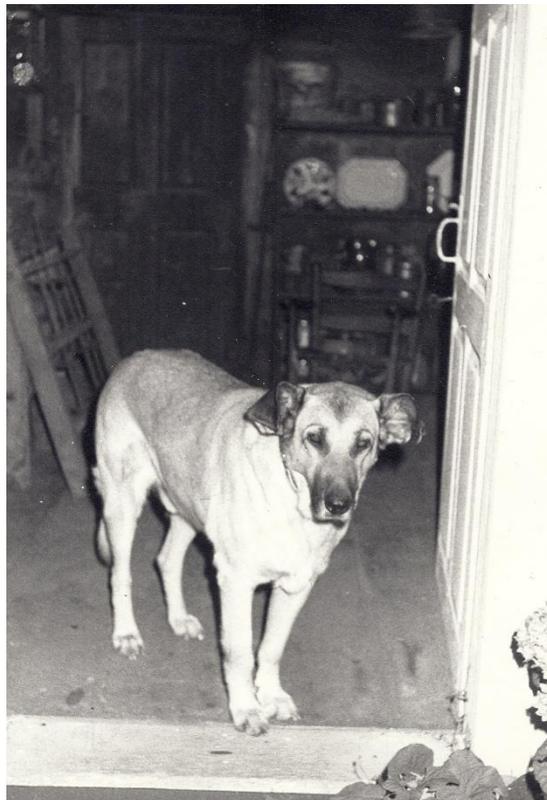


Rebel: a four legged companion

I finally got to sleep very late last evening. Just before I turned my light off my gaze fell on a framed picture sitting on the floor against an early chest of drawers. It was not on the floor because it was unimportant to me but because the wall was covered with all sorts of treasures. I could see the photograph quite clearly. So many memories came flowing back to me from years gone by. Just how many years ago was the likeness of Rebel taken? More time had slipped by than I first remembered. I turned the light off and went back to sleep. When next I awoke the morning light filled the room. Somehow the light cast a silvery shadow over the glass in the frame. The image had become obscured, just as the subject passed into obscurity thirty nine years ago. Rebel as a very small puppy came into my life and into the family sometime in the mid 1960s. Son Andy and my wife's father Ben made a trip to the farm butcher shop where a beef cow from our farm was taken to process into hamburger and steaks. When they returned home a light tan colored puppy came with them. Andy came to the back door and said: "The man gave me this little hound puppy." We had a farm dog and I had always known dogs that were like members of the family from my earliest youth. On that day I did not realize how attached I would become to this one who soon became known as Rebel.



As puppies do Rebel really grew. It became evident that he was part hound and part German shepherd. This did not appear to be any setback to this noble looking animal. He got what you would call big. His tail was German shepherd. His ears were also, but did not stand up. Instead they flopped over like his hound ancestry. Even for his size he had a gentle disposition. He might push a visitor off their feet in greeting them and bark to announce their coming but there was no sign of being vicious. He did seem

to be protective of me to the point that I think he was smart enough that in an emergency I could have set him onto someone but luckily it never became necessary. When Rebel grew up he became interested in girl dogs just like any healthy male dog will. In a few years he ventured forth into the neighborhood. Both Ethel and I spent hours to find him and bring him home. He had a heavy collar with my name and his license on it. Each year a new license was attached. Rebel became very attached to that collar. Sometimes in playing with him I would say: "Reb – come here and turn in your collar." I'd slip the collar over his head and he would act totally insulted. Rebel was a house dog from the beginning and one of the cleanest ones I ever remember. We treated him almost like a person and possibly he thought he was. He never got onto the furniture. When it became time to go to bed his place was on the rug beside it. I remember one time late in the night he suddenly woke us. When checking we found that the electric wires between house and barn were entwined and great showers of sparks were flying. "Reb" really did his job that night. When it came meal time he would wait patiently for his and sometimes be handed some morsel from the table. His favorite was pie and so was mine. Ethel baked an extra piece for Rebel. When living with a canine we often wonder just how many words that animal really understands. Probably the truth is that there are many.

There are three words that were tops for Rebel. They were "walk", "ride", and "pie". Let me tell you about Rebel and the word pie. There is no disputing the skill of Stone Arabia cooks in baking; pie especially. During the years of Rebel's living in our household I worked in one location. My carpenter work was doing on the ancient Brower farm. Occasionally some friends would ask me to do some job for them. One such time was when the Getman family of East Stone Arabia wanted some work on their old family farm. The Getmans were dog lovers. When I said that Rebel went with me every day he was welcomed also.

Nellie was the matriarch of the family. I was told to not bring my lunch. When it came lunch time I told Rebel to lie down by my place at the table. All went well until Nellie said we were to have pie for desert. Rebel started to make enough noise to tell us he was still there. Nellie said: "What is the matter with Rebel?" I told her that he know the word PIE very well. Nellie said "Rebel, can have a piece of pie." The elderly lady went to the cupboard and got a clean plate. The pie was put onto it and set near Rebel on the floor.

