

Guest Column: Clancy, we miss you

Written by

Linda Ann Chomin
Guest Columnist

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It's been three weeks since Clancy Callahan, our Irish wolfhound, died. My sister Gwen and I are devastated. He left extra-large paw prints across our hearts. Clancy gave endless love. In dark times when I was laid off from my job, Clancy was there to bring light, hope and happiness. He was an amazing pup and we had been through so much together.

Clancy was born Sept. 19, 2005, with a severe overbite that required extensive dental work during his first year of life. Clancy wasn't fond of seeing the doggie dentist in Dixboro, but tolerated him. Clancy never cared much for obedience school, either, but was a trooper. At four months of age, we started working with the first of three trainers. After successfully completing our six weeks of basic training in Belleville, Gwen and I realized we wanted to continue classes. It was a bonding experience with our big blond boy and we didn't want to give that up.

Next it was on to the K9 Academy in Wayne, where he trotted perfectly in the ring. The problem arose out in the real world. Clancy would see our neighbors, Chris and Rita, and take off without looking

back. He was more than 115 pounds at this point and we were no match at the other end of the leash. When he wanted to run somewhere, he went.

We did pass our AKC Canine Good Citizenship exam at the academy and even learned to watch our manners around wheelchairs and IV poles so we could eventually become a therapy dog. Something had to be done, though, about behaving in the real world.

TRAINING SUCCESS

That's when Bonny Wainz of Alternative Canine Training entered our lives. She was used to dealing with behavior problems. Bonny came to our home in Canton and worked with the three of us. Chris and Rita served as decoys as we walked past their house and through the neighborhood. Clancy was a perfect gentleman as he strolled by, his head high in the air trying to sneak a peak at them — but he didn't bolt.

Finally, all of the training paid off. We were

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able to play with Clancy in our unfenced 1 1/2 acres without him racing next door to visit Chris and Rita. Bonny also worked with us to stop Clancy from “counter surfing.” He was just the right height to snatch broccoli and whatever else was on the top of the cupboard as we prepared dinner. Clancy could get snippy if you tried to take food away from him and Bonny helped with this, too.

The three of us eventually were all trained when tragedy struck. Clancy was diagnosed with bone cancer June 14, 2010. Over the weekend he hit his leg on the glider and started limping, so Monday morning we went to see Dr. Kevin Roose, a veterinarian, in downtown Plymouth. It was from him we learned our Clancy would probably never turn 5.

Cancer is still a killer of dogs. Although there have been advances in veterinary medicine since Chopin — our first Irish wolfhound — died of osteosarcoma in 1989, certain types of cancer remain swift and deadly. Amputation and chemotherapy are the traditional options with no guarantee and a high-percentage of likelihood that after surgery Clancy would live only a few months. Some 99 percent of the time, the cancer reoccurs in another part of the body.

ALTERNATIVE THERAPY

Dr. Roose suggested we call Dr. Heidi Mier in Dixboro. She had extended the life of another dog with cancer and on our way out we spoke with Brook, her owner. She

gave us hope that maybe he could live another year. Clancy had seen Dr. Mier when she was in practice with Dr. Roose. Dr. Mier had returned to school to study Eastern medicine and used Chinese herbs and acupuncture to treat dogs and cats not helped by conventional treatment. We chose a combination of alternative and traditional so Clancy could live out his days happily running, playing and eating like a little horse. And he did. We had so much fun. That's one of the reasons it is so difficult now. Every day is a struggle since Clancy died in his sleep Feb. 23. Only six days earlier, Clancy wasn't limping or showing any sign of pain. We were told the cancer wasn't growing as fast as it had been. We took him home that night, but were back the next day and our happy lives ended.

We'll never know exactly why Clancy died. It really doesn't matter. He's not suffering. We don't know how much pain he was in because he never let on. All we know for sure is that we tried to give Clancy the best life possible. He taught us a lesson

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everyone should learn — to live every day to the fullest and to love each other.

Linda Ann Chomin is a free-lance writer and frequent contributor to the Observer Newspapers. A former staff member, she has written many columns about Clancy since he became a member of the family in December 2005. She lives in Canton Township.

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