

ABOUT A WEEK AGO, SAM AND I WENT THROUGH FILLMORE AND NOTICED THEY WERE SELLING FIREWORKS. I'VE NEVER GOTTEN OVER MY LOVE OF SPARKLERS. AND A 4TH OF JULY WITHOUT SPARKLERS JUST ISN'T COMPLETE SOMEHOW. SOME FEW YEARS BACK, A FRIEND OF MINE BROUGHT ME TWO BOXES from missouri and by using them sparingly, i made them last a LONG TIME. I USED THE LAST ONES ON JULY 4, 1980.

MY SISTER HAD INVITED ME TO HER HOUSE FOR THAT WEEK END. MY NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR WAS GOING TO BE AWAY FOR THE 4TH TOO, SO I TOLD MY SISTER " I CAN'T COME - THERE'S NO ONE AROUND TO FEED BRIDGET." SHE SAID, "I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE ALONE - BRING HER ALONG".

WELL, THAT WAS A HARD DECISION TO MAKE. BRIDGET HAD NEVER BEEN VISITING BEFORE. BESIDES, MY SISTER HAD A DOG OF HER OWN WHO WAS A BIT SPOILED. ALSO, MY SISTER IS AN EXCELLENT HOUSEKEEPER AND BRIDGET A HAIR SHEDDER OF THE FIRST MAGNITUDE.

BUT MY SISTER INSISTED AND I DID WANT TO GO. SO - FIRST THING I TOOK BRIDGET TO THE GROOMER FOR A BATH AND A HAIRCUT. THEN I PACKED MY BAG AND HER FOOD, PUT HER BED IN THE TRUNK, HER IN THE FRONT WITH ME, AND OFF WE WENT.

SHE TURNED OUT TO BE A GREAT TRAVELER. EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, SHE'D NUDGE MY ARM, I'D SAY A FEW WORDS TO HER AND THEN SHE'D LOOK OUT THE WINDOW AGAIN OR TAKE A LITTLE NAP.

MY SISTER WAS THERE WAITING FOR US, HOLDING HER YORKIE IN HER ARMS. THE FACT THAT BRIDGET WAS OVER TWICE HIS SIZE MUST HAVE IMPRESSED HIM MORE THAN THAT SHE WAS OF THE OPPOSITE SEX, BECAUSE THE MINUTE MY SISTER PUT HIM DOWN, HE BIT BRIDGET IN THE LEG.

THAT SET THE TEMPO FOR THE REST OF THAT DAY AND I HAD MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT BRIDGET. MAINLY I WAS PROUD OF HER GOOD BEHAVIOR. BUT I ALSO WAS HALF HEARTEDLY WISHING SHE'D PUT HIM IN HIS PLACE, WITHOUT KILLING HIM OF COURSE.

AND THAT'S WHAT SHE FINALLY DID - WITHOUT ANY HARM TO HIM, THANK GOODNESS, BECAUSE HE REALLY IS A NICE LITTLE DOG.

THE REST OF THE VISIT WAS VERY ENJOYABLE. THE EVENING OF THE FOURTH, WE LIT OUR SPARKLERS. AS THE LAST ONE DIED AWAY, I LOADED UP MY DOG AND WENT HOME.

BRIDGET AND HER BROTHER SHOWED UP ON OUR FRONT PORCH IN THE SPRING OF 1972. BOTH WERE PUPPIES, BOTH WERE BLACK, BUT THERE THE LIKENESS ENDED. HE WAS A BIG FOOTED, SMOOTH HAired, CLUMSY FRIENDLY THING. SHE WAS A BALL OF FUZZY FUR WITH A SHY STAND OFFISH WAY.

WE PUT THEM IN THE BACK YARD AND PUT AN AD IN THE PAPER. WE WEREN'T SURPRISED WHEN NO ONE CLAIMED THEM. UNFORTUNATELY, PEOPLE OFTEN DUMP PUPPIES AND KITTENS IN THE STREET.

SINCE WE ALREADY HAD ONE DOG AND ONE CAT, WE DIDN'T NEED ANOTHER PET AT ALL. BUT - - WE DECIDED TO KEEP HER, MY HUSBAND THOUGHT THE MALE HAD A BETTER CHANCE OF BEING ADOPTED. WE TOOK HIM TO THE ANIMAL SHELTER, PAID FOR HIS SHOTS AND BOTH OF US SHED SOME TEARS ON THE WAY HOME. IT'S AMAZING HOW ATTACHED YOU CAN GET TO A DOG IN ONLY A WEEK.

