

## *Sadie's Story*

### **Our "Blue Light Special"**



On a rather ordinary weekend trip to Kmart twelve years ago I little suspected we would be returning home with a pair of new family members. Coming out of the store I encountered a lady and two little girls holding out an animated box of eleven adorable lab mix puppies. It turned out that while I had been shopping inside Marcia and her visiting sister had been shopping outside. They had managed to pick out a beautiful brother and sister and have them in the car by the time I came back from returning the shopping cart. What could I say, I was smitten. Of course, I had to go back into the store to get doggie stuff to take home for the new babies. The puppies became our "Blue Light Specials", Sadie and Bailey.

From the beginning they were great dogs, inseparable and full of energy. Unfortunately, we lost Bailey after only two years. We then found two new brothers and sisters, Sophie and Elvis, both of whom we also lost. Then, at last we found Morgan and he has been Sadie's constant companion for the last five years. He just worships her.



***Morgan***

In 2005 my father fell and broke his hip. While he was in convalescent care I found out the hospital allowed pets to visit so I decided to take Sadie in for a trial run. Well, it took us a good half hour to just get down the hallway before I could even see my dad. Everyone we encountered along the way wanted to see and pet Sadie. She was totally obliging to each person we encountered along the way and she turned out to be the perfect height for nuzzling people in the wheelchairs.



We were living in California when I first heard about Pet Therapy animals and I immediately thought Sadie would be great. Her demeanor was always perfect and she was very good with adults and kids. I tried to find out about a program but there wasn't anything in Northern CA at the time. A few years later, in July of 2007, I accepted a job transfer that brought us to the Denver area and we re-located to Castle Rock. I wasn't going to be traveling as much and would now have the time to devote to my too long suppressed passion. I hardly had the boxes unpacked when I Googled pet therapy and found Denver Pet Partners. Sadie and I started our class in January 2008 and we graduated in March.

***Shanon & Sadie***

We immediately began going to Brookfield Inn, a skilled nursing facility in Castle Rock. Sadie loved it. She was fawned over, petted and hugged, and adored by staff and patients alike. One special patient was Kenneth. He has cerebral palsy and his movements are very abrupt and agitated. On our second visit I decided to see if Sadie would go to Ken. When I said “Hi” and asked if we could come in, he made a noise, which I translated as a yes. As we approached he quieted down and I asked him if he wanted to pet Sadie. She stood very calmly by the side of his chair. He couldn’t move his arms with any control so he reached over with his leg and foot and very gently petted Sadie on the top of her head. I will never forget the grin on his face. In the last year and a half we made lots of friends on our trips to Brookside. Sadie’s favorites are Sally and Shirley, who give her doggie treats and look forward to seeing her every Saturday.

On one special occasion we substituted at the Learning Center with special-needs children. We sat in a corner of the Library room and the children would come by and see us. One little girl was fascinated by giving Sadie water out of her portable bowl. I thought Sadie was going to float away she drank so much. The girl asked if she could read to Sadie and then said she couldn’t read because she hadn’t learned yet. I said no problem and told her to show Sadie the pictures and tell her what was going on in them. That seemed to work out just fine. The kids came and went, crawled on Sadie, pulled her ears and tail, groomed her and gave her treats. She just lay there, having a great time, absorbing all the attention they gave her.



Since moving to Castle Rock we have gotten to know some of our neighbors. One such neighbor, Suzanne, had recently married and moved into the house across the street. Her husband travels a lot and she is alone in a very big house. She told us she gets very little sleep while he is away. I volunteered Sadie to spend the night and that allowed Suzanne to finally get a good nights rest. Sadie’s companionship meant the world to Suzanne and she has formed a special bond with her. So now Sadie Girl has occasional “sleepovers” with her friend Suzanne.



In August of 2008 Sadie and I drove to Billings, MT to become a HOPE-certified “disaster response team”. It was three days of intense study and work with 16 other teams. We met with police, worked with firemen and their trucks, rode on a bus and even went through airport security and on to a plane. We had a mock disaster drill with eight different types of stations to navigate. Sadie came through with flying colors and graduated with her classmates.



In April of this year Sadie was diagnosed with Lymphomasarcoma. It was such a shock as she seemed so healthy on the outside. She started to have trouble with her eyes and we thought it was allergies. A week later she was blind. We were referred to an ophthalmologist at VRCC who in turn referred us to an oncologist. She started chemotherapy and we had great hope that the treatment would work and she would be with us

another couple years. Her eyesight however did not return. The glaucoma was too pronounced and we ended up having to have her eyes removed. The whole process has happened very suddenly and it has been difficult for all of us.

On our last visit to the VRCC we received news we had hoped would be much further down the road. Sadie's cancer has come back and the prognosis they gave us is not very hopeful. They told us she had anywhere from 6 weeks to 4 months to live. We decided not to put her through additional chemotherapy treatments and instead to concentrate on what quality of life she has left. Our goal is spending time with her and keeping her as active and positive as we can.

During this last five months Sadie has been incredible. It constantly amazes me how adaptable our pets are. She has continued to go through life with a beautiful attitude. Marcia and I are so happy. She was able to visit CA with us and she had a chance to be around old friends and family and to spend some time at the only other home she has known. I have learned so much from Sadie and will always be eternally grateful for the experience of living with her. I'm constantly amazed what a wagging tail, a cheerful disposition, and an ear for listening can do. Combine that with a warm furry body and you have the perfect ingredients for happiness.



Goodbye my sweet girl, see you on the other side of Rainbow Bridge.