



***Helping those who can't help themselves.***

## **Adopting an Older Swissy**

Many of our applicants state that they would prefer a younger dog, usually between one and two years of age. Although we do occasionally have a puppy or young adult come through rescue, the vast majority of our dogs are over the age of four and many are over the age of seven.

Given that a Swissy's life expectancy isn't as long as some of the smaller breeds, it is certainly understandable that it would be hard to become attached to an older dog only to have to say goodbye, but the love and devotion that an older dog gives more than makes up for the short time that they may be with us.

George and I have been very fortunate to have some long living Swissies. We've had one live to ten, one to ten-and-a-half and one to thirteen. The ten year old was our sweet male, Bernie, who was rescued from a shelter at six years of age. Bernie loved life to the fullest and we enjoyed every day we had with him. Some of you will say, yes but you only had him for four years. This is true, but aside from the three who lived past ten, one of our sweet boys only lived to three-and-a-half. Many of us in the Swissy world have had that "special one" who died way too early. So we had our "old" rescue,



*Bernie*

Bernie, longer than we had our young dog, Rowdy. The bottom line is that no matter how long our beloved pets live, it is never long enough. Whether they live two years or thirteen years, we always hope for just a few extra days or weeks.

There are two "one year later" stories in this issue. Both are great stories about two very different dogs, one "senior" at ten who needed a

loving home to enjoy his old age and one fairly young at four that had some fears to overcome and has flourished in her new "forever" home.

Samson's family has opened their home to our older rescue Swissies in the past. They adopted Cady at six, Samson at ten and Amansi at nine years of age. Adopt-

ing an older dog is not for everyone, but those that do are usually always willing to do it again.

We hope you enjoy this issue and if, in the future, any of you get a phone call from us or any other rescue organization about adopting an older dog, perhaps some of you will give it a try.

Sincerely,

Pat Saxon  
President, GSMD Rescue Foundation

# Samson

It sounds almost too cliché to say it. I'll say it anyway. We needed Samson as much, if not more, than Samson needed us.

I remember the day as vividly as if it were yesterday. I was heading home from a camping trip with my husband and three kids. None of us were too excited to get back to the routine of everyday life. Along the drive, I responded to a voice mail that shifted the mood in the car and put a new skip in everyone's step. A dog in rescue needed a new home; unbelievably, he was the littermate of our dear Swissy Willow, who had passed away only months ago at the age of 10. Willow was our first Swissy who we raised since a puppy and had secured a special place in our hearts. In the last couple of years, we had lost him and his sister Cady, who we had rescued at a later age. It was a series of heartbreaks that we were still mourning. On that drive home as soon as I said Willow's brother needed a home, the kids' eyes lit up and the mood in the car changed. The decision was made without pondering. Although my heart was still too raw to have contemplated adding another dog to our family prior to that call, there was no question in our mind that this boy belonged with us.



Although his previous owners stated no health problems, from day one it was clear they didn't look too closely. Samson had difficulty keeping his back end up when walking, and could barely make it down the

road and back. He also never stopped panting unless he was deep in sleep. I thought he was nervous, but at first sight of him, our vet recognized the weak backend and also diagnosed him as having laryngeal paralysis. Our vet, who loved Willow right along with us, just shook his head as he pet Samson on the



head and then he turned to me saying it was hard to know how long his legs or his larynx would keep up. He was too old for surgery to correct his larynx and there was no telling if, and at what rate, his breathing may worsen. He knew how fresh we were off of our heartbreak and tried to hint at that. But he knew Samson was already family, and there was nothing more to it. So he told Samson to be strong, and it seems he has listened well.

In the beginning, I found myself making comparisons to Willow and Cady. Samson was mouthy like Willow; his face reminded us of Cady, etc. We were so happy to have a little piece of Willow and Cady in our lives once again. In those early weeks, I think poor Samson was called Cady more times than Samson, though he didn't seem to mind. He was just happy to have a family excited to have him. He blended in from day one and took to our two-and-four-legged kids. Although it took us weeks to get Samson to lie down on carpet let alone sleep on the dog beds we bought him, he eventually went from an outside dog to figuring out what it meant to be part of a family. He's also figured out that kids are the best source of leftovers, there are always more treats if you just ask enough times, and his newest trick is barking as another way of getting his way. So, if anyone tells you that you can't teach an old

dog new tricks, just think of Samson.

