

Monday, January 15, 2007

This one's for you boy.

I've lived in a handful of states in my life, and in each of those states, I had some dogs. I was very young, so when one would run away, another one we had to give away, and another one got hit by a car, I was sad, but I cannot say it was something I thought about for more than 2 days.

Then, when I was just about 7 years old, me and my family moved to a small town in Kansas, called Olathe. We only lived there about 6 months, my dad's work called us elsewhere. But during that 6 month stay we had made a 30-40 mile trip to a farm house outside of Kansas City, Missouri. I remember it feeling like a very long trip. We parked close to the barn house, and when we walked right inside the doors, there was a male and female German Shepard, with some of their puppies. We knew we had wanted a male puppy, and the first dog to run up to us, was a male. He was the most lively of the bunch there, and just couldn't stand himself, licking our arms all over, jumping up on us. We knew he was the one we wanted. We walked back to our truck with him, and following close behind us were his parents. They almost had that look in their eyes like they knew we would take care of him, I think my mom even said that out loud. At the time our truck was an old Toyota pickup, single cab, my dad driving, brother in the middle (agh..older brother's always get the best seat), my mom in the passenger side, me on her lap, and our new dog at her and my feet, jumping back and forth from the ground, to my lap.

We named him Kafka. Well, actually my dad named him, after Franz Kafka, a German novelist and short story writer. At the time, I really had no idea the kind of work, and the influence that F. Kafka has in Western literature. In fact, some consider him amongst the most influential. An adjective was even created to describe his style of writing, 'kafkaesque', or absurd and surreal circumstances.

It's amazing, because Kafka's life as a dog really had a lot of relationship to these same statements made about Franz Kafka. Although Kafka's influence might not have been as broad all of Western Literature, he made an everlasting change in the life of me, my family, and those around me that knew of the love we shared. And for those that know Kafka, I don't need to tell you how absurd and surreal Kafka's life and actions were sometimes! Here's an example of absurd; one time we left Kafka when we went out of town, he ate an entire log, and I don't mean a stick, or a branch, but a LOG. The surreal part, is the love that he showed us his entire life. It really amazes me that an animal could show that much love, and it forever changed my viewpoint on the topic.

Most dogs that people have, might live with the entire family, but there are many factors that might change the time they spend together, and the love that's shared between each member of the family, and their dog. Firstly, most dogs generally find one or two people in the family, and that's who they spend most of their time with, and show most of their love to, their entire life. Some dogs are outside dogs, and spend most of their life out in the yard, playing with birds and lizards. In most families, the parents will leave for work early in the morning, and come home late

at night. This is another thing that made Kafka different from all the rest. He was an inside dog, who spent all of his time playing with me, my brother, or my parents. And his love wasn't spent on just one or two people, he spent it on EVERYONE.

We have love and memories with Kafka, some which are individual to us, and some which are shared by our entire family. We all had our moments with him. Up until the end of high school when we starting driving to school, my brother and I would always walk there. And from the first time Kafka to the last time Kafka saw me leave to school, his actions everyday in-between were the same. Right before we'd walk out the door, he'd come running full speed, jump up, put his front paws up on my shoulder, and I swear on everything I know, it was practically a hug. Then, when we walked out the front door, he'd watch us from the window, through the bottom of the blinds that were pulled up a bit, until we were all the way down the street, and around the corner, where he couldn't see us anymore. We get home later that day and he'd be right there by the door, waiting to jump on us again, and bark his lungs out.

The last couple years have been a little different though. When he comes up to hug me, he's slow to stand up, and there isn't anymore jumping, but he'll rub up his face against the side of my leg and wag. I'm in college now, and I drive to school, so I leave out the garage. There is no window for him to look out and see me through, so instead, he'll follow the garage door as it shuts, with his snout peeking out a little bit. He's still waiting for me when I get home, about 6 feet from the garage door, but sometimes he's sleeping and doesn't hear me come in. He'll wake up, see me, come say hi, and then it's off upstairs where he can lay down in my parents room and get some good sleep.

The last time I'd ever get to have that before and after school hug was last month, the middle of December, when my fall semester ended. I start my spring semester tomorrow, and for the first time in 14 years, he won't be there to tell me goodbye, and he won't be waiting for me when I get home.

My dad put it well when he wrote "Kafka was smart, but there definitely has been smarter. He was a good looking dog, but our muttly sure couldn't enter a show. He had a trick or two, but let's just say it's not like we could regale visitors to our home with hours of Kafka trick talents. A guard dog – hardly, we used to say I think the best we could hope for is he would lick a burglar to death. But what he did have, that I can't imagine many others coming close to, was a heart as big and giving as can be imagined."

On Jan. 12, 2007, Friday night, Kafka went to sleep. It was an unfamiliar place to him, but not unfamiliar people, my dad and I were close by. But, there were a few things I knew; he loved us endlessly, as we did him, and he knew that. And this time, unlike any other time he went to sleep for the last year, he wouldn't shuffle all night because of the pain he was in, this time he wouldn't be in pain at all. And he'll never be in pain again, which is the one thing that helps carry me through this all. He fought so hard, for so long, just because he loved us so much. He looked so peaceful, and I gave him one last hug.

I never realized it would be so hard. The hardest part is that he won't be here tomorrow, or next month, or 3 years from now. Some people might not ever

understand what I'm talking about, they might think that it's just a dog, and I shouldn't be that broken up about it. But he wasn't just a dog; he was a part of our family. He might have been the weirdest looking ever, but he was a brother, a son, and much more.

For now, our family grieves. But at the same time, we smile and laugh, remembering all those memories over his 14 year life spent with us. And I'll never forget about him, and he'll always be much more than a story to everyone I tell him about in the future.

**Kafka Miller, gone in body, everlasting in our memories.
May 6th, 1993 -- January 12th, 2007**



More memories when the time is right....