

PLEASE PUBLISH THIS MEMORIAL TO DYLAN ON YOUR
- WEBSITE IF YOU ARE ABLE FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL
THOSE WHO LOVED
Memorial to
DYLAN. THANKS.

Dylan Kelley, October 13, 2011 to January 24, 2016, the Love of my Old Age

By Don Kelley, his Companion

My dog, Dylan, was a crowd-stopper. Perhaps over the course of his short life and well beyond it I was told more than a thousand times, "What a gorgeous, happy energetic dog you have [or had]! Indeed he was all of that and far more than one could have hoped for. He was never exactly what I expected, however, and that was part of his charm. I bought him at 8 weeks of age from a small litter of 5 yellow to whitish pure-bred Labrador retrievers from a family in Reinholds, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. I had seen him on an internet video with his tiny playmates and they all looked like miniature English labs to me, short and squatty and waddling just like my old dog, Ashley, an English lab who had recently died. When I first held Dylan in my hands it was obvious, however, that he was an American lab through and through. He was destined to be tall and thin and rangy, a field dog for the hunt as his ancestors had prepared him to be. He really had no "yellow" on him at all but was mostly pure white with a light shading of fawnish tan on his back and ear flaps.

The only time I ever saw Dylan in distress was when I placed him in a small carrying case in my car for the two and a half hour ride to Pittstown, New Jersey, where he was to attend puppy boarding school for several months. He cried piteously on that stressful trip but as soon as he was released to his new home he was happy to meet the new dogs and the new people and I knew that he would be alright. He was placed in the hands of a loving family and there he met 7 or 8 dogs of various ages mostly uncrated most of the time. He came back from his schooling house-broken and knowing a few commands and trusting and loving all people and all dogs and all living creatures except insects, the only adversaries he detested and warred against. He wanted badly to introduce himself to our local red fox but I would not permit it. He was curious about anything that moved including leaves or flying papers. He loved to watch splashy cartoons on TV or nature programs with the sounds of wild animals mixed in. I never saw him angry or growling or displeased at a single thing. He was completely unafraid and saw no enemies in the world of any serious nature except annoying flies or bees and these were trivial. He loved going to the vet where we could meet new animals and new people. At the near-by dog park which was essential for his energetic and athletic personality he did his share of humping other dogs but when the other dogs humped him in return he never complained or snapped but was always good natured about it. If any of the dogs got too rough for him Dylan would find an L in the fence and quietly stand his

ground until the excitement was over. He was beautifully graceful and supple on his feet and loved puppy-play. He was known as the athlete of the dog park for whatever a young dog could do he could do better and with boundless energy to boot.

Dylan was fortunate to have an owner who could devote much time to him. He was a big chewer as a puppy and sometimes when he was alone his energy went into destroying a cell phone or a remote or taking a big bite out of the couch. (I got a throw to cover my mother's couch so that I could use it a bit longer after his partial destruction of it and I still use it.) I had a 3½ foot fence put up to keep the big D out of the living room and bedroom. He jumped right over that so I extended the fence to 7 ft. but unfortunately the bottom portion was flex and situated 4 inches above the floor so Dylan put his snout through the little opening and just kept pushing. He was quite pleased with his ingenuity but a third visit from maintenance fixed that. I had to stay close to him when he was a young puppy and get him to the dog park where we held the record jointly for the most visits in rain or shine, snow or ice, winter or searing summer. I called my big D the 115% dog for whatever a dog could do Dylan could do the same, just more of it. If dogs loved to eat Dylan was a voracious eater and ate faster than any of the others. If labs loved to swim Dylan swam until he was exhausted. If dogs loved to smell hundreds of aromas the big D would stop to smell the most fulsomely of all and at prolonged leisure and I gave him a lot of freedom to do that for I knew he loved smelling. He would move his nose quite methodically up a post to capture every smell it held. If dogs liked to roll on their backs in the grass Dylan would roll over on his back 7 or 8 times a day. He was literally consumed by life and lived life to the fullest. As he grew to maturity he was a very strong dog and weighed 75 to 80 pounds without an ounce of fat on him. I had to get a harness to better control him since he loved to jump up on people to greet them and that was forbidden at Ann's Choice. He mostly learned not to bark in the apartment unless someone knocked on the door where he could provide fair warning of an intruder. He loved to push his toys slowly to the edge of the balcony and watch them fall over the edge as my "under-neighbors" soon discovered. They were kind enough to return most of them to me.

