

## **Dogs in my life – Gaylord Atkinson**

**Pup.** My first dog was named Pup. That was before I started to school. I trained him to climb a ladder up to the loft in the barn. He spent a lot of time with me. He was just a dog-dog, no special breed. We had some neighbors named Lucky who did a number of not very nice things. One time we found a whole litter of puppies tied up in a gunny sack that they had thrown into the ditch by the side of the road and left to die. That's not a very nice thing to do to puppies. Pup liked to roam around the neighborhood and one day he was poisoned by those neighbors. He made it home and died in agony. That turned me off having dogs for quite a while.

**Spitz.** We also had a Spitz dog when I was little. I don't remember her name but she used to play hide and seek with me. I would put her in the house and then run and hide. I would leave a trail around the yard until I found a place to hide. Then Mom would let this spitz dog out and she would track me pretty well around the yard until she found me.

My family always had various dogs, usually two or three at any given time but I only really remember Pup and the Spitz.

**Casey.** In 1957 we decided to have a dog. We looked at the ads and went to look at various dogs. We looked at a schnauzer but to this day I'm glad we didn't get one. Schnauzer's take a lot of upkeep, while Casey only needed a bath and a pat now and then. In any case, we saw this ad for a Toy Fox Terrier kennel just south of Shawnee Mission Park. We went out and had a whole group of little dogs. We picked out Casey. Casey was a smart little dog. For example, we had a back porch and he quickly learned how to push open the screen door to the porch when we let him out. I thought he could probably learn to open it too so I attached a piece of rubber tubing to the bottom of the screen door and pretty soon Casey had learned how to hook that tubing with his claws and let himself in. This was really handy because then we didn't have to go out into the cold to let him in the other door. We would drive to Humphrey and he would get tired of just riding in the car so we would drive into a country road, open the door to let him out and then drive slowly ahead of him. He would just run, run, run, after the car until we slowed down and stopped and he would hop back in. He would pant and look so pleased with himself. He really enjoyed running after the car. I think probably Casey was my favorite. Kelly was the best trained but Casey was really a very smart and bright little dog.

**Boris.** Got him at the same place but I think he was just about ready to be killed if he hadn't been adopted and obviously he had been abused. He was mangy, had worms, fleas, a huge belly, and everything else that could be wrong. The vet was horrified. He had been kicked down the stairs and at first whenever we tried to teach him something he would run to and hide on the top step and just shiver. He would slink around the walls when people came to the house. He had a real personality problem until Janet came home with Morgan.

**Morgan.** Morgan wasn't a planned for dog. Janet just came home with this Irish Setter puppy one day and there he was. He was awful cute and we couldn't turn down such a nice puppy. Morgan was a good dog. He was pretty well behaved. You know, my memory is getting worse and just the other day I was thinking that I don't remember very much about Morgan.

**Kelly H. Dog.** Kelly was our next Irish Setter. The "H" in his name stood for "hellava." I called him Kelly Hellava Dog. We weren't going to have another dog and then one morning Erma said "There's an ad in the paper for an Irish Setter puppy." I said, "Yes, I know." We had both been looking at the dog ads without telling one another. So we went to the place in Peculiar, Missouri and picked out Kelly. He was too little to take home yet so several weeks later we went back and got him. Kelly was the first of our dogs to go to doggy school and we were lucky enough to have an extremely good trainer as opposed to Georgie's trainer who wasn't that good. So Kelly was well trained. I still have the little graduation cap I made for him for his graduation from doggy school.

Morgan was really thin but Kelly was neutered so he got rather portly in his old age. One strange thing about Kelly was that when he walked he "paced" using his left legs and then his right legs. It gave him kind-of a rolling walk.

**Georgie.** Kelly was still alive for another few months at the time we found Georgie. I went to the Vet to get medicine for Kelly and one of the techs was drying a puppy, one of Georgie's litter mates. The tech said, "How'd you like a puppy?" I said I'd like to see them. They were so cute. I picked out the most recessive one in the batch, some of the others turned out to be very aggressive and then I took her home for approval. Erma approved in a matter of seconds. So, I went back and said we keep her. We got her too early, I think. She was only 4 weeks old. She hadn't learned to play and she never has learned to play. She went to puppy school and soon every time we got close to PetsMart she would get very excited. You know, the PetsMart stores look pretty much alike and when we moved to Dallas Georgie perked up and got excited right away the first time we went to the PetsMart here. I would get turned around because our first

Pet'sMart faced East and this one faces West, but they are so much alike inside it was like being in the same store. The first training we did at Pet'sMart for Georgie we had a good trainer. The second training was not good. There were 9 dogs when we started the class but Georgie and I were the only ones who turned up for graduation. Georgie learned very little. It was amazing how much Kelly and all his classmates learned by comparison.

**Betsy**, Janet saw an ad on TV for a Pekinese up for adoption which they said would be a good dog for an elderly person. She thought it would be good for Erma. She went right over to the ASPCA but the Pekinese had been adopted but they had Betsy. City Rescue had a booth in the back of the store and there was a little scruffy dog in the cage. I said, "What's the story line on this one?" and the lady, sensing interest, closed in and really tried to sell me Betsy. Janet said she would NEVER have gotten Betsy because she is not a terribly pretty dog. She is supposed to be white and she's not white and at the time she had an eye infection and these brown stains running down her face. When the lady said they had a no return policy I said I couldn't take her because we had a bigger dog at home and I didn't know if they would get along. So the lady actually brought Betsy over to the house and then gave us two weeks to see if she and Georgie would get along. She has turned out to be a delightful little dog. Unfortunately, she and Georgie are both "my" dogs because I walk them etc. and neither one will have much to do with Erma. We recently found out that Betsy is allergic to the red food coloring in some dog treats. I have been making homemade dog biscuits for the dogs and Betsy has turned from a kind of "pinkish" dog to a white one.

Recently we have had a lot of dogs in the house. Besides Georgie and Betsy sometimes the neighbor's dog, Travis, stays with us. And when Janet is gone we have Hootie, the McClain's dog. The other day our other neighbor came over and brought her little poodle, Jock, and so we had Georgie, Betsy, Jock and Hootie all in the house. We were all in the living room and I was sitting on the ledge near the fireplace and suddenly here comes Georgie up on the ledge and trying to push herself between me and the wall. She needed some attention. But for the most part all the dogs get along. When Hootie is here the Wards, who own Travis, will come over in the evening and help me walk all the dogs at once.

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**Ellie:** Dad's last dog was Ellie. She had an interesting background. She was born in Iran where, one day, a cleric stated that all pet dogs should be killed. Ellie was rescued along with a plane load of other dogs. She ended up in Dallas where Janet saw her up for adoption on TV and she and Dad went and got her. After Dad died, Ellie went to live with Janet and Derek.

