

## SYDNEY



Sydney is my name and boy did I live a rough life after my loving dad passed away. I'd stay by his side day and night, in the house, in the yard, our car - everywhere he went I went. Then he passed away and I was devastated. Six years with him. His wife never liked me so she made me stay outside after he died - rain, cold, heat. I was never coming in her house again!

Then a neighbor called ARK and asked if they'd take me. My dad's mom agreed and I was saved. I was adopted to a nice family, references checked. I was with them two days and brought back. It seemed that I loved being in the kitchen with them but my new mom didn't like that because she was tripping over me. Tripping over me....can you imagine? So back to ARK I went - dejected.

A loving woman, Jill, from Palm Coast, called ARK to see if they had photos of her dog Maximilian, whom she'd adopted from ARK a year ago. Max-a-Million, she called him, had recently passed away. After ARK sent her a photo, it's president, Maggi Hall, inquired the following: "Jill, would you be interested in saving a very special life?" AND SHE DID! Maggi delivered me to Palm Coast, I was introduced to my wonderful new mom and her kitty.

I settled in but quickly my mom realized I wasn't going to be friendly with my new sibling, her kitty. Oh no! I feared I would be returned. But Mom refused to give up. She contacted a Feng Shui adviser who helped her redesign our house. And IT WORKED. Kitty and I are now pals and I'm Mom's "forever" baby - I'm absolutely spoiled rotten!!

### PART 2, SYDNEY SUCCESS STORY

#### SYDNEY AND ME, CLOSURE AND HEALING

##### Unconditional love, loss, healing from grief, resolution

Perhaps you remember one of the previous posts on this website; specifically, the post called "Sydney's Success Story". My name is Jill. I rescued Sydney from Maggie Hall/ARK in August, 2015.

Sydney was the perfect dog. There isn't one thing I would have ever changed about him. I always told him, "You're my BEST little kid". From the time Sydney came into my home, we were inseparable. He was at my side at all times. Also, everyone in the neighborhood loved Sydney. I used to tell him, "EVERYONE loves Sydney!!" He loved hearing that, because it was true. Some of the other names I had for Sydney were: Little Syd, Siddi, Sid-a-Licious, and he responded to them all. I was continuously talking to Sydney. I would say,

“You’re a WONDERFUL boy!” and I would massage his ears. I would tell him, “You’re a BEAUTIFUL boy!” I talked to him continuously throughout the day.

Sydney had lots of human friends in the neighborhood as well as dog friends. One of his favorite dog friends was a black lab named Velvet. When Velvet first saw Sydney, she swooned and lay on the ground. Sydney was NOT INTERESTED and made that known by immediately turning his back on Velvet. We were across the street standing on a neighbor’s driveway at the time. When we all saw Sydney’s reaction to Velvet’s interest in him, we laughed and laughed until we almost cried. Finally Velvet got the message and continued on her walk with her mother. For weeks, whenever Sydney and Velvet would meet up in the neighborhood, Sydney refused to look at Velvet and would turn his back. Finally there was a truce and one day Sydney decided perhaps a girl dog friend wouldn’t be so bad and so Sydney and Velvet developed an unspoken bond and liked to walk together down the street. This was life with Sydney.

Wherever we went in the neighborhood, EVERYONE loved him. He was a quiet, gentle soul and very friendly towards everyone. When I stopped to talk to one of the neighbors, he would just sit down and wait to resume our walks. For a long time, at least six months, I would get Sydney in the car every morning and we’d drive to Palm Coast Town Center’s Central Park and I’d walk Sydney around the lake. There were always loads and loads of people there with their dogs and Sydney made so many dog friends there! When he would see one of them coming towards us, he’d stop and start wagging his tail faster and faster and then he would silently interact with whichever dog friend came along. He loved walking around that lake and seeing his dog friends every morning! As usual, all the humans there at the park loved Sydney too.

Then early last summer, around the end of May or beginning of June 2016, I noticed Sydney’s belly was abnormally distended. He was panting a lot. He was drinking a lot. I made an appointment to take Sydney to see Dr. Erin Holder. We did lab testing and found that Sydney had Cushing’s disease. Cushing’s is an adrenal (usually) tumor which causes excess secretion of CORTISOL (the hormone which is usually secreted in a fight or flight situation when we need some excess energy and strength to get us out of a scary situation). In this case, Sydney was in fight or flight all the time, which meant his body was on overdrive all the time. It was hard for him to get any rest because his body was telling him to be ready to fight or run for survival. His body was basically burning itself up. I immediately put Sydney on a cooling diet and added some herbs and other things that Dr. Holder suggested. I spent many hours shopping for and preparing Sydney’s meals by hand, and sometimes at 5:00 in the morning I was already up cutting up organic vegetables for Sydney’s daily meals.

