

Sebastian's Journey

July 18, 1992 to May 2, 2005

It was in the year of 1992 that we had lost our previous Cocker Spaniel, Sheba. Within the weeks after her death I could not find anything to fill the void in my heart that her death had created. On October 7, 1992 while stopping by Pet Center here in Florence, I decided to take a peek at the puppies, being the dog lover that I am.

I had really entered the store with the idea of getting a Yorkie or a terrier puppy. I wanted a small dog, but didn't know which type. Unfortunately, they didn't have either of those puppies available. There were some puppies there that were different from any type puppy I had ever seen in this area. They were known as a Bichon Frise. They looked like a white ball of fluffy fur and were full of energy. It looked like they were smiling at you by the expression on their faces, and their eyes looked like little black marbles as did their small noses.



Hummm . . . a bichon I thought. I didn't know anything about them. I backed away from their open pen they were in and there was one little puppy that was trying his best to break loose from the others to get to me. He was full of energy and I picked him up. Immediately he started giving me kisses as fast and as furious as he could. We immediately bonded.

Well, I asked the price for the dog . . . WHAT??? That much!!! I couldn't imagine paying that much \$\$\$ for a dog, much less a little white ball of fur that could fit in a pocketbook or the palm of my hand. Well, he already had me wrapped around his paw so to speak, so I purchased the little dog. I never did tell Ed exactly how much I paid for him until a few years later and lots of bonding. This was to be my dog. I had lost Sheba which about killed me inside. I had been wanting a dog that loved to show love and affection and this dog was to be that one. I brought him home without a name and

Mary, my daughter, named him Sebastian. Where she got that name I don't know. Well, I didn't want to just name him Sebastian since he was going to be registered with the AKC, so I fancied it up . . . I named him Le Petite Sebastian. After all he was the result of the breeding together of Leawoods Oberon and Suzis Dancing Gigit. With a Mama and Daddy dog like that I felt he had to have a special name. To us however, he would be called Sebastian. His name was fitting . . . he was very small and a white powder puff. With all his energy I could just see that he must have inherited his "Mom's" dancing ability.

I remember when I brought him home he was so very small that my 6'0" husband said "Kathy, he's so little until I'll step on him before I know it", but he never did. Some how little Sebastian managed to stay out of the way. We always said we should have named him White Lightning because as he grew over the coming months, he would get out in our fenced-in back yard and run so rapid until you would almost just see a white blurr go past you. I never knew a little dog could run so fast. He would out run the 2 cocker spaniels that lived next door when they would run laps up and down the fence. He would also run large circles around the back yard, and smaller circles around our dining room table. Once when he was running his circles as hard and as fast as he could, he collapsed on the ground. Fortunately, I saw him and rushed to him. It appeared he was lifeless. I picked him up and his heart was still beating, but he wasn't breathing. I did the puppy rescue breathing, blowing into his nose enough to make his chest rise and fall. My son, John, was home and we jumped into the small Justy Subaru that I had and we took off toward the vet's office. Within a few minutes Sebastian's breathing returned while I was doing the rescue breathing and he came to. He appeared a little dazed, but by the time we got to the vet he seemed about back to normal. The vet checked him out and couldn't find anything obviously wrong with him. After that experience, Sebastian and myself were closer than ever.



Sebastian quickly spun his charm and magic on us over the coming weeks and months. We were totally bonded and in love with him. He was always under foot and loyal with each of us. Where we were, he was. At night I'd put him up on the bed with us . . . yes us. After all, he didn't take up very much space. In his later years he got to where he'd take his front paws and pull down the bedspread and top sheet so he could curl up between the sheets next to me so he could be covered up also. I could say "back back" and he'd snuggle up next to me. He was the only dog in the house so he had it made. He was treated with plenty of treats and lots of TLC. At night when we would watch TV he'd either jump up on the couch with me and lay in my lap, or sit beside Ed, my husband, on the lazy boy recliner and would patiently stay there until we said "Are you about ready to go to bed?" and off he'd dash to the bedroom.



I remember after having major surgery my Mother had come to spend a few days with me. On the day I had returned home from the hospital she had let Sebastian out the back door to do his business. Unknowingly the fence had been left open and "my dog" had gotten out. Now when Sebastian would get loose in the front yard there was hardly no catching him. He would look at you and with that cute little "smile" on his face he'd take off running down the street just as fast as he could go. All the yelling and calling in the world wouldn't stop him. You'd have to take off after him and literally catch him! Well that day he'd done it again and we didn't have any idea which way he went. Well, Mama got in her car and took off in one direction while I got into my vehicle . . . yes, home from surgery and supposedly recuperating . . . took off in the other



direction. Surgery, recovery or not, I was going to find my dog. We did manage to find him about a block away running wide open and Lord only knows how Mama caught him. There did come a time in the months to come that Sebastian was broke from his running when being called. One day when he was on the front porch with Ed, he saw a cat and took off running for it. Ed hollered for him to stop and Sebastian kept on going as he usually would. Ed caught up with him and with a little rolled up newspaper he put a spanking on Sebastian. He really didn't hurt him. The paper was making all the noise but you would have thought he was killing Sebastian the way he was acting. From that day forward Sebastian would stop when he was told to.

