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## A Very Good Dog, Indeed

Fri, 2013-05-31 10:35 — Robin Olson

The last time I felt like I had a family was in the late 1990's. My parents were alive, I had a career, our pets were thriving, relationships were intact. Clichè as it may be, I didn't realize what I had until it was gone, though it didn't disappear overnight or all at once. My family began to vanish with one loss, then another. With every change I scrambled to find a way to feel like I still had a family with whatever remained.

One of the foundations of our family was a dog named Mel. His full name, Mel Gibson, yes, that was the name Mel came with when my sister-in-law rescued him from Bridgeport Animal Control over a dozen years ago. My "sis" was getting divorced, a terrible shock to me and my parents, but I, too, was going through the same thing. In fact our divorces were final the same year. Sis wanted a dog. I never knew that until the day she called me to tell me she got one. I thought she was insane to adopt who was deemed unadoptable due to his fearful nature. It was one thing to get a dog-sized dog, but this was more like a horse-sized dog.



©2002 Robin A.F. Olson. *Dear, Mel, what you put up with!*

Mel was huge, weighing in at around 120 pounds. He was a Rottie/Shepard mix without a tail. I was worried Mel would harm my nephew, who was just a little boy at the time. Mel was afraid of stairs and getting in the car, which certainly made my sis's first day with Mel a bit difficult since she had to get him home somehow.



©2002 Robin A.F. Olson. *If I do a cute trick will you give me a cookie?*

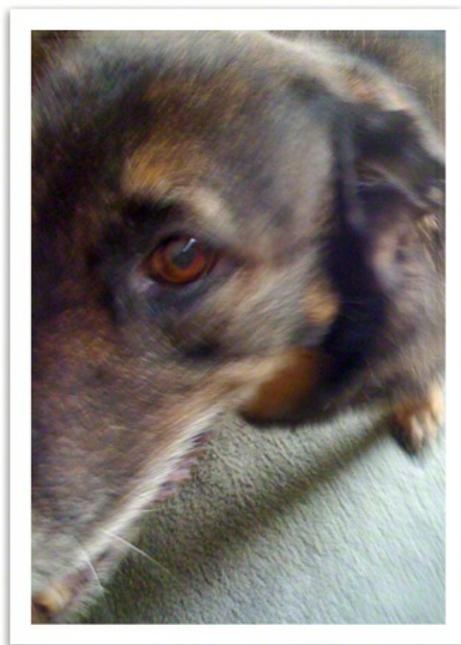
The thing about my sis is that she's a perfect "alpha dog." She is tough, but fair and doesn't put up with crap. It's not to say she is mean, not at all, it's that with Mel's fears she could have easily given in to them and probably made him even worse off. Instead she spent a lot of time working with him and helping him find the confidence he needed. Mel blossomed quickly and when I met him after an initial moment of fear on both our parts, once Mel was told that I was "okay" his rear end began to wiggle and I knelt down to get some kisses from him. We were buddies ever since.



©2002 Robin A.F. Olson. **COOKIE!**

Mel was a gentle giant with everyone in the family and a fierce protector of both my nephew and his mom. Mel would have done anything for them and clearly his love and devotion was returned tenfold. Mel even got along with the four cats in the home. He'd break up fights and put up with their antics. Mel never went after the cats, but squirrels were another story.

I didn't see Mel very often, but he was a cornerstone to every Christmas morning for many years. My sis would put together a Christmas breakfast and we'd gather to open presents, sing badly to the latest version of Karaoke Revolution on my nephew's Xbox. We'd put reindeer antlers on Mel and give him cookies. He was always so happy to see everyone but my God he was way too big for the living room and we often had to shoo him into the dining room so we could sit down.



©2008 Robin A.F. Olson. *Those lovely caramel colored eyes.*

Over the last few years, my family has scattered to the winds. My parents are gone, my ex-husband is on his deathbed in a foreign country as I write this. The family that once was has whittled away and Mel was one of the last members.

I knew Mel's health had been declining the past year or so and as I always do, I tried to think of something to help. I offered some glucosamine tabs to my sis to help Mel stay on his feet. It worked really well for a while and I made sure Mel always had a supply. But a big dog like Mel is never expected to live a long life and he truly surprised us that we were able to enjoy so many years with him.

As the time grew near, last week my sis texted me that Mel was dying and that could I get Dr. Larry and Super-Deb to help him pass? Mel hadn't been a patient of Dr. Larry, but I made some calls and let them know. I knew it was very tough for my sis to let Mel go. He meant more than just a companion, he had been with her through the worst times and never stopped being completely devoted to her. He rallied and perked up, she worried it was too soon, then feared she waited too long-the same feelings I had just suffered with having to put my cat, Fred down three weeks ago.



©2000 Robin A.F. Olson. *My nephew and Mel oh so many years ago.*

She waited another week, the another text last night saying that it was time. That Dr. Larry and Super-Deb would be there soon. I told sis to give Mel kisses from me, that I loved him and would miss him very much. "There's a new star in the heavens tonight," I wrote.

"He was a good dog." I added.

"The best!" she replied.

Rest in Peace, sweet Mellie-Vanelli. We will all miss you so very much.

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## Comments

Fri, 2013-05-31 11:18 — [Maria Romano](#) (not verified)

### **Mel** <sup>[7]</sup>

Yet another beautiful animal story from you Robin. Sorry that Mel is gone. Animals serve as loyal companions in our lives, while people come and go.

Fri, 2013-05-31 16:01 — [jmuhj](#) (not verified)

### **RE: FRED** <sup>[8]</sup>

Still holding Fred in my heart and \*PRAYERS\* -- what a little angel! <3

Fri, 2013-05-31 22:17 — [Central Coast Vet](#) (not verified) <sup>[9]</sup>

### **A Very Good Dog, Indeed** <sup>[10]</sup>

Sorry for the loss, but it makes us appreciate life more and go on living doing even more better. You've got another star up there.

Sat, 2013-06-01 13:35 — [Deb Barnes - Ze...](#) (not verified) <sup>[11]</sup>

### **Goodbye dear Mel** <sup>[12]</sup>

Sigh... I can relate on so, so many levels. Rest in peace dear Mel. You will clearly be missed and how wonderful that you had such a fantastic family who loved you so much.

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