

"MY BEST FRIEND"

Growing up in Middle Class America in South San Jose, California near the rolling foothills of Santa Teresa was a chubby boy name Paul. I had few friends and made quite a name for my self in the neighborhood as a tough guy. One day as kids were playing jacks and bouncing balls in the street out of no-where a medium size brown eared dog came out from the shadows--tail wagging and tongue flapping in the wind. Immediately eight kids give or take of Junior High age began playing with the young pup. They called him Snickers, but we wondered, where did he come from? No-one knew, but my sister Dannielle and I took him in. We convinced my mom and dad to let us keep him. William became a part of our family and in time my saving grace. He was named William for Dannielle's boyfriend was named Bill.

Immediately William was recognized as a smart dog of sorts, but also a curious dog that would get him into trouble a time or two. Like digging up a sprinkler head or turning the water faucet on, flooding up the yard. My sister Gina recognized Williams love of water and bought him his very own plastic kiddie pool. William would lounge in his kiddie pool for hours. Some times his entire head would be engulfed and we thought he'd drown, but that's the way he liked it. I taught William how to play soccer--we'd run up and down the yard me kicking the ball and William using his paws as if he was Beckham. My regret was not feeding him like Beckham. My dog didn't care that I was chubby and not one of the pretty people. He didn't care that I was a poor student who got in trouble for picking on others or not cleaning up after myself. Dogs are like that--they just love you the way you are--if you show a tad bit love back.

William was a good listener--he listend to my stories, never judging me and always had a lick or two left in him to let me know he loved me. One time when my dad and I took William to the vet we had him leashed up to the truck rack in the bed of our truck. On the way home William jumped out of the moving truck. He was swinging in the wind by his neck as other drivers began honking their horns to get my dad's attention. Once we saw William dad pulled over and William broke loose and ran all over the KMART Parking lot. He pooped on himself--dad sure didn't like letting William in the truck, but he did. William was okay, but thought twice before ever jumping out of a moving vehicle again.

For all his love of water, William didn't like going swimming in the Lake. It took an act of Congress to get him out on the lake. I was in the 4th Grade when William came into my life. By the 7th Grade my parents had divorced and my mom, Dannielle and I moved to a smaller house and a new neighborhood. My sister Gina was off at school at Cal Poly. William got out from the backyard one day and I chased him for three blocks trying to reign him in. All of a sudden he ran into the street and got side swiped by a van. He was hurt, but was able to walk some. The driver refused to help me and I walked, stopped and carried William home. Four houses away from mine a Pit Bull came rushing towards me--in mid flight a wounded William met this Pit in battle. The Pit was too strong and more skilled than William in this Hunger Games. The Pit locked onto William and I gave that Pit a over-hand right breaking my hand. The Pit let go and lunged at me--William again met the Pit in battle. I hit the Pit again, but this time he had the Texas Death grip on William--the Pit's owner came out with a ball bat and the Pit ran back into his own garage.

Another neighbor took a bleeding William and me to an emergency vet center. A short time later my family showed up. The smell of a dying dog is indescribable. It is a smell that I'd never forget and would recognize it immediately if that scent was ever to reach my nose. William would need thousands of dollars of surgery and would lose a paw if kept alive. My dad chose to put William down. I kissed my best friend goodbye and told him I loved him. I was taken to a hospital and had a cast on my hand for six weeks. Justice was never served on the Pit or his owner. I never got another dog after that. I've had some best friends since then--nothing could compare to the companionship or relationship between a boy and his dog. Funny how I'm 37 years old now and still tear up at the loss of my best friend William. For me he was a one of a kind dog. I hope All Dogs Go To Heaven--may we play soccer once again, only this time on a cloud of white...