



The Peppertree POST

What do we do? Rescue Dogs of good temperament who need new homes • Cooperate with and assist other rescues, shelters, and animal control • Educate the public about how to obtain a companion animal.

SPRING 2005 ISSUE

...A morning kiss, a discreet touch of his nose landing somewhere on the middle of my face. Because his long white whiskers tickled, I began everyday laughing.

— Janet F. Faure

TIME is

Too Slow for those who wait,
Too swift for those who fear,
Too long for those who grieve,
Too short for those who rejoice,
But for those who love,
Time is not.

— Henry van Dyke



"Pepper"

charcoal drawing courtesy of Michael Lewandowski

SAYING GOOD BYE

This newsletter is dedicated to Pepper, our founder, and the volunteers and adopters of Peppertree Rescue, who have loved and lost a beloved canine to the Rainbow Bridge. To the humans and canines who have shared love, trust, playful abandon and the sorrow of departure.

Nothing in life is as precious as having a partner to share smiles, sorrows and spontaneous fun. Nothing is more meaningful than having a paw to guide you to contentment. A warm, furry body to lean into when life is not as it should be. Nothing is more meaningful than saving a life and witnessing the daily love and belief, in yourself, who opened your heart to envelop a canine in need.

Unfortunately, our lives together can be much shorter than we would like. Illness, age, or the lack of 'miracles' lessen our beloved time together. Some of my most poignant memories as a volunteer are listening to the stories of those who have lost a beloved pet and cherishing my own animal family.

In this edition of the Peppertree Newsletter, you will be captivated by Pepper's story ... the beginning of Peppertree and the force that makes our hearts go on. It's a reading of adventure, heartfelt love and the desire to give to another.

THE RAINBOW BRIDGE

Just this side of heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge. When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge. There are meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can run and play together. There is plenty of food, water and sunshine, and our friends are warm and comfortable.

All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigor. Those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our dreams of days and times gone by. The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing; they each miss someone very special to them, who had to be left behind.

They all run and play together, but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent. His eager body quivers. Suddenly he begins to run from the group, flying over the green grass, his legs carrying him faster and faster.

You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress the beloved head, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, so long gone from your life but never absent from your heart.

Then you cross Rainbow Bridge together...

— Author Unknown

— Liz Amman, Editor

KELLY'S RICH CINNAMON PEPPER, CGC, TDI "PEPPER"

March 31, 1991 - January 4, 2005



All I knew was that I didn't want a dog. And I definitely didn't want a puppy. And I most definitely didn't want a Golden

Retriever puppy! I'd grown up with several wonderful German Shepherds, and IF I wanted a dog (which I didn't) I would want one like them - a dog that was super intelligent, almost able to communicate directly with me, an equal in many ways - not a sweet, submissive, always eager to please "pet." I knew what I didn't want and what I didn't want was a Golden puppy.

My father and step-mother, however, were powerfully persuasive. They generally had the good sense and courtesy to let their children decide things for themselves, BUT they had decided that I needed a puppy from the litter - the last litter - that was due to be born to their Golden, Feather. Before the night was over I just gave in and agreed. I was very skeptical about this but realized when I was outgunned. And David (Sawicki), who was in on the conversation, had been no help - offering to keep the pup if I wanted to travel, agreeing that I needed some change in my life, etc., etc.. Not, of course, that he cared particularly for Golden Retrievers either - he is (well, was) a Collie person. In truth, I think he just enjoyed seeing me bested in an argument.

So the litter was born on Easter Day (early that year) and my first sight of Pepper, tho I don't know which lump she was, was as one of a collection of nine furry "things" in an Easter basket. Feather was a very blond Golden and she had been mated to a dark red male. At the time, my folks didn't realize the significance of the fact that he was a Holloway Barty son. Nor did I. So one day my dad called and said "light or dark," I figured that since I'm a brunette, I said "dark." What the heck, it was going to be a brainless, spineless Golden whatever the color, right? As they say in the novels..... little did I know!