My dog was a natural born retriever. The first time I threw a ball out into the center of the dog park he ran out and picked it up and returned it right to my feet and dropped it. No other dog could do that consistently. Sometimes having been pent up in our apartment for awhile he would retrieve 30 or 40 times in a row, me using a chuck-it to scoop up the orange ball on a lacrosse-like stick and hurl it outward over and over. Dylan learned to "pick up" if he was distracted but near his ball, he learned to "find your ball" and he discovered how to "drop it" if he was still holding his ball when he returned to me. He would drop his ball on command but not his canine junk food if he had scooped it up once he had it in his mouth. Privately he said to himself, "I actually know more commands than I respond to." That was o.k. with me.

When Dylan was 3½ years old he had his first epileptic fit that was very scary and lasted about five minutes but seemed forever. Another one occurred at 4 years of age and another partial one about a month later. He came out of these episodes seemingly strong and fine and he was not put on medication. It was a warning sign though. In early January of this year I was shocked when he suddenly refused to retrieve, something that he had always loved to do. I was even more appalled when he turned away from his kibble, something unprecedented. By this point he was drinking large amounts of water but not getting much help from it. Of course I got him to the vet fast: after a half day of frantic testing he was proclaimed to have acute kidney failure with three-fourths of his kidneys destroyed. Dogs cannot live on one-fourth of their kidney capacity and the vet gave him two weeks to live. He died 13 days later.

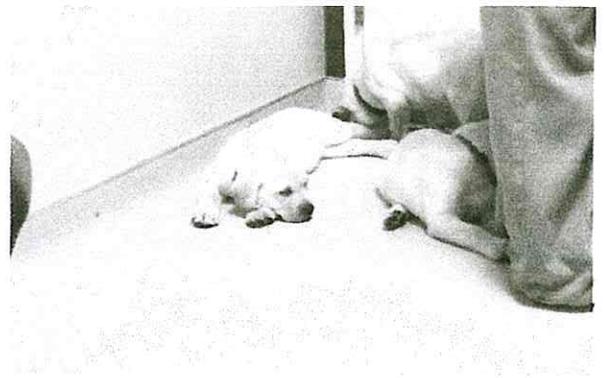
My good friends, the Glazmans, provided Dylan with chicken soup and other tasty eateries. Now the sky was the limit on food and Dylan loved his new and “magical” food right to his last day. I felt sad that I had not fed him more imaginatively in the past. He remained surprisingly strong and was totally devoted to me. It is hard to describe how the two of us had bonded in absolute love and devotion, this at the termination. For a long time I had eaten my meals with Dylan, ordering them into the apartment, he begging for more of my food in hope of a little extra morsel. We slept in the bed together for most of the night, he jumping up on the bed easily. Even near the end we planned picnics for the two of us along the Wissahickon, he with his water and dog food carried on my back. At this last stage of his life he wanted to do everything to please me and had even learned the “slow” command to slow down and not pull me fast over rocks and a steep downward grade. When we came to a fork in the path he would no longer behave as if he wanted to smell more on the right side or to the left. He would turn around and grin happily at me and say: “Which way are we going? That’s the way I want to go!”

The end was unbelievable. We took our last visit to the dog park in the last week of his life. We were alone in the park. I turned him loose and took the long sad walk around the periphery of the fenced area. He stayed right with me and didn’t wander off. When we returned to the shed where people sit and dog toys are kept he lifted himself on his back feet and clearly wanted to reach up and get his chuck-it that we had donated to the dog park. “Do you want to chuck-it?,” I asked him and he seemed eager. I threw the ball into mid-field and he loped after it, not fully running but at a good clip. He picked up the orange ball in his mouth and returned it to me, his feet light and prancing, his stature proud and deeply at contentment at what he wanted to do for me and himself. He placed his orange ball perfectly at my feet as he had always done. “Do you want to chuck-it again?,” I said and threw the ball out once more. He just looked at me. He had already given me his grand finale and what a sight it was, a farewell of all farewells and a special gift just for me alone in a lonely park.

