

CODI'S JOURNEY



*An Inspiring and Heartwarming Story
About an Amazing Best Friend*

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1. April 12, 2004

As the spring of 2004 arrived, it became very apparent that our Border Collie, Codi (or “the BC” as we often referred to her), had lost some weight over the winter. This was very unusual. Typically, our dogs tended to put on some pounds during previous winter seasons due to their reduced outdoor activity. Initially we didn’t think much of it since, during a trip to the veterinarian in February for her annual shots, the doctor didn’t raise any flags about her weight. Moreover, her appetite certainly hadn’t changed and her energy level was essentially as high as ever, even though she had just turned twelve years old.

Codi, like most Border Collies, was always a very active dog, one that literally demanded to play (also known as work) several times a day. If you’re not familiar with this breed, words cannot adequately describe just how committed these dogs are to their work and how intensely they focus on it. If you’ve actually had one in your life then you know exactly what I’m talking about. Simply put, Border Collies are not the type of dog to leave alone all day without something to keep them occupied, as they actually crave activities that challenge them both physically and mentally.

While visiting my brother’s house for Easter dinner, we mentioned Codi’s weight loss to my sister-in-law, Roseann, an avid animal lover. Her response was a strong recommendation to take the BC to the vet as soon as possible. She stressed that, as with humans, weight loss in a pet can be indicative of a serious medical condition. While I clearly

heard what she said, I chose not to focus on it, primarily because Codi had, for the most part, been a very healthy dog her whole life. This, combined with the fact that in my spiritual growth process I learned the importance of not giving thought or feeling energy to what I *didn't want*, caused me to hesitate in calling the vet early the very next day to make an appointment. Looking back, I suppose there also was a bit of “denial” operating within me, because, at some level, I refused to believe my beloved animal soul mate could actually have contracted a serious illness.

This attitude didn't last very long. Even though I was doing my best to apply positive thinking to the situation, my gut-level instincts were telling me Codi's health was indeed at risk. Nonetheless, before calling the vet the next morning I decided to check in with my dear friend Lisa Jacobsen, a very gifted energy healer¹, who has uncanny skills as a “medical intuitive.” If you're unfamiliar with this skill, individuals who possess it have the ability to recognize patterns of illnesses within people or animals without any need to actually be in the same room, town, state, or country for that matter. In essence, they are able to psychically tune in to the patient's energy field² and intuitively see/feel if there is an energy blockage that either has the potential to lead to the development of some type of disease, or which already has. Perhaps the most renowned medical intuitive in the U.S. today is Caroline Myss, who has written numerous books about healing and has been an occasional guest on The Oprah Show.

In any event, when I phoned Lisa on Monday afternoon she could noticeably sense I was in some emotional

distress about the situation. Out of the kindness of her heart, she offered to take a few moments to “look into” Codi’s energy field. After the phone went quiet for a minute or so, Lisa returned to say that she sensed some type of irregular cell growth on the left side of her liver near the edge of the rib cage. In that moment my heart literally sank, and I quickly asked, “When you say *irregular* cell growth do you mean something like a *cancerous* growth?” Lisa replied there was no way she could say for certain. She suggested we make a trip to a vet as soon as possible to acquire a formal medical diagnosis. Since I had come to trust her judgment implicitly, I put Codi in the car and drove the short drive to the nearest veterinarian’s office offering walk-in services, instead of driving over 30 miles to see our usual vet.

From the moment I heard Lisa’s words, it was clear this would be a major test of my ability to apply a spiritual approach to this situation. My mind started racing with all sorts of thoughts, most of them based in fear and worry. As I drove the short trip to the local vet, Codi stood in her usual spot on the front passenger seat staring intently out the front window. As was customary with our car trips I commanded her to *sit down* a few times. Each time she looked at me and totally ignored the instruction.

It wasn’t that she didn’t understand the command. No, not at all – she fully understood but defiantly did what she wanted to do anyway. That was our Codi all right, an independent spirit who was, in reality, the alpha dog of the household. Over the years we lived with her, my wife, Andrea, and I remarked many times how lucky we felt that

Codi allowed *us* to live in the house with her.

When we arrived at the vet's office and finished the registration process, it wasn't long before we were escorted into an examining room. There a vet technician weighed Codi, and also made notes regarding the reason for our visit. A few minutes later, a young and very compassionate vet named Sandra entered and asked me a series of questions. After several minutes of discussion, she recommended an x-ray and full blood workup, including a liver panel, be completed. Naturally, I agreed, and Codi soon was led away for her x-ray and blood draw. A short time later she was brought back to the room, and not long afterwards Sandra returned with the completed x-ray. At this point my heart was pumping fast as my body filled with adrenaline. I was hoping against hope Lisa was incorrect in her observation.