The next critical factor in the selection process was the fact that my dad was a clinical psychologist. He didn't know beans about dogs, really (although I loved him and so didn't point that out), but he understood all sorts of things about the differences in people, which he assumed applied to dogs (and, largely, they do - except dogs are much nicer). So as the puppies were growing, he began to pair them off and observe their behaviors. The one of a twosome that seemed more interested and eager and ready to interact was noted - and then that pup was paired off with another, and the "winner" of that match was noted, and so on. If he'd known more about dogs, he would have realized - and probably told me - that he was going to

wind up choosing the highest-ranking, most complete "alpha" of that litter. (There are usually a male alpha and a female alpha, and one of them is the supreme alpha, if you will - usually the female.) But he didn't know, so he didn't tell me, and so I didn't get to say "No, Dad - I really don't have the time to deal with a bossy, dominant dog. Pick another one." It's amazing how our lives get shaped by ignorance. (And a good thing, too, sometimes!)

David and I were in the process of showing our duplex to sell it, so we postponed getting the pup for a bit. I think she was about three and a half months before she was flown up to us from Tennessee. I got my first hint of what might be in store when Daddy told me, cheerfully, that the gal he had chosen for me was going to be a real "corker". The proof? Well, whenever they would let her out in the back yard, both her mother, Feather, and my sister's Mini Schnauzer would run and jump up on the top of the dog house so the "cute little puppy" couldn't terrorize them! Oh. Um. Okay. Say, what happened to sweet, soft, cuddly, brainless, eager to please - all those things that, of course, Golden Retrievers were?

The next hint came when we went to the airport to meet the "poor dear little puppy" who just had to be traumatized by being sent in an airplane from Memphis, with a layover in Atlanta, at her young age. We almost bought some smelling salts so that we could revive the poor dear. Glad we saved our money. Opened the crate and out bounced this red, short-coated whirling dervish who had had the time of her life bouncing over the air pockets and who assumed, immediately, that she had been sent to Albany for the sole purpose of meeting and greeting and jumping up on everyone in the Albany International Airport. Miss Personality - in spades!

The next three years can be summarized by saying that it was a long - very long - and lively - very lively - childhood. She flunked out of obedience class three times; she ate my collection of straw hats (with pride, no less, killing and

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(A 501 (c) (3) Not-for-Profit Charity)

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therefore saving mom from those odd spiky creatures that were taking over the shelves in her bedroom);

she ate an assortment of other non-edibles; she excelled in hiding underwear in her mouth (which made her look like a chipmunk storing up for winter) and sneaking them out to the front yard so all the neighbors could see the interesting garments. Her underwear fetish was particularly strong when it came to visitors: if they ever left their suitcase open, we - and the neighbors - would know their most intimate secrets the next morning. I learned things about my best friend since sixth grade that I would *never* have dreamed of!

When Pepper was in the middle of her interesting - and long - childhood, we became a two pet family. My daughter was given the chance to have a kitten and really wanted to take it but was concerned that Pepper might hurt the little thing. I didn't have a clue and was sort of concerned (she certainly demolished every *toy* we got her) but said we could give it a try. Enter Ozzy (yes, for O. Osbourne) - a tiny black and white fellow with his own strong personality. Things seemed to be going well until one day my daughter shrieked, "Mom - you've got to stop her! Pepper is going to kill Ozzy!!!!!" I ran into the living room expecting blood and gore but instead there was Kelly holding this drenched kitten, crying that Pepper was licking the kitten so much she was going to give him pneumonia and he would die! The tongue is more deadly than the fangs? Interesting concept.

Pepper and Ozzy became - well, they became something that I found unimaginable. Best friends, sleeping partners and wrestling partners! This now big, but very childish, dog and a kitten the size of her paw would

wrestle and roll about and make awful noises for sometimes 30 or 40 minutes at a time and no one was ever hurt.

