

What I Did Last Summer: A Visit to My Pet Therapy Muse

By Buddy Cutler

Our WAGazine editor asked our members if anyone would like to do an essay on “What I did last summer” [with our dog]. Well, we didn’t do anything special with our Millie this summer – no vacations or travel with her. She had a routine summer here with us. Carol and I spent time in California with the one who inspired me to enter the wonderful world of pet therapy – our younger daughter, Alice -- and her husband and their therapy dog, Freddy.



Alice began giving pet therapy in Los Angeles in 2016 with Betty, a cattle dog mix, her first dog not counting her childhood pets. She began with LA-based *Love on Four Paws* even though, ironically, Betty was a tripod with only three paws -- but enough heart to more than fill the void of a missing body part. Their specialty was visiting amputees in a veterans’ facility. After Betty passed over the Rainbow Bridge, they adopted Freddy, Alice’s current therapy dog.

Our weekly FaceTime conversations with Alice always included heartwarming stories of her visits with Betty, and later, Freddy. She once told us the many-chaptered story of her and Betty’s weekly visits at a special ed school with a young girl who was afraid of dogs. Each week, the girl moved closer to Betty, eventually started petting her, and finally took her leash and proudly walked her. Later, she shared a story of Freddy’s success when he cuddled in bed with an elderly woman who was in a hospital awaiting heart surgery. The patient’s daughter later contacted Alice to tell her how Freddy had greatly relieved her mother’s constant anxiety as she faced that serious surgery.

Hearing Alice’s enthusiasm for giving pet therapy and the joy her pets brought to patients, I decided that was the right fit for me after I retired. Now we can share our stories during our weekly conversations (with appropriate confidentiality, of course) and reinforce our commitments to pet therapy.

Back to: “What I did last summer.” We visited Freddy in California. Always ready for a walk or a cuddle on the couch, Freddy has become our California canine companion. Of course, our real visit was with Alice and her husband, and yet Freddy was an important reminder of our shared love of giving pet therapy and the endless positive differences which this therapy brings to so many.

