



Celebrant Foundation & Institute Library

Animal Companion Ceremony

Sampson

July 6, 1997 - February 14, 2007

Sampson, a black German Shepherd, would have been considered a formidable presence by mostly anyone who crossed his path. He had a black muzzle, deep-set brown eyes, black and brown fur, and was large in size, with 75 pounds draped on his solid frame. Many dog lovers are intimidated when they come across a German Shepherd. German Shepherds are known for their police work, guard work, assistance with the blind as seeing-eye dogs, search and rescue, as well as their competitive schutzhund trials.

Sampson was not stereotypical or average by any stretch of the imagination. Although he was loyal, obedient and friendly like many German Shepherds are, his nature was much larger than life itself. Sampson had no concept of his physical size, and one would often find him in the lap of one of his favorite people. He also liked to be carried around, just like a baby. He was a gentle soul.

Sampson was one of those special dogs that left a lasting, favorable impression on everyone he met. From the technicians in the vet's office, the veterinarian, the newborn in his household, the residents in his human companion's grandmother's nursing home, and, especially those animals and people he shared his life with: Myke, Patrick, Brandon, Nikita and Raylene; Sampson's heart awed all who had the distinct pleasure of knowing him. He is even credited with saving his human companion, Patrick, from getting a speeding ticket. One day, when the state police approached the car and requested the obligatory license and insurance information, Sampson stuck his head out of the window. In his own distinctive canine manner - Sampson grinned and said hello. The policeman smiled and decided not to write the ticket!

It's true that many dogs are friendly and touch our lives in their own ways, but there was something unique about Sampson's personality and spirit. He just seemed to have some sort of magic about him.

Myke fell in love with him upon first sight. She had gone to the Phillipsburg Mall pet store with the thought of getting a dog. She spotted Sampson -- he nipped at her legs and displayed his fondness for her lap from their very first meeting. Myke took him home that very day and introduced him to Nikita, Myke's German Shepherd who was a year old at the

time. Nikita was not initially impressed. She tried to convince Myke that when she, Sampson and Myke went for walks - it might be best to leave Sampson on the road. Then she learned to tolerate him - but soon, she came to love him also. They did a lot together.

Sampson was a very good swimmer from a young age. He swam in the Lehigh Valley River, Pennsylvania; Merrill Creek, New Jersey; but his personal favorite was the waters of Cape Cod. Whenever he traveled, Sampson insisted on sitting in the front passenger seat of the car - he especially liked to share this seat with Myke in Patrick's RV. He loved Frisbee and didn't rest for long when one was around. He chased squirrels, cats and rabbits. Once he found a baby bunny and proudly carried it in his 'soft' mouth to show Myke. He had no plans to harm it - he just wanted to play.

Sampson

At one and one half years of age, Sampson started to show nerve loss in his legs. He began to drag his legs. It seemed as if he couldn't even locate them. Myke and Patrick took him to their veterinarian and Sampson was diagnosed with Degenerative Malopothy (DM). Myke and Patrick educated themselves about this condition and learned that Sampson's white blood cells were attacking his own nervous system and to anticipate a slow, progressive disease state. They brought Sampson to a specialist located some distance away. They decided that they would try putting him in a cart, a canine adaptation of the human wheelchair. After locating a company through the internet, Sampson's cart arrived shortly after. All the dimensions were right except it was too snug around Sampson's thighs. Myke and Patrick drove to Massachusetts from New Jersey to have Sampson's cart re-fitted. The first day Sampson was a little unsure of how to maneuver his cart. Then he saw a squirrel and took off. From that moment on, he didn't look back. He adapted very quickly to his new form of transportation. He used his cart daily for walks and to go outside to the bathroom. He wasn't in pain. His canine sister, Nikita, avoided the cart.

Sampson's humans, Myke and Patrick, also took Sampson for rehabilitative water therapy. This helped to stabilize and maintain his health. By keeping him active and utilizing the cart, Sampson did well. He invented a new way to play ball - he became an expert at putting a ball in his mouth and 'spitting' it out.

He had much to teach his humans and anyone who cared to notice. He never felt sorry for himself. He certainly wasn't self-conscious. He approached each day, each moment with enthusiasm and delight. He was happy and had fun each day. It was with this endearing attitude that Sampson commanded the attention of any room he entered.

Sampson slept with his humans and when his disease didn't allow him to climb the stairs any longer, they slept downstairs with him. They didn't think anything of relocating their bedroom to the first floor. Sampson was family. Sampson was their boy. When Myke and Patrick's son, Brandon became a toddler, Sampson played gently with him. He allowed Brandon to fall and collapse on him. Brandon still seeks out Sampson's favorite squeaky toy.

On Valentine's Day, February 14, 2007, Myke and Patrick knew that it was time to let go of their beloved Sampson's physical form. He taught them so much. Even though he lived with

a disease, he didn't know what suffering meant and he certainly never identified with having any limitations or looking at himself as being 'different'. His charismatic spirit always carried the day. Clearly, Sampson was a master teacher. His lesson was simple but very important, "Be happy. Enjoy life now."

Sampson will always be remembered with love and devotion.

Written for dear, sweet Sampson, with deep gratitude by: Dorry Bless, Celebrant