

## **AimeeLove, Golden Retriever:**

### ***A Dog For All Seasons (Pet Therapy, Drama Therapy, Music Therapy, Baby Sitter for Seven Grandchildren***

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I grew up loving animals, especially dogs. However, I had never participated in pet therapy or obedience trialing until my husband and I, and our two Golden Retrievers, moved to Martinez, GA in 2000. It was through Marlene Stachowiak (a member of the Board of Therapy Dogs, Inc.) came to understand how one can help others by sharing a pet. She introduced me to Pet Therapy.

I enthusiastically enrolled in the Academy, operated by Marlene and her capable staff. We were soon visiting hospitals, nursing homes and rehabilitation centers. In addition, we began work on AKC Obedience Trialing. AimeeLove had completed her AKC CDX title and was training for Utility, when her health failed her. She had served as a Therapy Dog for eight years, when she died on March 31, 2010.

One of our most memorable visits was made to the VA Medical Center. AimeeLove sat quietly beside a gentleman in a wheelchair. The nurse said the patient did not speak. However, as he stroked AimeeLove, he began whisper softly about the dog that he had when he was a child. The staff gathered around, amazed and appreciative.

Drama Therapy was also a part of her life. She starred as Sandy in the musical "Annie". She had a calming effect on the cast. The audience loved her, and she loved the applause. She followed this role with a larger one, as Horrid, the companion dog of King Pellinore (played by my husband) in the musical "Camelot". Music was a great interest to her.

She was always a faithful listener, lying, uncritically under my piano as I practiced. There were no wrong notes for her!

She was a serious babysitter. When any of our seven grandchildren were visiting, AimeeLove seemed to believe their welfare was dependent on her watchfulness. Her frequent sleeping was replaced with an alert movement of the eyes, following each child's activity.

Our younger Golden, RoseMarie, now takes over the role of top dog in our family. She is also a Therapy dog, and is working toward her Grand Open title. To date, she has no stage experience, but she has shown a keen interest in listening to Bach. RoseMarie knows that she has some large paws to fill.

Whenever a loved one leaves us, we are reminded that life is short, that we do not have much time, and that we must be quick to love.