

Memories of a King

It's funny how certain things trigger memories of our childhood -- songs, foods, smells, and even weather. Today is a crisp Fall day... bright sunshine... gentle breeze... leaves falling and blowing around. Something about today reminded me of times from my childhood -- and about a dog named King.

King was our German Shepherd. I don't remember exactly how King came into my life -- seems like his mother showed up at our house and soon thereafter gave birth to a bunch of puppies. I don't remember King ever being a puppy, but I guess I was just a "puppy" myself during those years -- I was probably 7-8 years old when King arrived. I just remember he was one of most entertaining pets I've ever had, and a good companion.

We lived a few miles from town, and since we had a decent-sized yard, King was able to run loose on our property. He was always doing something! On a hot summer day, King enjoyed chasing butterflies and bumblebees -- he would sprint after them and at just the right moment, he would jump high into the air snapping at them to try and gobble them down. I often wondered how a dog could digest a bumblebee -- or why one would want to? He enjoyed chasing rabbits, birds, cats, and even cars! I'm not sure what he would have done with a car had he caught one, but still, he never stopped trying. I guess -- true to this name -- he considered himself the King of our little farm!

He had a special ability to climb wooden gates. If he saw something he wanted to chase in the field behind our house, he would gallop as fast as he could to our back gate, climb quickly to the top, jump off the backside, and continue on without missing a beat. Sometimes he would climb the back gate and run over to the pond for a swim. He was pretty good at dog paddling and would swim around quite a while in that mostly moss-covered pond!

I would go on little "adventures" with King. We would walk down into the sage field behind our house -- usually I would be armed with my Daisy BB-gun -- and it wouldn't be long before he would be in hot pursuit of a rabbit. The brown sage grass was over waist high, and as King chased the rabbit in the tall grass, he would leap high into the air to try and see it -- then he would disappear again below the tall grass. A few seconds later he would again leap high into the air -- then disappear. From a distance this was always hilarious because all you could see was a big German Shepherd popping up every few seconds in different places in the field! He never seemed to tire of these rabbit chases! Later I would walk from the field into the woods, and King was always nearby. He would stick with me no matter where I went -- and He always seemed to be hot on the trail of something!

I specifically remember a Fall day much like today. It was particularly cool, but the bright sun was beaming down. I walked to the pond bank and laid down on my back in the knee-high grass. King plopped down in the grass near me, and he soon began to roll back and forth on his back -- feet straight up in the air -- wallowing around in the sunshine, his long tongue hanging out the side of his mouth. We stayed there for quite a while enjoying the warm sunshine and looking up at the puffy clouds and the beautiful blue sky between them. I remember wishing I could

somehow freeze that perfect moment in time. But, of course, I could not. Time is not like that. Soon King and I walked back home, this little experience turned into a memory, and this memory was filed away in a little-used corner of my mind.

Fast forward about 45 years. Today is another bright, sunny, breezy, cool, Fall day -- with white puffy clouds. Being outside while ago opened a door into that little-used corner of my mind, and just for a moment, my thoughts drifted away from the stress of work, troubling world events, and daily chores. I had to smile as I re-lived one of those picture-perfect memories from childhood.

The thought just occurred to me -- the day is not quite over! Maybe I can go back outside and re-create this childhood memory -- I even have a German Shepherd to enjoy it with! Now, if only I had a nice, grassy pond bank...

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