House breaking was a chore with Sebastian. I don't know if it was a result of the type of breed that he was, or

because he was just plain stubborn . . . which he could be when he wanted to. It seemed like he wanted to mark his spot on everything in sight!

Finally in what seemed like an eternity he was house broken. As an adult dog in later years he became very wise and would not eat or drink when he would see we were leaving, knowing he'd have to go out. He'd



wait until we got home before he would eat & drink. As for tearing up things or chewing up things, he never did. We always had a few toys that we left lying around for him and he'd play with them instead. As for being stubborn, if we went on a trip and returned home he would ignore us for the first 20 minutes or so. He refused to even look at us. Then all of a sudden he'd take off giving you all the kisses in the world and would be all over you.

As for being a good guard dog . . . forget it. He loved every one too much. If a burglar would have came to the door, he would have licked and licked them and then took them & showed them where everything was and licked them on their way out. He knew no stranger. In his entire life I had only

heard him growl a few times and that was mostly at the cat that seemed to torture Sebastian by walking across the back of our yard. There was one thing that he couldn't tolerate . . . a cat. He got along with the neighbor dogs, but you let him see a cat any where in sight and those little legs would start running at 100 mph to chase that cat out of our yard. There was a couple of times that he almost caught a cat, but never quite made it. Once we put him over the fence in the neighbor's yard who had an outside cat just to see what he would do . . . under supervision of course. Well, we learned Sebastian wasn't quite the tough little boy that he thought he was. He kinda backed down to the cat and wanted to get back in our yard.

Over the months he learned our ways, our habits, and even the sounds of our vehicles as they pulled in the drive way and would always greet us with a wagging tail, a smile on his face and bunches of licks and kisses as we walked through the door. He was especially happy if I'd been to Walmart or the grocery store. He learned that rattling plastic bags meant a surprise for him and he always waited anxiously when the bags came through the door. I always teasingly said my dog wouldn't let me come in the house unless I had brought him a surprise home from the store. He eventually got to where he almost did a dance



when he wanted a treat. When I headed to the kitchen he'd be under foot and prance back and forth tapping his front paws on the floor as if doing a little dance for a treat. Of course, I'd give in to him. Maybe that is where his Mom's gene's kicked in (Suzis Dancing Gigit). Either way, I was a sucker to his begging. We didn't give him people food except on holidays . . . usually Christmas and Thanksgiving we'd give him a "little" bit of people food. We felt he deserved to have a little holiday also. He would manage to eat some popcorn and Pringles potato chips & his favorite cup of milk on occasion. With Ed working with the railroad, Sebastian had become my companion with all the lonesome hours that I would have otherwise had. He was more than just "a dog". He was there for me during the death of my Dad, family

problems, the death of my Grandmother, death of my Father-in-law, birth of my grandchildren and during heavy personal issues in my marriage. He was my confidant and listened to all my concerns. He always showed interest and never walked away when I would pour out my heart to him. Of course he couldn't answer me, but he always showed loyalty and provided me with lots of kisses freely.

There were a few things as he aged that he didn't care for. . . thunder, getting groomed, seeing us pull out the suit cases and going to the vet. Once when I had to go to work one day, I had left Sebastian in the kitchen with the gates up at the door ways. I always left a little kitchen light on, either the TV on Animal Planet or the stereo on soft music for him when I'd have to leave him in the kitchen for any time



period. Well, that night a horrible hail storm came up with base ball sized hail. It had broken out both the storm windows and the inside windows in the kitchen. That must have terrified the little fellow because he would always make a bee line for me to hold him during any storm from that day forward. It was always an ordeal taking him to the vet and to be groomed. From the time we would leave the house until the time we started returning home he'd shake & tremble so very badly. He was terrified of going to the vet even though they were extremely loving and gentle to him at Palmetto Animal Hospital. Kim Coleman had been his groomer pretty much all of his life and he loved her. He just didn't like being bathed. Maybe it was the blow drying he didn't like. I had tried to groom him on several occasions myself, but he whined and carried on so bad until I didn't have the heart to do it. He didn't like folks messing with his ears either. If you acted like you were going to look in his ears he would put that ear down on your chest and push against you so you couldn't look into it. As for suitcases, he would always get upset when he saw them coming down out of the attic. He knew he was going to be separated from us for a few days so we eventually had to pull them down when he was out of sight. He would really get excited when we asked him if

he wanted to go to the beach. He loved to go there.