They had their "lion tamers" act, where Pepper would open her jaws, Ozzy would stick his head in, and then Pepper would take him for a "ride" around the dining room. Then there was the "mountain lion" scenario, where Ozzy would get on the couch back and wait for Pepper to walk past, so he could spring onto her back and wrestle that red fur violently. Oh, and speaking of fur, they groomed each other incessantly. We were at the vets one time when the black and white Ozzy coughed up a rusty red fur ball. The vet, in alarm, started talking about possibly internal bleeding - but we just laughed and pointed to rusty red Pepper, who had come along for the ride. I've



never seen a friendship like that, before or since. Their ashes are now mingled

together in beautiful wood boxes on our mantle.

When we got to the fourth obedience class, it was with a trainer - Karen Squires, to give credit where it's due - who told us that the dog wasn't the problem - we were! She said that Pepper was so damn smart and so eager to please us, and we were mucking it up by not being clear enough about what we wanted and quick enough to keep her attention. Karen was absolutely right and, with her help, we learned how to communicate with this high-powered, strong-willed but utterly good natured creature we'd been gifted with. Pepper was delighted that we'd finally come to our senses, and we were delighted as we started to realize what an exceptional



dog we had. (She also stopped eating everything in sight, which assisted us in being delighted with her. I believe her last illicit feast was on one - of course, only one - of my daughter's dearly beloved fashion boots. I can still see Kelly, brandishing the remaining boot, chasing Pepper all over the yard, yelling "I'm going to kill you! I'm going to kill you!" Pepper, of course, was delighted that she'd done something to motivate this sulky teenager in coming out to play vigorous games with her.)



When she finally graduated from Karen's obedience class, it was in the most unusual way.

David was handling her and at the final test class she did everything perfectly - except the "Down." Well, heck, she's an alpha, okay? She doesn't want to demean herself or lower herself under any kind of authority, of course. David begged; he coaxed; he physically put her into a down; he tried lying on top of her; and finally he gave up - dropped the leash - gestured to the gods (we won't say with what finger) - and walked away. Pepper stared over her shoulder, making sure that he was truly vanquished, and once she was convinced he was out of the way for good, she voluntarily, on her own, did a perfect, proper "down." That's just who she was. Karen respected that sort of spirit and gave her a "pass" on that part of the test.

Then - in all ignorance - we decided that since we had a female dog that was wonderful, if boisterous, we should breed her. I was referred to a local, responsible breeder who told me all sorts of things I'd never heard of: medical clearances, eye checks, canine ophthalmologists, canine cardiologists, canine orthopedists, etc., etc. The woman made a lot of sense and so I said we would set about getting the clearances. She also asked me to send



her a copy of Pepper's pedigree, and while, sadly, I've forgotten her name, I'll never forget the phone call that came after that. "Well, I've looked over your dog's pedigree and found it to be very interesting. Tell me, have you found that she is, well, er, a bit more, er, 'lively' than you anticipated when you got a Golden Retriever?" I thought back to my image of this fluffy, brainless, soft, cuddly, eager-to-please doll-like creature and told her that well, yes, I'd sort of noticed something like that.

That's when I learned about Holloway Barty - described as the premier field Golden of the century - and learned the difference between a "field" Golden and a "show" Golden. Pepper belonged in the former category, with Holloway Barty and Chief Sands and Tigatoes and a number of other field notables in her lineage. In other words, she was the equivalent of an instinctive, inherent athlete - 110 octane - perpetual motion, both mental and physical. No steroids needed. That really explained a lot. I was very relieved. I'd been afraid it was something I'd done to warp her.

