

Blue's Story

Blue was born in Florida on September 9, 1997. She was a Border collie - black lab mix. Blue had been owned by a woman who could no longer care for her and she was given to a man who wanted Blue as a hunting dog. Blue ran away. She was named for the blue spots on her tongue.

She was found walking down a highway by our neighbor's son, Sandy. He contacted the owner and Sandy ended up getting the previous owner another dog to hunt with, and he kept Blue. He brought her to Maine, we are guessing in 2002. Blue got them both kicked out of several apartments because she had separation anxiety, and she would bark all day while Sandy went to work! Eventually, they moved in with Sandy's mom and dad, Ruth and George Douglas, Jr.



When we moved in next door to them January 2006, Blue and our golden retriever, Hobo, became great buddies right away. Two months before our move, Hobo had lost one of his companions, our yellow lab mix, Sandi. Every time Hobo would be outside, Blue would come over. They were very close in age and were like 2 peas in a pod.

From the moment we met Blue, we liked her. Dave had told George that if there ever came a time he could no longer care for Blue we'd take her. We would see Blue in the passenger seat of the car with Sandy or George sitting up tall looking out the window. She loved to ride.

In November of 2007, Sandy passed away suddenly. George's health was failing – he needed kidney dialysis treatments - and he needed to move to a place easier for him to take care of.

We were to watch Blue (Feb 22 & 23, 2008) while he went to the closing on his house, moved and settled into his new apartment. That day George had a mild heart attack, and Blue never moved in to the new apartment. After George came out of the hospital, we brought Blue over to see him, and she visited every week for 2 years, and every week she would give George kisses to get her allotment of dog biscuits! And she was there at his side in May of 2010 when he was in hospice.

Blue was always comfortable at our house even before we took over her care and George felt very happy about that. We would find Blue sunning herself like our own

dogs did, on our front porch. So when she came to live with us forever in February of 2008, it didn't take long for her to become part of our family, with 'her' Hobo and Gretchen, our coonhound mix.

Blue was a great protector and a very smart girl. On April 1, 2008, she had a mastectomy for breast cancer - she was a three-year survivor. She was very willful and a fighter, which was a good thing. She healed well and life went on as usual – as usual as a household can be with 2 adults and 3 large dogs!

When Hobo left us October 25, 2009, she was very sad, but Gretchie took up the role of being her best buddy. Blue was always referred to as our 'downstairs' dog – she only went upstairs once in all the time she lived here. And Gretchen was the 'upstairs' dog – on the bed, napping. After Hobo left us, Gretchie was downstairs most of the time. She'd only go upstairs to sleep at night. And Blue would wait every morning for her to come down.

February of 2010, Gretchen became suddenly and fatally ill from a perforated bowel and peritonitis, and was reunited with Hobo. Blue was devastated. Her companions were gone. It was heartbreaking to watch her stand at the bottom of the stairs looking up waiting for Gretchen, who would never come down.

We needed to get a companion for her right away. After meeting a couple of dogs that didn't seem to like her, we found Dixie, a treeing walker coonhound then named Olivia, at a sister rescue in Arkansas to Almost Home Rescue in South Portland, Maine. Dixie loved all the dogs she met so we couldn't miss! She was young, but Blue always acted like a puppy so we weren't worried. Dixie came up via Last Chance Highway a couple of weeks later and immediately hit it off with Blue-belle.

Blue-belle taught Dixie about living in a home, and let her become the alpha female. When we decided to adopt a golden retriever, Biscuit, 3 months later, Blue showed Dixie how to graciously accept another dog into their home and pack. Blue was mild-mannered, and she loved to go for rides in the car and she loved her dog cookies.

At the end of February this year we noticed Blue wasn't eating all her food, she seemed to be chewing funny and she was drooling. She had always had good teeth and a great appetite! When she went to visit Dr Shively, who always lovingly called her Bluey, she didn't want to open her mouth for the exam! We tried her on some antibiotics and Pepcid to keep her from getting an upset stomach. Unfortunately, they didn't help so a more in-depth exam was necessary under sedation.

Blue was scheduled on March 9. She had pre-surgical lab work done and that's when all of the problems surfaced. The vet found she had elevated kidney values, liver disease and possible pancreatitis, and she was anemic – an indicator of kidney problems. Her urine was dilute meaning she wasn't getting rid of the toxins from her

body – an indication of kidney failure. Her difficulty eating and drooling was from nausea.

She had X-rays to determine if there were any masses on her liver, spleen, kidneys, lungs or intestines but nothing showed up. The diagnosis was kidney failure and it was difficult to know whether Blue would last weeks or months. A low protein diet would be better for Blue - that the vet said tasted awful to dogs - and she had to keep taking the Pepcid to help with the nausea.

I did some research about low protein diets and kidney disease, and received great suggestions from Jeannette Lebel, Blue's groomer. After the first day on the lower protein foods, Blue really perked up! She was eating 4 smaller meals a day and she had a spring in her step – she wanted to play with Dixie and Biscuit. It was a miracle!

That lasted for a week, and then last Friday she stopped eating again. She didn't want any of the new foods she'd been eating, so I gave her anything I thought she would eat - a bowl of dog cookies, raw chicken, cooked chicken, sliced cheese and turkey bacon. The stronger anti-nausea med didn't help.

Blue was getting weak now and it was heartbreaking to watch. She couldn't climb up and down the stairs to go out and do her business. She didn't want to use the ramp. Wednesday was an especially bad day for her – she started with diarrhea and she started drinking, drinking, drinking. Thursday the fluid was noticeably collecting in her belly.

Dave and I had to make the devastating decision, and this morning, March 25, 2011, at 9:15 am, our wonderful vet, Margaret Shively, helped 'our' Bluey go peacefully to meet Hobo and Gretchen once again. I'm sure Sandy, George and Ruth were there to meet her, too. She was at home, on her bed in the office, where she loved to sleep, with us gathered around her.

Each of our dogs has brought us a multitude of joy and has been an overwhelming challenge at times, and we have learned something different from each one of them. It never gets easier to let them go, but we are so very thankful for the short time they bless our lives and homes. We wouldn't have it any other way. And during the last few days Blue was with us, Dixie stayed by Blue's side in the mornings and Biscuit was with her in the afternoons. Their capacity for love is so much purer and deeper than we give them credit for. We will miss you Blue-belle.

Carol, Dave, Dixie & Biscuit Santora