

Sir Tobes (Tobias)

It was a Sunday afternoon, and we were visiting our dear friend, Betty Christenson, who was Director of North Texas Alaskan Malamute Rescue. At any given moment in time, Betty and her husband, Chris, had twelve to twenty “rescue” dogs on their property which they fostered, rehabilitated and cared for until the dogs were physically and emotionally healthy and available for adoption. The dogs were remarkably well taken care of in the hope that they would be adopted by “forever” families – those who would keep them forever and ever and never surrender them to an Animal Shelter or Animal Control for any reason. Betty and Chris had also enlisted the aid of and “partnered” with a young man that helped foster the dogs that were no longer in need of special or urgent medical care and attention. He sheltered and provided care for them until they were adopted. The sheer numbers of homeless, abandoned dogs were overwhelming. There were never enough foster families to care for all the dogs in dire need and distress.

While we spent time together, Betty showed us a photo album of all the dogs she had saved. It was chock full of photos of beautiful Malamutes of all sizes, shapes and colors. She shared the often horrifying and tragic stories of these pitiful dogs that had been injured, neglected, abandoned or abused. As members of the Texas Alaskan Malamute Rescue Association (TAMR) volunteer rescue organization, they fundraised and donated to provide whatever medical treatment these animals required (ranging from surgery to heartworm treatment, receiving vaccinations or being spayed or neutered, recovering from injuries, illnesses or abuse), and so on).

They fostered them and provided them with a temporary home until the animal was well physically and emotionally enough to be adopted. They also loved and socialized the animals in their care to the extent that socialization /rehabilitation was required. They came to know and understand the animals in their care and could provide potential adopters descriptions of physical and personality characteristics to help potential adopters to make a wise decision regarding a pet adoption.

As we leafed through the photo album, Betty stopped at a page that featured a beautiful Mal named Tobes. “Of all the dogs I’ve rescued, he is my favorite, she said quietly. Her eyes were filled with tears. “We didn’t think he’d make it,” she said softly, pointing to the Mal as he posed in his kennel, licked Chris’ face and “smiled” his goofy Malamute smile in front of Betty’s house. He was absolutely beautiful, small and delicate, but seemed to have a definite Malamute cockiness and high sense of self-esteem. He was smart and good-looking and knew it! He had been a stray for a long time and was very street wise, savvy, resourceful and independent. Betty told us that he’d had such an advanced case of heartworm and treatment that he had been terribly weak and ill and had been unable to get up or walk. She and Chris carried him out in a gurney to let him do his business. Toby also had a seriously fractured hip, osteoarthritis and was full of buckshot. For such a small, frail Mal, he had been through the wars. Finally, finally he had recovered sufficiently to be regarded as healthy enough to live in a foster home and be adopted. Apparently, Toby was very outgoing, engaging and charismatic. He was also

extremely intelligent and resilient. He was so savvy and really knew how to manipulate his human friends and companions.

While viewing his photos, I asked Betty about his current status. There was something about this dog that reminded me very much of my Caesar. Perhaps it was the twinkle of his eyes and the saucy spirit that shone through them. I could begin to understand why Betty loved him so. He was obviously a “trooper”, survivor and part sorcerer. He was magical and angelic, mischievous and insightful. I fell in love with this beautiful sable and white Mal and asked Betty if we could see him. Betty phoned her colleague Jay, and he was able to bring him over within half an hour.

Upon meeting, playing with and becoming acquainted with Toby, we became very impressed and of him. Once we got to know him, we subsequently named “Tobias”. Later on as we came to know him better (and further admire his many gifts,) we re-named him “Sir Tobes” Of course, we adopted him. We filled out the adoption forms right then and there at Betty’s. He was handsome, charming and beautifully behaved. He was a gentleman. Having decided he would never, ever suffer in any way again; we invited him into our truck to go home with us. Without the slightest hesitation, he enthusiastically jumped into the comfortable, blanket covered back seat of our Suburban. He had played the game well – and was victorious. He had found a wonderful, loving home which he would rule benevolently. Toby was also psychic – he knew he was headed for the Promised Land. He reigned supreme in the back of our Suburban. We stopped at Dickie’s Barbecue, a well-known Texas chain of BBQ restaurants and provided Tobes with some turkey breast. He thoroughly enjoyed himself – the treats and the ride and the companionship with and the forging of kindred spirits. He looked with enchantment out the window of the truck but never back to harder days and times. This was but the beginning of a wonderful life for Tobes and us. He would become an Animal Assisted Therapy Dog extraordinaire, a grief counseling dog, a book signing dog, a brilliant and engaging ambassador for the Malamute breed, a beloved public figure, and a friend, guide and healer to countless people. It was not long before Toby became Tobias and then Sir Tobes. Sir Tobes was the mascot for parades, doggie fundraisers, and numerous local celebrations and events. He was beloved by all he met. There will never, ever be another Sir Tobes (beloved and profoundly missed) by my husband, myself, his Animal Assisted Therapy dog pals, the griever and patients to whom he brought hope and inspiration, and so many others whose lives he touched and blessed in so many profound and lasting ways!!! May God bless and keep you always, my dearest boy... You are always near and dear to my heart.