Motherhood came next. She passed all her clearances was accepted by one of the best breeders in this area, Sallie and Dennis D'Asaro of Darrowby Goldens. She was bred first to their lovely and sweet-natured Am/Can. Champion Chad and, the second time, to their stunning Australian imported stud, Breaker. The first litter was ten pups and the second was twelve, and Sallie and Dennis helped deliver both. Pepper was confused at first - doing some moaning and groaning, which upset her friend Ozzy terribly. He gave her face baths to ease her pains and then sat on a stool as the

puppies were delivered to be sure that we weren't doing anything to hurt his pal. Cats can look really intimidating, have you ever noticed?

It took Pepper a little bit to catch on to what was happening. Dennis showed her the first pup and she cut him a look that said as clearly as words "I have no idea what that thing is and would you quit pestering me with it. There's something really odd going on with my body right now and I need to attend to that, if you don't mind!" Just seconds later, however, motherly instinct kicked in and she looked back at "that thing" as if it were the Holy Grail and became immensely proud of herself - and immensely fond of "it."

Watching Pepper do the mother routine was like watching Arturo Toscanini lead an orchestra. She was never possessive of the pups and, instead, took delight in showing them off to people - just as long as she got a fair share of the attention. They were the cleanest puppies in four counties, because at last she had a legitimate focus for her incessant dog-kisses. And when they reached the age of toddling around and interacting, she really hit her prime. I could watch for hours in fascination, as she would go



from one pup to the next, chiding one for being too rough, consoling another for having been treated to

roughly by its siblings, going to another one that was wailing just as piteously and telling it to buck up and quit being a baby, nudging the shy ones to do something bold, and putting her paw or mouth on the bold ones to remind them that *she* was the one in charge, not them. It was constant motion, but the interaction with each pup was totally different, sometimes subtly. I've always figured that she could have given a more complete, and thorough, personality assessment of each one of those pups than my dad or his colleagues could give

of any single individual after weeks of administering the Rorschach and dozens of other tests. That's probably the first time I was truly in awe of Pepper - but it certainly wasn't the last.

As you've probably figured out, I was rather naive and untutored about the dog world, but Sallie and Dennis were extremely competent (although I later found out, unusual) tutors, so I learned a lot - fast. One thing I learned, which they told me as gospel and which I accepted as gospel, was that anyone who was a responsible breeder was also involved in and supportive of rescue. Would that it were true! But it was true for them and, blessedly, is true for many other Golden breeders in this area. So that's how the thread of rescue began.

Albany at that time had a one-person (but a very effective person, Bill Berner) Golden rescue program. After the first litter were grown and gone, it was just Pepper and her son Topper at the house. (Long story about how he came to be the one who stayed, and no, we didn't exactly *pick* the similar sounding and rather too-cute names.) Consequently we became - admittedly very reluctantly and with a lot of trepidation - a short-term foster home for a sweet, gawky, three-legged Golden mix named Rebel. Topper thought it was great fun to have another playmate and Pepper - well, she thought the world had ended. How *dare* we bring a stranger, and a scruffy stranger at that, into *her* home? When was he leaving? and could it possibly be sooner? In short, she was not amused - or pleased.

Still, when Rebel finally just "crashed" after all that he'd been through, including



loss of his leg, and lay down to die (I think), her essential take-care-of-things nature kicked in. She lay

down on one side of this almost-comatose dog, directed Topper to lay down on the other side, and they spent the whole night giving



*"Pepper and April"
photograph courtesy of Paul Stelmaszyk*

Rebel warmth, creature comfort, and tongue-baths. (Ozzy helped with the latter.) After that, she took a little more interest in Rebel and began encouraging him to cheer up, stand up straighter, exercise his other leg, and have some fun again (for the first time?). It was like she couldn't help herself - she had decided he was a nice dog even if he was an intruder, so she wanted to make him better.

Rebel went to a great new home (Pepper accompanied us there and gave her approval). Then it was time for her second litter, upon whom she perfected her mothering/mentoring skills. We were planning to have a third and final litter, with Chad as the sire, but she developed an infection after the second delivery (another long story) and was seriously sick. By then we had some idea of what an exceptional dog we had - and we loved her dearly - so she was spayed and the home turned from breeding to increased rescue activity.

