

## **DUKE**

### **The Weimaraner**

Back in about 1967, my brother and his wife got a puppy and named him Duke. As Duke got bigger, he got more destructive until one day, they returned to find their dining room set eaten. Cushioned chairs were destroyed and the table was chewed up. My brother became incensed and went after the dog. His wife called our house (3 doors away) and told my dad what was going on. My dad rushed down and took the dog.

As I recall, Duke was already full-grown in size at that point. He absolutely became dad's dog and went everywhere possible with him. If we left him at home, he would chew on things. If he didn't get in the ski boat with dad while we practiced, he would try to keep us from getting off the dock by grabbing the skis or our feet.

I remember one day we were getting ready to do step-off starts on slalom from our floating dock with dad driving the boat. Duke somehow got left in the house that was about 200 feet from the seawall. Dad was idling away from the dock when we saw Duke start running down from the house. He was running flat out and his ears were flapping up and down with every stride.

We yelled to dad, "Hurry! Duke's coming!" Duke made it onto the dock, but we didn't want to jump in the water if we didn't have to. Dad slowly turned the boat and came back to the dock. Duke jumped in and took up his spot on the observer's seat facing the back of the boat and was now content. He would ride like that and watch us ski.

One night we all tried to sneak out without him. Dad had been taking a nap (he was the master of naps) so he had us call Duke out of the room and he made up the bed as though he was still in the bed, leaving clothes with his scent all around. He then snuck out of the house and we sent Duke back into the bedroom to "stay with dad".

We went out to dinner and came back after dark. As we turned into the driveway and the headlights hit the yard, we saw Duke standing next to a pile consisting of every shoe we owned and shaking the stuffing out of a bed pillow. I don't even remember how he got out and back in the house over and over.

When we would go to softball practice, if Duke came along, the girls didn't even have to chase down balls during batting practice if we didn't want to as Duke took

care of it. He would only bring the balls back to dad who was the coach and usually pitched for batting practice, so it worked well.

Once at the end of a practice, Duke got a ball and the entire team was trying to get it from him. He didn't run off. He just darted among us with the ball in his mouth and a happy dog smile and wagging tail.

When I was playing music at the bar my 9<sup>th</sup> grade year, dad was always there and tried having Duke sit just outside the back door of the bar. An old drunk that lived in a back room was coming in one night and Duke raised his leg on the guy. Other customers were afraid of the dog and complained to the owner who told dad Duke couldn't be there. Dad tried leaving Duke in the car, but he ate the headliner out of the '64 Oldsmobile.

Next dad tried to crosstie Duke in his Ford van so he would be in the parking lot and dad could check on him. Duke didn't like being tied even though he had all the comforts of home in the van and worked himself into a lather. Dad then went to the vet and got tranquilizers. He gave Duke one but after a couple hours, Duke was still trying to get loose, so dad gave him another pill. I think Duke eventually got a third one. The next day he was walking around with red eyes acting very hungover.

After both my sisters and I were married, mom and dad traveled out to Arizona and of course Duke went along. Dad had been a horseman training hunters and jumpers and competing (was the 1945 US/Canadian Open Jumping Champion on his horse The General) but got his start in rodeos when he was 15 years old. He always wanted to go back out west and got hooked up with Old Tucson studios. He and mom became the caretakers of a movie site closer to Mescal, AZ that had a small western town and cavalry fort. They stayed out there in the '68 Ford Econoline van my dad had an RV roof and interior installed in that he designed.

They said Duke would chase cattle free grazing in the area or jack rabbits. Apparently, he would be chasing a rabbit at full speed when the rabbit suddenly changed directions in one hop. Duke couldn't make the turn and pretty much just ran past looking at where the rabbit went.

The movie *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean* had just been filmed before they got out there, and one day two men drove up in a pick-up truck. They got out and Duke started running their way and barking. The men jumped onto the hood of the truck to get away from the scary dog. Dad found out one was Paul Newman's brother Art.

When mom and dad came back to Florida, dad went to a rodeo somewhere and bought a ticket for Duke so the dog could sit with him in the bleachers. He said when the little kids started doing the event riding sheep, Duke started howling. Everyone in the bleachers was entertained by Duke being there.

In late 1971 or early '72, when dad had gone to work doing door-to-door vacuum cleaner repairs in Florida, Duke pushed through the screen door and was hit by a car as he chased a cat across the road. I arrived to find my mom crying and holding the bloody collar Duke had been wearing. He was taken to a vet's office but died.

I waited for dad to come back from work and told him what had happened while he was still sitting in the car. He just lowered his head to the steering wheel and cried.

A year or two later, while living in Tucson, my husband got me a puppy Weimaraner and of course we named him Duke. Mom had gone back to Florida and divorced dad. Dad was married to a lady in Tucson and Max and I were living in the camper van. The puppy was so small, he could lay on the engine box under the dashboard. As he grew, he kept trying to get up on the engine box but would slide off. Eventually, we gave him to dad.

Years later, Dad found someone wanting to breed their female Weimaraner, so he got one or two puppies from the litter as payment for Duke's services. The new Dukes were no match for the first Duke.