Referring to the x-ray, Sandra pointed out some dark shading that indicated irregular tissue on the liver. She cautioned the only way to be certain as to its nature would be to perform an ultrasound test. I then asked her what area of the organ she was referring to, thinking back to Lisa's original impression. Sandra replied that the suspect tissue was on the left lobe of the liver, very near to the rib cage; *precisely where Lisa had said it was*. 'A simply amazing effort on Lisa's part,' I briefly thought, but the fact was we still didn't know the exact nature of the problem. According to the vet, it was at least possible the tissue in question wasn't malignant, which gave me some faint amount of hope. When the results of the blood work were available the next morning we would have a much better idea of the liver's

overall health, but that information alone wouldn't be enough to provide an exact diagnosis. For that, the ultrasound obviously had to be completed.

Given Codi's importance to our family, there was no alternative but to agree to the test. It would be conducted the following afternoon at a sister facility located about 15 miles away. I also was told to phone in around 10 the next morning for the blood test results, which would likewise be faxed to the other facility. Standing there in the examining room with Sandra, the seriousness of the situation finally hit me and I was moved to tears as I shared with her how much Codi had meant to us over the years. She did her best to reassure me, cautioning it was simply too early in the process to draw any definitive conclusions about the condition. Despite those assurances, feelings of fear and sadness gripped me while considering the possibility Codi might indeed be seriously ill. After a couple more minutes of conversation, Sandra said goodbye and wished us well. We then left the examining room and prepared to leave.

After settling up at the desk we headed back to the car. As I sat down in the driver's seat I looked over at Codi, embraced her and began to cry. She quickly wiggled out of my grasp and in typical Codi style looked at me intently as if to say, "Take me home, I have work to do." I wasn't offended because being standoffish was just part of her nature, as was the fixation on *work* I referenced earlier. During the short drive home, my mind continued to focus on reviewing potential outcomes of this situation while Codi once again stood up in the passenger seat gazing out at life, clearly unaffected by what had just transpired.

Codi's Journey

When we got back home she jumped out of the car, picked up one of her Frisbees and went directly to the back door of the garage, demanding to go out and play. Andrea then came out of the house with our other dog, Heidi, who barked like crazy to greet us both and joined her pal in wanting to play. A rescue dog, Heidi joined our family a day after Christmas of 1995 as a present from my well-meaning brother Mike and his wife Roseann. As we headed out to the backyard, I began updating Andrea on what we had learned in our visit to the vet. Her eyes promptly filled with tears, triggering mine to once again do the same. We embraced for a few moments and then began tossing toys for the dogs.

Throughout the rest of that evening we made a concerted effort not to dwell on the “what ifs” of the situation, but there was no denying our deep concern about what the next day’s news would bring.

II. Codi's Comedy

Previously I mentioned that Codi would usually respond with a very comical eye-roll whenever we asked her to do something she evidently felt was beneath her. However, this wasn't her only amusing behavior. Over the years there were plenty of times when she would let her guard down and do something totally out of her typically very serious character.

Perhaps Codi's most humorous exploit was something we ultimately came to call "going Border Collie Crazy," or *BCC* for short. It all started when she was about five months old, coinciding with the time when we began to leave her alone in the house for longer periods of time. One day, upon returning from a shopping trip that kept us away for longer than we had ever been before, the BC greeted us enthusiastically at the back door and then immediately launched into a high-speed romp through the house.

This wasn't just a quick gallop from one end of the abode to the other and back again. No, this was a sustained burst of pent-up energy that included jumping on and off the couch, crawling on her belly under the cocktail table, rising up again and sprinting down the hall to the bedroom, leaping on and off the bed, circling a padded chair, then repeating the same process at least twice more until she finally got it out of her system. It essentially happened so fast that all we could do was stand back and laugh hysterically as this wild-eyed Border Collie treated our entire house like it was the setting for an agility competition!

Codi's Journey

This riotous and very entertaining behavior was actually something we had the opportunity to enjoy on many occasions over the first few years of Codi's life. She eventually stopped doing it soon after Heidi joined the family, most likely because someone was finally there to keep her company when we were away from the house. Although it's been well over a decade since Codi last went BCC, just the thought of her running insanely through the house in that manner still brings a big smile to my face.



Another of Codi's comedic antics happened out of the blue one day when she was about a year old. I was in the process of brushing my teeth while walking around the house. When I sat down on a chair in front of the tv, she suddenly leapt up next to me and starting licking the toothpaste that had leaked out of the corner of my mouth. Andrea, who also was in the room, started laughing out loud and, even though I immediately pushed the BC away, the seed was planted for a behavior that would ultimately continue for years.

