

Kahlua: July 1991 to August 28, 1999



Received Kahlua in January 1992

Died when hit by a car in Black Diamond at 8 years

Kahlua was an all black cat with green eyes and a unique personality. His coat was a shiny black, but in the right sunlight, it almost looked a brownish color. He was always a happy cat that loved everyone in the family. He would climb on you, rub his face against yours, kneed with his paws, and then go to sleep. When he wanted to be held, he would reach up on his hind legs and stretch on your leg until you pick him up. He usually liked to be around us whether it is inside or out. He went in phases of coming out when visitors were present or hiding until they were gone. Kahlua knew the nightly routine and loved to sit in on story time – all you had to do was yell “Kahlua, story time” and he would come. Kahlua had one gross habit in that he liked ear wax; so if he was near your ear, he would try licking it. Kahlua was also a complainer - if he was relaxing and you had to move him, he would let out a loud meow. He would talk to you if you talked to him, by meowing back his answer. He was the only cat that took a lot of abuse from Leah and the kids, but still came back for more. Leah used to grab Kahlua by the scruff of the neck and run while dragging him across the floor. We called them “King Kahlualua and Leah the Evil Dog Queen”. And Kelin and Max would drag him around and lay on and squeeze him. A few times he had too much and would whack Leah or scratch Kelin. One time Max had dressed him up with people clothes. In the early morning, Kahlua seemed to like to visit and sleep with Max and then Kelin when they were little. When Kahlua was little, I used to wave a string around on the end of a stick every day. He really liked that game of chasing the string around. Even before he left he liked playing the game. Also when he was young, he liked to drink out of the bathroom faucet and play in the sink. He liked Tuna Fish a lot – he would come running when a can was opened. Kahlua spent a lot of time indoors, but he really liked to go outside and explore. It was a real problem at times to get him in at night, safe from larger night animals, because he wanted to stay out. We tried keeping him inside for an extended period or keeping him outside for a few days. Those tricks would work for awhile and then he would try staying out again. He was very sly, and would wait near the door and slip through a crack if you held it open too long. There was one night that Kahlua must have had an encounter with some other large animal, because he had a large gash under the base of his tail. It was a good thing he got away. When we moved to Black Diamond, we had to stay at Cindy and Al’s house in Auburn for a few days. Kahlua had

escaped there and was lost for a week while we moved. We finally found him in the area, but he was very scared and cautious. After a couple weeks at the new house, he went out for the first time. When he came back his eyes were very wide like he had seen something big. It was several months after that before he would go outside for an extended period. For several months before he died, Kahlua's favorite sleeping place was between Sandy's and my pillow. Kahlua was a great cat and could never be replaced, and I'm going to miss him.

Leah: March 20, 1993 to October 10, 2005



Received Leah May 8, 1993

Died of cancer at home at 12.5 years

Leah, where do I start – there’s so much to say about her during the 12.5 years of her life and the time we spent with her. She had her moments of misbehaving, not listening and not learning, but overall she was the most wonderful dog! Leah was so much fun and always energetic – all the way to her last week she had the energy of a puppy. She was happy, playful, smart, tough, lovable, loyal and protective of her family.

We got Leah from the Human Society on May 8, 1993. We picked her from a litter of 6-8 week old pups because she was the one that crawled over the others to Max or Sandy. The mother was a pure-bred chocolate (yellow?) Lab and about 90% of all people guessed Greyhound as the primary mix.

When Leah was a puppy, Kahlua was larger than Leah and would grab Leah with his front paws and bounce on her with his hind legs. Well, Leah grew quickly and later started to grab Kahlua by the scruff of his neck and run around the house dragging Kahlua! The funny thing is that Kahlua liked it and would come back for more by teasing Leah. Leah quite often shared her sleeping area with both Kahlua and Pebbles. When we got rats, Leah was so focused on them that we couldn’t always let her play at the same time. She wanted to play with them, but of course there was a little size difference and she could easily hurt the rats. One time Leah rescued Croissant – that story is written below. Even on her last day she was interested in what Kelin was doing in the rat cage.

At around 4 months of age I took Leah through obedience class. She did excellent and ended up with a second place. She could have gotten first, but messed up one test. She was the best in class at stay (she wasn’t as good at that later in life). So, when it was time to test down and stay the dogs lined up against the wall and the owners went to the other side. Leah got positioned almost backward and so with only 30 seconds to go, she decided to slowly stand up. The instructors said they weren’t really even paying attention to Leah because they figured she would stay down the whole time. But the class was good for her and she has almost always obeyed. She even knows the basic commands by hand signal. But then Leah was always focused on her family and never wanted to venture away from home like most dogs do around 6 months to a year. She did not need a

leash in the yard or anywhere unless it was required. She always followed me around (sometimes annoyingly too much), even on her last day. She liked to stay in Kelin's room when she went to bed until Kelin was asleep and then would come down with me. It was like she was first making sure Kelin was alright.