As he got older there were new things he enjoyed. He truly loved to ride down to the beach and stay at our trailer at Ocean Isle Beach. In the trailer he was the king. He had choices of places to lay . . . chairs, beds, couch and if he was lucky a rabbit or squirrel would be in the yard for him to make chase to. Now the highlight of his trip down to the beach was riding on the golf cart. He loved it. Often he would jump up on it in hopes you'd take him for a ride or if you had taken him for a ride he would stay on the seat and not want to get off. Then down at the



intercostal waterway he'd just have to mark everything, but he never did want to get in the water. He never did like to get his paws wet, even on the deck after a rain at home. Everyone down there knew Sebastian and had fallen in love with him likewise, especially Mary Strickland.

My Mother-in-law even allowed us to take Sebastian to her house when we would go for visits to see her. Sebastian was the first dog that she had allowed to be in her house. She would sneak him some pieces of food (particularly cooked ham) off the table during meal time. She said he was the first little inside dog that she had ever liked. He was always well behaved when he went to any one's house. Of course he chose to hang directly under us even on those visits.

He was still extremely loyal and full of love to those around him. He loved to give kisses to the neighbors, Bob Younts & Patricia Ross. On occasion when Patricia would come over to take care of him when we'd be gone on a cruise, etc., we learned to put up a fence in the hallway else Sebastian would take off running and get under the middle of the bed so Patricia couldn't get to him to let him outside. He used to drive her crazy doing that. Bob would walk over and sit on the front steps to talk to us and look at Sebastian and say "come on over here little boy and see me". Sebastian would eat that up. All

the time Ed would tell Sebastian to leave Bob alone, but Bob would quickly reprimand Ed and let him know that he wanted to see Sebastian.



Over the years and after many events in our personal lives, Sebastian began to slow down. No longer did he run at lightening speed through the yard, chase the cats here or the squirrels down at the beach.

Sebastian was developing cataracts and his vision wasn't as sharp as it once was. The vet said he could see the larger things well, just not the little details. Sebastian would now stand up at the back door and look out. Even if the cat was in the yard, he couldn't see him any more. I could pick up Sebastian in my arms and say "Sebastian, there's the cat. Go get him!" He'd look diligently for him and then give me that look like "you're crazy. There isn't any cat out there." There was once a time that he even enjoyed

watching the AKC club shows on TV. When they showed the show dogs up close, he'd even get up close to the TV and stare at them. In the later years he really didn't do that. He would look toward the TV if he heard a dog bark on it, but that was all.

A turn of events came about in August of 2004 we ended up taking in Rufus, my daughter's dog. This adoption came as a surprise for us. Rufus is a mixed breed with an obviously heavy collie background. Rufus loved attention and had never had a stable home environment. Even though he never hurt Sebastian, he would nudge Sebastian to the side when we would go to pet Sebastian and love on him. I learned quickly to pick Sebastian up and hold him in my arms in order to give him hugs and kisses. It seems to me that Sebastian went down hill rapidly once we got Rufus. He lost the sparkle in his eye, the bounce in his step and even showed less affection toward us than prior to Rufus' arrival. I thought it was his age setting in and catching up

with him. Perhaps it was, but then again I wonder if he was broken hearted over another dog entering his domain. After all, he had always been “the only one”. Now I had very mixed feelings. Ed had really seemed to bond with Rufus, yet I could see what it was doing to Sebastian and to me he was the first dog and was the priority. Yet, what could we do. Here we had this other smart, intelligent dog that was starved for the comforts of the type of life that we had given Sebastian and who was very loyal likewise. Rufus would be a guard dog whereas it was not in Sebastian’s nature to be one. Rufus wouldn’t give kisses, would never be a lap dog like my Sebastian had been. Rufus would be Ed’s dog and Sebastian would remain my dog.

