

Lumberjack

From the moment I met Betty Christenson, Director of North Texas Alaskan Malamute Rescue, it was as though we had known, genuinely understood and loved each other forever. She was the best friend anyone could ever have wanted– she played so many important and pivotal roles in my life and in my heart. She was a true friend, companion, teacher guide, and confidante, A source of inspiration, she was also a surrogate sister, mother and kindred spirit. We read each other’s minds – we completed each other’s sentences. Our love for animals, and Alaskan Malamutes, in particular had brought us together – the spiritual bond and mutual love, respect and appreciation we shared – kept us together in a relationship unparalleled in my life.

My husband and I learned just about everything we knew about animal rescue from Betty and her husband, Chris. Through Betty’s encouragement and support, we rescued and adopted many dogs – many of them Malamutes, but also Bentley, a German Shepherd,, Hitchcock, Shadow and Cinders, Siberian Huskies, Maximus, an Anatolian Shepherd, and others. Although we were both involved with Texas Alaskan Malamute Rescue, we attempted to save and find a home for any breed of dog, or cat, or any other animal, for that matter.

Betty and I spoke and emailed to one another regularly. Our phone conversations were almost always full of love, beauty, upliftment and inspiration. Shortly before Thanksgiving in 2001, Betty told me about a beautiful 11-year-old Malamute named Lumberjack that had been neglected and basically left to fend for himself living outside year round following a bitter divorce and custody battle. Apparently Lumberjack had been the wife’s favorite, and the husband took him out of spite. He took his anger and bitterness out on the poor old dog. Lumberjack had hip dysplasia, osteoarthritis, could barely get up and walk and had cataracts. He was a loving, lovable Mal in need of a loving family.

As Betty had spent her Thanksgiving holidays with us since we met, I told her to bring Lumberjack to Thanksgiving dinner in order to determine if he would fit into our household. She, along with several other of our dog-loving friends shared a beautiful, joyous day together, and Lumberjack was home at last. He was enthralled by our pond and pool and wooded area. We shared a feast and a lot of playtime out in our backyard where Lumberjack met most of our dogs – all of whom seemed to understand that this old, happy-go-lucky dog posed no threat whatsoever to the family hierarchy. We officially adopted him that day – truly a day of Thanksgiving for so very many blessings and gifts. It was November 22, 2001.

We treated Lumberjack with the love, respect and appreciation he deserved. He was overjoyed and in his element – to be with humans and canine siblings who loved and cared for him. He slept in the bedroom with us and the other dogs for the rest of his life. He enjoyed all the warmth and comfort we could provide

He was large and wooly with a beautiful black, white and red and brown shiny coat. He had a beautiful white face with a dark gray widow's peak, eyes that always twinkled even though they had been dimmed by cataracts. He had the merriest face and disposition of any dog I've ever known. Although he had difficulty getting up and walking, and obviously spent a lot of time in pain, he possessed the joie de vivre and happy nature of a hopeful 4-year-old child. He loved playing with his toys and friends. And how he loved his rides in the car! His previous owner had never permitted him to sit in his car, so it was a very special and unique privilege for Lumberjack to enjoy the luxury of a good ride in our car.

From Lumberjack, I learned many lessons – courage, faithfulness, perseverance, stoicism, acceptance, gratitude, the ability to live in the moment with appreciation for each moment – and the ability to keep on keeping on. Lumberjack is the only dog I have ever known who literally sang – if he heard me singing or someone on television or the radio singing, he would sing along with us. His woo-wooing made me laugh until the tears rolled down my cheeks. AND...he actually sang in tune and in harmony with the music! . He brought me so much joy and laughter and, of course, unconditional love. During this Thanksgiving of 2010, I am so very grateful for the privilege and blessing of having known my dear, wonderful Lumberjack, having shared such a joyous, beautiful part of my life with him and having had him as a loving member of my family...