BRIDGET WAS SOON FIRMLY ENTRENCHED IN OUR HOUSEHOLD. BEING A GIRL, THE INEVITABLE HAPPENED AND WHEN IT DID, OUR LITTLE ~~BLACK DOG~~ ^{MALE} DOG- FELL HOPELESSLY IN LOVE. HE HARDLY SLEPT OR ATE. UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM, THE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR SIZES DOOMED HIS LOVE AFFAIR TO ONE OF UNFULFILLED FRUSTRATION. AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, WE TOOK BRIDGET TO OUR VET AND HAD HER SPAYED.

HER COAT WAS BEAUTIFUL, THICK AND WAVY AND PLENTIFUL. NOT JUST ON HER:, BUT ALL AROUND THE HOUSE, WALL TO WALL. DAILY FLOOR CARE WAS NECESSARY. I ALSO STARTED BRUSHING HER REGULARLY. SHE LOOKED GREAT, BUT IT DIDN'T HELP MUCH. I BEGAN TO WONDER IF THERE WAS A MARKET FOR DOG HAIR.

WE DID SOLVE THE PROBLEM - BY TAKING HER TO HAVE HER HAIR CUT- ^{WE} SHE WENT IN LOOKING LIKE A BIG, ROUND, HAIRY BEAR AND ~~HARDLY~~ RECOGNIZED THE SKINNY, LONG LEGGED MISS WITH THE RIBBON BOWS ON HER HEAD. WE MIGHT HAVE CLAIMED THE WRONG DOG, BUT SHE KNEW WHO WE WERE.

A FAMILIAR PATTERN DEVELOPED. EACH TIME SHE CAME HOME FROM THE GROOMER, SHE HID UNDER TABLES FOR A DAY OR TWO. SHE PROBABLY FELT NAKED AND NO DOUBT CHILLY.

IN THE FOLLWING YEARS, WE FIRST HAD TO TAKE OUR SIAMESE CAT, TINKERBELL TO BE PUT TO SLEEP --AND THEN SPOOK, OUR LITTLE BLACK DOG, NOW QUITE GRAY) also.

SO BRIDGET BECAME AN ONLY DOG. WENDELL HAD HEALTH PROBLEMS AND HE OPENED AN OFFICE AT HOME. HE AND BRIDGET BECAME THE CLOSEST OF PALS.

THEN CANCER CLAIMED WENDELL AND BRIDGET SPENT LONG LONESOME DAYS WHILE I WAS AT WORK. BUT, OH WHAT A COMFORT SHE WAS TO ME AT THAT TIME.

~~SOME~~ ^(a good friend) MONTHS LATER, HAZEL AND I TOOK UP SQUARE DANCING AND ABOUT WHEN WE WERE READY TO GRADUATE, WE FOUND DANCE PARTNERS WHO BECAME HUSBANDS. SAM HAD A SMALL WHITE POODLE NAMED LUV - SPELLED L-U-V. BEFORE WE WERE MARRIED, HE'D BRING HER ALONG SO SHE AND BRIDGET COULD GET ACQUAINTED. MOSTLY THEY IGNORED EACH OTHER.

ONE NIGHT WE DECIDED TO TRY A BIG EXPERIMENT. WE'D LEAVE THE DOGS TOGETHER AND WE'D GO DANCING. WE DIDN'T TELL EACH OTHER UNTIL LATER, BUT WE BOTH HAD SERIOUS QUALMS ABOUT IT. WE NEEDN'T HAVE WORRIED ALL EVENING, THEY WERE BOTH AT THE DOOR TO GREET US WHEN WE CAME BACK.

OUR TWO STEP DOGS ADJUSTED VERY WELL TO EACH OTHER. THEY RUSHED out into the back yard TO BARK AT ANYONE GOING DOWN THE ALLEY. THEY ALSO BARKED A DUET WHEN ANYONE CAME TO THE FRONT DOOR.

ABOUT SIX MONTHS AGO IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT BRIDGET HAD AN INOPERABLE TUMOR. AND A LITTLE OVER A WEEK AGO, OUR VET TOLD US THAT IT WAS TIME TO GIVE HER UP TO SAVE HER PAIN AND SUFFERING.

SO NOW WE MISS BRIDGET AT OUR HOUSE. LUV IS TRYING HARD TO FILL THE EMPTY SPACES AND THAT'S NOT EASY FOR A FIVE POUND DOG.