On the night of May 2, Ed had taken off work expecting to be returning from a golf tournament in Greenville, SC. I had gone scuba diving that day with friends and got home around 10:30 pm that night . . . unusually late for me. Being extremely tired I wanted to be certain that I’d sleep well that night since I had to work grave yard shift the following night so I took a benadryl and headed to bed shortly after getting in. Before getting ready for bed that night I had picked up Sebastian in the living room and held him to my heart and loved on him and talked to him. He seemed happy to see me, as usual, when I had returned home that night and had not seemed to be in any distress. Ed said he had gone outside and did his business so we headed to bed. It didn’t take me but minutes to fall into a deep sleep. At around 2:45 I got up to go to the bathroom and all was quiet. At 3:15 a loud strange howl was coming from under the bed where Sebastian was. I didn’t think a lot about it since I had heard Sebastian bark, whimper and howl in his sleep before. I just figured he was dreaming once again. Ed told him to be quiet. Ed was thinking like me that Sebastian was just acting out a dream. He howled once more, but not to the magnitude of the first howl. After this I fell back off to sleep. Ed stayed awake however. He said he heard Sebastian making a “coughing-like” sound, but thought nothing peculiar about it. Oh how my soul hurts now to know that I never got the chance to say a good bye while my dog was alive. I will never have complete closure on his death as a result of this. I look back at all the times that Sebastian had been there for me full of love, full of kisses when I was pouring out my fears & worries to him on the back deck and now when perhaps he was trying to painfully say good bye

to me that I wasn't there to bid him farewell. If only I had known . . . if only I hadn't taken the benadryl that night . . . if only I had checked on Sebastian when he had howled, if only . . . Even though it would not have changed the outcome probably, at least I'd been able to hold my dying Sebastian in my arms.

The next morning at 8:30 Ed came to the bed and tells me to wake up that Sebastian is dead. No warning, no preparation . . . just that my dog is dead. He said when he got up and called for Sebastian to go outside that he had not come from under the bed. Ed said he reached under the bed to feel for Sebastian to find him cold. He was still under the bed at the time he told me the devastating news. I went around and pulled my lifeless companion from under the bed. Rigor mortis had started setting in and it was obvious that he had been dead for a while. My heart was broken. The one constant I had over the years was gone, and I had been robbed of the opportunity to say good bye. Tim, my stepson, came over and buried my buddy of 12 yrs 10 months behind our garage next to our previous pet, Sheba. Ed and I placed some flowers on his grave.

The days was beautiful, the sky blue, in the upper 70's. Our lilac bush was still in bloom as was the pink rose bush and the purple clematis. These were to provide the flowers for his grave. It would have been a perfect day to see a little white ball of fur flying through the yard in circles with eyes sparkling from sheer devotion and happiness and a smile on his face. Afterward he would always come bounding up to me to provide me with tons of puppy kisses.

I don't know if I will ever own another bichon, not because they aren't a wonderful breed, they certainly are the best, but because of the pain that they would cause by reminding me of Sebastian. What I do know is that Sebastian was the best dog I would ever and will ever own.

Rufus, you have big steps to walk in but you will never replace my Sebastian. Sebastian, your spirit, your love and devotion will live in our hearts forever.

You will forever be loved and missed.

In my heart forever,

Your Mama

Picture details:

Page 1 - Sebastian at around 6 mos with all his puppy hair.

Page 2 - Ed holding Sebastian. Still very much a puppy.

Page 3 - Me and Sebastian at Christmas. Mary holding Sebastian.

Page 4 - Sebastian with Killian, my Grandson, and Tim, my stepson.

Page 5 - Me holding Sebastian while still in my bathrobe.

Page 6 - Sebastian would always go to bed at any time with anyone. He loved to curl up next to them. Here Ed was asleep.

Page 7 - Freshly groomed he'd prance around as if to show off.

Page 8 - Sebastian with the "smile" that he was famous for.

Page 11 - Sebastian and I had many a talk and cry in this very spot on my deck, at the top of the steps.



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Hummm . . . a bichon I thought. I didn't know anything about them. I backed away from their open pen they were in and there was one little puppy that was trying his best to break loose from the others to get to me. He was full of energy and I picked him up. Immediately he started giving me kisses as fast and as furious as he could. We immediately bonded.

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I remember after having major surgery my Mother had come to spend a few days with me. On the day I had returned home from the hospital she had let Sebastian out the back door to do his business. Unknowingly the fence had been left open and "my dog" had gotten out. Now when Sebastian would get loose in the front yard there was hardly no catching him. He would look at you and with that cute little "smile" on his face he'd take off running down the street just as fast as he could go. All the yelling and calling in the world wouldn't stop him. You'd have to take off after him and literally catch him! Well that day he'd done it again and we didn't have any idea which way he went. Well, Mama got in her car and took off in one direction while I got into my vehicle . . . yes, home from surgery and supposedly recuperating . . . took off in the other



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As for being a good guard dog . . . forget it. He loved every one too much. If a burglar would have came to the door, he would have licked and licked them and then took them & showed them where everything was and licked them on their way out. He knew no stranger. In his entire life I had only

heard him growl a few times and that was mostly at the cat that seemed to torture Sebastian by walking across the back of our yard. There was one thing that he couldn't tolerate . . . a cat. He got along with the neighbor dogs, but you let him see a cat any where in sight and those little legs would start running at 100 mph to chase that cat out of our yard. There was a couple of times that he almost caught a cat, but never quite made it. Once we put him over the fence in the neighbor's yard who had an outside cat just to see what he would do . . . under supervision of course. Well, we learned Sebastian wasn't quite the tough little boy that he thought he was. He kinda backed down to the cat and wanted to get back in our yard.

