

Thursday, December 29, 2011

## **Mamma - The story of a little cat and a love story**



The year was 1992 and after 10 years of marriage, I was on my own again. My sister came down down from her home in the Arctic and asked me what I wanted to do. My reply: 1 hire a lawyer, 2 buy a stereo and 3 get a dog. That week we did all three.

The dog was an 18 month old Bearded Collie called Dixie who really should have been called Houdini. She was able to escape anything that she was put in leaving behind a pile of chewed door, window etc. Just change the noun and she went through it. The solution was a chain link dog run connected into another run in the garage. When I was home from work, she had free run of the farm.

It was heading into the winter when I first noticed that Dixie might have "company" while I was at work. Her kennel often had rodent parts scattered about: leg of mouse, tail of rat. About one month later I noticed a black streak dashing from her kennel when I pulled in the driveway.

Finally I saw her companion, a diminutive jet black cat. Over the winter, the cat had kittens in the kennel, leaving Dixie to babysit while she would go hunting. She would return sharing her spoils. She had a second litter but lost most but Shadow who went to my sister's house.

By spring I realized the cat was there to stay so, unless I wanted to be continuously finding homes for kittens, she would need to be spayed. She needed a name. A discussion over coffee break resulted in Mamma. Not original but appropriate as she became the grand dam of every farm since. She stayed in the house for a week after her surgery, one of only two times she came in to stay over a period of close to 20 years.

Mamma and Dixie were inseparable and often you would see the two curled up together.

In 1995, enter a new man in my life, a whirlwind romance, marriage and move to another farm. Mamma tolerated the new extended family of cats and dogs. We were not sure that Mamma would stay at the new farm but home was where her Dixie was. She would cry outside the door until Dixie went out in the morning.

In 1997, we moved to Hawk Hill. Again Mamma came with us and was the constant companion with Dixie. If we left the car windows open, Dixie would soon crawl in the car to sleep and Mamma would join her.

A new dog joined our flock - Haley, a exuberant Golden Retriever who was about the same age as Dix when I first got her. She was suitably ignored by Mamma.

When Dixie was about 13 years old, she became quite lethargic one night and by the morning had died. It was almost as if her time was up and that was it. We buried her by the boulder behind the house. Mamma was devastated crying at the door for her Dixie to come out. She was still not interested in human comfort. But slowly over time she adopted Haley as her dog. You would see the two in the same way you saw Dixie and her. And she cried for Haley in the morning to come out of the house.

More years passed and last year Haley developed a rapidly progressive spinal tumor and need to be euthanized in February. Mamma was a very old cat by now spending most of her time in an insulated box house in the garage only coming out to bask in the sun. She again missed her dog

and had to turn her attention to us as we no longer had a house dog. She tolerated the occasional scratch but no more.

This week age finally caught up with Mamma. She spent her last day in the house beside the wood stove (the second time in her life). She is buried by the boulder behind the house. She and Dixie are together again. And now it is me crying outside the door for Mamma.

Laurie