

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

May 17-23, 2019

PENINSULA PULCHRITUDE - Part 20



ROMEO, ROMEO, WHEREFORE WENT THOU?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

REHOUSING a pet is much easier now than in winter 1972, when I had to relocate my young son's puppy named Romeo in Southern California.

If I'd had someone like Doctor Dani of Pebble Beach--or simply the internet with Wikipedia as reference resource--caring guidance might have prevented me from desperately dumping the dog and then keeping the dastardly deed secret for 47 years—until now.

The Wish That Came True

The reasons I needed to relocate Romeo were complex.

First, my little boy longed for a dog, but his dad insisted on a no-pet home, and we had separated partly because of our diametrically opposed feelings for animals, which I grew up loving.

Second, the pup's appearance proved the veracity of wishful thinking. At bedtime, one of my son's favorite stories was about a homeless brown pup who finally got the right home after several mistrials.

His wish manifestation came after a neighbor's dog had pups; one was the embodiment of Brown Puppy.

"Can I have him, Mom, please, please," my son begged, the adorable brown, black and tan pup wriggling in his arms as I was cooking dinner.

“Will you clean up after him every single day?”

He vowed to keep the yard clean. He kept the promise for a few days.

Romeo grew into a sleek young hunting dog that leapt like a deer around our small backyard in Pacific Palisades.

To Dump Or Not Dump The Dog

My soon-to-be ex-husband was studying psychology, so our relationship with the dog became his critical analysis lab in which he diagnosed my faults. “You’re saying one thing and doing another, not setting a good example.”

Gulp.

“You’re not practicing discipline,” he said. “If you don’t follow up on your threat, you’ll ruin the lad.”

Gulp.

“What you’re doing is criminal,” he said.

“What’s criminal about loving a pup that loves you back?” I asked.

“It’s wrong that there are homeless, starving people in the world who are dying while you feed a dog.”

Gulp.

Analysis didn’t provoke me to release Romeo from confinement in a city environment, however. Romeo’s own growing pains indicated, “I love you, but this is not the right home for me.”

Relocating him was my chore and doing it was the challenge.

Militarily Classified 4-F

The army was advertising for recruits for its Canine Corps, so we spent an afternoon at Fort MacArthur in San Pedro, where Romeo’s enlisting officer failed him as being “4-F” aka Too Friendly, Too Fearless, Too Funny and Too Flat-Footed.

Try non-military service, I was told.

Our obvious member of the Foxhound clan was actually Fleet-Footed.

Romeo was part “Treeing Walker Coonhound”, a rare canine breed that, like the Catahoula Leopard Dog, can climb trees and hurtle walls. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treeing_Walker_Coonhound)

By five months, Romeo was climbing our peach tree and gazing through the bedroom window. At six months, he could scale the 6-foot-high backyard fence to run loose in the westernmost neighborhood on both sides of heavily trafficked Sunset Boulevard.

I penned him up in the house and ran ads in the Free Pets section of daily newspapers, but 1972 was a year of Vietnam denouement, dog overpopulation, and snootiness. He had no pedigree.

I went to the Santa Monica branch of the county animal shelter to determine his chance of being adopted as a Christmas gift. “Very slim,” an animal control officer said. “He’ll probably be put down unless. . .” he found the name of a non-profit in Topanga Canyon. “They train service dogs. . .”

So, while my son was visiting his dad on a Sunday afternoon, I took Romeo to Topanga Canyon to volunteer him to be a guide dog.

I found the facility among rustic cabins. Free-roaming dogs and chickens, hippie vans with painted peace symbols, and wood smoke mixed with the scent of pot, told me “Free Love Children live here.”

The non-profit building was inside a padlocked chain-link fence. No one was there.

“To leave you to find a great new life, or take you home to face disaster?” I asked.

Romeo wagged his tail.

I made a snap decision and left Romeo beside the gate with a note on his collar.

Later, I lied. “Romeo, just like your favorite Brown Puppy, is now in the right new home for him.” In dreams I asked, “Romeo, Romeo, wherefore went thou?”

He answered by scaling the fence that locked him out, thus, becoming first dog to report for breakfast at Monday morning’s muster.

Would truth have made losing Romeo easier if I’d told my heartbroken little boy: “I dumped him, not to discipline you, but to save him?”

I don’t know because shortly thereafter, my son brought a very pregnant honey-hued terrier home.

“Mom, someone dumped her. She followed me. Can we keep her?”

A few days passed and Patrick’s batch of six blonde pups was born.

Eight weeks later my ad read: Golden Retriever pups. No papers. \$20.

They sold within two hours.

Alternatives To Dumping

If you need to give up a dog, don’t dump it. Consult someone like Doctor Dani, the mobile pet doctor who helped CeliaSue Hecht gain proper rest after her last hospitalization. She treats Cici, the unsheltered writer’s 12-year-old companion, first with love, then with medicine.

CeliaSue, hospitalized again with two blood clots in her lungs, extends her gratitude to Dani, aka Danielle Hettler, DVM, and requests readers to say prayers for Cici.

Doctor Dani says, “Of all the things I’ve done in my life, nothing gives me more satisfaction or pure delight than helping animals live the longest, healthiest, and most joy-filled lives that they can.”

Contact: PawsitivePetMobileVet@yahoo.com or call 831-233-0531.

Website <http://www.pawsitivepet.net/meet.html>.

You may make a memorial gift to help animals, in honor of animal activist/singer Doris Day who died May 13 in her home in Carmel at age 97, at www.dorisdayanimalfoundation.org.

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Photo courtesy of Clip Art

rare dogs can climb trees

some scale fences six feet high

this is a true tale . . .

haiku by Wanda Sue Parrott

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