Several months after the second litter

had been placed, the by then three or four person Albany Golden rescue group was hit with a heavy challenge: could we take 36 dogs seized from a local puppy mill? If not, they would be returned to the miller, because there was nowhere for them to go. We took them. Pepper went into action then, becoming, in essence, the meetee, greeter, orientation committee, trouble-shooter, and evaluator of a long line of puppy mill refugees that came through our home. Naturally we didn't pay much attention or give her much credit at that point, thinking we humans were the heroes of the day. But gradually we began to realize that

she was, in a less obvious way, repeating the role she had played with her litter - chiding some of the dogs to get into the action, depressing the aspirations of others with a quelling look, giving comfortable nudges and sometimes licks (always the licking!) to some of the older and more depressed.

One of the refugees who came and stayed, with her two surviving puppies, was an emaciated, terrified young Golden named April. I was rather worried about having the two mothers, one so strong and competent and one so defeated and ill, in the same house. I assumed that Pepper would want to step in and take over the care and rearing of the puppies. And she probably did want to, but she was much smarter than that. She stayed a respectful distance away, let April mother her pups, and was just "around" for, I suppose, advice. It's true that when April had to go to the vets on two or three occasions, Pepper would swoop in and play the full time and attentive mom to little Lucky and Dash. But as soon as April returned, she backed off

and deferred fully, only helping out with the cleaning or other mother tasks when (apparently) invited or when April was simply too weak to complete the job. I think I was - and continue to be - more impressed by her self-restraint in that situation than I was even by her utter competence when she could be the only mother in charge.

After that, Pepper became an official one-person "rescue dog orientation committee." I wish I knew dog language better, because I'd swear that she had a canned speech for each new foster who came in. Cruise director on a very serious ship, perhaps? It took us a while to catch on, I'll admit. In fact, I probably didn't "get it" until one day we brought in a very attractive Golden male who had behaved oddly at his first adoptive home. Pepper took one look, one sniff and then turned around and stalked upstairs. She couldn't have announced her opinion more clearly if she had taken a megaphone, mastered human speech, and shouted, "I will NOT even try to be in charge while this utterly insane dog is in MY house. Do the best you can. *I* know an impossible task when I meet it!" We thought she was being merely odd, until we'd watched that dog act playful and then terrorize and start fights with every other dog in our home over the next day and a half. He was, to phrase it mildly, rather psycho - and she had known it in an instant. Less than an instant. We started paying more attention to her, as we should, after that.

We once took in a huge, bulky Golden/Lab mix who had had all sorts of extreme behaviors. Frankly, we thought we were just going to assess him before deciding there was something seriously wrong and making the hard euthanasia decision. Pepper, however, didn't seem unduly alarmed by Boomer. What she did was spend the next two weeks "lecturing" him. Whenever they would cross paths in the house (small house, so it was often), she would stop and bark at him - with varying cadences and for various

Peppertree Adoption Clinic Schedule

2005 PEPPERTREE ADOPTION CLINIC SCHEDULE:

April 16th PetsMart, Niskayuna 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.	May 7th Unleashed Pet Supplies, Wynantskill 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	June 4th The Children’s Museum of Science & Technology 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
April 30th Location to be determined	May 21st PetsMart, Niskayuna 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.	June 18th PetsMart, Niskayuna 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Saturday April 9th 2005 11:00am - 3:00pm
Spring Adopt-A-Thon
 in conjunction with MHRHS, Out of the Pits and Homestretch
 Greyhounds at Indian Ladder Farms, Altamont

Saturday June 4th 2005 10:00am - 2:00pm
Working With Animals. Search, Save & Support
 Children’s Museum of Science & Technology,
 Rensselaer Technology Park, Troy

For locations of other Adoption Clinics and further details of all events, call our Voice-Mail 435-7425 or visit our website (<http://www.peppertree.org>)

- Peppertree Post** 1 year (4 issues) \$10.00
Peppertree Rescue Pins _____ @ \$5.00 each
Peppertree T-Shirts (Original Teal Version)
 (check one) S M L XL \$10.00 + \$3.00 shipping

Peppertree has a limited number of our original teal T-shirts left. To clear the stock we are discounting the prices for all T-shirts to \$10, including shipping. Order before the remaining stock disappears forever!

