



Zach, the Remarkable "Old Man"

by Sue Liles

I received Zach from your organization a year ago last December. My friend, who fostered Zach prior to his adoption, saw Zach's picture on your website from before he came to her as a foster. Zach has been such a joy. In truth, he is close to the perfect companion dog.

I have had dogs for over 30 years and Zach is among the true jewels. I believe he is somewhere around 10 years old. That was part of his appeal. My Siberians are 15, 10 and 6. That means all but one of us (the 6 year old) are just the right age to enjoy the comforts of life without thinking we have something to prove. There's a lot to be said for that!

My friend who fostered Zach thought all of you might truly enjoy the story of this part of his life.

Adopting a rescue dog into a house with another breed is always a gamble, but I've learned to trust my intuition, and when I learned a friend in Tennessee was fostering a Belgian Sheepdog, something told me to gain a new house dog. Though I had tried to make house dogs of my Siberians, they preferred their own indoor kennel area. It was too warm in the house and they might miss something.

I've had Siberian show dogs for 30 years. My reputation was such that I had never needed to go through a "home check". It was required before I could acquire Zach, so I put on a smile and invited the examiner into my home. I knew she would like what she saw and it did give my friends great cause to tease me.

After the check, I excitedly awaited my friend, Judy's, trip to visit us for one of our local dog shows. I had not laid eyes on Zach until then, and it was agreed that if I thought he would not fit into my home, he would return to Tennessee with Judy. It

was love at first sight! The deal was sealed and this grand old man came to live in Illinois.

Even after a year's time, the Siberians view Zach as though he came from Mars. Zach tries to herd them from his yard when they are all outside, but the stuck up Siberians don't even look at him.

Zach really doesn't care so long as he has his fuzzy sheep (his favorite toys) to chase and herd.

I will never know Zach's past, but every now and then he gives me possible clues. For example, I know he was once well loved and well trained. He hasn't met a human he doesn't like and Judy put his CGC on him in the few weeks he was with her. He also likes to be brushed and does not protest having his nails trimmed. He must have had a bad experience when getting caught out in a rain storm because if he is outside when a hard rain hits, he will flatten to the ground and not move, waiting for me to "save him".

I wanted to share a touching story with you. I took Zach with me when I visited relatives in the northern part of my state in November. During my visit, my dad's brother and his wife stopped to see me. My uncle is in the early stages of Alzheimer's and often will just sit, not saying much. When my uncle sat down, Zach went over to him and stayed by him to be petted. He was very gentle around my uncle even though my uncle is a big man. The two had a very good visit!

My uncle often does not remember things well, but a few days after our visit he asked for the "big, black dog". It was explained that he had returned home with me. His family thought that would be the end of that memory. I sent a couple of pictures for them to keep in case he should ask again.

A week later my uncle related the following story about HIS big, black dog (that would be Zach to the rest of us)! According to him, Zach was riding with him the other day. A man commented how nice a dog he had and asked if he could buy him...to which my uncle replied, "Definitely not!" He also said he was concerned that Zach might wander off their property, to which my aunt replied that I watched over Zach carefully and nothing would happen to him. He was satisfied with that answer. Needless to say, Zach brought great happiness to a man losing most memories.

Though I can only surmise his past, I KNOW Zach's future...and it's a bright one with all the love and comfort he would ever want. I hope you enjoyed Zach's story half as much as I enjoy this "grand old man"! -Sue