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He was still extremely loyal and full of love to those around him. He loved to give kisses to the neighbors, Bob Younts & Patricia Ross. On occasion when Patricia would come over to take care of him when we'd be gone on a cruise, etc., we learned to put up a fence in the hallway else Sebastian would take off running and get under the middle of the bed so Patricia couldn't get to him to let him outside. He used to drive her crazy doing that. Bob would walk over and sit on the front steps to talk to us and look at Sebastian and say "come on over here little boy and see me". Sebastian would eat that up. All

the time Ed would tell Sebastian to leave Bob alone, but Bob would quickly reprimand Ed and let him know that he wanted to see Sebastian.



Over the years and after many events in our personal lives, Sebastian began to slow down. No longer did he run at lightening speed through the yard, chase the cats here or the squirrels down at the beach.

Sebastian was developing cataracts and his vision wasn't as sharp as it once was. The vet said he could see the larger things well, just not the little details. Sebastian would now stand up at the back door and look out. Even if the cat was in the yard, he couldn't see him any more. I could pick up Sebastian in my arms and say "Sebastian, there's the cat. Go get him!" He'd look diligently for him and then give me that look like "you're crazy. There isn't any cat out there." There was once a time that he even enjoyed

watching the AKC club shows on TV. When they showed the show dogs up close, he'd even get up close to the TV and stare at them. In the later years he really didn't do that. He would look toward the TV if he heard a dog bark on it, but that was all.

A turn of events came about in August of 2004 we ended up taking in Rufus, my daughter's dog. This adoption came as a surprise for us. Rufus is a mixed breed with an obviously heavy collie background. Rufus loved attention and had never had a stable home environment. Even though he never hurt Sebastian, he would nudge Sebastian to the side when we would go to pet Sebastian and love on him. I learned quickly to pick Sebastian up and hold him in my arms in order to give him hugs and kisses. It seems to me that Sebastian went down hill rapidly once we got Rufus. He lost the sparkle in his eye, the bounce in his step and even showed less affection toward us than prior to Rufus' arrival. I thought it was his age setting in and catching up

with him. Perhaps it was, but then again I wonder if he was broken hearted over another dog entering his domain. After all, he had always been “the only one”. Now I had very mixed feelings. Ed had really seemed to bond with Rufus, yet I could see what it was doing to Sebastian and to me he was the first dog and was the priority. Yet, what could we do. Here we had this other smart, intelligent dog that was starved for the comforts of the type of life that we had given Sebastian and who was very loyal likewise. Rufus would be a guard dog whereas it was not in Sebastian’s nature to be one. Rufus wouldn’t give kisses, would never be a lap dog like my Sebastian had been. Rufus would be Ed’s dog and Sebastian would remain my dog.

On the night of May 2, Ed had taken off work expecting to be returning from a golf tournament in Greenville, SC. I had gone scuba diving that day with friends and got home around 10:30 pm that night . . . unusually late for me. Being extremely tired I wanted to be certain that I’d sleep well that night since I had to work grave yard shift the following night so I took a benadryl and headed to bed shortly after getting in. Before getting ready for bed that night I had picked up Sebastian in the living room and held him to my heart and loved on him and talked to him. He seemed happy to see me, as usual, when I had returned home that night and had not seemed to be in any distress. Ed said he had gone outside and did his business so we headed to bed. It didn’t take me but minutes to fall into a deep sleep. At around 2:45 I got up to go to the bathroom and all was quiet. At 3:15 a loud strange howl was coming from under the bed where Sebastian was. I didn’t think a lot about it since I had heard Sebastian bark, whimper and howl in his sleep before. I just figured he was dreaming once again. Ed told him to be quiet. Ed was thinking like me that Sebastian was just acting out a dream. He howled once more, but not to the magnitude of the first howl. After this I fell back off to sleep. Ed stayed awake however. He said he heard Sebastian making a “coughing-like” sound, but thought nothing peculiar about it. Oh how my soul hurts now to know that I never got the chance to say a good bye while my dog was alive. I will never have complete closure on his death as a result of this. I look back at all the times that Sebastian had been there for me full of love, full of kisses when I was pouring out my fears & worries to him on the back deck and now when perhaps he was trying to painfully say good bye

to me that I wasn't there to bid him farewell. If only I had known . . . if only I hadn't taken the benadryl that night . . . if only I had checked on Sebastian when he had howled, if only . . . Even though it would not have changed the outcome probably, at least I'd been able to hold my dying Sebastian in my arms.

