

Sadie

I will never forget the day in February 1995 when my sister called from Glens Falls, NY, and said, "Guess what! One of the girls in the office just brought in her litter of sheepdog puppies! And they are free!" Apparently her co-workers Old English Sheepdog had a night out with the neighborhood boys, one a black lab, the other a German Shepard, and soon thereafter came her litter of 11 "mostlies."

At the time, I was not thinking about another dog, but as she told me about them, I said I would give it some thought. We had already Hannah, the black lab, who was about 12 years old, and Pickwick, the Airedale, who was 5. As I considered another puppy, I thought Pickwick would enjoy a younger playmate, as Hannah was getting older, and not as inclined to play when he wanted to. So I told my sister that I would take a female if there were one available. By then, all had been promised, but I said that if for some reason a puppy was returned, I would take him, or her. Within a week, she called to say that a female was returned, and she made arrangements to transport the puppy to me in NH.

On March 17, 1995, over the Adirondacks, and Green Mountains, came Sadie. She was a black and white ball of fluff, weighing all of 5 ½ pounds. After oohing and aaaahing over her, we immediately went off to the vet for her first wellness exam. All was good, and she schmoozed right into our hearts. Pickwick was thrilled, "Oh boy, someone to play tug of war with!" Hannah, being the matriarch of our dogdom, let Pickwick have all the fun.

Sadie was very smart; she picked up on our routine very fast. At the time, I worked late afternoons and evenings for a major air carrier in Boston, so I was home for the greater part of the day. When I went to work, the dogs were with my parents (who lived next door), and stayed with them until bedtime, then they would bring them home. Hannah and Pickwick had their own beds, and Sadie shared with either one, until she was too big, and finally got a bed of own.

Sadie looked and acted every bit an OES. If it were not for her corkscrew tail, and her pointed ears (which flopped over) like a Shepard, you would have thought her the full OES. She would run rings around us, herding us along, especially if it was time to go for a ride. My father took all three dogs for a ride daily. He was so recognized with all the dogs in the car that we finally convinced him to get vanity plates DOGMBL.

Sadly, within two years, Pickwick developed liver disease, and passed away, then the next year, Hannah died at 15 ½ years. Sadie then became the center of our lives.

When my mother became ill, and spent several months in the hospital, I was concerned of what to do with Sadie when my mother came home. Sadie immediately recognized the difference in my mother, and settled down beside

her. Sadie would get up and move when my mother moved; the rest of us could walk over her. Sadie would herd us up to go outside, yet she would wait and let my mother guide her to the door to let her out. Sadie was amazing. Eight years later, when my mother was again hospitalized then confined to a nursing home, Sadie visited her in both places, sitting up in a chair beside her, and of course, visiting with all the other patients, and staff.

After my mother passed away, Sadie continued to have her daily rides, and visits with my father. She was a great companion for him, and it took so very little to make her happy. If he was out and about in the yard, or in his workshop, she was content to wait for him lounging in the back seat of the DOGMBL, with the back door open so she could see what was going on around her.

In 2004, I sought out Annie, in the hopes of rescuing a Sheepie to give that companionship to Sadie. Sadie and I met a couple of Sheepies, but both were too “bouncy” for the now 9-year-old Sadie, who had never been an Alpha dog anyway. A year later, Annie called me about a rescue from the streets of Reading, PA, a mostly named Darby. Darby needed medical attention, and I was leaving on vacation, so I told her I would check in with her when I returned. I did, and Darby was on the mend, so I made arrangements to meet with his foster parent, half way in Newburgh, NY, to claim Darby. I told Sadie it was long way to go for a date, but we went, and we fell in love with Darby. He was my little old man, with his funny under bite, snaggle tooth, and big brown eyes. He was a senior too, not too sure of his age, but he was the perfect companion for Sadie. He did not bark, not that he couldn’t but he only barked if he was in distress. So Sadie did all his talking for him. He was very hard of hearing; he could hear me if the pitch and volume was just right, and he would follow Sadie wherever she went, and they both had daily visits and rides with my Dad in the DOGMBL. Two years went by with Darby, during the second year he started to deteriorate, and I knew he would not be with us long. His heart gave out, and despite all the efforts of the veterinary experts, I had to let him go.

I could see the devastation in Sadie, she was so shaken. She and I were crushed, and she would not let me out of her sight, nor I for her. Two weeks later, my sister called and said, “Guess what!” I knew that sound. The mother of her co-worker knew the Dog Officer who had a friend/hairdresser who had a client who knew of a West Highland White Terrier in need of a home immediately. Houston was his name, and his mistress was terminally ill. Her family was so distraught that they just locked him up in the garage, and a neighbor asked if they could find Houston a home. I called the “friend/hairdresser” to find out about the Westie, a neutered 10-year in good health, and will all veterinary papers. So Sadie and I agreed to meet Houston, and as soon as we saw him, we were hooked. He had the same under bite and snaggle tooth that Darby had, it was like he was reincarnated in a younger dog. That was three years ago!

What a help for Sadie, and for my Dad. Although no longer able to drive the DOGMBL, both dogs visited him daily. Houston was the lively one (still is), and really perked up Sadie. Shortly thereafter, Sadie lost most of her hearing, and like Darby, could hear me at the same pitch and volume. Houston did his share of talking for her, herding her up, and keeping her lively too. Dad passed away in 2008 very suddenly, and both dogs really missed their visits with him.

Last July 2009, Sadie passed her senior lab panels so that she could have her teeth cleaned under sedation. All went well, and then within a month, I noticed her glands were swollen, really swollen. Our Vet confirmed Lymphoma. I was sick. Sadie was 14 ½ so there was no way I was going to put her through chemotherapy, or any other invasive procedure. We decided to try prednisone, 20 mg a day, and keep her comfortable. That was in August of 2009. Despite the increased thirst and appetite (We maintained fluid intake and diet), Sadie did very well with the prednisone, but I told myself that we were day to day with her, knowing that she would let me know when it was her time.

May 21 of this year, almost overnight, she started to fail. After consulting our Vet, I increased her prednisone, and that helped. But two weeks ago, June 8, I took Sadie and Houston for their Tuesday morning ride, and noticed when we got home, that Sadie would take a couple of steps then just sit. I had to help her get into the house. I did not feel well going to work, but it was only for 5 hours. When I got home, Sadie could not stand, nor could she support herself when I lifted her. She looked so confused, and I was so upset. I called our Vet, then my sister, "Aunt Sandy." I made Sadie comfortable on her bed with her favorite wool blanket, and then lay down next to her until my sister came. I combed her thin fur, and fixed up her face as Houston licked us both. When my sister arrived we moved Sadie to the car for the trip to the vet. Once there, they made us comfortable in the "Family Room." We lay on the floor with Sadie as she went to sleep. She looked so at peace, no more stress, no more pain. She was my Sadiebaby, Sadieface, always there, always alert and happy, even in these past few months when she was so visibly deteriorating. We loved her for 15 ½ years; we celebrated every birthday, fluffed her up and put bright bows on her at Christmas. She knew what gifts were hers, and like a kid, tore off all the paper to get inside. She made us laugh, and at the end we cried over her. Today I will retrieve her ashes, and she will be buried in my perennial garden in the lilies with Darby. I miss her so. Houston is a lost...follows me everywhere, like Sadie did when Darby was gone. Our lives will never be the same without her. She may have been from a litter of 11, but Sadie was one of a kind.

Hilary Hall
New Hampshire