

# Macey's Story



Macey in 2010



Ben and Macey, 2010



Oscar and Macey, 2014

*God made the earth, the sky and the water, the moon and the sun. He made man and bird and beast. But He didn't make the dog. He already had one.*

- A Native American saying

My words weren't as eloquent as that, as sent to me by Jan Perkins. I'd just say, "we always come back to the beach, Macey." That's how I would convince my 105-lb Great Dane-Ridgeback mix to end her well-practiced "boneless dog" imitation and head up the beach stairs to breakfast. I certainly couldn't lift her.

Macey came into our lives in October 2006, when we were about to lose our 12-year old rescue dog to cancer. I wasn't up to adopting a new dog so soon, but work colleague Marilee Jackson said, "you're not ready, but this big pup in a cage is sure ready."

Macey was a Newport Beach shelter dog. Staff at the shelter called her Jaws. She had a broken jaw that someone had spent hundreds to fix, but still abandoned her (at nine months old) with an odd-looking exterior brace. Newport Beach PD animal control found her tied to a tree in a West Newport park (I think it was Bolsa Park). There was a post-it note – "I'll be back for this dog."



But no one came back. The shelter looked across the region for vet records of jaw surgeries. Nothing. Even after Jaws was featured on NBTV's Pick-A-Pet with Marilee, Steve Rosansky and NBPD Animal Control Officer Jamye Rogers, no one came asking after Jaws. But that's where Jamye ramped up the pressure. Jamye loved getting animals adopted - a fine thing as an ACO.

At Marilee's and Jamye's prompting, I would visit Jaws at the Newport shelter yard at lunch. Jaws was shy, and so skinny. Jaws loved the other puppies in the next pen over and would try to squeeze her big frame as close to them as she could.

The bittersweet week came to put down our older dog but to also adopt Jaws. By that time, I had her spayed, the jaw brace could be removed, and she was declared in good health. Jaws became Macey (I always spelled it with an "e" because it also is the last name of a colleague and friend here at work).

Macey arrived home that first night. She had already been introduced to our lone remaining dog, the very mellow Ben. She stepped gingerly in the house, and paused. She looked around, then ran – at full sprint – all around the house for five full minutes. On furniture, up

and down stairs, as fast as she could. It was something to see – we just got out of the way, up against the wall. Even Ben didn't know what we were getting into. But Macey was home.

Jamye volunteered to help me train Macey. More like training me. Macey learned faster than I did. She sat, unless she didn't want to sit, when she would walk away as if she didn't hear you. We would have to spell other words in front of her, her vocabulary was so good.

Macey was a great companion. She would walk as long and as far as I could, day in and day out. Not a fan of rain, she still stood at the front door every morning ready to leash up. We would climb hills, run along dirt trails, walk around the Upper Bay, and have regular timed routes through neighborhoods. One hike found us lost and in so much poison oak that her unwavering faith in me well, wavered.

I think she loved the beach the most because I couldn't get lost there.

I figure we walked over 3,500 miles in eight years.

Three years ago, when we found Oscar (a little guy we're sure is part Lhasa Apso, part Ewok) on Macey's beach, Macey became Oscar's big sister. She would play gently with him – besting him by 80 pounds. He'd make a running start to jump on her. Oscar, Macey, Ben and I were a four person walk team until Ben, at nearly 16 years old, left us two years ago.

At the end of August 2014, Macey was next to me and Oscar as I finished breakfast. She had easily completed a 2-mile beach walk and a good meal. I had reminded her to sit, and she was amenable to doing so. She fell backwards in a spasm on the floor. On her side, she let out a low, long, howl. And she was gone.

Great Danes are the "heartbreak breed." Congenital heart defects plague them, resulting in a short lifespan (6-8 years). I had hoped that her mix part would help lengthen the years. We are still stunned. I'd never think to see a dog cardiologist. I'm thankful I had 8 years with her, that I was there, I had just given her a hug and a scratch, and that she went fast.

I think of her now with Ben and with Jamye. Because Jamye is gone, too.

How did Macey's story start? What were those initial months of her life like? What broke her jaw? Who would just leave a note and go away? Did anyone try later to find her? I wish I knew, even more today. I used to be angry wondering who would abandon her. But anger was washed away by the great years Macey brought to us and our home.

The abandoned pup called Jaws was a stable, gentle comfort to us, as were the miles we traveled.

Life is so short, death so sudden. Please give your pet a hug for us and Macey.

And always go back to the beach.

October is National Adopt-A-Shelter Dog Month – we’re so glad we did.



**October Update.** We now have a new shelter dog. He can't replace Macey, but he already has a spot in our hearts. Moby is two, and was at the amazing Irvine Animal Care Center. He had been in and out of two shelters and two homes. I think it's because he needs to walk. A lot. I can do that.

