

# Happy Tails News

December 2008

Upper Snake River Valley Dog Training Club, Inc.

P.O. Box 1611

Idaho Falls ID 83403

[www.usrvdte.org](http://www.usrvdte.org)



## 2008 OFFICERS

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## 2008 BOARD

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Deadline:

24<sup>th</sup> Of Each Month

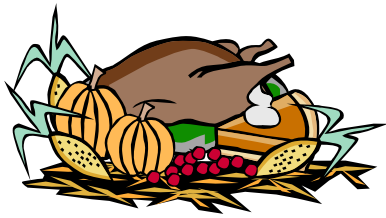
*Have a Merry Christmas and  
Wonderful New Year  
from your editor*



## **DOG, REST YE MERRY GENTLE ONE**

**Dog, rest ye merry, gentle one,  
And when you wake, we'll play.  
Then you can jump on all the guests  
Who come for Christmas Day,  
And save us all from feeling sad.  
If our thoughts go astray,  
Ooooh, guardian of comfort and joy,  
Comfort and joy  
Ooooh, guardian of comfort and joy.**





USRV DTC REGULAR  
MEETING MINUTES  
November 20, 2008

The regular monthly meeting of the USRV DTC was called to order by President, Suzanne Belger, on Thursday, November 20, 2008, at 7:30 p.m., at Dixie's Diner in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Members Present: Rosha Adams, Wendy Baldwin, Darcy Bartholomay, Suzanne Belger, Barbara Friedrich, Carl Friedrich, George Haller, Glenda Haller, Cathy Hjelm, Kerwin Hassing, Lori Keele, Cheryl Loomis, Duane Loomis, LaDawn Moad, Shelby Moad, Mary Lee Moore, Lois Olson, Steven Olson, Bill Orr, Diane Orr, Jay Robinson, Vicki Robinson, Margi Vanover, Ed Vitacolonna, Heike Vitacolonna, Mark Whitham, Donna Whitham, Collette Young, and Abbie Zaladonis.

Guests: Adam Boyce, Christine Donnelly, Tyler Donnelly, and Laynie Donnelly were welcomed.

The board minutes were read.

**LaDawn Moad motioned to approve the minutes of the previous regular meeting as they were printed in the newsletter. Lois Olson seconded the motion. PASSED.**

Report of the President: Suzanne Belger passed around some information from AKC regarding the S.T.A.R. Puppy Program being started by AKC. It is a training program geared toward puppies and their owners.

Report of Vice-President: Suzanne Belger reported for Judy Grof that the Christmas Party will be held on Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at the Sandpiper Restaurant. The party will begin at 6:30 p.m. There will be a gift exchange with a \$10.00 limit. There will also be a centerpiece exchange. Club members who will be attending are asked to e-mail their dog(s)' names to Glenda Haller for use in the games. Menu choices were discussed and club members present were asked to indicate their preference. Information about the party will be included in the club's December newsletter.

Report of Secretary: None.

Report of Treasurer: Glenda Haller read the regular monthly report. She also read the financial report from the October agility trials. The trials netted \$2,602.62.

Report of Committees:

**Agility Trial Secretary:** Suzanne Belger reported that very few FAST entries were received for the Sunday Trial, so FAST will not be offered again on Sundays. Suzanne reported that the trials went well and the club received a number of letters and e-mails praising the club for the trials. LaDawn Moad reported that an AKC Representative was present at the trials on Saturday and Sunday. Approximately 30 dogs were measured. The judge and the AKC Rep were both able to measure dogs so many people present were able to get their two necessary measurements for their height cards. Suzanne also reported that she had received a letter from the Prosecuting Attorney in Colorado regarding the club's claim against Dog Events Online and Keri Caraher. The

Prosecutor indicated that he will not be pursuing the criminal matter for the reason that he felt he would not be able to provide criminal intent in the matter. The Club is free to file a civil complaint. **Barbara Friedrich motioned to close the matter and not to pursue DEO or Keri Caraher civilly. Steven Olson seconded the motion. PASSED.**

LaDawn Moad also reported that the judge for the March 2009 agility trials will be Beverly Morgan Lewis. **Obedience Training Director:** Kelly P'Pool thanked all who have helped with the OB classes in the past. She indicated that all arrangements have been made for the February classes. She also reported that she will be ordering equipment (training collars).

