**Hey Buddy, Do you want to go for a ride?**

Sebastian and I began our friendship in Sept. of 2004. I was living in Italy and really was not in any position to take care of a dog. I had 3 months left there before I was to go back to the USA. Sebastian and I found ourselves in that precarious situation when I had gone over to a friend’s house who actually owned him at the time. I had no intention of acquiring a dog when I went over there that night, I didn’t even know she had a dog until that night. We were friends right away. Sebastian was only 4-6 weeks old and very friendly. We played ball most of the evening.

 The only thing that I know about where he came from was what she told me that night. His mother, who was an Italian greyhound, seemed to appreciate qualities that only back alley mutts had. I had never seen a dog like him before and after a while stopped trying to figure out what breed he could be, he was a mutt. After a while, he was just my dog, that’s all that mattered.

The first few months in Italy were an interesting training session. He learned the essentials like going to the bathroom in the appropriate places outside within the first few days. I knew I had a smart dog. I was 20 and I thought it was perfectly appropriate to choose the keyword “poop” for bathroom time. It must have been pretty humorous to hear me walking around the house the first few weeks trailing my puppy asking him, “Hey buddy, do you want to go poop?” Who was being trained, I’m not completely sure. I am also proud that he learned very quickly not to go on a road unless I was with him. He never forgot that one. Believe it or not, I also was able to train him not to bark. For those of you, who knew Sebastian, knew that he loved to bark. That was a lesson that was forgotten a few short years later.

I was in the military for the first few years and I received orders for deployment. I took my perfectly trained dog to my mom’s farm for my deployment. Six months later I received a wild man. When I left he was not even 2 years old and I actually worried that he might not recognize me when I came home. I was wrong. I thought he might die of a heart attack that day. Quite a few years ago, internet videos of service members being reunited with their dogs became popular. I knew exactly what was going to happen before I watched my first video. The same thing had been true for Sebastian and me.

Boy did he learn how to be a farm dog well! He was a hellion. He learned to bark, watch for dangerous things, and mark his territory. After that, he liked to follow dogs around the yard and mark immediately after the previous dog as if to say, “I don’t think so buddy.” His appreciation for barking grew so much on the farm that I was never able to break him from it again. If I were to yell at him for barking, he almost always returned a woof from under his breath, as if to say, “I don’t think so buddy.” A hellion I tell you!

Beyond the bark, Sebastian had no fight in him. He was a lover. He would play ball with anyone who would have him and if no one was willing, would plop down next to the most comfortable person he could find with a resigned sigh. He always had plenty of people to play with him during those military years. He won the hearts of many, including my wife, which was no small task. I think that he was the first animal that she loved, possibly from playing ball.

Sebastian and I moved around a lot. From Italy, to Texas, Illinois, back to Texas, Wisconsin, and finally South Carolina. He was always ready to go. He never wanted to be left at home alone. “Hey buddy, do you want to go for a ride?” was always received with explosive excitement to the degree that he thought I had just saved his life. He was good at making me feel good. I don’t think he ever got over me leaving him while deployed. That dog would have gone to the edge of the earth with me and we tried our hardest to find it.

After Amanda and I got married and bought a house in 2010, life slowed down for Sebastian and me for a while. I made human friends like adults do, and Sebastian made friends with just about every dog and human he was around. I am positive that he had more close friends than I. He found it as perfectly acceptable to jump in a person’s lap and be petted as it was to sniff his dog friend’s rear ends. I was never that close my friends. We played ball a lot. The seizures started during this time period.

In Wisconsin, he was reunited with the farm. An older and wiser Sebastian approached the farm in mostly the same way I did after coming back as an adult. As a young dog, he thought it was so much fun he had to explore it all, all the time, he thought it was heaven. My childhood summers are remembered the same way. I think he appreciated the farm as an adult and had a sense of ownership over it because he had explored, discovered, and probably fought for it. He was more reserved with his explorations, he knew what he would find, and he preferred to be petted than find animals to fight. He was slowing down and enjoying life in a different way. Or maybe it was the tumor.

The last day we both knew what was happening. I had my last heart to heart with him in a fairly unknown place in the evening dusk which was bittersweet but fitting. I told him that he was the best dog I ever wanted. I asked God to take him quickly. He did. After, as I lay awake in bed, I began questioning what I could have differently to save him. I stopped and instead thought about his life and a relationship that I don’t think I’ll ever replace.

Sebastian and I had a longer relationship than I have ever had before. I have never been involved with someone so closely, for so long. He was my best friend for a very long time. We were together, and there wasn’t a time that I didn’t want to take him with me. Even though he is gone now, it will be a long time before I stop looking for him in the morning, cringing when someone comes to the door, or reaching for his leash when I go for a ride.

In memory of Sebastian

August 2004 – August 30th 2014