

Int Ch/Ch Heart N Soul's Alien Life Form, U.D., R.N. "ALF"

As the first anniversary of his death approaches I now feel that I can share what an extraordinary dog Alf was during his lifetime. My journey with Alf began two years before his birth. I was visiting with friends at a dog show in Northern California when my friend's daughter approaches with this small Am Staff like dog. That dog was Ch. Heart N Soul's Rock and Rule aka Rocker who would become Alf's sire. Rocker literally climbed up the front of me to reach my face to plant many kisses on me. Immediately I asked my friend what breed is this dog and I want pick of the litter when you breed him. In February, 1995 I watched Alf's dam, Ch. Sonshine's Lady of the Night aka Simba finish her championship and a few weeks later she was bred to Rocker.

I was at my office on May 5, 1995 at 5:30 a.m. getting some work done when my phone rang and it was Alf's breeder telling me that my puppy was just born. I could hardly contain myself as I wanted to drive to Shingle Springs, CA immediately. Cooler heads prevailed and five (5) weeks later I made the journey to test the puppies. When I went into the puppy room there were seven (7) puppies all clamoring for my attention. However, the smallest pup caught my attention as he seemed to follow every move I made. I finally took out the little penguin squeaker toy and squeaked it and said puppy come. Alf literally ran over his littermates in what was later to be his signature rocket recall to reach me. He was mine.

Two and a half weeks later I made the trek again to pick-up Alf and take him home to my home in the Napa valley. My heart dog, Maxwell, was dying of two different kinds of cancer and only had months to live so Alf brought so much joy into our house. When I decided to move to Nebraska in a mistaken idea that I could retire early, Alf sat in the front seat all during the drive to Nebraska. When he saw snow, he decided it was okay to view indoors but was too cold to walk on unless I went with him.

During a stay in Nebraska Alf was shown in the breed ring by a twelve year old young man who was reaching his teenage years. Cameron was looking for a manly dog to impress his friends and Alf fit the bill. Cameron's family bred and showed Pugs. Alf would travel to dog shows all over the midwest with Cameron and his parents and became an honorary Pug. One weekend Alf and I joined the Missouri Valley Pug Fanciers at a meet the breed expo in Omaha, NE. Alf sat on a grooming table next to his Pug friends and was quite a hit with some of the inner city youth. Finally one of them came over and asked Cameron's father where he could buy a big black Pug like that one pointing to Alf. After we stopped laughing I explained that Alf was a Staffordshire Bull Terrier and not a Pug.

There were many a show when Cameron would be showing Alf in the breed ring on one side of the building and we would meet outside the ring and change collars and leads and I would take Alf into the obedience ring after a brief warm-up. Alf obtained his C.D. with all first places and no score under 195. Alf obtained his Open title with all first and second places and no score under 195. Golden Retrievers fascinated Alf and I think he secretly yearned to be one.

Other than his Pug friends or the Puglets as we called them, Alf's best friend was Kirby, the Whippet. Many a Sunday morning or afternoon if I was not trialing, Alf and I would train at my friend's training building which was a blessing on frigid Nebraska days. After training, Kirby and Alf would play chase and would chase each other around the building doing sprints.

Now Whippets are much faster than Staffords so Alf would cut inside and bump Kirby and they would wrestle. If Kirby lost his temper, Alf would just stand there and grin at him as if to say, Kirby, its me, your friend Alf.

When I lived in Nebraska I lived in a two story Victorian house that I was slowly restoring. The house had two staircases, a grand front staircase and the rear maid's staircase. All of the dogs including Alf loved to race up one staircase, down the hall and down the other staircase. The dogs would do this for what seemed like hours. They sounded like a herd of bison thundering on the plains. The good thing about the house is that on cold days and nights, the dogs got their exercise without a long walk.