He made no move and Nellie said "I do not blame you, Rebel, it was not too good a pie." I told her that was not the difficulty. Rebel did not know that it was for him. When I said: "You can have the pie, Rebel," it disappeared very rapidly.

Rebel the patient patient

When I drove into the Brower farm or my old place on Kilts Road I'd tell Reb to look around. He did just that – examine all around the buildings. On a snowy day at Kilts he made a quick trip around my recently purchased Dutch Barn. When he returned to me he kept looking at his front foot. Then I saw the blood on the snow. He had cut his foot on a piece of glass frozen into the ice. It was a large and deep cut. He needed attention and he needed it quickly. We made the trip to the family veterinarian, Dr Vedder. Rebel was given an anesthetic and the cut was sewn up. The area was bandaged and I took

him home before he came to. It was longer than I thought it would be before he regained his natural self. The cut needed medication and a new bandage for a few days.

When it was done I tied a plastic bag on his foot on wet days. I said: "Reb, you leave that on there!" The surprising thing was that he did just that. How many so called dumb animals would have done that?

Further ramblings with Rebel

There are many happenings every day with Rebel, even though it was many years ago that came to mind. Rebel's love of water would be one. When he was with us we sometimes went swimming in the creek at Wagner's Hollow. If there were children there at the same time they soon learned to grasp Rebel's tail and be towed across the water. Both he and they seemed to greatly enjoy it.

Was Rebel jealous? I used to have fun with him at my old Kilts House. On the wall was a full size model of a horse head. If I patted it and said "Nice horsie" he would show his displeasure in no uncertain terms.

Garden planting and protecting it

When spring arrived each year it was planting time for Ethel Barshied, the "Stone Arabia pumpkin lady." I tilled the gardens and often help to plant the pumpkin seeds. One day I told Ethel that I would get Rebel to help plant the seeds. She doubted he could do it. As we went down a row I would point to the desired place and say: "Rebel, dig right there!" Surprisingly he would do it and I would drop the seeds and cover them. Most of a row was planted before Rebel or I gave up and let the master gardener plant the rest of the garden.

Where garden protection came for Rebel was when we think of his never ending war against woodchucks that was greatly encouraged by Ethel. These creatures seemed to make a special effort to eat her plants when they emerged. I tried to tell her that she should not hold it against the wood chucks but be honored that she was growing something they enjoyed eating. That was not a popular subject. Despite all this the gardens thrived through the years. Luckily most of these groundhogs reached their burrows before Rebel could catch them and then some did not.

An expose: Rebel meets the law

This big gentle canine named Rebel was not known for infractions of the law. That is, with the exception of occasionally making love with one of the neighbors' lady dogs or helping to wash the wheel of a car that usually did not need it.

Let me tell you how he once met the law. I was driving my van along Main Street in Palatine Bridge. Rebel was sitting bolt upright in the passenger seat, thinking he was a people. It just happened that we came to a traffic check. Several State Troopers were making a thorough check of all vehicles. A trooper walked up to the driver's side window. I turned the window down and Rebel climbed over onto my lap and decided to check this new invader out. Their noses were only a few inches apart. I said: "Reb, don't bite him or we're going to be in big trouble." The officer first laughed then just waved us on.

Nearing the end

One of Rebel's enjoyments was chasing the snowmobile. I often stopped so Rebel could rest. As spring was around the corner in 1974 I noted a change in Rebel. The greatest one came one day in February. He had chased the snowmobile. I thought he had overdone it and it was my fault. My first thought was that he had had a heart attack. In the days that followed it was evident that he was filling with fluid. In spite of his increasing weight I helped him into the van so he could go along with me as he had for such a long time. We took him to a vet clinic south of Amsterdam in an effort to help. All that was done for a human was done for Rebel. It was determined that his problem was not his heart. The vet said there was some problem with his blood that pointed towards a malignancy. His condition worsened at home. Rebel was suffering so I decided to face one of the really tough decisions of my life. I'd have Rebel put to sleep. I sat on the floor of the kitchen with his head on my lap. The vet did his job and Rebel, without a shudder or whimper, left the world. Later that day when I was sure he would not come back to life I wrapped him in plastic leaving his collar on. The ground was frozen outside so I removed some planks from my Dutch Barn floor and prepared his final resting place. The planks were replaced and over the place I fixed a bronze plate on a timber. It said: "In memory of my friend Rebel. Died March 1, 1974." There, 39 years later people still ask about that plate and what it means. Then the nine years that were together come rushing back to me. They were great years.

Skip Barshied, Stone Arabia, March 1, 2013