**Web Master:** Diane Orr reported that the Members Only portion of the club's webpage is now password protected. Internet Explorer, unfortunately, does not work with the password. Club members can download the free version of Firefox. The program can be downloaded at Mozilla.org and the version to download is Version 3.

**Election of 2009 Officers:** Club members present voted on the slate of officers for 2009. The officers will be: President, LaDawn Moad; Vice-President, Judy Grof; Secretary, Rosha Adams; Treasurer, Glenda Haller; and 3-Year Board Member, Suzanne Belger.

Membership Voting: The club members voted on the membership of Christine Donnelly for a single membership. Christine was welcomed to the club.

Membership Application Read: Membership application for Adam Boyce was read. Adam has a German Shepherd/Akita mix, 6 months old, named Max. Donna Whitham and Wendy Baldwin are the sponsors for Adam. Membership for Adam will be voted on at the January 2009 club meeting.

Unfinished Business: Glenda Haller reminded club members that dues are due no later than January 1<sup>st</sup>. Dues are \$15 for a single membership and \$20 for a family membership. Dues for Juniors are \$10.00.

New Business: Glenda Haller circulated a list of club member(s)' information for the club directory. Those present were asked to make any necessary corrections. Suzanne Belger brought up for discussion the possibility of the club sponsoring some seminars. She asked for two volunteers for a seminar committee. MaryLee Moore and Lori Keele volunteered. They will make recommendations at the January meeting.

**Barbara Friedrich motioned for adjournment. Glenda Haller seconded the motion. PASSED.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Submitted by Secretary,  
Rosha Adams

## AGILITY PRACTICES

There will be agility practice at "King's Arena" on 65th West (York Road) from 2 pm until 5 pm.

**December 7**  
**December 21**

To off set the cost of the barn we will be charging \$5.00 per dog.

## “Braggs”

**REMEMBER** that brags and other newsletter information is due to the newsletter editor by the 24<sup>th</sup> of each month. We accept late brags! You can email your info setnsun@cableone.net. It is preferred that you email your brags to the editor.

### From the Loomis’

**Rider earned his Open Standard Preferred and Novice Fast Preferred titles along with a Open Jumpers Preferred leg and 2 Open Fast Preferred legs at our trials in October.**

### 2009 Committee Positions

Please turn in to Suzanne Belger or a member of the Board

- \_\_\_\_\_ Obedience Training Director
- \_\_\_\_\_ Agility Training Director
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tracking Training Director
- \_\_\_\_\_ Match Chair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Practice Director
- \_\_\_\_\_ Obedience Trial Chair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Obedience Trial Secretary
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tracking Trial Chair/Secretary
- \_\_\_\_\_ Chief Steward
- \_\_\_\_\_ Trophies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Publicity
- \_\_\_\_\_ Public Education and Demonstrations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter Editor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Delegate Liaison
- \_\_\_\_\_ Video Tape/Librarian/Cameras
- \_\_\_\_\_ Canine Good Citizen Chair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Agility Trial Chair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Agility Trial Secretary
- \_\_\_\_\_ Historian
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hospitality
- \_\_\_\_\_ Webmaster
- \_\_\_\_\_ Trailer Chair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Equipment Manager

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

**Remember everyone can help somewhere.**



# DID YOU KNOW?

AKC has approved many changes to the Obedience Regulations. They will be printed over the next several issues. All changes are underlined and highlighted in red.

