

## *Ode to Meisha (Mee-sha)*

In late July 1996 my youngest daughter came to me, all excited.

"Mom, Mom," she exclaimed, "there's a Doxie (short for Dachshund) at the Humane Society up for adoption! Can we go look ... please?"

My response was along the lines that we already had one dog. But, well ... what would it hurt to go look? So off we went.

Whether she had found her way alone to a park, or had been purposely abandoned there, it was obvious she had suffered neglect and abuse. Grossly overweight, her coat was dull, her toenails chipped and broken, her teeth needed attention. She was certainly no candidate for AKC registration; she was the epitome of a weiner dog.



But it was love at first sight. It was hard for us to leave her there; she was more than ready to go home with us. We accomplished that feat a few days later. A caregiver at the Humane Society made us promise that if we couldn't handle her, we would bring her back. But we left that facility with her knowing that she would never be abandoned or neglected again; whatever her problems, we would deal with them. That need would

soon become apparent.

My daughters named her "Meisha" which, when she was naughty or in trouble, became "Meisha Ann"; at other times "mischievous" seemed more appropriate.

A penchant for following her nose would land her in more than one pickle. Locked in a room she had followed you in to without you knowing it, she would wait by the door while her humans searched frantically for her, never uttering a peep but wagging her tail furiously when you opened the door. Her nose would lead her into conundrums where you were not sure if you should laugh or cry. Stick her head between the banister posts of the stairs to say hello? No problem! Half an hour later, we would have her unstuck - us cursing, she wagging her tail and waiting patiently to be off again on another adventure. Under the fence where only a squirrel or a cat could go? Also, not a problem! Except the part where the rest of her body needed to fit, and it did not. Oh yes... and her undying love of being "superdog" ... flying leaps off the back deck to chase the squirrels: elongated dog, huge ears flapping out to the tune of "bat dog" going through your head. Along with the wince as she landed, knowing that could not be good for her back. We were forced to fix the deck to curtail that activity.

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Used to the meek and mild, well-bred and well-mannered "lady" that was our existing Doxie, Tasha, we were not prepared for the reality of Meisha. She was a "lady" by no means. She and Tasha were about as much alike as the two dogs in the Walt Disney animated feature, Lady and the Tramp.

Within days of coming to live with us, Meisha shattered our illusions that all Doxies were like our Tasha. Left loose in the house while we were away, something we had never hesitated to do with Tasha, we discovered that Meisha had "separation anxiety" when her humans had to leave her at home. We returned to a house that looked like a tornado had blown through. Worst of all, in the mess we came home to, was the garbage can emptied of its contents, strewn about, some of which Meisha had eaten.

She was a garbage hound. Obviously left to fend for herself in her past, Meisha ate everything she could find because tomorrow might come and go with nothing to eat. All her life, Meisha would beg for and eat the darndest things and enjoy every morsel: veggies that most dogs would pass up with a disdainful sniff, stuff prim and proper Miss Tasha would bury ... hard candy, rotten food ... you name it, she thought it was Good Eatin'. She cherished onions, the hotter the better. She "heard" cheese better than she heard "come!".

But amongst the goodies Meisha found in the garbage can in our home was a half-pound of baking chocolate that my daughter had put there after she tried to use it and it curdled.

Baking chocolate will kill a dog, so it was a hair-raising race to pet emergency where they pumped Meisha's stomach and checked her pancreas to make sure she was all right. \$400 poorer but much wiser, her new family brought Meisha home with the realization that she was no meek, mild, well-mannered Doxie. Instead of our dainty little queen, Tasha, we had a romping, rambunctious tomboy who found height no obstacle, size no matter, and a "go get it" attitude that forced us to "Meisha"-proof her environment.

