

PROLOGUE

My Love of Dogs

Ever since I can remember, I have loved animals, dogs in particular. As I type this now I have been a graphic designer for fifteen plus years. I like my job, but I'm not in love with it. I could have done worse, mind you. I worked in a super market for nine years when I was in high school and all through college. I knew that career was not for me. One day off a week, fourteen hour days and working every weekend, no thank you. Hind sight being 20/20, I would have gone and done something with animals, zoology maybe. I still have time, you never know what the future holds. But my design skills have also helped me with animals and later on it will help me in my grieving.

I have always had dogs in my life for the most part, minus a brief time when I was in my early twenties still living at home. However, they have always been there. We had two dogs growing up, Pebbles; a chihuahua/cocker spaniel mix and Bamm Bamm; a German shepherd/husky mix. Yes

it does seem like my parents had some Flintstone fetish going on. But I really can't tell you where it comes from, I have seen no evidence of this other than the mutt's names. I digress. My family had both dogs all through my time growing up in Lowell Massachusetts to when we moved to Tyngsboro (also in good ole' Mass, we don't move all that far).

Pebbles was a small dog, brownish in nature and had the meanest streak in her, until my mother wasn't around. Then the dog was the biggest wuss that could be. As she got older she pretty much lost all her teeth except one that was right in the front on her lower jaw. She used to try and bite me with that tooth but only ended up gumming me which made me laugh to my mother's "Joey, leave the dog alone". Pretty much all my family and respective friends call me Joey up north, I'm used to it by now and everyone else that knows me here in Florida loves to hear about it.

I used to make fun of the dog, but I did love Pebbles and was sad when she passed at the old age of 17. She did so in my parents house one night as I was out with some friends (this was the summer between junior and senior years in high school, so 1989). I had come home from Canobie Lake Park in Hudson New Hampshire (a VERY poor man's Disney World) with the worst stomach ache. I had drank some Sprite on the way out of the park, it

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didn't taste right. I paid for it, threw it all up on the side of the road on the way home. I was so sick when I finally got home. My parents had told me Pebbles had passed. I simply said "That's too bad" and ran up stairs to my bed. My mom swore I was drunk, which I never was in high school or even college. I NEVER drank or did any type of drugs. Just wasn't my gig. I started to work out when I was fourteen and have ever since. Though today I do like to go out and get a buzz on now and then, but still... NO drugs.

Pebbles is now buried in my parents backyard where my mom planted a small plant that grows every year (unless my dad plowed it by now, my friends will understand this and laugh as they know my dad can be a madman with the snow plow). It hit my mom hard, she loved that little mutt. She still talks about her today, she was the animal that touched my mom's soul as I believe everyone has one that could in their lifetime. I say could, if you let them "in".

Bamm Bamm was a big white dog. He had a beautiful coat and was gentle. He only disliked one person that we knew of, a neighbor, Chrissy, who lived across from us in Lowell. As I was told, my dad caught her wrapping Bamm Bamm's tail around a pole. Since then he never liked her. I never had a strong connection to Bamm Bamm. I loved the dog

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but when he passed, I didn't feel a ton of sadness. My parents kept him in the cellar for the most part or outside. I never really understood why. He was a good dog, seemed to starve for attention. But I think, because of this, I never got to really know him and I never got attached. My dad brought him to the vet one day to have him put down. I believe he was twelve which is old for a big dog. He had a hard time walking and getting up, it was just his time. I will learn that it depends on the amount of love that keeps a dog young and going in this world. My dogs were and are VERY old!

Now I am a big believer of putting living things down, so to speak. I think it's more inhumane to let someone or something suffer in pain. It's a HUGE sacrifice but the last one you can make for a loved one. When ready, I am willing to make this sacrifice.

I am a huge dog lover they are the greatest living organisms in the world. Yes, even more so than humans. A dog, there is always exceptions of course, loves you unconditionally. A dog is ALWAYS happy to see you walk through that door. A dog never judges you if you can't take them to the dog park or you accidently step on their paws (they actually feel bad about it). A dog will go back into a fire for you or even take a bullet. People who know me know I'm not a huge lover of kids. I have never

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had any and don't have any desire to want any. I'm too selfish. I like to be able to go out anytime I like. I don't want to deal with sickness, home work and diaper changing. I know this about me and at least I didn't have a kid to end up regretting it. I see too much of that and think if people were honest with themselves and were posed with the questions "would you do it again?" The answer would be no. But that is just my feeling on it. Dogs are different. They are more loyal and much easier to take care of and never talk back (well not in a bad way). For me, the answer is dogs. I'll take a hundred of them over one kid.

Like I wrote above when talking about my mom and Pebbles touching her soul. I do believe this. It's not every animal. You can love all animals and even love a certain breed of them (I'm much more a dog lover than cat). But there is that one animal that will touch your soul in your life if you let them "in". I didn't know it when I was younger but would soon learn it when one day on lunch when I was working in Boston in 1995, reading the Boston Globe, and saw an ad in the classified.