

## Me – and my Shadow...

Shadow was a magnificent black and white Siberian Husky/Alaskan Malamute mix who had been surrendered to the SPCA of Texas because someone in his family of nine years – suddenly developed allergies to him. At least that's how they explained their decision to give up their dog. The true reasons they turned Shadow in, however, were that he was nine years old and had a severe heart murmur and advanced heartworm disease which can be costly to treat and prove fatal.

Shadow was very vocal and howled piercingly and hauntingly throughout the old SPCA building. It was obvious he was heartbroken at being left in this strange and scary place with other terrified and wretched animals. His wailing and soulful howling were very upsetting and disturbing to everyone at the SPCA. They felt so sorry for the old guy and were saddened and depressed by the fact that this poor fellow had virtually no chance of being adopted. He was moved many times from kennel to kennel and various other rooms because of his heartrending vocalizations and finally found a temporary place in one of the offices of the Shelter workers. Everyone at the SPCA was depressed by the story of this beautiful boy who had been a family dog and was now in suffering inexplicably in a strange new environment. The staff and volunteers adored Shadow and hoped and prayed he would find a new, loving home.

As a volunteer at the Shelter, I had heard about the plight of poor Shadow. When I first saw him, I was surprised by his beauty and how much he resembled a Malamute with the exception of his blazing, intense, dazzling blue Siberian Husky eyes. He was large for a Husky and about the size of a normal sized Mal. I spoke softly and comfortingly to Shadow. By the time our "meeting" ended, we both knew that we were destined to be together. I signed the adoption papers. He had received all of his vaccinations and had been neutered. He was to begin heartworm treatments immediately – as soon as he adjusted to his new home with Norm and me and the other dogs.

Shadow, like Lumberjack and many of the older and special needs dogs we had adopted, posed no threat to the rest of our "pack." Shadow met his new siblings with no problem whatsoever – other than that he tended to be rather timid. However, Shadow was what our friend Betty called "a dreamboat of a dog" – beautiful, spirited, highly intelligent, great with other dogs, cats and people. Shadow was friendly and loved receiving complements.

Shadow was treated at the SPCA for heartworm. At our very first visit, the vet commented on how deeply attached he was to me and what a powerful bond we shared. Shadow never let me out of his sight. He loved and trusted me and was not ever going to be "surrendered" to a shelter again.

Shadow's first public appearance was at a book signing coordinated by the SPCA at the Dallas Children's Museum. He was such a gentleman and so beautifully behaved. Everyone came by to pet him or make a fuss over him. He was wonderfully well

adjusted to people of all ages. I adored Shadow. He became a certified Animal Assisted Therapy Dog and accompanied Sophie (my first Therapy dog) on countless visits to schools, hospitals, assisted living centers to bring his own special personality and gift of healing to those in need. Shadow also frequently accompanied me to book signings and other events. His forte, however, was his work at our Grief Recovery Groups at the SPCA where people gather to learn how to cope with and recover from the devastating loss of a beloved pet. Shadow's magnificent blue eyes seemed to see right into the heart of those most in need of his brand of comfort. He would sit by the griever's side; place his paw on their knee or his head in their lap. He would lick them on the face. So many griever's through the years fell in love with my Shadow, gratefully acknowledging his beauty, gentleness, empathy and supportive presence.

Shadow shared so much with so many. He was so clever and knew how to perform for and please one person or a crowd. He sensed when, where and how he was needed. He had charm and charisma. He could be a clown or simply lend a sympathetic ear. Shadow knew I loved him dearly and would never betray him, as had his previous owners. I knew I could trust him to help and heal others. We shared a glorious relationship – me – and my Shadow...