The next morning at 8:30 Ed came to the bed and tells me to wake up that Sebastian is dead. No warning, no preparation . . . just that my dog is dead. He said when he got up and called for Sebastian to go outside that he had not come from under the bed. Ed said he reached under the bed to feel for Sebastian to find him cold. He was still under the bed at the time he told me the devastating news. I went around and pulled my lifeless companion from under the bed. Rigor mortis had started setting in and it was obvious that he had been dead for a while. My heart was broken. The one constant I had over the years was gone, and I had been robbed of the opportunity to say good bye. Tim, my stepson, came over and buried my buddy of 12 yrs 10 months behind our garage next to our previous pet, Sheba. Ed and I placed some flowers on his grave.

The days was beautiful, the sky blue, in the upper 70's. Our lilac bush was still in bloom as was the pink rose bush and the purple clematis. These were to provide the flowers for his grave. It would have been a perfect day to see a little white ball of fur flying through the yard in circles with eyes sparkling from sheer devotion and happiness and a smile on his face. Afterward he would always come bounding up to me to provide me with tons of puppy kisses.

I don't know if I will ever own another bichon, not because they aren't a wonderful breed, they certainly are the best, but because of the pain that they would cause by reminding me of Sebastian. What I do know is that Sebastian was the best dog I would ever and will ever own.

Rufus, you have big steps to walk in but you will never replace my Sebastian. Sebastian, your spirit, your love and devotion will live in our hearts forever.

You will forever be loved and missed.

In my heart forever,

Your Mama

Picture details:

Page 1 - Sebastian at around 6 mos with all his puppy hair.

Page 2 - Ed holding Sebastian. Still very much a puppy.

Page 3 - Me and Sebastian at Christmas.
Mary holding Sebastian.

Page 4 - Sebastian with Killian, my Grandson, and Tim,
my stepson.

Page 5 - Me holding Sebastian while still in my bathrobe.

Page 6 - Sebastian would always go to bed at any time with anyone. He loved to curl up next to them. Here Ed was asleep.

Page 7 - Freshly groomed he'd prance around as if to show off.

Page 8 - Sebastian with the "smile" that he was famous for.

Page 11 - Sebastian and I had many a talk and cry in this very spot on my deck, at the top of the steps.



Sebastian's Journey

July 18, 1992 to May 2, 2005

It was in the year of 1992 that we had lost our previous Cocker Spaniel, Sheba. Within the weeks after her death I could not find anything to fill the void in my heart that her death had created. On October 7, 1992 while stopping by Pet Center here in Florence, I decided to take a peek at the puppies, being the dog lover that I am.

I had really entered the store with the idea of getting a Yorkie or a terrier puppy. I wanted a small dog, but didn't know which type. Unfortunately, they didn't have either of those puppies available. There were some puppies there that were different from any type puppy I had ever seen in this area. They were known as a Bichon Frise. They looked like a white ball of fluffy fur and were full of energy. It looked like they were smiling at you by the expression on their faces, and their eyes looked like little black marbles as did their small noses.



Hummm . . . a bichon I thought. I didn't know anything about them. I backed away from their open pen they were in and there was one little puppy that was trying his best to break loose from the others to get to me. He was full of energy and I picked him up. Immediately he started giving me kisses as fast and as furious as he could. We immediately bonded.

Well, I asked the price for the dog . . . WHAT??? That much!!! I couldn't imagine paying that much \$\$\$ for a dog, much less a little white ball of fur that could fit in a pocketbook or the palm of my hand. Well, he already had me wrapped around his paw so to speak, so I purchased the little dog. I never did tell Ed exactly how much I paid for him until a few years later and lots of bonding. This was to be my dog. I had lost Sheba which about killed me inside. I had been wanting a dog that loved to show love and affection and this dog was to be that one. I brought him home without a name and

Mary, my daughter, named him Sebastian. Where she got that name I don't know. Well, I didn't want to just name him Sebastian since he was going to be registered with the AKC, so I fancied it up . . . I named him Le Petite Sebastian. After all he was the result of the breeding together of Leawoods Oberon and Suzis Dancing Gigit. With a Mama and Daddy dog like that I felt he had to have a special name. To us however, he would be called Sebastian. His name was fitting . . . he was very small and a white powder puff. With all his energy I could just see that he must have inherited his "Mom's" dancing ability.