## OBEDIENCE REGULATIONS Chapter One Continued

**Section 17a. Dog Attacks/Event Committee Hearing.** Any dog that, in the opinion of the Event Committee, attacks a person or a dog at an AKC event, resulting in injury, and is believed by that Event Committee to present a hazard to persons or other dogs, shall be disqualified. When the dog is disqualified by the Event Committee pursuant to this section, a report shall be filed with the Executive Secretary of the American Kennel Club. The disqualified dog may not again compete at any AKC event nor be on the grounds of an AKC event unless and until, following application for reinstatement by the owner to the American Kennel Club, the owner receives official notification in writing from the AKC that the dog’s eligibility has been reinstated. Refer to Rules Applying to Dog Shows – Chapter 11 Section 8-A, “Event Committee Procedural Checklist” (RDEOB1) and “Dog Disqualified by Event Committee” (AEDSQ4).

**Section 18. Disturbances.** Bitches in season are not permitted to compete. The judge of an obedience trial must remove and excuse from competition any bitch in season, any dog that is not under its handler’s control, and any handler who willfully interferes with another competitor or that competitor’s dog. The judge may also excuse any dog that is unfit to compete or any bitch that appears so attractive to males as to be a disturbing element. If a dog or handler is excused by a judge, the reason must be stated in the judge’s book or in a separate report.

**Section 19. Obedience Ribbons.** At licensed or member obedience trials, the following colors must be used for prize ribbons or rosettes in all regular and optional titling classes, for the ribbon or rosette for Highest Scoring dog in the Regular classes, and for the ribbon or rosette for the dog with the Highest Combined Score in Open B and Utility:

- First Prize Blue
- Second Prize Red
- Third Prize Yellow
- Fourth Prize White
- Qualifying Prize Dark Green
- Highest Scoring Dog in the Regular Classes Blue and Gold
- Highest Combined Score in Open B and Utility Blue and Green

The following colors shall be used for non-regular classes:

- First Prize Rose
- Second Prize Brown
- Third Prize Light Green
- Fourth Prize Gray

Each prize ribbon or rosette in all regular and optional titling classes, for the ribbon or rosette for Highest Scoring dog in the regular classes, and for the ribbon or rosette for the dog with the Highest Combined Score in Open B and Utility will be at least two inches wide and a minimum of eight inches long and will bear on its face a facsimile of the seal of the AKC, the words “Obedience Trial,” the name of the placement, and the name of the trial-giving club. The date of the trial and the name of the city or town where the trial is held must appear on the face, back tab, or on a label attached to the specific ribbon. Qualifying ribbons or rosettes, and ribbons or rosettes for non-regular classes, will be at least two inches wide and a minimum of eight inches long, and will bear on the face a facsimile of the seal of the AKC, the

words "Obedience Trial," the name of the placement and the name of the trial-giving club. The date of the trial and the name of the city or town where the trial is held may be on the face of the ribbons.

**Section 20. Match Ribbons.** If ribbons are given at sanctioned obedience matches, they will be of the following colors and will have the words "Obedience Match" printed on them but may be of any design or size:

- First Prize Rose
- Second Prize Brown
- Third Prize Light Green
- Fourth Prize Gray
- Qualifying Prize Green with Pink edges

**Section 21. Ribbons and Prizes.** Ribbons for the four official placements and all prizes offered for competition within a single regular or optional titling class at licensed or member trials will be awarded only to dogs that earn qualifying scores. Qualifying scores will not be required for the awarding of ribbons and prizes in the non-regular classes. Awards for the four placements in these classes will be based solely on the number of points earned. The ribbon and any prizes offered for the dog with the highest combined score in Open B and Utility at a licensed or member trial will be awarded only to a dog that earns qualifying scores in both Open B and Utility.

Prizes for which dogs in one class compete against dogs in one or more other classes at licensed or member trials or at sanctioned matches will be awarded only to dogs that earn qualifying scores.

Prizes at a licensed or member obedience trial must be offered to be won outright. However, a prize requiring three wins by the same owner for permanent possession, but not necessarily with the same dog, may be offered for the dog with the highest qualifying score in one of the regular classes, the highest scoring dog in the regular classes, or the dog with the highest combined qualifying scores in the Open B and Utility classes.