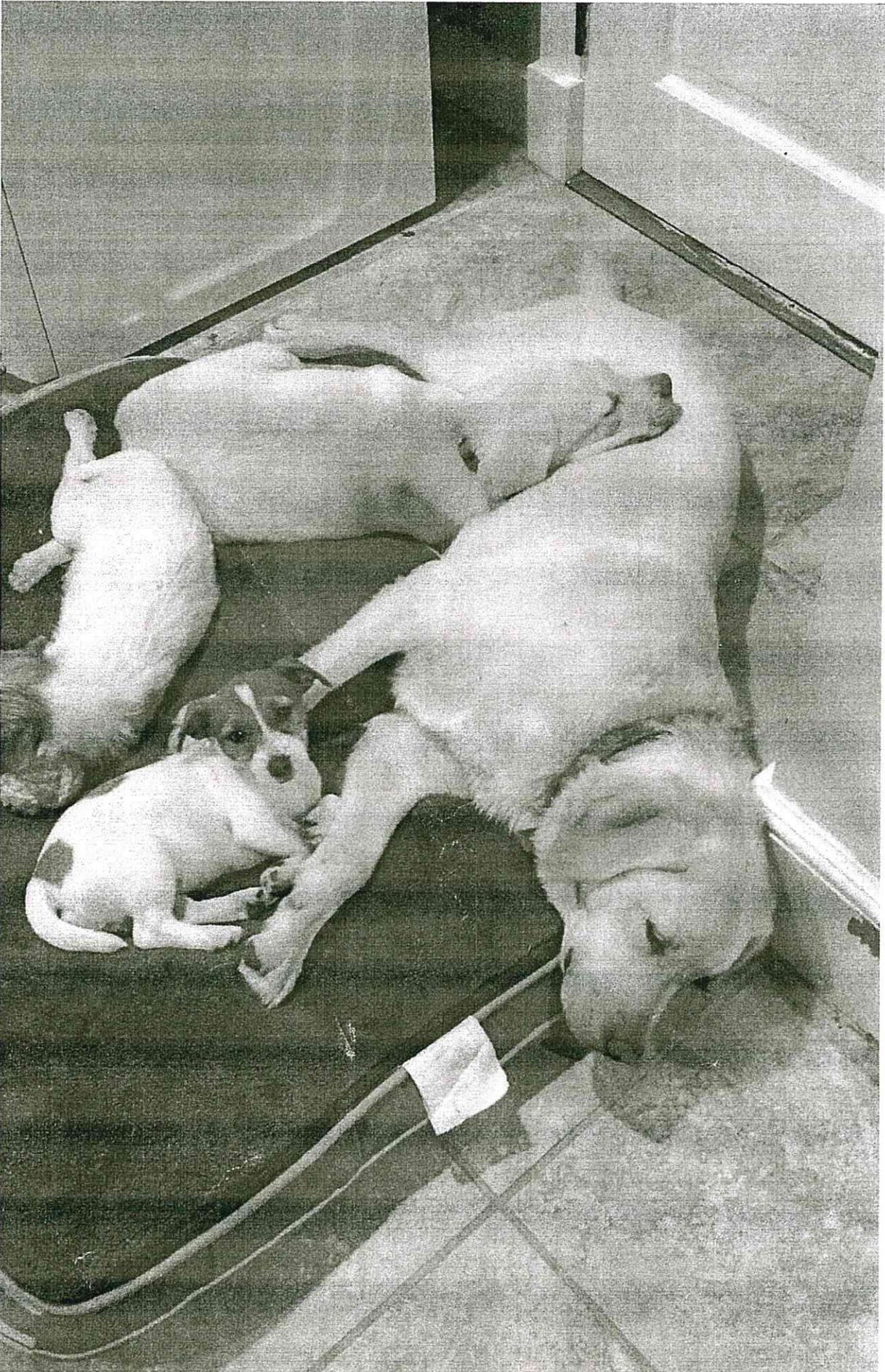
Three days before his death we took our last metered or measured three mile walk together. Those who have taken a legitimate three mile walk know that it is a tremendously long walk. Dylan didn't slow me down a bit and stayed right with me, though I find myself completely exhausted on the forced three mile walks I have taken since his demise. I could tell, however, as we approached our apartment that he was getting tired so I took him up on the elevator to our third floor apartment. I can't really imagine how much he wanted to be with me to make such a long walk in his condition. But the big D was strong and courageous to the end. 36 hours before his death we took our final 20 minute walk around the Keystone clubhouse here at Ann's Choice. Someone in a car actually stopped and rolled down his window and said, "What a gorgeous puppy you have there!" I could see the bones protruding from Dylan's body and the flesh hanging from his side and his fur dried out and matted but he was still a gorgeous dog to me so I just smiled and agreed with the stranger and we went our separate ways.

Dylan, though he had eaten his breakfast, was showing signs of real suffering in the last day of his life and so in a tremendous snowstorm a representative of a wonderful organization called "Lap of Love" came out to my apartment and while I held him put him down. The vet and a security guard carried him out on a little doggie stretcher. I thought that my life and my very being had gone out of the apartment with him and I still very much feel that way.