Now that a year has passed, Samson, or Sammy as we sometimes call him, is so much more than a reminder of Willow and Cady. To us, he is purely



Samson. He's our boy who reminds us that no matter what age, new beginnings are not only possible, they are sometimes the best thing. We have had our moments of triumphs with Samson learning new tricks of the trade as well as our moments of fear as Samson's back end has had its very bad days. I'm not sure how much longer we will be blessed with Samson's presence, but at the end of the day each moment has been a gift we wouldn't have had if he hadn't found his way to us. That's the best thing about rescues and the time you have with them. No matter how limited our days are with them, each moment is a gift that we didn't have before our paths crossed.

*Claudine*

Note: Sadly, Samson passed away before this newsletter was published. Claudine wrote a beautiful tribute to Samson and a couple of thoughts from that tribute are posted here.

***Suddenly silence isn't golden but instead a reminder that you are no longer with us and the silence hurts... I hope you have found your silly brother, your sister who I'm sure will be as loyal to you as she was to us, and I hope as a trio the three of you will forever watch over us.***

## FACEBOOK HELPS RESCUE FUND RAISING

On March 29 2010, GSMDRF joined the Facebook community.

Facebook is a wonderful venue for posting information on rescues and updates on the dogs once adopted.

Any progress reports and photos of GMDRF Rescues would be greatly appreciated. We will take what you send us and create albums to post on Facebook so everyone can learn how these dogs are doing in their new forever homes. Everyone loves a happy ending.

The Facebook exposure has factored greatly in participation in the ongoing fundraising auction on eBay. So far the online auctions have raised over \$1,500 for three items.

Caryl Castleberrys beautiful bronze "Waiting" sold for \$500, Holly Witzgalls' oil painting sold for \$810 and Ann Telnaes "Hungry Swissy" drawing sold for \$266. We have several more items ready to be auctioned and we will continue to accept items for fundraising purposes.

GSMDRF thanks all the generous people who have donated items for the auction, especially those who have given their time and effort to make the works of art and of course we are eternally grateful to those who have bid on the items to help raise money for our Rescue Swissies.

As of November 21, the Greater Swiss Mountain Dog Rescue Foundation Page has 453 Friends (Likes), 148 Monthly Active Users and 112 Daily Post Views.

# Abbey

Abbey entered our lives at the end of August 2009. Nothing has been the same since. Porter, suddenly became brother to an older, bossy-but nice sister and my husband and I became the human family of two enormously entertaining and loveable Swissies.



*Porter (left) with Abbey on her first day with us.*

Abbey came to us uncertain about men, worried about overhead lights and fans, and distrustful of most food that came her way. On the positive side, she seemed to like Porter, became excited by the prospect of us playing ball with her, and responded well to our attention.



*Abbey who has shown once again that we cannot hide her ball from her no matter how big the leaf pile.  
Porter and Abbey on the road.*



*Porter and Abbey on the road.*

Over time, Abbey has learned to trust us and put up with just about whatever we demand, including dressing funny and travelling with Porter.

She has travelled with us to many states, passed her CGC and enthusiastically begun agility. (Well, the teeter could disappear off the face of the earth as far as she is concerned, but the jumps can definitely stay.) Abbey is also about to complete her NWD title and start her WPD title.



*Abbey is proudly in command of the back seat while Porter thinks he has the best spot.*

But really the best part of the year has been watching Abbey become truly a part of our family. She is the happiest Swissy I have every met and the biggest optimist in our family. She brings smiles and joy no matter what our mood and circumstances. What I hope we have given her in addition to a secure and



*January Jump Start Hike, 2010. Abbey's first NRPD leg  
(middle Swissy)*

loving home is confidence; confidence to meet new people, to experience different surroundings, to enjoy new adventures and perhaps to try new food. So far her adventures have brought her to the point where she is clearly comfortable with us, is most vociferous in her demands that Christopher not leave her behind, and has gained enough confidence that people we meet on hikes and around town don't even realize that she once had a problem with new people, especially men. She now even jumps with joy over mealtime, so long we stick to the rules. In Abbey's world, real food once must have been either feathered or had fins.

*Andrea*