Subject to the provisions of paragraphs 1 and 2 of this section, prizes may be offered for the highest scoring dog of the groups as defined in Chapter 3 of the *Rules Applying to Dog Shows* or for the highest scoring dogs of any breeds, but not for a breed variety, with the following exceptions: In accordance with Chapter 3 of the *Rules Applying to Dog Shows*, all Miniature and Standard Poodles are in the Non-Sporting Group and all Toy Poodles are in the Toy Group. In addition, Standard Manchester Terriers are in the Terrier Group, and Toy Manchester Terriers are in the Toy Group.

Prizes offered only to members of certain clubs or organizations will not be approved for publication in premium lists.

If an award in any of the regular or optional titling classes is cancelled, the next highest scoring dog will receive that award. If there is no dog to move up, the award will be void. If the AKC cancels a dog's win, the dog's owner must return all ribbons and prizes to the show-giving club within 10 days of receiving the AKC's cancellation notice.

Optional titling classes are not considered regular classes

**Section 22. Highest Scoring Dog in the Regular Classes and the Dog with the Highest Combined Score in Open B and Utility.** The dog receiving the highest qualifying score in the regular classes will be awarded the ribbons and any prizes offered for these placements after the announcement of final scores of the last regular class to be judged. The dog receiving the highest combined score in Open B and Utility may be awarded the ribbon and any prizes offered for this placement after Open B and Utility Classes have been judged and after the announcement of those final scores. The superintendent or show or trial secretary will mark the catalog to identify the dogs receiving these awards.

In the case of a tie between dogs eligible for either of the above awards, each dog will be tested again, individually, by performing the entire Novice Heel Free exercise. The judge for a run-off will be designated by the Event Committee from among the judges of the obedience trial. When a run-off has been completed, the judge will record the results on a special sheet that identifies the dogs taking part in the runoff by catalog number, class and breed. When the judge has marked and signed the sheet, it will be turned over to the superintendent or show or trial secretary who will mark the catalog accordingly and forward the sheet to the AKC as part of the records of the trial.

**Section 23. Risk.** The owner or agent entering a dog in an obedience trial does so at his own risk and agrees to abide by the rules of the AKC and the *Obedience Regulations*.

**Section 24. Decisions.** At the trial the decisions of the judge shall be final in all matters affecting the performance and scoring of the team. The Event Committee shall decide all other matters arising at the trial, including protests against dogs made under Chapter 15 of the *Rules Applying to Dog Shows*.

**Section 25. Dogs Competing.** If a dog is excused by the trial's official veterinarian, the excusal must be in writing and must be approved by the superintendent or show or trial secretary. The excusal must be submitted to the AKC with the report of the trial. The judge must report to the AKC any dog that is not brought back for the Group Exercises.

**Section 26. Judging Program.** After entries have closed, any club holding a licensed or member obedience trial must prepare a program showing the time for the judging of each of the classes before 12:00 noon. Classes at or after 12:00 noon will be listed "to follow" and must be judged in the order and ring listed. No "to follow" class may start before 12:00 noon. If there are to be two trials scheduled for the same day/same site, a start time must be given for each trial. In the case of a licensed or member specialty trial open only to the specialty breed, a group trial or a trial that begins after 12:00 noon, the start time for only the first obedience class needs to be given.

A copy of this program will be mailed to the owner of each entered dog and to each judge, and the program will be printed in the catalog. This program will be based on the judging of no more than nine (9) Novice entries, eight (8) Open entries or seven (7) Utility entries per hour during the published show or trial time.

The published starting hour for judging and the availability of rings must also be taken into consideration. No judge will be scheduled to exceed this limit of dogs per hour and, in addition, may take 45 minutes to one hour for rest or meals at their discretion. No judge will be assigned to judge for more than eight hours in one day, including any breed judging assignment when the obedience trial is held in conjunction with a dog show.

