

## Sleet

By Sandra McLeod Humphrey

I called him "Sleet" because just as sleet is neither snow nor rain, this dog was neither hound nor shepherd. His paws were much too big for his hound-like frame and, in fact, his paws were the only thing about him that looked anything like a shepherd. His tail was also much too long for his body, but it was really his ears that drew the comments. His ears were so big that when they stood straight up, he looked like a huge white furry rabbit.

His big white ears were even pink inside like a rabbit's, and no one could look at him without making a joke about his father probably having been a rabbit. A very large rabbit!

Not only did Sleet not look the way he was supposed to look, but he didn't even act the way a dog was supposed to act.

He rarely slept because he was always in search of someone to play with and if he found no one, then he simply dashed around in mad circles chasing his own tail.

If Sleet were still around, he would probably be diagnosed ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) today. On the few occasions he did sleep, however, he did not even sleep like a regular dog. He never curled up the way most dogs do. He always slept on his back with his feet straight up in the air, hoping that someone would scratch his tummy for him. And, of course, someone always did.

Not only did he not sleep like a regular dog, but he never paced around in a circle before lying down which is almost instinctive for so many dogs and probably dates back to their days in the wild. Au contraire! Sleet always just plopped down wherever he happened to be at the time with no canine rituals at all.

Then, of course, there were his drinking habits which simply had to be seen to be believed. He never lapped up water like an ordinary dog. Instead, he put his entire head into the dish, ears and all, and then slurped around underwater until he apparently had had his fill and then came up for air. If the dish were large enough, then his front paws always went into the water right along with his head. Then as a finale, he always picked up his dish by the rim (spilling the rest of the water onto the kitchen floor in the process, of course) and pranced into the living room hoping someone would throw his dish for him so he could fetch it. And, of course, someone always did.

But not only did Sleet not look the way he was supposed to look or act the way he was supposed to act, he didn't even know when to bark. Instead of barking at strangers the way most dogs do, he only barked at people he knew. In fact, the better he knew someone, the more he barked which meant, of course, that he barked the most at family members.

During his first year with us, we lived in a small apartment complex for grad students near the college campus where I was working on my master's degree in psychology.

More than anything else in the world, Sleet loved to take baths in the bathtub, and he didn't care if anyone was already in the tub or not when he jumped in. Fortunately, my husband and visiting friends and relatives had a good sense of humor.

It got to the point where he would just sit in the empty bathtub waiting and hoping that someone would turn the water on for him.

Unfortunately, Sleet did not discriminate between bathtubs. Back in those days the other grad students in our complex not only left their apartments unlocked, they left their doors open. Wide open! To Sleet a bathtub was a bathtub, and many times students would return to their apartment to find Sleet sitting in their bathtub patiently waiting.

It wasn't long before everyone knew him, and he became the mascot for the entire complex. I'm sure some of those people are still telling Sleet stories to this day.

And it wasn't just his bathtub fetish which attracted attention. He also had a few other socially embarrassing habits. He loved to go for rides in the car. Any car. So whenever he saw a car window open, he would jump through the open window and sit patiently on the front seat waiting for someone to take him for a ride.

As the Sleet stories began making the rounds, pretty soon everyone was remembering to roll up their car windows, and Sleet had to resort to other devious behaviors. Like unrolling the toilet paper from the roller and dragging it all over the apartment.

And playgrounds! He loved playgrounds, especially the slides. He loved to climb the ladders and then slide down the slides right along with the kids. It wasn't long before the other kids in the complex were stopping by every day to ask if Sleet "could come out and play."

We've had many other dogs since then, but Sleet was without a doubt the most memorable. And if truth be told, probably my all-time favorite. We all loved him not in spite of his quirks but most likely because of his quirks which just goes to show there's no accounting for love! True love!