

Maggie's and Chamois' Story



Maggie and Chamois (aka the Breck Girls - the name given them by the young ladies with dogs who frequent our park) are golden retrievers. They are sisters from the same litter. Maggie is nine years old, and Chamois, sadly, passed away last December.

It had been two years since our cocker spaniel passed away, and we were ready for another dog.

It was a Saturday, and Pat called our youngest son. She asked what he was planning to do that day. David replied he was going with his cousin to feed the puppies. PUPPIES! Pat was curious, and wanted to know more. He explained that his cousin's friend had a litter of ten puppies, and the mother could not feed them all so David and his cousin were helping. Pat asked where they were so we could see them. David warned her that if she saw them we would certainly end up with a new puppy.

We looked, we saw, we bought. This was the beginning of a love affair with our Maggie. David could not leave without a puppy either. Chamois also became part of our family.

The change from a small Cocker Spaniel to a big Golden Retriever has been a trip. No more lap dog for us!

Maggie and Chamois grew up together even though they did not live together. We always got them together when possible, and when our son was out of town or the two of us were out town, the dogs stay together. When we would go to our cabin in Idaho in the summer, the two dogs go with us. When our son would go to the cabin, he took both of them.



Maggie is very protective of our two granddaughters as well as us. For an example, we were fly fishing in the river by our cabin one summer, and Pat stumbled and took water into her waders. While she was struggling to get her feet under her, Maggie jumped into the river and swam over to her trying to help. Fortunately I was able to get to her also, and we averted a disaster. Maggie was really concerned and tried her best to help.

We got into Pet Partners quite by chance. Pat was talking to a friend who volunteers at Presbyterian-St. Luke's Hospital about an episode with a therapy dog who encouraged a patient who had suffered a stroke, in his physical therapy. She was so impressed with his story she thought our dogs would be good candidates for this type of work. She did a search on the web and came up with the Delta Society. They put her in touch with Diana McQuarrie of Denver Pet Partners, and we enrolled in the PP TEAM Training course in June of 2002.

We both wanted to get involved, but having only one dog meant we could not do things together. We decided to ask our son for the loan of his dog Chamois. He was kind enough to allow us to proceed with both dogs.

After going through the Pet Partners training course, and the evaluation for the two Golden Retrievers, we selected Swedish Medical Center for our visits. Pat and Chamois visited at SMC for two and a half years, and Maggie and I have been visiting there for four years. Maggie and I have also been visiting the Colorado State Veterans Home at Fitzsimons for three years.



There have been many memorable encounters at the Hospital. Like the time I entered a room to see a woman sitting at the window. She turned to her husband in bed and said "there is a dog here to see you" She explained to me that her husband had told her that morning he was going to have a dog visit him. Since he had recently come from surgery, his wife thought he was hallucinating. She caught up with me in the waiting room, and thanked me again for the visit because now she knew her husband was

alright.

During another visit I met with a patient whose wife told me that they had recently lost their Golden Retriever. When I was ready to visit, I asked his wife if he wanted see Maggie.. She asked her husband, and he said yes. Since he could not sit up to see Maggie we moved along side his bed. He reached down and started to pet Maggie. He continued for about five minutes, and turning to his wife he said "we are going to get a puppy". Maggie helped him come to terms with his loss.

At an American Legion meeting a representative of the Colorado Veterans Nursing Home spoke to the group. After explaining the services there, she asked for members to visit

the veterans staying there. Many of them do not have family in Denver. She stressed how much they enjoy a visit from anyone. This hit home with me since I am a Korean Veteran, and had an excuse to visit them with Maggie.



I was asked to visit the Alzheimer section since they are not able to move freely around the Home. When I started there was an elderly woman that had a blank expression carrying a baby doll. She just sat not talking to anyone. After four months of visiting the lady reached down and touched Maggie. The next week she was sitting and talking to the other women. She petted Maggie and



smiled. I do not know where she had been, but Maggie brought her back.

There have been so many small encounters that I recall. However, I never came away from the Hospital and Veterans Home without a good feeling that someone felt better. Many of my encounters involved patients that had lost dogs, or had dogs at home they missed, and they were able to have a 'puppy fix' for a few minutes.

When visiting the Veterans Home we get to see the same patients week after week. We get to know them, and they know us and look for us every week. However a visit with a Hospital patient is just a snap shot. We almost never know anything about a patient before or after the visit. However, after one visit with a young lady that had an older lady visitor I finished my rounds, and as I was leaving the Hospital I met the lady that had been in the room. She stopped me and thanked me for the visit. She said that was the first time the young lady had smiled in several weeks.

Thanks to Denver Pet Partners our visiting with Maggie and Chamois has been a rewarding experience for both of us.

We have been Pet Partners since June 2002.

Pat, Karl, Maggie and Chamois

