



A Tribute to Lucy Dog

Lucy Dog came to us the year that my son ran cross-country track in junior high school. He spotted her while walking home from the track one spring afternoon. His route usually took him through the Oklahoma State University married student housing apartments. He said she was catching and eating bugs in some tall grass beside the street. She followed him home. I have always suspected that she had a little "encouragement". But, at any rate, when I got home from work that afternoon, this little black dog met me at the gate.

She was very friendly, but had no collar or identification. So, we went through the usual routine when finding a stray animal. We called the city animal control office to see if anyone had reported losing a small black dog. Nobody had. They duly took our name and address to post on their lost/found bulletin board, but told us that if nobody called

us within a week we should assume that she had been abandoned. I was somewhat taken aback by this. I couldn't understand how anyone would abandon a nice little dog like this to dodge traffic on busy streets and fend for herself by eating a diet of bugs!

However, as the days passed I came to realize that nobody was going to call. By the end of the week, the little black dog had won our hearts and I was secretly hoping nobody would call. I was also a little worried because we already had one dog and I didn't think we could manage another pet in a crowded household of two adults and three teenage children. After discussing the situation with the family, we decided to keep the little dog and Lucy Dog became a permanent part of our family.

While the kids were still at home, Lucy was pretty much "their" dog. She loved to chase balls or sticks or just about anything you wanted to throw for her. The only problem was she didn't know she was supposed to give the object back. She always turned a game of "fetch" in to a game of "keep-away". I remember one time when the church youth group came to our house for a party and Lucy started one of these games of keep-away. There must have been at least 8 kids out in the yard trying to catch Lucy. But, as I recall, she evaded all attempts to capture her.

As the nest began to empty, Lucy and my husband spent more time together. When he broke his shoulder and was laid-up for a couple of weeks, Lucy was his "nurse". She stayed right next to him on the couch until I got home from work, at which time she turned the nurse duties over to me. After that they became inseparable partners. Lucy rode "shot-gun" in the passenger seat of his truck on most of his errands. She especially liked to go to the drive-in bank with him where she could expect to receive dog treats from the tellers.

This way of life continued into retirement. Life was good and it seemed that things would always stay the same. But, very slowly Lucy's health began to falter. At first it was just little things that we were able to work around. Her hearing deteriorated, so we developed certain hand signals that she learned to respond to. She developed arthritis, so at night we picked her up and put her on the foot of our bed where she was used to sleeping. Finally, she began to lose weight and we took her to the veterinarian who gave us the bad news that she had the beginnings of kidney failure.

Fortunately, we had several months to get ready for her death and to say goodbye. We were able to make her last days comfortable and happy. The last week of her life she stopped eating and we had to take her to the vet's office several times to be re-hydrated through an IV. One of the few things in her life that she hated was the vet's office. So, just going to the office was stressful enough, not to mention having to stay there several hours while the IV pumped life-giving nourishment into her.

Eventually, we had to face the inevitable and we made the appointment to have her put to sleep for late in the afternoon the next day. I went to sleep that night praying that she would pass away in her sleep and I awoke in the morning hoping against hope that she was dead. But, such was not to be. I could think of nothing else all day. When I got home from work that afternoon, we still had a couple of hours before we were to take her in. So, we decided to pass the time by taking her for a drive in the country. I will never forget that afternoon. It was a beautiful autumn day and we drove west for a while watching the sunset. Lucy sat on my husband's lap while I drove. We all sat quietly lost in our own thoughts until finally we had to turn around and begin the last leg of our journey.

Her death was quiet and peaceful and we buried her in a little wooden box that my husband made for her. We planted daffodil bulbs on her grave which bloom every spring to remind us of the little black dog that brightened our lives for so long.

Nancy Stevens & Family