Goodbye Dylan



A few weeks ago my son came home and told me that his Dad's dog Dylan had passed away. My ex husband and I have been divorced almost ten years and we haven't had any contact since Alex graduated in 2009 but this news made me very sad.

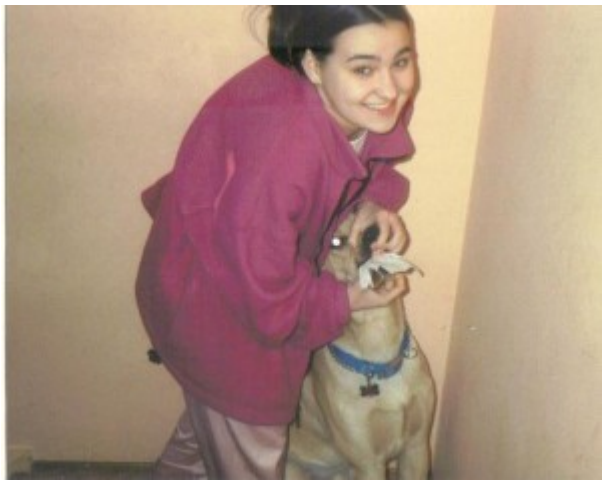
Once upon a time Dylan was my dog too.

We had recently lost our dog Mickey to a sudden illness and the kids had taken it hard. Mickey had been a rescue dog and when my ex husband Bill suggested getting the kids a puppy I was a little hesitant because I had no experience house breaking a dog. Bill reassured me that it would be fine and he knew someone who knew someone who had just had a litter of yellow labs. I remember the day we went to pick him out. We stood in a pen with about ten adorable little yellow balls of fur running around our feet as if to say "Pick me, pick me!' I wanted to take them all home. Their mother was a sweet loving dog with a good temperament. Their father was strong and energetic. You could tell this was going to be a special dog. The puppies were still too young to leave their mother so we would go back in a few weeks to pick him up but we first had to figure out which one would be the right fit for our family. We knew we wanted a boy. I can't say I remember exactly what made our boy stand out. He was active but not too active. He was adorable but they all were. We all just kind of migrated towards the same dog.

We named him Dylan. People always assumed it was after the musician but it wasn't. Our youngest son Alex was crazy about a book at the time called "Dylan's Day Out" by Peter Catalanotto. The Dylan in the book is a Dalmatian who escapes the house and goes on a series of wacky adventures. Alex loved this book and we read it over and over again. It was easy for everyone to agree that it was obvious what we should name him.



My worries about housebreaking and having a puppy tear up the house were mostly unfounded. Like every puppy he was not perfect but he was sweet and we all grew to love him rather quickly. He grew like a weed and was incredibly active. The kids all pitched in helping to take care of him. If you know anything about Labs you know that they are the sweetest most even tempered dogs ever. Dylan was no exception. I love this picture of him with Brittany. He actually did steal her homework. She asked me to take the picture so she could prove it to her teacher.



Unfortunately, four or five years down the road Bill and I found ourselves in an unraveling marriage. It was hard on the kids each in their own way. For a few months right before we separated for good, Bill was pretty much living in the basement and I was upstairs with the kids. I used to say that Alex wore out the stairs going up and down between us. It broke my heart. Divorce is an ugly thing. You take a life

that is a whole, the sum of all it's different parts and you start dividing it up bit by bit. You take that chair. I'll keep this picture. We had a lot of animosity at the time so the process of splitting things down the middle was that much more difficult. One of the things that Bill insisted was that he take the dog. I believe his exact words were "I'm going to be alone. I won't have my children with me anymore. You aren't keeping my dog too. " At the time I thought it was a pretty crappy thing to do, take his children's dog away from them during a very difficult time. A lot of people around me thought it was pretty crappy too and encouraged me to fight him on it but the more I considered it I kind of understood how he felt. He was right. I had the kids. I couldn't complain about the dog.

Alex took it the hardest not having his pet anymore. I got him a cat but it wasn't the same. He missed Dylan. Eventually we added two new dogs to our household and he loved them a lot but for him it was never quite the same. Thankfully he did see his dad often and always came back telling me "Dylan did this" or "Dylan did that." He also told me how much the dog meant to his dad. He told me how they were inseparable. He told me that when his dad cried tears of loneliness the dog would lick them off his face. He told me how his grandma (Bill's mother) who claimed to not care for dogs would sneak him scraps of food so often that Bill had to put Dylan on a diet. He told me these things and I realized that I had made the right decison in letting him take the dog. Either of us could have fed and cared for the dog but Bill needed that dog because, in the aftermath of what happened to us, Dylan helped him heal.

I saw Dylan several years ago when Bill came to pick up Alex for the weekend. We wanted to see if he would play with our new dog Duke, a lab/weimeraner mix. When Bill got Dylan out of the car he ran to me like it had been a day since he had seen me instead of years. Clearly dogs never forget love. He

was so happy to see me. We put him in the back yard to see if he would run around and play with Duke. Poor Dylan just stood at the gate looking at Bill pleading with his eyes to "Get me away from this lunatic." To say that Duke was a hyper maniac when he was a puppy would be the understatement of the year. That dog ate six remote controls before he was one.

Over the years Alex kept me posted on Dylan's antics. He would show me pictures or tell me stories and while it had been years since I'd seen him, hearing about how he was doing always made me smile. This last year his health had really declined so when I found out he had passed it wasn't suprising but it was sad. I guess over the years I have softened because my heart went out to my children's father as I tried to imagine the great emptiness he must be feeling.

When the children were young they loved a movie called "All Dogs Go to Heaven." It's about a murdered mutt who returns to earth to do a good deed so he can gain entrance in to heaven. It's a cute little movie and I haven't thought of it in years. Not until recently. I hope dog heaven has lots of wide open spaces for running and fetching, a lake for swimming and catching "stick fish," an endless supply of doggy bones and all the homework a dog could eat.

Rest well sweet Dylan….you earned it buddy.