

Joy's Story

February 25, 1998 – February 10, 2002



To tell you Joy's story I must begin with her 2nd cousin, Sadie; my first dog.

Sadie was my closest companion through very difficult and painful times in my life. Her unconditional love strengthened me and reminded me of others who loved me. She brightened dark days and my thankfulness for her helped me to be thankful for life's other gifts. She helped me to keep going through what seemed unbearable. She became my heart. On January 26th, 1999, Sadie died tragically.

One of the incredible things about our dogs is that they love us; no matter how unlovable we may be. This love can be healing. Memories of these friends can find their way into our broken hearts and help us to love again.

Perhaps because I had known Sadie since she was 3 days old, I knew (when I was ready to look) that for me the choice was another Chesapeake Bay Retriever, preferably related to Sadie. As a horse breeder, I've found temperament breeds as true as colour. I also hoped to be there to help at whelping and to know this new little girl from the day her life began.

After much seeking, I found a male whose father was Sadie's mother's full brother. He was a strong handsome fellow with a wonderful personality; we were friends at first encounter. I then began my quest for a potential mother. Truly, I think I met every Chesapeake anywhere near Kingston and then some! Three registered females were offered to me but none seemed suitable for breeding (although I did find a good home for one). Another young female we did breed but she didn't conceive. As months went by, I met another Chesapeake soon before she whelped and got to know her litter well but there were no female pups available.



At this stage I was rather at a loss. Then, unexpectedly, a lovely Chesey female came into my life seeking a home for a year or so. Misty was the perfect answer to my

prayers. Christmas Day found me watching Misty frolic in the snow with Joy's father-to-be then steadying and reassuring them through the tie.

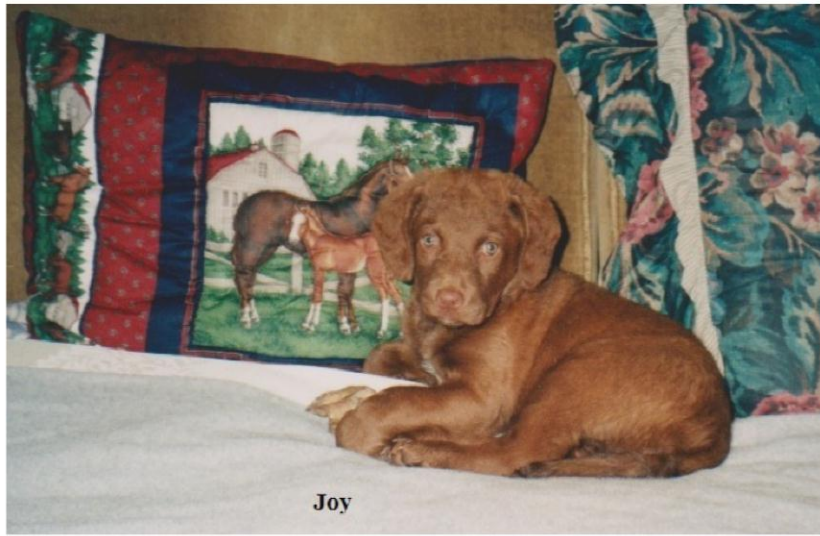
On February 25th, 1998, Misty whelped nine beautiful puppies in the nest I'd made for her beside my bed. The first six puppies had been born over a three hour period and Misty was resting and very attentive to her nursing babies. I thought she'd be okay if I slipped away briefly. The only difficulty was that the bathroom was at the top of a flight of stairs outside our room and I was in a wheelchair. (On February 21st, my horse slipped onto ice hidden in the grass and fell so suddenly that my left foot was crushed under him. After reconstructive surgery, I was struck in the hospital worrying about Misty's imminent whelping and her being distressed by the disappearance of another person from her life. Thankfully, I was back with her on the 23rd!) With my left foot in a non-weight bearing cast and my collar bone also snapped in the fall my dash to the bathroom was not very dashing! Still I hoped I could be quick enough not to miss anything and Misty was so focussed on and protective of her puppies. I hardly thought she'd miss me. I was wrong. When I came back to the top of the stairs, there was Misty at the bottom eagerly waiting for me. As I started down, she delivered her seventh puppy right there! She cleaned her off, then looked up at me clearly telling me. "Take care of her, she's yours". Then she hurried back to her other puppies entrusting me with little "Joy" to finish drying off and bring to join her family.



This is, of course, just the beginning of Joy's story. Because of my injuries, I was able to spend many hours with her and her family in those first weeks. On the farm we spent every day together. I named her Joy for many reasons, because after grief there can be joy and joy flows deeper than happiness or grief. Joy can be a source of strength and complements love and peace. She grew into a beautiful young dog who brightened every day with me. Every time I looked at her my heart would lift. In the spring 2001, she had five lovely puppies of her own and was a wonderful mother. By summer she was back to her youthful self, carefree and loving.



I was asked if I'd had Joy since she was a puppy. Even more, even before her conception, I think she was born in my heart. My life is so much richer because Joy has been part of it and so much poorer from her loss.



Joy



Misty and Joy



Misty watching Joy