During this time, Sydney and I continued to do our daily neighborhood walks and interact with the neighbors and the neighborhood dogs. I stopped taking him to the park to walk around the lake because it became too much for him and it was getting harder and harder for him to get in and out of the car. You see, the Cushing’s was eating up the muscles in his hind legs. He was becoming very unsteady on his feet.

Things went on like this with our daily walks. I kept the A/C at 70 degrees at all times and kept all the ceiling fans running constantly so as to keep Sydney cool because his body being in constant overdrive made him very hot and he was panting continuously. He spent a lot of time lying on the tile floor because it was cool against his body.

Then in January of this year, 2017, Sydney and I were out walking in the neighborhood one morning and Sydney’s legs gave out. I was barely able to get him home. After that, Sydney seemed to deteriorate fairly rapidly and he didn’t feel up to walking much in the neighborhood. This caused him to become isolated because he wasn’t getting out much to see his regular dog friends.

Towards the end of May this year, 2017, I noticed a baseball-sized mass in Sydney's groin. I noticed Sydney was also having trouble urinating and would have to squat instead of lifting his leg like a regular boy dog. He had a couple of accidents in the house but of course I didn't say anything to him about it and just cleaned up the mess. Sydney's legs were starting to collapse under him more and more . . . but he would always be able to get his bearings before falling completely to the ground. We now only went out to the end of the driveway and even then he was having trouble with his legs holding him up.

I was facing the terrible fact that I might lose Sydney. This was almost too much for me to be able to deal with. I made an appointment with Dr. Holder and we talked about putting Sydney on a medication to help counteract the Cushing's even though the medication comes with severe and debilitating side effects.

To make a long story short, I had to let Sydney go on Saturday, June 10 at around 10:30 a.m. I was devastated. I barely made it home to Palm Coast. Actually, I don't know how I drove home to Palm Coast. I was inconsolable. I was beyond devastated. I was broken-hearted. I could smell Sydney everywhere in the house. I was looking at his blankets, his pillows, his toys, his treats, his big Milk Bones, his food everywhere. I could barely function. I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep. I said to myself, "If Sydney isn't here, I don't want to be here". I literally couldn't face life going forward without Sydney being there next to me.

I e-mailed Maggie Hall stating that I felt the need to see Sydney one more time and asked if it would be possible for me to go to Florida Wild on Monday (two days after Sydney's passing) so as to be able to sit with him in "The Chapel". I needed to be able to talk to Sydney one more time. I needed to be able to touch Sydney one more time. I needed for Sydney to know how much I loved him.

Maggie arranged everything and when I arrived at Florida Wild on Monday morning, June 12, 2017 at around 9:15 a.m., Maggie met me and told me Sydney was already in the chapel and was covered with a blanket. Maggie took me to the chapel. I entered and saw Sydney there on the Oriental rug covered by a tan blanket. I sat down on the floor next to Sydney and talked to him and massaged his body. I told Sydney what a wonderful dog he was. I told Sydney how much I would always love him. I told Sydney he was my "best little kid", I told Sydney how sorry I was about the way things had turned out. I poured out my heart to Sydney for 1-1/2 hours all the while massaging his body the way I used to when he was alive.

After 1-1/2 hours, I placed one hand on my heart and one hand on Sydney and told him it was okay to for him to release his spirit into the universe and that I knew he would be waiting to see me on the other side. I immediately sensed a feeling of peace, not only in my own spirit, but a peace emanating from Sydney's body. I felt an emotional release for us both.

After that, I got up and sat next to Sydney in one of the forest green wing chairs in the chapel. I sat there with Sydney in silence for another 30 minutes. Then I got down on the ground with Sydney again and kissed his head and rubbed his arm again and said goodbye. There was a beautiful atmosphere of peace as I left the room.

I met Maggie just outside the chapel and told her that both Sydney and I were now at peace. I told Maggie that Sydney's spirit had released into the universe. As I drove home from DeLand to Palm Coast, my car was enveloped by an amazing marshmallow-like soft, gentle cloud-like atmosphere and I could feel Sydney's spirit presence with me in the car.

I've written this story about Sydney and me to let people know how enriching one's life can be by adopting a rescue dog (or any dog for that matter). I've written this to thank Dr. Holder and Maggie for being so open and understanding of my need to meet with Sydney one more time so that both Sydney and I could get

closure. I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't been able to see, talk to and touch Sydney one last time. Most of all, I'm thankful that I felt comfortable enough with Dr. Holder and Maggie to even broach the subject of wanting to spend time in the chapel at Florida Wild with Sydney one last time.

My broken heart about losing Sydney will never go away. I will always miss Sydney. I am looking forward to the day when I'll see Sydney again. Sydney will always be "My best little kid" and a "Wonderful boy". I always used to tell him, "EVERYONE loves Sydney".

P.S. If you're interested in reading more about Sydney's life, "Sydney's Success Story" (Part I with photo) is available to read. He'll always be "My BEAUTIFUL boy".

Written in grief by Dr. Jill -2017