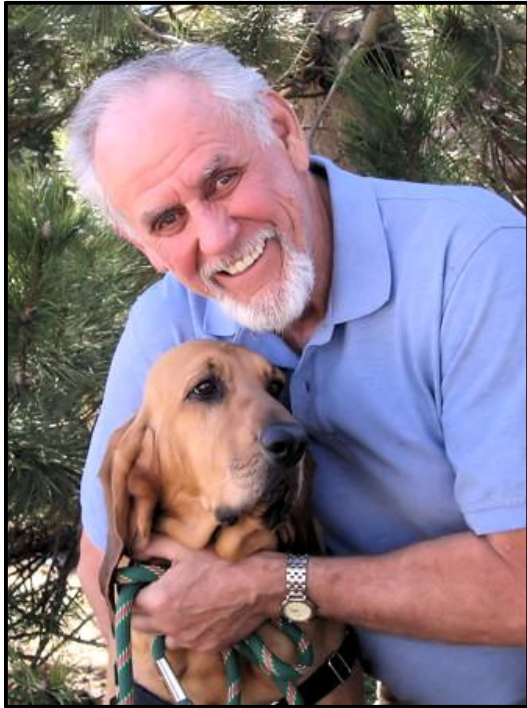


## *Sadie's Story*

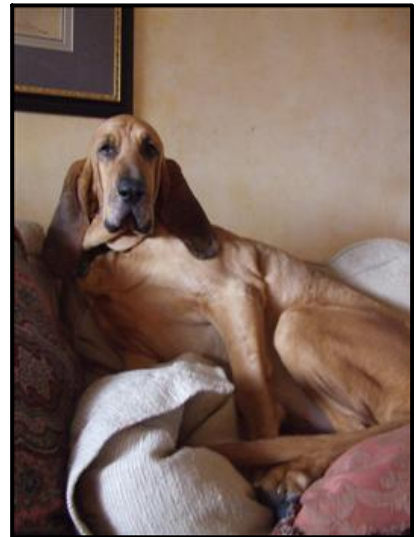


As I drove into the parking lot I could see Sadie, a two-year-old Bloodhound, standing with Richard next to the fence. I had arranged to meet Richard, director of the Alie Foundation Bloodhound Rescue, to see Sadie for the first time. Richard greeted me while Sadie stood between us gazing up at me. She was as curious about me as I was about her.

I knelt down beside her attracted by her searching, deep set eyes. Her long soft ears rose slightly when I spoke her name for the first time. I reached out to pet her and her tail rose in a circular arc. Watching my every move, Sadie stood in silence as I poked, patted, and hugged my way over her slight frame testing her reaction to my friendly intrusion. It is the test every Pet Partner must pass. Sadie passed her first exam. I thought I sensed a smile in her expression.

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He smiles at Sadie as she moves to his bedside. The young man lies beneath a maze of tubes surrounded by the miracles of medical technology that help him live. Looking at me, he asks in a near whisper, "Is Sadie a Bloodhound?" He brightens when I say, "Yes, she is a Bloodhound." He wants to know, "How old she is and where did I get her?" Somewhere, a Bloodhound roams in his memory. What cruel twist of fate had placed him in this moment with the strength and grace to enjoy our presence? I can only imagine, like a child grappling with the unknowable. The room fades before me and there is only the paralyzed young man and Sadie--- their bond fills the moment with hope. Everything is clear to me and I realize I am part of something far beyond the ordinary.



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"I'd like to take her home with me, Richard." "That's great, James. Sadie really is a good dog," Richard responded. I knew Richard was right and that Sadie would not be returning to her old life. I closed the car door and headed for home with Sadie sitting in the back seat looking back for the last time. Later that evening Sadie would have her first test in her new home.

"Did you eat the rest of the pork roast," my wife Liz shouted from the kitchen. "No" I shouted back. "Well it's gone," she groaned. Sure enough what remained of the roast had disappeared from countertop. Looking into the living room we saw Sadie licking her muzzle, savoring the final bits of pork roast that remained on the carpet. I should have known. Her paperwork from Richard said Sadie was alone most of the time and had never had any obedience training. With the mystery of the pork roast caper solved, I realized my work to prepare Sadie for the Pet Partner evaluation had begun.



room.

The nurse enters the room to check on her patient and brings me back to reality. Sadie looks up at her, wagging her tail. "She's so cute," the nurse offers. The young man, still smiling, gestures to Sadie one last time. His hand locks in a fist, struggling against the paralysis that holds his body in its grasp. I position Sadie next to him and lift her long soft ear over his hand. His face radiates light and he murmurs, "Thanks for visiting with me." My heart shouts, "You are most welcome my young friend. Take care." We turn and leave the

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Sadie and I spent many hours together training, going for long walks, and sharing in the intimacy of the human/animal bond. There is nothing like the wisdom learned being a part of Sadie's life and the lives of the many people we serve as Pet Partners. On a beautiful September morning, I found what I was looking for in Sadie. She is my second Partner and in the days since, she has assumed the mantel of grace in the many hearts she enters with every visit.

To my beloved Newfoundland Winston, my beloved Sadie, and the beloved Partners who serve us so well I offer my profound thanks.

