

SKOOK - “Wild and Care-free”, RMR 1995 - 2006

Skook was nearing her tenth birthday and had suffered a second injury by the end of the 2005 hunting season. She was cold, wet and, oh so, tired! My husband sadly admitted it was time to retire her from the intense physical demands of the hunting field. Skook healed quickly and replenished her energy with the warmth and love of her family surrounding her. She was still the tenacious little Brittany Spaniel, with a heart of pure gold! I am sure she dreamt of days to come when she would return once again to the golden-colored fields around Montana looking for the wily Ringneck pheasants for my husband, Larry. However her life, as she had known it, was about to change in so many ways.....

I, too, had recently retired (from education) and was wondering what type of new and interesting opportunities awaited me in my changing world. I remember not only asking myself, but also asking her “What now little girl?” The answer wasn’t readily apparent! We were both used to busy lives, deeply involved in what it seemed as if we were destined to do. I was hoping to try to merge my time and talents in helping people in a completely new and different way.

And, she being a true working dog at heart had a burning desire to be “out there in the field” - despite the slow-down-phase she had entered. To be sure our daily “walk-about” joyfully continued with both me and her younger “sister”. All three of us enjoyed those outings, knowing that the warmth of the house would chase away the chill in our bones once we returned. Still, the answer to “what’s next” seemed to elude us!

That is, until late January of 2006, when I happened upon an advertisement in our local newspaper inviting the public to an OPEN HOUSE meeting for HOPE AACR. It was here that a dream began to emerge. Perhaps, both Skook and I could meld our lives together, and with training we might become an animal- assisted therapy team where we would each have a “job” of service within our community. We had so much fun together over the next few months while being encouraged and mentored as a new Intermountain Therapy Animal team. From there, we attended and successfully completed the 2006 HOPE AACR workshop in Bozeman, Montana. We did it - we were also a HOPE K9 Team! Life was busy, we were learning new things all the time, and we had a purpose! LIFE IS GRAND.....but it is also challenging to be sure!

Our little Skook-er took a turn for the worse. By early Fall, she experienced rapid onset blindness, and found her “new world” a dark and scary place to navigate without her eyesight. She went on to develop additional life-threatening symptoms and was gone by mid-November!

Yes, life is challenging, but oh, so rewarding!! THANK YOU SKOOK FOR ENRICHING MY LIFE, FOR BEING MY STEADFAST FRIEND, AND FOR INSTILLING IN ME AN EVEN STRONGER DESIRE TO KEEP WORKING FOR HOPE AACR.

With loving memories, Mary Martin
August 20, 2008