Any non-regular class must be judged after the regular class if the classes are scheduled to be judged in the same ring.

Contact information, e.g. cell telephone number for at least one committee member, must be listed in the "Judging Program." The information must provide a means of readily available communication with a member of the committee on the day of the event.

**Section 27. Limitation of Entries.** If a club anticipates an entry to exceed the capacity of its facilities for a licensed or member trial, it may limit entries, not to exceed up to eight hours of judging time per day, per judge. Non-regular classes, however, may be included, if so desired.

Prominent announcement of such limits will appear on the title or cover page of the premium list for an obedience trial or immediately under the obedience heading in the premium list for a dog show. This announcement must state that entries in one or more specified classes will automatically close when certain limits have been reached, even if this occurs before the official closing date.

When entries are limited in the Open B and/or Utility B classes, a club must designate a UDX class in the premium list. Dogs entered in this UDX class would be entered in both Open B and Utility B, and the combined entry fee for these two classes must be paid. Once the limit has been reached in either the Open B or the Utility B class, the UDX class will be considered closed and any subsequent entries for this class will be unacceptable in their entirety.

**Section 28. Additional Judges, Reassignment, Split Classes.** After the entries have closed, if any judge exceeds the limit established in Chapter 1, Section 26 of these *Regulations*, the club will immediately secure the approval of the AKC for an additional judge, or for reassignment of its advertised judges, so that no judge will be required to exceed the limit.

If a judge was advertised to judge more than one class and receives an excessive entry, at least one of the classes shall be assigned to another judge.

Reassignment shall first go to any non-regular classes, then to either the class with the lesser number of entries or those with the lesser scheduled time. This will bring the advertised judge's schedule as close as possible to the maximum limit.

If a judge with an excessive entry was advertised to judge only one class, the superintendent, show secretary, or obedience trial secretary will divide the entry as evenly as possible between the two judges by drawing lots. A notification of any change of judge must be mailed to the owner of each entry affected.

The owner will be permitted to withdraw such entry no later than one half hour prior to the scheduled start of any regular obedience competition at the trial, and the entry fee will then be refunded.

**Section 29. Split Classes in Premium List.** A club may choose to announce two or more judges for any class in its premium list. In such case, the entries will be divided by lots as provided above. The identification slips and judging program will be made up so that the owner of each dog will know the division and the judge under which their dog is entered, but no owner is entitled to a refund of entry fee.

**Section 30. Split Classes, Official Ribbons, Prizes.** A club that holds a split class will award AKC qualifying ribbons in each division, even if the split is made after entries close. The four dogs with the highest qualifying scores in each division will be awarded the four AKC official placements.

**Section 31. Stewards.** Judges are in sole charge of their rings until their assignments are completed. Stewards are provided to assist but may act only on the judge's instructions. They must not give information or instructions to owners and handlers except when the judge asks them to do so.

**Section 32. Ring Conditions.** An indoor ring should be rectangular and about 40 x 50 feet for all obedience classes. The Utility ring should never be less than 35 x 50 feet, and the Novice or Open ring should not be less than 30 x 40 feet. The floor must have firm footing, using rubber or similar non-slip material at least 4 feet wide for the takeoffs and landings of all jumps, unless the judge feels the surface does not require it.

At an outdoor show or trial, the rings should be about 40 x 50 feet. The ground should be clean and level. Any grass should be cut short. For the Open Classes, the club and superintendent are responsible for providing an appropriate place, approved by the judge, for the handlers to go completely out of sight of their dogs. Under unusual or adverse weather conditions, a club may provide a separate regulation size ring for the Group Exercises. If inclement weather at an outdoor show or trial necessitates the judging of obedience under shelter, the requirements as to ring size may be waived.

The judge's table and chairs will be of such size and location so as not to interfere with the dog and handler's performance while in the ring.

