

MY DOG SAM

Today I have the sad news that we had Sam put to sleep. He held out strong far longer than I thought possible after his bout of seizures a few years ago, though his body just wore out on him. For the longest time I could keep him going just by talking loudly and enthusiastically with him. He rests on a bluff overlooking the Smoke Creek Desert northwest of Pyramid Lake doing for eternity one thing he always loved, looking out over an expansive peaceful scene.

When I met Sam he was a stray, hanging out near a friend's house in Mississippi, taking handouts, and was covered with fleas and ticks. I had never seen engorged ticks, so thought that the big lump on his head must have been some kind of growth. He found his way into my heart very quickly and I cleaned him up. For a while, the only thing he wanted to do was sit under the truck and bark at passerby's, being the Mississippi ideal I would think. He learned to come on in and hang out with us. On one walk along the famous square in Oxford MS, Mrs. Duvall, who owned the corner fine-clothing store, commented that she thought he was a Tibetan Terrier. Her own dog Truman was 'beyond his fighting years' and was a cocker spaniel. I think she liked Sam. From then on, this became Sam's official breed.

He traveled with us to CO and on to Nevada after my time in MS was up. We had many adventures crossing the country in that large diesel powered U-Haul truck in the middle of the winter, especially in Wyoming. Upon arriving in Nevada he became a desert rat, like me, after a bit of adjustment. He had never walked very far in MS, so on our first hike, he was all over the Peavine Mtn, chasing deer and running like a crazed mutt. On our way out he ran out of gas, and stopped at every bush for a rest, like that classical picture of a man wanting water in the desert. Soon he got in fine shape and led me through many runs, mtn climbs, and hikes in our area. He ran 16 miles with me on several occasions, with 4'000 of vertical gain, and was feeling better the next day than I was. He also took Patty on daily walks when she was pregnant with Leanna, which was very good for her health.

When Leanna was born, Sam gave her a lick of approval and realized immediately that the pecking order had changed. He has been her 'brother' all of her 9 years.

His first time over Monarch Pass was interesting. He looked out the window, got scared, and tried to climb up my arm as if to say -- yikes, I'm scared, take care of me. In Crested Butte, he really loved the house, and took it as his duty to protect it from evil doers.

Most of the time Sam would just act like a dog. However, once in a while I would be at a very low point in my life, and Sam would suddenly gesture or do such profound things that I'm sure he could read my feelings. He could provide me with comfort when all I felt was despair. Even on his last day he managed to come back long enough for one last snuggle. He was happy to see me every day upon my arrival back home, and he had many dog friends. I will surely miss him beyond description, but will also always cherish my memories of him.



Sam as an Afgan, and Sam in his Star-Trek outfit.



Sam dressed up as Ms. Nesbitt.

Sam was with me from August 1989 until April 20, 2004.



Sam being Sam, and Sam at Leanna's slumber party.
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