



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
and the *Jamestown Post-Journal* on Saturdays



Cats and Dogs

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Predawn on a late November morning when I know there's no chance of its getting too much brighter offers me little. I have been known to bury my head in the pillow, snuggle close to Hero (if he's around; he isn't as great about sleeping on the bed as earlier dogs), and hope to rest. It wasn't to be.



“Gloria's in the lake and I can only see the top of her head.” I am ashamed to confess my reply: “I never liked her much anyway.” Well, the cat's demands were loud and steady and she bit me whenever she could.

The visiting dogs caught her scent and the chase was on. Out of the water, up a tree, eventually rescued and put in my car. Once things quieted down – hours – the door was opened in hopes she'd get out and into the house. Who forgot to first close the garage door? She was out . . . and gone.

Frightened? Injured? How could she not be?

Her absence stretched into days and we all sadly presumed the worst. (And, yes, I missed her.)

A gloom hung over the house as I think we'd all written her off. Wrong! Once the visiting dogs departed, she was back within twelve hours. Soaked from the heavy rain and very affectionate (which remains a pleasant change), she seemed in perfect health. (A note to one who has my gratitude: Gloria, basically black cat with three white patches, has disappeared often and always returns a few days later. Whoever tends for her has my gratitude.)

Now if I can just keep her safe until it's time for all to gather 'neath the Christmas tree.

I am truly looking forward to sharing Christmas with the most tail-waggingest dog I've ever known.



This will be Hero's first. Television grabs his attention. He was as spellbound with the Verdi Requiem as I. I'm a huge Bills fan and he'll join me on the couch when I'm home for a game. There was a Sunday when the Bills were not playing. I turned the set on to check on other games as they progressed. I didn't expect to find Hero in his corner of the couch, sitting up straight and waiting for my presence. Often Gloria also ends up with us on top of one of the cushions.

Hero positively likes presents. One day when I was out shopping, he found the Chewy box of dog treats, knocked it on its side and pretty much opened every single treat, sampling to his taste (and delight).

Hero, incidentally, continues to grow. Regular visitors always comment on the change. Hero is basically calm and is a perfect companion but, as I write, he resembles a small pony and is just eight months old.

Note to anyone with a puppy: If you know your baby is eventually going to top sixty pounds, don't encourage that little darling to sit on your lap.

Hero prefers onions to apples; grapes were tops till I found they belong on any dog's no-no list. Hero would eat me out of house and home. No, not puppy food but ballpoint pens, plastic pill bottles, even a flower pot. Then he sits quietly and watches the doe and her twins . . . and the geese, noisy or not. He would really like to be friends with Gloria but the cat just hisses, causing him to bark back. Well, wouldn't you?

My daughter, who had to keep Hero until he had all his Parvo shots, trained him well. Put his food bowl down in front of him and he sits quietly until released with a solid "Break!"

"Hero"? When I saw him, I knew he was Hero without a second thought. I'd always carried a list I'd begun when dreaming of a someday puppy: Hobbs, Hubert, Humphrey, Harrison, Harris, Hardy, Harding, Homer (nice time in Alaska), Hector, Hannibal, Horton, Hezekiah, Hosea, Herbert and of course Hairy. I'm not sure Howie even knew his name before he died. And Henry was always "Well, that's just Henry." Two rescues – Buddy and then Molly – each impressed and taught me that a mature dog could quickly win my deepest affection as easily as a puppy.

2021 has been a year of many ups and downs. I pray it closes peacefully. I look forward to good carols, multicolored lights, a tree (origin and height TBD) and, mostly, what I get so seldom: time. Time for peace of mind. Time (more) for love.

A labradoodle truly is not like other breeds but his traits are typical of all. I highly recommend them.

It was one of my best decisions in 2021.

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