**Section 33. Obedience Rings at Dog Shows.** At an outdoor dog show, a separate ring or rings should be provided for obedience. A sign forbidding anyone to permit any dog to use the ring (except during judging) should be set up in each obedience ring by the superintendent or event secretary. It is the duty of the superintendent and/or the show/trial committee to enforce this regulation. At an indoor show where limited space does not permit the exclusive use of any ring for obedience, the same regulation will apply after the obedience rings have been set up. At a dog show, the material used for enclosing the obedience rings will be at least equal to the material used for enclosing the breed rings. If the ring has previously been used for breed judging, it must be thoroughly cleaned before the obedience judging starts.

A show or trial-giving club may designate a confined warm-up area, physically defined by ropes or ring gates. If offered, it must not be disruptive to any dog or person. The area should be monitored at all times by a person or persons designated by the club.

**Section 34. Judge's Report on Ring and Equipment.** The superintendent and the officials of the club holding the obedience trial are responsible for providing rings and equipment that meet the requirements of these *Regulations*. The judge, however, must check both the ring and equipment before starting to judge. After the trial, they must report to the

AKC any undesirable ring conditions or deficiencies that were not promptly corrected at their request.

**Section 35. Judges' Education.** Obedience judges must attend at least one obedience judges' seminar presented by AKC staff in every three-year period and will be ineligible to accept assignments if this requirement is not met.

To assist in educating prospective judges, prospective judges may apprentice under a judge who has been approved to judge the Utility Class. The apprentice judge will score dogs and handlers from outside the obedience ring. Proper notification to and consent from the judge must be given prior to the start of the class.

A person who is not currently suspended from the privileges of the AKC and who has trained and exhibited a dog to the Utility Dog title may be approved to judge non-regular classes, unless these Regulations state otherwise.

TO BE CONTINUED

## The Twelve Days of Christmas from your dogs point of view



On the first day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
A puppy for company

On the second day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
Two water bowls and,

On the third day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
Three nylabones,

On the fourth day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
Four fleecy rugs,

On the fifth day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
Five plush toys,

On the sixth day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
Six belly rubs,

On the seventh day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
Seven different collars,

On the eighth day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
Eight Obedience lessons,

On the ninth day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
Nine gloves for tracking,

On the tenth day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
Ten balls for fetching,

On the eleventh day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
Eleven jumps for jumping,

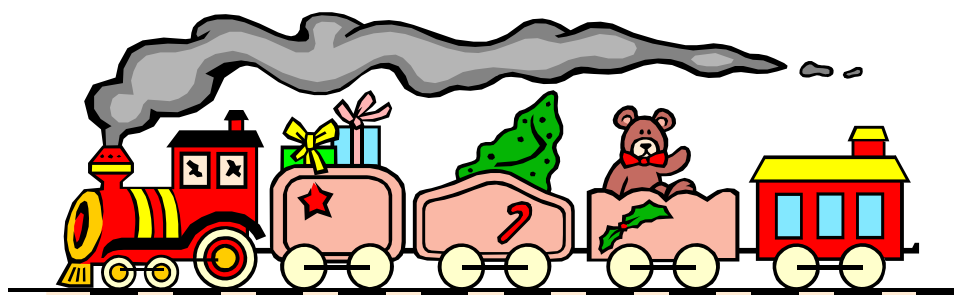
On the twelfth day of Christmas, my owner gave to me  
Twelve poles for weaving,



# December 2008



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 "Suki" Loomis "Belle" Mathis	2	3	4	5 Lois Olson	6
7	8 "Chance" Guidinger	9 Craig Cazier	10 Linda Newby-Reimann	11	12	13
14 Nyda Ovard	15	16	17 Bill Orr "Meg" Loomis Brian Nielson	18	19	20
21 BRRR.... Winter Begins 	22	23	24	25 Suzanne Belger 	26	27
28	29	30 "Chloe" Dent Holly Frazier	31			



ANNOUNCING THE EVENT OF THE YEAR



**Upper Snake River Valley Dog Training Club's  
CHRISTMAS PARTY  
December 13, 2008, 6:30 p.m.  
Sandpiper Restaurant**

**Menu Choices:**

Hawaiian Crunch Halibut \$22.95

Prime Rib - \$18.95

Chicken Oscar - \$ 17.95

Chicken Baja \$13.95

All entrées served with a house salad and an Idaho baked potato.