I remember when I brought him home he was so very small that my 6'0" husband said "Kathy, he's so little until I'll step on him before I know it", but he never did. Some how little Sebastian managed to stay out of the way. We always said we should have named him White Lightning because as he grew over the coming months, he would get out in our fenced-in back yard and run so rapid until you would almost just see a white blurr go past you. I never knew a little dog could run so fast. He would out run the 2 cocker spaniels that lived next door when they would run laps up and down the fence. He would also run large circles around the back



yard, and smaller circles around our dining room table. Once when he was running his circles as hard and as fast as he could, he collapsed on the ground. Fortunately, I saw him and rushed to him. It appeared he was lifeless. I picked him up and his heart was still beating, but he wasn't breathing. I did the puppy rescue breathing, blowing into his nose enough to make his chest rise and fall. My son, John, was home and we jumped into the small Justy Subaru that I had and we took off toward the vet's office. Within a few minutes Sebastian's breathing returned while I was doing the rescue breathing and he came to. He appeared a little dazed, but by the time we got to the vet he seemed about back to normal. The vet checked him out and couldn't find anything obviously wrong with him. After that experience, Sebastian and myself were closer than ever.

Sebastian quickly spun his charm and magic on us over the coming weeks and months. We were totally bonded and in love with him. He was always under foot and loyal with each of us. Where we were, he was. At night I'd put him up on the bed with us . . . yes us. After all, he didn't take up very much space. In his later years he got to where he'd take his front paws and pull down the bedspread and top sheet so he could curl up between the sheets next to me so he could be covered up also. I could say "back back" and he'd snuggle up next to me. He was the only dog in the house so he had it made. He was treated with plenty of treats and lots of TLC. At night when we would watch TV he'd either jump up on the couch with me and lay in my lap, or sit beside Ed, my husband, on the lazy boy recliner and would patiently stay there until we said "Are you about ready to go to bed?" and off he'd dash to the bedroom.



I remember after having major surgery my Mother had come to spend a few days with me. On the day I had returned home from the hospital she had let Sebastian out the back door to do his business. Unknowingly the fence had been left open and "my dog" had gotten out. Now when Sebastian would get loose in the front yard there was hardly no catching him. He would look at you and with that cute little "smile" on his face he'd take off running down the street just as fast as he could go. All the yelling and calling in the world wouldn't stop him. You'd have to take off after him and literally catch him! Well that day he'd done it again and we didn't have any idea which way he went. Well, Mama got in her car and took off in one direction while I got into my vehicle . . . yes, home from surgery and supposedly recuperating . . . took off in the other



direction. Surgery, recovery or not, I was going to find my dog. We did manage to find him about a block away running wide open and Lord only knows how Mama caught him. There did come a time in the months to come that Sebastian was broke from his running when being called. One day when he was on the front porch with Ed, he saw a cat and took off running for it. Ed hollered for him to stop and Sebastian kept on going as he usually would. Ed caught up with him and with a little rolled up newspaper he put a spanking on Sebastian. He really didn't hurt him. The paper was making all the noise but you would have thought he was killing Sebastian the way he was acting. From that day forward Sebastian would stop when he was told to.

House breaking was a chore with Sebastian. I don't know if it was a result of the type of breed that he was, or

because he was just plain stubborn . . . which he could be when he wanted to. It seemed like he wanted to mark his spot on everything in sight!

Finally in what seemed like an eternity he was house broken. As an adult dog in later years he became very wise and would not eat or drink when he would see we were leaving, knowing he'd have to go out. He'd



wait until we got home before he would eat & drink. As for tearing up things or chewing up things, he never did. We always had a few toys that we left lying around for him and he'd play with them instead. As for being stubborn, if we went on a trip and returned home he would ignore us for the first 20 minutes or so. He refused to even look at us. Then all of a sudden he'd take off giving you all the kisses in the world and would be all over you.

As for being a good guard dog . . . forget it. He loved every one too much. If a burglar would have came to the door, he would have licked and licked them and then took them & showed them where everything was and licked them on their way out. He knew no stranger. In his entire life I had only

heard him growl a few times and that was mostly at the cat that seemed to torture Sebastian by walking across the back of our yard. There was one thing that he couldn't tolerate . . . a cat. He got along with the neighbor dogs, but you let him see a cat any where in sight and those little legs would start running at 100 mph to chase that cat out of our yard. There was a couple of times that he almost caught a cat, but never quite made it. Once we put him over the fence in the neighbor's yard who had an outside cat just to see what he would do . . . under supervision of course. Well, we learned Sebastian wasn't quite the tough little boy that he thought he was. He kinda backed down to the cat and wanted to get back in our yard.