Maybe it was the spearmint flavor that hooked her, or perhaps an unconscious desire to improve her dental hygiene. Whatever it was, from that day forward whenever I brushed my teeth I had to remain on guard for a potential sneak attack of toothpaste licking! Because of this, I made sure to never again sit down while brushing. But as the picture of Codi putting her paws on the bathroom sink (shown later in the photo gallery) demonstrates, that

behavioral adjustment alone couldn't ensure that the BC wouldn't try an alternative way to get another taste. Over the years, the fact that I thwarted her advance every time she tried never deterred her from trying again. And, no matter how many times she did so, we always enjoyed a good giggle over it.



When playing with her Frisbee, or any other toy for that matter, Codi always came across as a very confident dog. In addition, the fact she never cowered in front of any human that approached might have led anyone who interacted with her to conclude that she was a very powerful being. The funny thing was, though, this self-assured persona didn't transfer over to the times she connected with other dogs. In fact, except for Heidi, Codi recoiled whenever another dog came close to her and, God forbid if they actually tried to sniff her behind! At such times she put on a "terrified puppy" act that left us feeling a bit embarrassed and usually led to some hearty laughter on the part of the humans who witnessed the interaction.

Although we had become accustomed to Codi's excessive shyness around other dogs, during the midst of a walk around the neighborhood one day she took this timidity to another level. Seemingly out of nowhere, a tiny Golden Labrador puppy came darting into the street to greet us. In the pup's zeal to introduce herself she just about frightened the BC half to death. In fact, Codi was so startled by this canine infant that she literally tried to

jump into my arms. Andrea and I just burst out laughing at the sight of this normally intense and determined Border Collie being intimidated by such a harmless little dog barely a third of her size. Based on this experience, it was a darned good thing Codi didn't end up living on a farm because, if she had, the sheep might never have been brought in from pasture.



Codi's toy obsession wasn't limited to just Frisbees and tennis balls, as she also was fascinated with any type of dog toy, particularly those that made a squeaking sound. Each time we'd throw one for her she'd squeak the darned thing 10 or 20 times before dropping it on the floor for us to toss again. While that behavior alone was pretty humorous, what always gave us a hearty laugh was her habit of quickly bouncing her front legs up and down whenever we'd turn the table on her by squeaking the toy in rapid succession. While doing this we'd also say "dancey-dancey" to her a few times, because it literally appeared as if she were dancing in a very rhythmic motion. The truth is she was probably just so annoyed with our delay in tossing the toy that she simply had to vent her frustration in some way! Over the years I lost count of the number of toys we were forced to replace because of Codi's ability to wear out the squeaker device in them so swiftly.



As a rule, the vast majority of the people who interacted with Codi only experienced her renowned intensity as a toy-obsessed Border Collie. Other than in rare instances (like the attack of the Golden Lab puppy) it was usually just Andrea and I, or her dog-sitter Rick, who had the opportunity to see the BC's comedic side in action. One notable exception occurred once when we needed to go out of town and my sister Jan and her family volunteered to take care of Codi for a few days. Their dog, Mickey, had recently passed, so she and her daughters, Michele and Lauren, were really looking forward to having a dog around the house again.

When we dropped the BC off on a Friday afternoon, the girls showed obvious excitement at the prospects of having Codi with them for an entire weekend. They also particularly were looking forward to playing Frisbee with her. We said our goodbyes and off we went, feeling very confident that she was in great hands. After all, not only were they very responsible people, they also knew how much Codi meant to us both.

As it turned out, on the following day during a play session, one Frisbee toss Michele made accidentally floated outside of her line of sight with Codi in hot pursuit. When the BC failed to return after about a minute Michele started calling her name. After perhaps a minute more, she still neither saw nor heard any sign of Codi. It didn't take long for Michele to start to panic a bit, so she ran in the

house to enlist the aid of Jan and Lauren in locating her.

The three of them then spread out and began looking all around the property, calling Codi's name the entire time. Finally, after frantically searching for a few minutes more, Michele looked behind some overgrown bushes next to the house and found Codi, stuck in one of the basement window wells with the Frisbee still in her mouth. Apparently, the BC was unwilling to drop it and, as a result, she couldn't bark and let them know her whereabouts!

Within seconds Jan and Lauren joined Michele in looking down at the BC in the window well, at which point all of them began laughing like crazy about her calm demeanor in the face of such a potentially stressful predicament. When relating these events to me, Michele remarked that the moment she came across her, the look on Codi's face seemed to say, "What the heck took you so long to find me?"

35. Author Contact

If you would care to comment or have questions regarding this book, please direct your correspondence to:

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Readers are also invited to post comments regarding the book, or about their own experiences with dogs or other pets, on the *Codi's Journey* blog website at www.Codipup.com or on the *Codi's Journey* Facebook page.