Prices do not include tax and tip. You will pay your own ticket directly to the Sandpiper.

Please RSVP with Judy Grof  
(524-2543 or [grofjb@cableone.net](mailto:grofjb@cableone.net))

**Centerpiece** exchange-bring a centerpiece to exchange for another centerpiece.

**Gift exchange**-bring a gift (preferably dog related) to exchange, \$10.00 limit.

Come and join your friends and family for a little holiday spirit and a doggone good time! Dog Bingo back by popular demand, email your dog's names to [sunkisd@cableone.net](mailto:sunkisd@cableone.net) or call 523-3374.

## A Special Christmas

"Where'd the cookies go? They were here a minute ago!" my sister Sylvia shouted from the living room. It was Christmas Eve and she was crouched under the artificial tree, staring at an empty dish resting on the tree skirt. A few crumbs were visible, but otherwise, there was little trace of what had been there. Only a short while earlier, our mother had set a dish of crunchy oatmeal raisin cookies under the tree. She had made them for Santa Claus. But someone had gotten to the treats before Ol' Saint Nick had a chance to shimmy down the chimney. It didn't take us long to finger the culprit.

*Sunshine*, my sister's pet Chihuahua/terrier mix, was licking her chops as she came trotting from under the tree. She was dressed for the holidays, sporting a green and red doggie sweater with her name embroidered in cursive across the chest and a metallic red Christmas bow on her collar. Our mother had purchased the sweater for Sunshine by special order.

"Sunshine!" my sister scolded the dog as she scooped her into her arms. "I can't believe you ate all of those cookies. They'll hurt your tummy." But Sunshine didn't show any remorse. She simply gazed affectionately at my sister and seemed pleased that she'd discovered the treasure under the tree.

Sunshine had that same look of discovery in her eyes a few years earlier on the day that my sister first saw her. Sylvia was a college freshman, living by herself in a studio apartment and had just finished classes for the afternoon. As she walked back to her apartment, she noticed a chubby little chocolate and caramel colored fur ball sitting on the sidewalk near her front door.

"Hi doggie," my sister said as she leaned down to pet the animal. In response, the dog wagged her tail and craned her neck to brush her head against Sylvia's hand. "You're a real sweetheart," she said to the dog. "I'm sure you have an owner who will be along any time now to find you."

Sylvia noticed the dog was wearing a collar, but no tags. "It was nice meeting you, doggie," my sister said as she entered her apartment. That night, a heavy rainstorm swept through the area. The downpour seemed relentless and didn't let up until the next morning. After the weather cleared, Sylvia stepped outside to run some errands. To her surprise, the dog was still sitting there on the sidewalk and had apparently sat there throughout the storm!

"Hmm. I wonder where your master could be," Sylvia said. "I don't want you to stay out here and catch a cold. I'll take you in until someone comes looking for you." The dog had a warm dreamy look in her eyes and my sister fell instantly in love with her. Sylvia knew the dog would brighten up her life so she called her "Sunshine."

Days passed, but no one ever did come looking for the little dog, even after Sylvia distributed fliers in the neighborhood. In the meantime, Sylvia began to notice that Sunshine had some health problems.

Sunshine had a wheezing condition. My sister initially thought it was the lingering effects of that night outside during the storm. But whenever Sunshine got excited at feeding time, during rides in the car, or when it was time for one of her walks Sunshine would start hacking and squawking like a wild goose. Sylvia figured a doggie checkup would be a good idea. What she found out was disturbing.

