

Our Special Innoko

We found out about Innoko through a close friend and computer software designer who happened to be working on a project at a local Animal Shelter. Our friend, Robert, told us about a dainty, beautiful and extremely timid and delicate 7-month old Alaskan Malamute who was in dire straits and desperately in need of escaping euthanasia. At Robert's suggestion, my husband visited the Shelter to make a breed identification and determined that the small-boned, beautifully masked black and white dog was an Alaskan Malamute/Siberian Husky mix. The seven-month old puppy was very skittish and was covered with ticks and fleas. Apparently, he had been a stray living in fields nearby who had been picked up by Animal Control. He was not sick per se but had many medical issues that had to be handled. We strongly doubted that anyone would adopt him as he had been at the shelter for as long as they would keep him. We decided to adopt him.

We had him fully examined by our vet before bringing him home. He was so afraid of people and terrified of our vet. After he had been bathed and groomed, he came home to meet our other dogs. They didn't mind him at all as he was so submissive – he clearly posed no threat to the pack "hierarchy". He spent a day with us and hid behind a large chair in our family room. We discovered another tick on him and decided that we shouldn't expose our Spencer dog who was old and very ill at the time to any potential contagious disease that Innoko may have been harboring. He had been a stray and at the shelter for a long time, and the results of all of his medical tests weren't available to us yet. We asked our dear friend, Betty Christenson to keep Innoko for us for a while at her home until our Spencer, who was near death, passed away. Betty was the North Texas Director of the Texas Alaskan Malamute Rescue organization and was able to keep Innoko isolated for a short time from other dogs in case he had any contagious health problems.

Life works in mysterious ways. Spencer would be on the verge of death one day, and then suddenly rally. It was a roller coaster, as we provided him with hospice care. So our newly adopted Innoko remained at Betty's house. She ended up keeping Innoko in a crate in her living room and came to love this gentle boy dearly. When it was discovered that Betty had advanced esophageal cancer, Innoko became her devoted friend, guardian angel, and always-loving companion. He always made her laugh with his puppy antics and gentle but mischievous spirit. She kept him crated, as he was so very frightened of people. His crate was his sanctuary. Often, when she opened his crate door, Innoko would retreat as far back in his crate and refuse to come out. Other times, he would zoom out the door. Then he would play with his toys and run through the house. He could make a game out of any situation.

Innoko brought Betty great joy throughout the various stages of her illness and she ended up "keeping him for us" until her death in 2004. As we regularly visited Betty, Innoko regarded us as his family, so that when we adopted him and his best friend, Bojangles after Betty died, he was content and at peace. He had come a long way from the terrified little puppy that we had first adopted. Although always timid, he is as playful and as impish as ever. Our special boy, Innoko, has shared his beauty and loving, gentle spirit

with us and so many other friends and family members people throughout his life. He continues to bring us joy every day.