



It's A Dog's Life

Rick Magers

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17 years ago (1998) a tiny puppy, somehow crossed the highway on Auraria Road, on the outskirts of Dahlonega, Georgia...a beautiful little town in the North Georgia Mountains. His limping indicated that he had been injured. I later learned that he had escaped Dog Dachau, a canine nightmare down in the hallow across the highway. Once he realized that he was now living with people who loved all animals, especially dogs, he relaxed and began playing with 'our' dogs. My wife, Dottie, (Feb. 1931/Sept. 2002) for 41 years and I created a way-station for traveling dogs. They must have created a system similar to the one used by hobo travelers many decades ago...STOP HERE--GOOD FOOD--NURSING CARE--PLENTY OF HEAD-PETTING. We had 15 'ribs-showing' hungry, traveling dogs during one winter, but usually we had only 5 or 6, plus Coti and Dandy. Several times I noticed small tree limbs up near the highway, and all around our 'God's Little Acre', low to the ground, which appeared to have been chewed on. Perhaps a signal to exhausted, traveling dogs? We took Dandy (Named that because he resembled our Jack Russell, Andy--who was with us for 15 years, until he decided to go hunting--I found him once, a few weeks earlier, but he only stayed two days before continuing his hunt...never saw him again) to the Veterinarian, the day after he came to us. His X-ray showed small pellets (like birdshot) in the area around his left hip. "They've been in there a while," the Vet said, "so it would probably do more damage taking them out, so I suggest we leave them where they are." Dandy stopped limping after a few months, and quite a few warm bathtub soakings with me. He was Dottie's constant companion during the two years she had left on this beautiful blue planet. I couldn't stand the memories of our mountain home, that were attached to the walls of my brain, so I left it, telling our son, Tom, to do whatever he wanted with it, and Dandy and I headed south in our little Toyota Dolphin motorhome. I was Dottie's 24/7 caregiver during her final 2 years. To keep my sanity, I began writing two books that had been floating around in my mind for a long time. Blue Water Adventure was one, (now in 2015 it is titled Dark Caribbean) the other was The McKannahs. We stopped in Atlanta and had 20 copies of each printed. They used the cover art that was done by a Dahlonega friend, and the other by an Aussie artist, who became my Webmaster. Dandy was the best companion any traveler could ever have. He would lay beneath the table I was signing copies. If he needed to pee or poop, he would just stand up and look at me. After walking him for about fifteen minutes, something that helped me too, he would curl up on his mat beneath the table again and snooze. Dandy was blind the last year, and handled it well, until he began crying softly through the night. He was too good a friend to turn my back on, so in 2013 I had the Vet euthanize him. As usual, Dandy just lay there in Stubby and accepted the needle as the next phase of his life. Rather than one, I now have two special places in my brain. My two best friends, Dottie and Dandy occupy them.

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