"Your dog has a collapsed windpipe," the veterinarian said. "That's what's causing her to wheeze and cough. It almost always happens in toy breeds or terriers and Pomeranians. The disease usually becomes problematic in middle age, but can happen at any age."

"Why would she have this?" Sylvia asked. "Is there anything we can do? I...I mean is there any medicine I can give her?"

"In your dog's case, we don't know what's caused it. And there's really nothing we can do," the veterinarian said. "It's not life threatening, but do try to keep her from getting excited. When her windpipe collapses, she's gasping for air and that's not good for her."

A few weeks later during a follow-up examination, the veterinarian diagnosed additional ailments. Sunshine had a heart condition; fluid was gathering around her heart. The vet instructed Sylvia to keep Sunshine's walks to a minimum and to carry her whenever they had to go up a flight of stairs. Sunshine also had cataracts, which accounted for the dreamy look in her eyes. In addition, she had tumors in her ovaries and she was suffering from significant hearing loss. The vet couldn't determine Sunshine's exact age, but he figured her to be an older dog, somewhere between 10 and 12 years old.

Sylvia left the vet's office shaken. In one hand, she had a bottle of pills to drain the fluid from around the dog's heart and in the other hand, she had two reminder cards for the surgeries Sunshine would have in a few weeks to remove the cataracts and her ovaries.

Sunshine licked Sylvia's hand as she lifted the dog into the backseat of the car.

"I love you so much, Sunshine," Sylvia said, trying to fight back tears. "We're going to get through this together. I promise."

Sunshine was a trooper. She was brave during both her surgeries and patient whenever my sister would slip the pills for her heart condition down her throat. Sunshine would always lick Sylvia's hand after she swallowed her pills, as if to thank my sister for all the tender care she was giving her. And whenever Sylvia would leave the apartment without Sunshine, Sunshine would sit and hold vigil at the front door for more than 20 minutes, to see if Sylvia would return. Then, looking dejected, she would slowly walk away with her head bowed, ears flapping, and climb onto Sylvia's bed and lie down with her hind legs stretched out behind her.

Sylvia discovered that she and Sunshine had similar interests. They loved watching the soap operas together. The dog would curl up on the pillow next to Sylvia and seemed to focus on the screen as if she knew what was going on.

The two of them would take leisurely walks at a local botanical garden. Often, Sylvia would dress Sunshine in a black and white tuxedo sweater with a red bow tie pattern on the front. Sunshine took pride in her personal appearance and would trot through the park more lively than usual, with her head cocked back slightly in a self-assured manner.

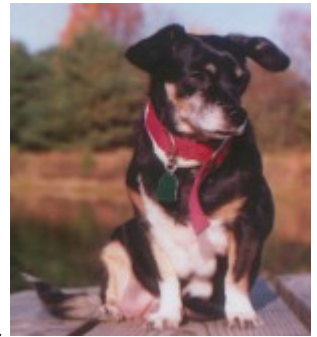
When the weather was warm, Sunshine enjoyed lying in the sun on the apartment balcony. Sylvia would take the opportunity to give Sunshine back and shoulder rubs until the dog drifted off to sleep.

But even more special to the two of them were the trips they took home to see our mom and dad. Typically, as Sylvia drove, Sunshine would stand on my lap on her hind legs, rest her front paws on the inside passenger door and watch the cars and trucks zip past.

And one of the most memorable trips was the one we took home for Christmas.

As I watched Sylvia scoop Sunshine up into her arms and wipe the cookie crumbs from her muzzle, I couldn't help but think of how far they'd come together.

Sunshine, the dog that only a few years earlier was physically broken, without a home, without shelter and without someone to care for her and my sister, the college freshman living by herself away from home for the first time, had found each other to love.



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### About the Author:

Lisa Braxton, a native of Bridgeport, Connecticut, is a former television news anchor and reporter. She is also a former newspaper reporter and radio newscaster. She currently lives in the Boston, Massachusetts area where she is a radio and TV broadcasting professor and a public educator for a non-profit association. In her spare time she dabbles in creative writing.