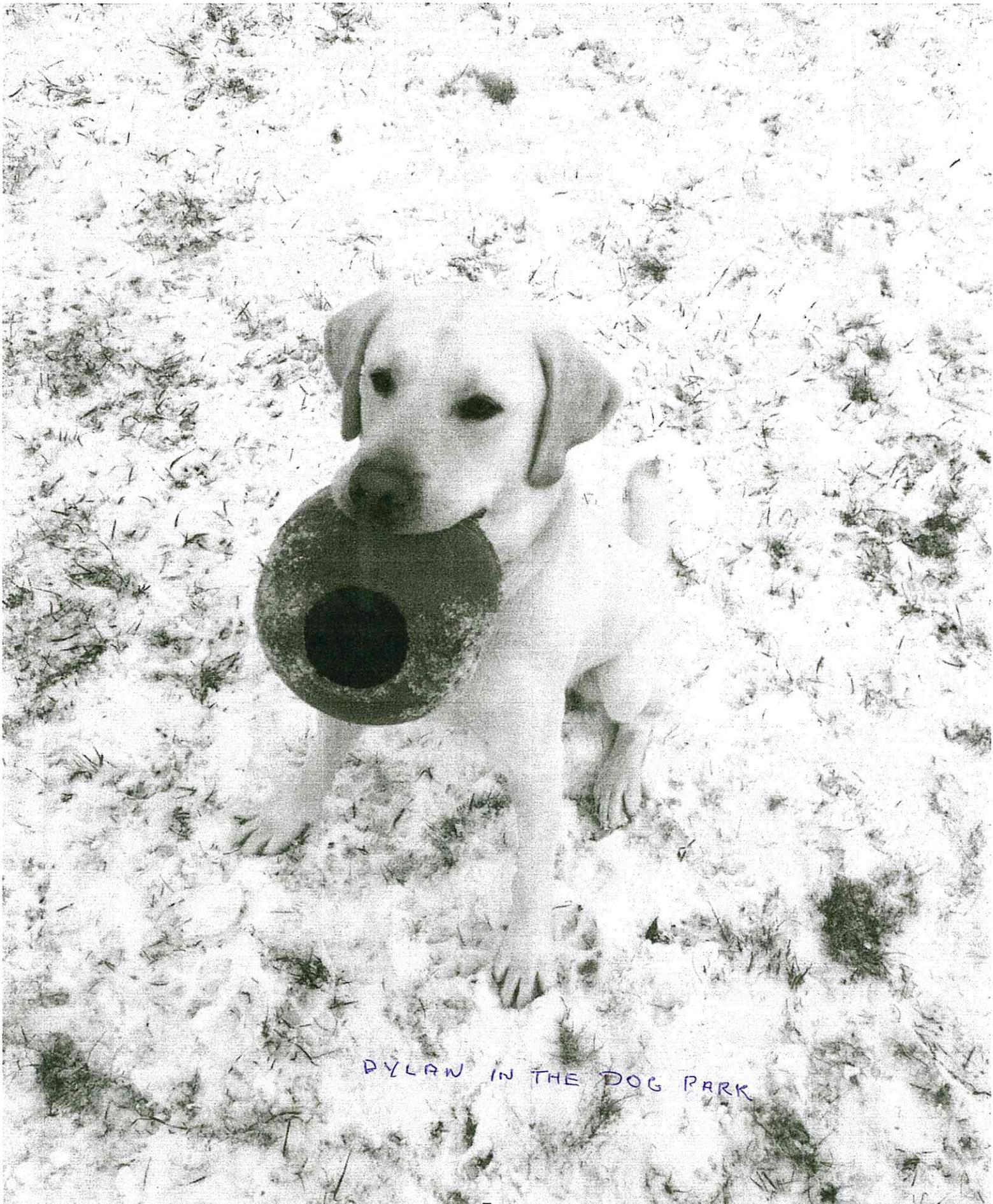
The proofs of the existence of a benign God are still not persuasive to me but I am not one to deny the unknowable and I can always hope. If a benign God does exist he can and probably will construct a world to fill our happiness. If that's the case I certainly want Dylan with me. He was the most fun-loving and happy dog I have ever met and the most curious one too, a curiosity that was a sign of his intelligence. He stood majestically as the standard for unconditional love as only the greatest of the dogs can be. I will miss him forever or until a better world comes along in which we can be together again.



DYLAN AT THE VET
REINHOLDS, PA.
NOVEMBER, 2011



DYLAN
AT PUPPY
BOARDING
SCHOOL,
PITTSFORD,
N. J.
JANUARY
2012
(RESTING
HIS HEAD
ON ONE
OF THE
VISITING
DOGS)



DYLAN IN THE DOG PARK

