

Paco the Chicken Herder

In 2009, I found my first pet sit on Housecarers.com and drove to Los Lunas, NM to meet Deb and Michel (French for Michael) and take care of their white Shephard mix named Paco. There were also a few chickens and a garden to tend too, but no problem. Their home was on about an acre and the area around it had similar single-family homes and some farmland with irrigation ditches everywhere. The home was rustic and felt a bit isolated, but Paco would be my guard dog.

Deb was retired and did quilting on the side and volunteer work. Michel was a wood worker with a shop attached to the house. They showed me everything I needed to know about the house and animals and got me settled into my room. Michel had even given me permission to use the tools in his shop for any project I may want to work on (I made 2 storage bins for inside the camper shell on my Dodge pickup). I don't recall if they left that night or the next morning but soon it was me and Paco vs the world!

Paco was a super dog. He loved playing outside chasing toys and on walks he would run down into an irrigation ditch to cool off. He slept downstairs in the main room at night (I don't think he was allowed upstairs as I recall) and liked me to brush and cuddle him in the evening.

I tell people Paco was a chicken herding dog. One evening a couple chickens had managed to fly enough to get out over the top of the fence and into a narrow pathway that was a dead end. I guess their wings needed to be clipped but not something I could do. So, while I went in after these 2 chickens, I had Paco sit at the entrance (the area was about 25 feet long and 4 feet wide). I grabbed one and reached up and dropped her back over the fence into the coop. When I went to grab the other, she got past me. As she headed for the exit, she saw Paco. Paco stood but didn't advance. The chicken stopped, gave out a loud, "Bawk, bawk!" and turned around and headed back past me. I finally got her pinned against the fence, got a

grip on her and boosted her over the fence with her friends. Then I praised Paco for his help, and we went back to playing fetch.



I returned to Los Lunas a second time for Deb and Michel and again for friends of theirs who had a blind dog and a cat. Deb has always been willing to provide me with a reference and even talk to people on my behalf. I got this photo of Paco from her recently and learned he had just died last winter of old age. He lived a pretty long life for a large dog. RIP, my buddy.