Over the months he learned our ways, our habits, and even the sounds of our vehicles as they pulled in the drive way and would always greet us with a wagging tail, a smile on his face and bunches of licks and kisses as we walked through the door. He was especially happy if I'd been to Walmart or the grocery store. He learned that rattling plastic bags meant a surprise for him and he always waited anxiously when the bags came through the door. I always teasingly said my dog wouldn't let me come in the house unless I had brought him a surprise home from the store. He eventually got to where he almost did a dance



when he wanted a treat. When I headed to the kitchen he'd be under foot and prance back and forth tapping his front paws on the floor as if doing a little dance for a treat. Of course, I'd give in to him. Maybe that is where his Mom's gene's kicked in (Suzis Dancing Gigit). Either way, I was a sucker to his begging. We didn't give him people food except on holidays . . . usually Christmas and Thanksgiving we'd give him a "little" bit of people food. We felt he deserved to have a little holiday also. He would manage to eat some popcorn and Pringles potato chips & his favorite cup of milk on occasion. With Ed working with the railroad, Sebastian had become my companion with all the lonesome hours that I would have otherwise had. He was more than just "a dog". He was there for me during the death of my Dad, family

problems, the death of my Grandmother, death of my Father-in-law, birth of my grandchildren and during heavy personal issues in my marriage. He was my confidant and listened to all my concerns. He always showed interest and never walked away when I would pour out my heart to him. Of course he couldn't answer me, but he always showed loyalty and provided me with lots of kisses freely.

There were a few things as he aged that he didn't care for. . . thunder, getting groomed, seeing us pull out the suit cases and going to the vet. Once when I had to go to work one day, I had left Sebastian in the kitchen with the gates up at the door ways. I always left a little kitchen light on, either the TV on Animal Planet or the stereo on soft music for him when I'd have to leave him in the kitchen for any time



period. Well, that night a horrible hail storm came up with base ball sized hail. It had broken out both the storm windows and the inside windows in the kitchen. That must have terrified the little fellow because he would always make a bee line for me to hold him during any storm from that day forward. It was always an ordeal taking him to the vet and to be groomed. From the time we would leave the house until the time we started returning home he'd shake & tremble so very badly. He was terrified of going to the vet even though they were extremely loving and gentle to him at Palmetto Animal Hospital. Kim Coleman had been his groomer pretty much all of his life and he loved her. He just didn't like being bathed. Maybe it was the blow drying he didn't like. I had tried to groom him on several occasions myself, but he whined and carried on so bad until I didn't have the heart to do it. He didn't like folks messing with his ears either. If you acted like you were going to look in his ears he would put that ear down on your chest and push against you so you couldn't look into it. As for suitcases, he would always get upset when he saw them coming down out of the attic. He knew he was going to be separated from us for a few days so we eventually had to pull them down when he was out of sight. He would really get excited when we asked him if

he wanted to go to the beach. He loved to go there.

As he got older there were new things he enjoyed. He truly loved to ride down to the beach and stay at our trailer at Ocean Isle Beach. In the trailer he was the king. He had choices of places to lay . . . chairs, beds, couch and if he was lucky a rabbit or squirrel would be in the yard for him to make chase to. Now the highlight of his trip down to the beach was riding on the golf cart. He loved it. Often he would jump up on it in hopes you'd take him for a ride or if you had taken him for a ride he would stay on the seat and not want to get off. Then down at the



intercostal waterway he'd just have to mark everything, but he never did want to get in the water. He never did like to get his paws wet, even on the deck after a rain at home. Everyone down there knew Sebastian and had fallen in love with him likewise, especially Mary Strickland.

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On the night of May 2, Ed had taken off work expecting to be returning from a golf tournament in Greenville, SC. I had gone scuba diving that day with friends and got home around 10:30 pm that night . . . unusually late for me. Being extremely tired I wanted to be certain that I’d sleep well that night since I had to work grave yard shift the following night so I took a benadryl and headed to bed shortly after getting in. Before getting ready for bed that night I had picked up Sebastian in the living room and held him to my heart and loved on him and talked to him. He seemed happy to see me, as usual, when I had returned home that night and had not seemed to be in any distress. Ed said he had gone outside and did his business so we headed to bed. It didn’t take me but minutes to fall into a deep sleep. At around 2:45 I got up to go to the bathroom and all was quiet. At 3:15 a loud strange howl was coming from under the bed where Sebastian was. I didn’t think a lot about it since I had heard Sebastian bark, whimper and howl in his sleep before. I just figured he was dreaming once again. Ed told him to be quiet. Ed was thinking like me that Sebastian was just acting out a dream. He howled once more, but not to the magnitude of the first howl. After this I fell back off to sleep. Ed stayed awake however. He said he heard Sebastian making a “coughing-like” sound, but thought nothing peculiar about it. Oh how my soul hurts now to know that I never got the chance to say a good bye while my dog was alive. I will never have complete closure on his death as a result of this. I look back at all the times that Sebastian had been there for me full of love, full of kisses when I was pouring out my fears & worries to him on the back deck and now when perhaps he was trying to painfully say good bye

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