Alf became a method actor when we lived in Nebraska. The local high school, and in conjunction with students from the elementary schools, put on a production of The Wizard of Oz. A friend who knew that Alf was a "show dog" asked me if I wanted to talk to the director/teacher about whether Alf could play the part of "Toto" in the play as they were planning to use a stuffed dog. Alf and I went down to the school gym for his big audition. The teacher/director asked me to show her what he could do. I had no clue what she wanted so I started heeling, improvised some retrieving etc. She asked me if Alf could work with a live band in the dark. I told her we could try. The lights were dimmed and the small band started to play. She had the student playing Dorothy take Alf up the stairs toward the stage in the dimly lit auditorium. Alf did everything she asked him to do even some things I did not teach him. The director used not only the stage but the whole auditorium so that some scenes in the play took place in front of the audience on the floor.

“ALF”

(continued)

We attended all rehearsals for six weeks several nights a week. Alf had to ride in the back of a big three wheeler bike looking pitiful. Every night Alf sat in the back of the bike basket looking like he lost his best friend. Alf had to do a recall to Dorothy in a pitch black auditorium and I taught him to do it as a blind go out. Alf did that perfectly. The best part of the show was when Dorothy, Alf, and their three compadres danced down the Yellow Brick Road going to see the wizard. Alf did the dance with them. I did not teach him that trick but he just did it. Alf was on stage for 95% of the time and no parent was prouder than me when Alf and Dorothy took their bows to a standing ovation. Alf stood next to Dorothy to greet play goers for the run of the play. Even our parish priest came over to congratulate Alf on his fine performance. The country club

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made an exception and allowed Alf to attend the cast party. Pictures of Dorothy and Alf appeared in the local newspaper.

When I returned to California and settled in Los Angeles, I joined WLAOTC, Alf enjoyed his utility classes and was a member of the 2002 and 2003 Top Dog Teams. Alf quickly made friends with his classmates and training mates.

Alf had another chance to practice his acting skills in the Venice High School's performance of "The Wiz" He played "Toto" again. To avoid being typecast, Alf retired from acting after that play but it did not stop him from being a ham. He so loved performing for children. Neighborhood children would come over at to play with Alf and it made his day when he could be around children. He truly was a "nanny dog".

Alf finished his U.D. with good scores and at Great Western Terrier obedience trials in June, 2003 went High in Trial with a 198 ½ from Open B and also obtained his first OTCH points.

We received an invitation to compete with the best in Long Beach in December 2003. A friend from Northern CA who came down to assist me and be my coach fell instantly in love with Alf. My two timing dog spent some of the night in her bed and then hopped to my bed. We placed in terrier group and competed the second day.

Unfortunately, Alf' developed some serious health problems and I had to retire him from obedience competition. Alf had a glass is half full outlook on life and never made enemies only friends. We had several close calls with stays in the hospital so I thought he would live forever. In March 2009 my veterinarian gently told me that it was time as there was nothing he could do for him anymore. Up to the night he died Alf slept on my bed sharing my pillow. When he would start to shake with seizures, I would clasp his boney body to mine and just hold him til it passed. Jenny who watched over Alf when I was at work, just howled when I returned home from the veterinarian without Alf. Mikey sat there looking very somber as he treated Alf with the same courtesy as he did his grandfather, Nigel. All three of us sat on the floor and cried as our hearts were broken.

Alf was shown in 2008 in veteran's sweepstakes by Karyn Dawes who used to show him in breed for me. As luck would have it I was competing in Novice B with Jenny at the same time Alf was strutting his stuff in veterans sweeps. His breeder told me it was obvious he was ill but when he heard people clapping he picked up his feet and gave that big Stafford grin as he made his way around the ring and free stacked like a pro. I treasure those pictures. His breeder and I planned to bring Alf, his brother Santana, sister Roane and sister Stevie Nicks to Great Western in 2009 to show in veterans sweeps again as they would have been fourteen years of age. However Alf died March 18, 2009, Santana died April 18, 2009, Roane died July 23, 2009 and Stevie Nicks died December, 2009. Roane and Stevie Nicks showed in veterans sweeps and it seemed as if I could see Alf right there with them.

Dayna, Mikey's breeder who owned Roane, Cindy, Alf's breeder and I toasted each other with some champagne and let the tears flow.

Wait there Alf! 5/05/1995 to 3/18/2009.