Donation (Tax-deductible).

Donation (Tax-deductible). Written receipts will automatically be provided for donations of \$50 or more. If you wish a written receipt for audit purposes for amounts less than \$50, please note. Any donations of \$10 or more will automatically be subscribed for 1 year to the Peppertree Post, unless noted that the subscription is not wanted.

If you wish to foster, adopt or volunteer, please check here and an Application will be mailed or e-mailed to you.

Name _____

E-mail Address _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone No. (with area code, please note if day or evening) (_____) _____

Send form & check to: Peppertree Rescue, PO Box 2396, Albany, NY 12220
Applications can also be downloaded or copied from our website. Woof!!!!

periods of time. He never reacted, other than to listen. And after about two weeks, the “lectures” stopped. Apparently she had decided that he’d learned his lesson and was cleared for placement. In any event, we never saw any more of the odd behavior and he found his soul mate and went, happily, off to a new home. By now we had really started paying attention to her.

That, in the end, is why we left a purebred Golden-only rescue and ventured into the all-breed, mixed-breed world of Peppertree, named for the one who was smart enough to point out some home truths to us. In that earlier group, we would take in any purebred Golden who needed a new home. Some of them were, admittedly, rather neurotic and edgy. Pepper wouldn’t necessarily reject them, but she would turn that knowing gaze on us and say, in effect, “Do you truly think this one is worth all your effort?” With other Heinz 57 mixes that we kept sneaking in, she would sometimes light up and start playing ... saying to us, “This is a great dog! I don’t just play with anyone, you know.” Pepper is the one who taught us to look beyond the coat or the conformation to the heart of the dog - and she truly is an appropriate name-sake for a rescue for “Golden-hearted” dogs. She showed us, gradually and over the years, that there were “special” dogs, there were “okay” dogs, and there were dogs that we were idiots if we tried to work with. She knew, without a doubt, and she tried her best to teach us.

Eventually, we started paying attention and “listening” to her. If Pepper wouldn’t look another dog in the eye, or wouldn’t relax her posture, we learned - through some hard trials - that we shouldn’t waste our time, heart, and energy trying to save that dog. And on the rare occasion when she would relax and play, or even flirt, we knew we had a real winner, even if it looked and acted like the worst loser possible at the time.

Somehow (and I can’t quite remember how it happened) we introduced her to

our behavioral consultant ... and a true dynamic duo was born. At our more-or-less annual behavioral/temperament seminar, Patti would teach us - then we would evaluate the dogs at the shelter where the seminar was given - then we would bring individual dogs up for focused evaluation - and *then* we would bring in Pepper, to let us know how well we mere humans had assessed the situation. She was incredible, and constantly surprised us all.

There was the play-bowing, seemingly friendly Golden girl, to whom Pepper wouldn’t look directly and around whom she remained tensed for a fight (“I will NOT interact with this dog. Her play bows are phony and merely an invitation to be attacked.. I am no fool.”) - there was the growling, snarling pup to whom Pepper herself gave a play bow and otherwise ignored (“Cut it out, kid. We know you’re just scared and no one is going to take you seriously. So just relax.”) - there was the handsome, active, tall Lab mix to whom Pepper reacted in ways I’d never seen (Patti had to translate that one: “Hey, fella - you’re a younger man and I’m an older woman, but I really like your style - what do you say?”) - and there was the very appropriately acting GSD girl that Pepper would NOT look at and, in fact, after one sniff, she did what amounted to a contortionist act to avoid acknowledging that the dog even existed. I guess her strength wasn’t just in her perception skills, which were very impressive and accurate, but in her ability to communicate to us “mere” humans what her conclusions were. You have no idea how very much we miss her incredible assessment abilities as we continue this work in her name. We never realized how very much we depended on her.

