

## CUTTER

A loving Memorial from his family, the Richards

(Cutter passed the Rainbow Bridge on Jan 8, 2010 at almost 14 years old)



Cutter was not the dog we intended to adopt. After having raised from puppy hood three Golden's over a 30 year period, we decided to adopt a more mature dog, perhaps 3 or 4 years old. We were visited in early 2002 by Ann Mitchell of NORCAL who was fostering Cutter at that time. Cutter was 6 years old and a "good sized dog". It didn't take much for Ann to convince my wife Barbara that we should at least take a look at him. Barely a minute after he walked in the door the decision was made. "Good sized" was an understatement. He was 29 inches tall at the shoulder and a slim 115lbs. His previous owner had taken great care of him. Besides his toys, there was an extra large L.L.Bean bed with his name embroidered on it. The only blemish on his vet records was an incident of having eaten 20 Hershey kisses which had been set out for cookies. Apparently his philosophy was if something is set out on the table and I can reach it, then it's meant for me to eat. He was tall enough to lay his muzzle on the kitchen table so we were fore warned. It was hard to believe how polite and well behaved he was. My wife likened it to giving birth to a 35 year old. All maturity and education issues were complete. His rather reserved personality simply required being near "his people". There was no digging up, no chewing and he seldom barked. By seldom I mean the barks per year could be counted on one hand. I guess he just didn't see the need.

Our seven grandchildren, now ranging in age from 5 yrs to 11 yrs, all thought Cutter was their dog. Since children represented petting, play and treats, he greeted them all enthusiastically. We did not need to worry about them doing him any physical injustice as he was bigger and stronger than any two of them. The little ones in particular would dress him in all manner of costumes and delighted in "reading" to him and showing him pictures. I often marveled at his patience with the little ones. His ears and gums were pulled and his nose and mouth were explored and he was totally stoic about it.

Shortly after I retired in early 2005, we had the idea of doing pet therapy with Cutter. During his yearly check-up we discussed it with our Vet. He agreed Cutter seemed suited for it and wrote him a letter of recommendation. I don't know if Cutter had previous training in therapy work but he passed the interview and went straight to the practical test. This is when we found out what a tremendous asset his tall stature was. You didn't have to reach down to stroke Cutter. The majority of the residents of the places we visited were confined to beds or wheelchairs. Cutter would simply lay his head in the lap of the wheelchair bound or on the side of the bed for those who couldn't get up. We would visit three facilities every other week in Livermore, CA. At one, Hacienda Care, Cutter had a fan club of ladies who would save graham crackers for him. He would sit and be stroked for graham crackers all day long. It was, I think, his idea of heaven. The joy that this big, lanky guy brought to these people still brings tears to my eyes. One older gentleman, who we knew only as "David", had been there for some time and had not responded or participated in anything since suffering several strokes. By taking extra time with him he gradually came to recognize Cutter's presence and after some time would actually wait for us in the hallway to be sure he didn't miss Cutter.

The PAWS to Read program at the Pleasanton Library usually has at least seven Golden's among the 20 dogs at a time that participate in the program. It involves two half hour sessions of primary school age children who have been referred for reading practice. Dogs are not judgmental or critical of a child's reading skills. Cutter was an enthusiastic participant. He greeted every child with a lick and surprisingly stayed awake and attentive throughout the sessions. It also gave him the opportunity to socialize with the other dogs on the program. All of whom got his trademark greeting of a face-lick, which is apparently dog for "Hi, I'm a friend".

At the age of 13 Cutter was having a rough time on smooth floors as arthritis was setting in and we had to retire him from therapy work. With the aid of arthritis medication he continued on for another year. Eager to take walks, which got shorter and shorter. And always having to be in whatever room in the house we happened to be in. Finally we had to do

what was best for him, no matter how painful it was for us. To us, Cutter was a thoroughbred in body and soul. He was our friend and we will miss him.

Thank you NGRR for giving us the pleasure of 8 wonderful years with Cutter.

Sincerely,

Barbara & Bob Richards