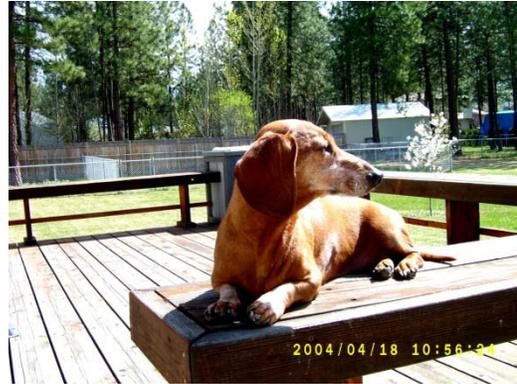
As Meisha slimmed down to an appropriate weight for her size and length of back, the extent of the abuse she had suffered before coming to us became apparent. Meisha had deformed ribs on both sides. When we had her spayed later that year, her internal injuries suggested more than one bout with the tip of someone's boot. It was hard to believe anyone could do such a thing.

But Meisha proved she had a zest for life that just didn't quit. With loving care and discipline, she blossomed. As she lost the frenetic, nervous disposition so common in

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animals that have been unloved, abused, neglected and abandoned, her wonderful personality surfaced. She became a kind, gentle, spirited soul who loved her humans as much as they loved her.

She quickly became protective of her family. Our first experience with her "bark" came at the veterinarian clinic where we took her for a check-up. We had yet to hear her make a sound, perpetuating our soon-to-be shattered illusion (delusion?) that she was a mild, well-mannered creature. As my youngest daughter held her, a group of boisterous youngsters approached the door. Suddenly, this five-alarm, tip-of-the-tail to the end-of-the-nose, Grand Canyon-deep voice let forth a solid, ear-splitting "you stay away from my family!" WOOF. The entire waiting room sat there staring at her, wondering how a Rottweiler's voice could fit into that little dog's body.



The bark was soon coupled with a no-nonsense attitude toward strangers. Within days of becoming part of our family, she corralled an errant youngster who made the mistake of climbing over our fence and sauntering across our back yard. Small she might be, but with lips curled back and that commanding voice, she left the youngster with no illusions that she saw him as an unwelcomed intruder into her domain, and his ankles would be just the beginning. Another time, when EMT's were called to our home to address health issues, Meisha stood in the middle of me and wouldn't let the EMT's close until I assured her it was okay. When people asked me if she would bite, I never told them that she wouldn't. I always suspected that if she felt her humans were in jeopardy, she wouldn't hesitate.



as I ran toward them.

And she became the protector and "mother" of our toy Doxie, Scooter, who came to live with us in the summer of 2001 at the age of about four months. Scooter wanted to explore, like all good Doxies, and what better place to explore than The Forbidden Road? Scooter followed his curiosity under our front gate one day. To the sound of barking that said "YO - heads up!", I turned to see Meisha heading for the front gate. Against all her training, I watched Meisha go under the gate and right after little Scooter, heading him off and herding him back toward me

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This was not the end of her teaching Scooter How Things Are. If she wanted attention, he could move over. If that was her spot to sleep, she had no qualms turning him into a body pillow. And if he got out of line, he discovered he was no match for a fifteen-pound small standard Doxie sitting on him.

Our veterinarian estimated that Meisha was 4 to 4.5 years old when she became part of our family in 1996, making her birth date in early to middle 1992. As Meisha aged, her health began to decline. Her back became problematic due to the abuse she had suffered as a young dog. She often wore a home-made back brace to help her. In her last years she was on medication to aid the function of her failing heart; she caught infections easily. She often needed help from her humans to accomplish her goals, letting us know she needed our help with a soft "woof". We were always met with a wagging tail when we went to see what she needed.

But through it all Meisha's zest for life shown through. She never gave up, never complained, often silently endured with an ever-patient expression and a lick. She was always there to give you a Meisha hug and sloppy wet kiss when you were down or feeling blue, always there to tell you that she loved you with the abandon only a dedicated best friend can show. If you needed a lap dog, she was sure to oblige, splaying out across you and pinning you down with a "you WILL be loved" attitude.

On July 10, 2008, Meisha lost her battle with age and infirmity and died quietly in my arms after a brief illness. She was approximately 16.5 years old.



Although she could be at times aggravating, annoying and demanding, she is and will always be sorely missed by her human family and Scooter, the toy Doxie she left behind. She was a mutt, a mongrel, a one-in-a-million dog who left her legacy indelibly etched on her human family.

Life can be trying, life can be difficult, life can be unfair. Like Meisha, we should ever be patient and never give up.

Lynn M Stuter  
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