So — I guess it’s another version of



photograph courtesy of Paul Stelmaszyk

“be careful what you wish for.” I’d wanted the best of the experiences I’d had as a child and as a teenager - a dog who was “super intelligent, almost able to communicate directly with me, an equal in many ways” - and I got just that, but in a beautiful red Golden form and soul. I’d never known you could have the best of all worlds ... so I was gifted with that. I, and her eventual “official” owner David, were blessed with that for so many years ... and then we’ve had to learn how to live without. We have other dogs - her son Topper, more recently her daughter who returned to us, her friend April, and April’s son - but Pepper was the “mom” to all of them, and I suspect to all of us humans also. She left us quickly, after only a week’s illness (it was cancer, but neither she nor we knew that she was ill until a week before she died). We survivors - canine, human and even feline (Ozzy’s successor, Mowgli) - have been at a loss without the head of our household and the head of our rescue here to tell us if we were going in the right direction.

There was so much more to Pepper - her pride, her dignity, her utter lack of dignity when it came to food, her rare sweet touches and her constant, intelligent companionship. But all of

that is personal - and, while I'm sorry that the rest of you couldn't share that, I know you are lucky that you don't share the loss of it. What she gave to us will live in our hearts forever. What she gave to rescue, to the rescue that we founded in her name, is incalculable. She's the one who pushed us into realizing that breed stereotypes are just that - that it's what's inside the heart of the dog that matters. She was able to see the heart so clearly and, somehow, to generously communicate that wisdom to us. We couldn't help but learn, because she was that good a teacher. But I think she had much more that she could have taught us.

So, to Pepper - rest well, we thank you, and most of all we miss you - terribly. There are many, many lives that have been saved thanks to you. It still seems a shock to us that you were, after all, mortal and that you couldn't be here with us forever. In a funny way, however, you have confirmed our belief, our hope, that there is an after-life. You were so very special, so magnificent, that we simply can't

believe that all that spirit and wisdom and lust for life could simply disappear. You have to be somewhere; because you're much too vital to have simply ceased being. We believe and trust in our hearts that you are at the Rainbow Bridge ... probably reorganizing and improving it ... while you wait for us to come and once again be with you. I simply refuse to accept any other possibility. And every day I look at your picture and draw strength from it.

In the meantime, we will curse you weekly, sometimes daily, for not being here to guide us and show us what we need to know. But we will try to remember your very profound, wise, and sound values and keep them at the heart of the rescue you gave your name to. We love you very much, you grand lady - and we always will. You will never be far from our hearts or our memories.

— Betsy Sommers, President

PS One last thought. In so many ways I feel unequal to the honor of having Pepper as part of my family. But the truest lesson is one that strikes me occasionally - and each time with a shock. She was/is so terribly special, but it was only by luck that she was spared what so many others face. I take great solace in the fact that this grand lady was never truly afraid, never truly alone, never hungry, never in doubt that she was loved. She deserved every bit of that, and more but I suppose the real lesson of rescue is how few deserving dogs get to have that kind of life, which should be a birthright of them all. Under any circumstances, Pepper would be a very, very special being, but it was in fact a fairly rare chance that she was appreciated and cared for as she deserved. I think that is what her rescue is all about: finding the ones who are as special in their own right and, if possible, bringing them into the love and security they truly deserve. We'll keep trying, pal. I'm sure you'll let us know how well we succeeded when we finally meet up again.



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A Rescue For Dogs Of Good Temperament