

Ode to “Ruby Red” – A Story of Love

September 6, 2014

Who would have thought that a fat little Red Labrador Retriever puppy would have woven her heart through ours in such a short period of time. A gift from Kansas, just as in the Wizard of Oz, Little Ruby Red was dropped into our lives during a time that we needed her most. This morning as I woke up, there was a hollow empty feeling knowing that Ruby was no longer with us. The warm lick on my hand at 6 AM, the full body shake with the rattle of her collar and the thumping of her tail said it was time to get up and greet the day. It was always a good day when Ruby was a part of it – the epitome of optimism, she would race to her dog bowl and stare into it knowing that food would soon appear; then, bring her favorite ball to you every morning and drop it at your feet then turn knowing that it be thrown for her to fetch. She trained us to look for the good in everything..... we will miss her deeply.

It was the fall of 2011, Dustin and I were looking for a dog that would be the perfect fit for the new Red Barn we had recently built and someone that would keep Dustin company as he worked on the Farm. Our on-line computer search found a cute “Pink Nosed” Red Labrador Retriever in Kansas’ Red Moon Labs – it was an instant “That’s the one, Dad” from Dustin when we saw her picture. It was a perfect fit for the Red Barn..... Ruby was Born in December and we had to wait until she was old enough to travel - she had a twin sister and in February they were both flown to SLC Airport where we went to pick her up. She was a roly-polly puppy that loved to eat and loved people – an instant hit at the barn, as she would scatter the chickens in playful fun and hang with Gunner (a 150lb Kuvasz – guardian livestock dog) not realizing the size disparity. She made her mark at the farm as she learned how to herd the Alpaca’s, gather the eggs, wait patiently by your feet as a specific project was being built and be constantly at your side. She would stay at night in our home, but every morning was anxious to jump in the back of the truck to head to the farm, as we turned the corner to the farm and she could start to see her friends – her tail would begin banging (literally banging – you could hear it from a block away) the metal bed of the truck. We had a wonderful spring watching her grow, begin her training at PETCO and become part of our family. Little did we know then, her role of a “Therapy Dog” was already in the works.

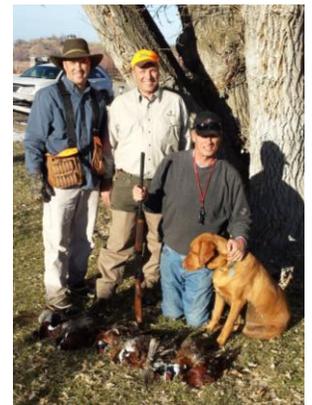


Dustin passed away on June 29th, 2012, just five months after getting Ruby.... Taylor had left in May for his LDS mission to Budapest Hungary – it was a hard time. Ruby would sit at our feet and just wait – knowing the right time to sit up and gaze into your eyes and offer her love. Amazing how she could sense the situation and know what to do. That summer was a difficult one – time at the farm and in the pool helped the healing process take place. We pulled together as a family, our activities always included Ruby – where she was the bright spot that would put a smile on our face. Our weekly letters to Taylor would always include pictures of Ruby playing with the grandkids – she kept us going..... The thought that dogs “laugh with the tails” is a sign we have hanging in our garage and is certainly true with Ruby. Her big Ol Tail would start thumping as soon as she caught a glimpse of you – she would whack it against anything in its way – I am anxious to ask her when we meet again if that would hurt, it sure seemed like it would – but it did not stop her from thumping away..... she really loved people!



Ruby is part of a long line of Labs within our family. It started with Cocoa, then Hershey, then Carmel.....we had a brief hiatus from the lab world with a fun loving Italian Spinone named “Maggie”, but Ruby was unique – maybe it was the timing and the situation – but her personality was just what the doctor ordered. She was a gift from heaven to help fill a void – she was unique. She had her own struggles that helped develop her compassion for others..... much like each of us - it is through our own experiences that we find true empathy and compassion... she tore her ACL in her right knee at one years old – at the time we did not know that this was the early stages of bone cancer, which would ultimately take her life. She went through a painful knee surgery to only see more complications arise and further surgeries. During this process she endeared herself to all of us through her brave and cheery disposition, in spite of the obvious pain that she was going through. Even though she would now carry a constant limp and was in pain, she would always greet you with a smile (she had a way of pulling her lips back with this cheesy grin and show her teeth) and the wagging tail..... she had a way of reminding us what really mattered – each other!

Ruby loved to hunt and had the unique trait as both a pointer and retriever. On her very first hunting trip to Sportsman’s Paradise she performed beautifully. On one particular point, she flushed the pheasant out to where we just barely winged the bird and it flew off over a distant hill. The next thing we knew we saw Ruby chasing over the hill after it – I tried to call her back, but she had a very strong will. We thought, well sooner or later we’ll find her – about 5 minutes later here came Ruby galloping back over the hill with the rooster hanging out of her mouth, she brought it directly to me and dropped the bird right at my feet – with her cheesy grin she looked up at me – I think she saw the tears in my eyes when I gave her a good ol pat on the head, wow!! what a dog..... Ruby also loved to fish, water was her favorite place to be and a few trout to chase around made it even better...She would sit on the bank and be ready to help once the fish was hooked to help land it.... In her short 2 ½ years she lived a good life....



Since getting Ruby, Red Barn Farms would become a Non-Profit Recovery Community Center that now holds recovery meetings and works with those that have specific challenges in their lives (check out www.redbarnfarms.org). Ruby caught on real quick. All of us are in one form of recovery or another – Ruby became our Therapy Dog. She was quick to survey the room and see who needed her attention. She would then go over and place her head on their lap and say “you can pet my head, it will help you feel better...”. She created Hope and was the example of Hope, always the optimist and greeted each day as if it was the best day of her life..... We’ve learned a lot about ourselves from Ruby – like it’s cool to be loyal to your partner and.... you may not always feel your best – but by serving and loving others you make the best out of what life throws at you.



There are so many stories – hunting mice in the greenhouse; loving the mud baths in Shepard Creek; the early morning romps with Gunner and Rocky – then chasing the alpacas and the cows; running to Krista in the apartment complex after climbing 3 flights of stairs; finding Rick, Mike, Scott, Steve, Tina and Sarah each morning when coming to the Barn – then giving them each a warm lick on their hands – she would make the rounds until she had said hello to everyone;

hunting and fishing; swimming in the pool with all the family and their friends; playing with Ollie and the grandkids – Joshua, Spencer, Cooper and Abby; chasing snowballs and catching them; catching and popping many soccer balls – we have had to replace our share; *our long walks and talks together – I will really miss those.....*; thanks to Dr. Pam and her team that helped Ruby through her pain – Ruby can truly say to her pack in heaven, I bet you didn't have the care or the send-off that I had.

Ruby is now the pioneer and matriarch for future therapy dogs at RBF – she is the model. As RBF grows and serves the recovery community, dog therapy will be part of what RBF is all about.... Her reputation and lore will grow with time – it will be fun to see where all this takes us. Dustin and Ruby have helped create an awareness and a journey that was totally unplanned....2 ½ years ago who would have thought this is where we would be. Dustin was kind to share Ruby with us for 2 years – I know that he was the first to greet her on the other side and I'm sure Ruby had a major tail wagging session + licks for him..... It is now Dustin's turn to have Ruby – lucky guy! We feel the need to share this with those we love and within our community – I can hear Ruby's tail thumping as I write this..... Thanks to all those who have shared in Ruby's life and remember what really matters – each other! [The pictures attached are a brief high-light reel – there are many others!]

