would become more patient and learned to balance moments where people would pay too much attention to me or too little attention to me".

People would stop their cars and get picture after picture made with the big dog on the street of Estes Park. Bob learned more and more about being a dog and knew he had it down when he heard, more than once, "How did that dog get inside that suit?"

Bob realized he had a good dog act with Bruiser and made the short trip to Boulder on the weekends to work the famous Pearl Street there. All sorts of jugglers, contortionists and magicians were working along this pedestrian mall area in downtown Boulder but no one was being a large dog. Bob and Bruiser soon found themselves the center of attention. "I wasn't able to do a big show like the other performers," Bob remembered, "so I did just a series of little shows". He would interact with each group that came by and became their best friend, as any dog would. He would perform tricks, let them tickle, scratch and hug Bruiser and then bark and paw at his food bowl as if asking for a treat.

The treat was a tip of course and Bob was able to make a good living with just a few visits to Boulder each month. "I had one advantage over the other acts" Bob tells, "Because Bruiser's costume was so thick and warm, I could work in the colder months". This means that when even the fire-eater was inside to stay warm Bruiser was out acting cute and making some money.

"Oh I played the cute card a lot. That was Bruiser's ace in the hole." Bob said about the tippers on Pearl Street, "They had fun with Bruiser because they really believed he was a dog".

He hopes that the people attending the Busker Festival in Lawrence will fall in love with Bruiser too.

Bob will be bringing Bruiser to the Lawrence Busker Festival on August 20th through the 22nd along with over 25 other street performers working on over 5 different stages in the three days. Bob will be presenting his puppet show on the Family Stage on Saturday with Bruiser making appearances throughout the weekend. You can find out more about his schedule and the other acts on the web site for the Busker Festival at www.lawrencebuskerfest.com.