

My son has often said, "You replaced me with a dog when I moved out." Indeed I did and that dog was a Rottweiler, a 70-pound lap dog who loved me for ten years. His name was Max, and it should have been Angel. Max has crossed the rainbow bridge and is proudly wearing his new name tag which says, "Max, best boy ever."

I got Max from a rescue group. I had gone to a pet store to look at a particular dog. This group displayed their dogs at a pet store each Saturday so that people could visit and get to know them. Most dogs had been fostered so the volunteers could give an accurate description of each dog's temperament. The dog I wanted had just been adopted. I was leaving when I was introduced to Max, aka Roger. No one was interested in this giant dog with a spotted tongue. I wasn't either until he came for a walk with me around the store. He was a perfect gentleman and gently inspected each item on the shelves. My daughter and her husband had come along to give their opinion. They loved Max. As Max and I were wandering - and I was still wondering - my daughter was purchasing a stuffed bear toy. "He's been eyeballing it," she said. Soon Max was in the back seat of my Toyota drooling like a madman as I drove. I was baptised in dog drool and Max had a new home!

Max was the sweetest, most gentle giant. He never met a person, cat, or other dog that he didn't love. He loved all my friends and family. He even loved our cranky cat, Charley Brown. His interactions with Charley Brown consisted of ignoring the cat who was constantly hissing at him. My neighbors adored Max and would come in to feed him when I was running late. The groomers would fight over who got to trim Max. He never chewed on anything, never bit anyone, and was perfectly house trained when I got him.

He was so scared to let me out of his sight that he followed me everywhere, including the bathroom. When he was groomed, you could see bite marks around his neck and trunk. He had probably lived on the streets. He would look behind to see if I was still standing there every time he went out. He stood by the front door every time I left and again when I came home. He loved his kibble and ate every meal like he'd never seen food. His only flaw was that he shed a ton of fur. To make life easier I bought a couch the exact shade of Max's coat.

Max went on two road trips in his later years; one to the beach and one to the mountains. We think he preferred the mountains.

In 2017 he needed extensive dental surgery. I took him to a well-known university animal hospital. He looked at me with huge brown eyes that were full of questions and fear as they took him into the surgical suite. I retreated to the restroom where I cried for 30 minutes.

Max recovered from his surgery but declined in health that year. In December he began having seizures. Then the day came that I had been half-expecting and fully dreading. It started at 3:30 am and ended 4 hours later. My vet wasn't even in the office that day. He stopped by to look for his cell phone just as I pulled up. When he saw the tears on my face, he turned off his car and sprang into action. Before I could turn around, he and his assistant carried my dog into the clinic. Max was hooked up to an IV when I got inside. I have never been in the back room of an animal clinic. It was so quiet. The vet and I talked, I kissed

Max, and I left. I couldn't stay to see him go. I am sure that he knew and understood, and we had already said our goodbyes.

Max was such a joyful soul. His loyalty and devotion were astounding. I cannot fathom what I ever did to deserve that kind of love.

A replacement dog came to live with me in 2018. My son said, "Why is Max's picture on your wall and you have no pictures of your new dog?" I said, "Because he EARNED it."