



**Boomer**

Boomer became a teenager on 11 April, his thirteenth birthday. I wished him a Happy Birthday but I must admit he seemed largely unimpressed. He was more impressed by a special treat left for him by a friend, but I do not believe he realized it had anything to do with his birthday. He simply ingested it in typical Boomer fashion, which is “as fast as possible,” and then looked around to see if some other delicacies had befallen him. What is said of Boomer parallels some of the things that are said about me; “for his age, he is doing pretty well.” We do differ widely in one respect in that I do not come home and take a long nap after our morning walk. As a matter of fact, I am not given to napping at all during daylight hours. There are so few of them that I hate to squander them away by sleeping when there are many other more exciting things to do.

[Above from Glimpses of Brillion, 18 April...Editor]

I am not happy to have to report that Boomer is not doing well; in my vernacular, he is slowly settling by the stern. His breathing has become ragged and labored; the veterinarian says that is a common ailment in older Labradors, sometimes correctable by surgery, but not often. The breathing condition has been ongoing and worsening for quite some time and in more recent times his left shoulder has become painful, causing him to limp, sometimes heavily. It splays outward when he walks and yesterday, I saw it collapse when he put weight on it, twice. I have had to move his sleeping quarters up from the basement because he has a hard time negotiating the stairway. He accompanies me on my morning stroll most days but apathy has replaced his boundless enthusiasm; he plods rather than bounds, and his tail hangs down, presenting a dejected appearance. His lowered head completes the “hang dog” look. It is not something to which one looks forward with alacrity but I fear the time is rapidly approaching when I must make that dreaded decision. Wish us well.

[From 30 May...]

This is not a pleasant way to begin but I must start with the fact that Boomer has gone wherever it is that truly great dogs go when they leave us. Boomer was a truly great dog, a canine of undaunted courage and boundless enthusiasm, until his main propulsion system failed him. I knew the end was near and I dreaded that painful decision, but I knew it had to be made. Boomer is gone forever but he leaves behind a treasure chest of great memories, memories to be cherished by me and by all who had the good fortune to share his hunting adventures. Life goes on, as does my regimen of daily walking, a regimen which began in 1996. It used to be a four-mile stroll with some up and down hills, but time takes a toll on all of us and I now make do with something around three and a half miles over mostly flat terrain.

[From 6 June...]

The scores of letters and cards that poured in extending condolences for my loss of Boomer are sincerely appreciated, warmly received and somewhat unexpected. I was unaware that Boomer had such a following. Having been my boon companion on my daily strolls through the countryside for thirteen years, it is no surprise that I miss him – a lot. Walking alone is not the same. The questions often posed are “Will you get another dog? Will you get a puppy?” The answers are “yes” and “no.”

I will let most of the summer pass without a walking companion but I do have in mind to procure an adult dog in late August or early September. I will not consider him a replacement for Boomer because nothing can ever replace Boomer. He was unique and I do not believe there will ever be another quite like him. But

somewhere out there, there is a dog for me and I have already started the wheels turning in the beginning of the search for him. It is extremely likely that it will be a Labrador because I am admittedly quite biased in my dog likes.

[From 13 June...]

For years I have often thought, and said to anyone willing to listen, that when Boomer dies, I will go to the Canine Hilton where I sometimes boarded him for a replacement. The owners raise Labradors and the man is a professional field dog trainer with an uncountable collection of blue ribbons and a wall full of silver chalices. It took a little more than two weeks after Boomer walked the wind for me to call the kennel to check on availability of a replacement. I sought a quality dog of an age to be beyond slipper eating, trained for home and field. On 12 June I closed the deal on Duck, one year old now with obedience training complete and currently undergoing field training. He is scheduled to graduate about mid-August and it is then that he will come to live with us. His schooling can best be provided by a professional dog trainer, and that I am not. I am a better than average meteorologist, expert with rifle and pistol, but much less skilled as a dog trainer. It is best I leave that to a professional. You will not read much about Duck for a while but I believe that he will get more than a passing mention subsequent to August.

There are some who question the sagacity of my procuring another canine companion in my advanced years. (Four score and five is advanced.) I remind those questioners that my years are still advancing and no one among us knows how many more years that will go on. I firmly believe that I must live while I am alive. It is almost painful to have an acquaintance say "I don't do that anymore," or "I don't hunt anymore." I want to say in response "But you're still alive!" I say to anyone who will listen do not stop living while you are still alive. Only God knows the appointed hour of death and He has not told it to me, so I shall go on pretending I am a mere youth, doing what I enjoy, albeit sometimes at a slightly slower pace than formerly.

Boomer, for his part, is gone, but he will never be forgotten. A dear lady friend who is skilled with the artist's brush recorded him for posterity on canvas. It is from there that he will serve as a frequent reminder of the many cherish able moments we shared, while he occupies a wall space between Hubert the elk and Harvey the huge whitetail. Memories are good to have, especially when they are of a friend of undaunted courage, indefatigable stamina and the wisdom to exact the most from both traits. There was only one Boomer and there will never be another quite like him.

[From 20 June...]

CAPT R. Claude Corbeille, USN RET granted Editor permission to publish