

Louie: The Best Years of His Life

By Martha Heisel, foster mom, and Evelyn Manteris, adopter

In my 20 years with Sheltie rescue, I have fostered a LOT of Shelties. Each was different and each needed the perfect home. Once in a while, one came along that was really special in some way. It could be a look, coming from a difficult background, needing some behavior modification, unusual medical needs or something else. Louie was one of those very special dogs and I was lucky to foster him.

Six-year-old Louie came to NVSR from a caring person who had taken him from a dying friend. Living in an apartment, she soon realized it wasn't the right place for an active Sheltie. So in August 2018, Louie arrived at my home. I noticed right away that his face was missing a lot of hair. The symmetry of the hair loss likely meant he had "DM" (Dermatomyositis) which had been untreated for several years. In spite of his "scarface" look, he was a simply delightful dog.

I fostered Louie for eight months taking him to numerous vet visits to get his DM under control. I knew that he'd need a special adopter who could appreciate his unique look, medical challenges and loving temperament, yet realize that he might live only a few more years. I found the perfect home for him, and Evelyn, Louie's adoptive mom, continues his story ...

Through a quirk of fate I found Louie about 9:30 one night. While doing research on my computer, NVSR popped up and there was Louie! He looked so handsome, playful and happy that I fell in love with him and his story of living with DM. It tugged at my heart until I finally filled out the application to adopt! Finding Louie changed our lives forever, bringing more joy, laughter, kindness and love to our family!

Louie was an extraordinary little fellow and quite the charmer! He was born with DM, a hereditary immune-mediated disease that affects the skin, muscles and blood and usually shortens the life span. Louie's foster mom, Martha, had done a wonderful job maintaining his health for eight months. When my husband Greg and I met Louie all we saw was how handsome and complete he was and his love of everything and everyone. We knew what to expect regarding his medical condition. Even so, we wanted to be Louie's Forever Family and welcomed him into our home and hearts.

At adoption day, Louie bounced in and made himself right at home. Martha came prepared with information about his medical condition, and I had researched it and was prepared to continue his care for as long as Louie needed it. Our veterinarians were also eager to meet him. I still chuckle remembering when Martha showed me how to brush his teeth. She then handed me the toothbrush and asked me to show her how I would brush his teeth. I am a retired CDA and never was so nervous as I was to brush Louie's teeth for the first time. Every night we had "brush teeth" time.

We immediately became very attached. Louie loved his bath time and brushing time. Every other Sunday we clipped his nails. Of course, "treats" helped! He slept at my side and would roll over onto his back with all four feet in the air. If I ate apples, so did he. If I got animal cookies, so did he (tiny pieces). Louie loved baby carrots chopped into tiny pieces. He sat for everything and was very patient to get a treat. When I made smoothies, he got pieces of the fruit and a teaspoon of yogurt. Then we sang, "Smoothie in Louie's tummy!"

He became great friends with our Labrador, Gabbee, and our Collie, Skyla. One favorite self-imposed daily "Duty" was to check on the Silkie chickens and Guinea hen and jump at them in their coop to make them fly! After they flew around and he was satisfied that they were all "OK", we walked the field. Louie trotted along and sat at each corner for a treat with Gabbee. He encouraged older Skyla to make a lap around before she stopped to enjoy the sunshine. He taught Gabbee how to play Tug of War with his rope, and Gabbee taught him to chase her in a figure eight. He enjoyed napping near Skyla, who was like a mother to him, but at 8:00 pm he was ready to go to sleep in our bed. We had three cats and he loved all of them.

We celebrated Louie's ninth birthday in January 2021 with our daughter and youngest grandson. He had a big doggie biscuit with a little yogurt icing on it. We sang Happy Birthday to him and he sat so proud and excited. He got toys, new ropes, and a double-sided jacket - his favorite! It was a raincoat on one side and flannel on the other. He pranced around whenever he wore it.

Louie loved people and he filled any space with his love, joy and charm! He became part of the family literally overnight! It was impossible not to be overcome by his love and joy! Louie left us on March 19, 2021, falling asleep in our arms for the last time. Our family misses him terribly, especially Gabbee, who still looks for him every day.

The sadness we felt losing Louie was replaced with the knowledge that he will never have to take all those medications, visit the vets so often and deal with pain. He is in a place with all the dogs that have gone before him and has surely already charmed all of them. He will always be with us in our hearts, tons of photos, and all the glorious stories we will remember and tell forever. We know that we will meet him again someday, but for now ... Louie, go be a healthy puppy again! Happy trails, Louie!



Our Louie Forever



My new Mom and Dad



Snack before bedtime



My two favorite Ellies - I came with the orange one and my forever parents had the patchwork one waiting for me!!



I'm coming Gabbee--Boy she's really fast!



My morning run in the shade just like Aunt Martha said to do!



OK...we both win the morning run!



Just rounded the third corner of the field with Gabbee and Skyla and catching our breath!!



WOW...more new friends! Feathers everywhere!



Handsome me with my two new girl friends!! Being the charmer that I am has great benefits like getting extra treats, hugs, and kisses from my new forever Mom!



Break time on our walk



Woof, that was a good work out! Are you as tired as me?



Yay! I finished our walk first today!!



Just you and me Mom!!!