Until just over a year prior to her departure, Leah would run with me. When she was young (and when I was running more), she had run up to 8 miles at one time. She used to enjoy it and get excited to go. Then as she got older she just did it without getting excited. I stopped running her when she started losing too much weight and getting older. Leah also liked to play hide-n-seek. I would throw a toy for her down the hall and as she was going to retrieve it I would go and hide. She would come back and realize I was gone and come looking for me. She ran around the house with her nose in the air smelling me out, and would always find me and then get all excited. She could do it in the dark too.

One of Leah's favorite things was to open presents. She knew what presents were and of course Christmas was a favorite time. She tore open her own presents and knew when she reached the toy or had to open more packaging. If it were someone else's birthday, she would want to help open their presents. One Christmas all the presents were under the tree and no one had told Leah which presents were hers. She later comes running in to the other room all happy and holding one of her presents (that was located toward the bottom of the pile)! She was like a little kid, because after putting the present back she later snuck in there and started to open her present. We caught her before she found out what it was. Leah also liked to play with balloons. It was an amazing sight to watch her jump around and keep the balloon in the air with her nose. If the balloon got out of the area, she would pick up the balloon with her teeth by the knot and bring it back to the open space. Amazingly, the balloon would last quite awhile before it ever popped. Similarly, she liked to chase bubbles and we eventually bought her a bubble maker. Leah did not like fireworks at all. She was rather scarred when she heard fireworks, but did quite well the last couple years when we went to the fireworks show.

Leah sure liked her toys! She would fetch anything thrown, even rocks or sand. In her younger years she was very good at jumping and catching the Frisbee (at least if it were a decent throw). She would retrieve the object and bring it back to you, and I could get her to even place it in my hand. When a visitor came up to her, she would run to get a toy or find a stick. If it was someone she didn't know, she would first be protective and bark, and then growl as she was getting a toy. It was hard for anyone to pet her, because she kept moving and running. She was so fast that she could do circles around most dogs. She seemed to prefer playing with dogs that looked similar to her and similar size. Leah also loved water! She was a good swimmer and would jump at splash bubbles or chase sticks in the water. When other kids were playing and throwing things at the beach, Leah would try getting in on the action. She would intercept the spray from a garden hose or squirt gun. She knew what Super Soakers were and would get excited when someone picked one up. When Sandy was on bed rest with Kelin she had a squirt bottle next to her to stop the cats from getting into mischief (i.e. digging in plants). Leah quickly learned how to get the cat in trouble and then come running to Sandy to show her. Then when the cat was being squirted, Leah would intercept to catch the water in her mouth. As much as she

liked water, she did not like baths. Her favorite part of baths was the drying scrub-down with a towel. After the bath she would follow me around waiting for the scrub-down, followed by a treat.

One of Leah's favorite things was to go camping. She got to spend time with her family, do a lot of fun activities, and get her special can dog food meals. Usually she got to swim and play with Kelin and me in the water, and always play fetch. She could run up rock cliffs or sand dunes or snow hills like they were nothing. Leah would sleep outside the tent in a vestibule attached to the tent. We learned this was the best method by trying a few ideas when she was a puppy. At first we had her in the tent with us, but then she would move around too much and took up too much space. So, we put her outside until she started whining. We looked out and saw many glowing eyes staring at us! They were raccoons approaching. So, we brought her back in the tent and later put her back out. Early in the morning we could hear jingling coming and going. It was Leah having fun after she chewed her rope leash in half. After that she was always on a steel cable leash. Then one time we hit rain while camping and Leah was cold and wet, so we cleared the vestibule and let her come in. And she used the vestibule thereafter. Leah had one other encounter with raccoons right at our Burien home. We came home one night and she took off behind the garage. We heard many terrible squealing noises and thought she was getting attacked, but fortunately she made it out without injury.

Five or six times Leah got the chance to fly up to Lake of the Woods and enjoy paradise. She didn't like the flight, but sure enjoyed the time and freedom at the island. Fortunately, she got the opportunity to go one last time the summer before she left us. When she is at the island there is no collar or leash and she gets to do whatever she wants and swim whenever she wants.

Leah had a problem with her scent gland that would produce a nasty, indescribable odor usually when she was frightened or excited. It usually occurred after a flight until the vet started clearing the gland once a year. The only other problem she had was with barking. She didn't really bark while around us, but when we weren't around she would bark whenever she heard noise. It was a combination of protection and being scared. She was a scardy cat sometimes. Something could be out of place in the garage (i.e. a new box on the floor) and she was nervous. But she also seemed to be quite protective.

It was very easy to get Leah excited. When she did get excited, she would start running and jumping in circles trying to catch her tail. There were many key words or phrases that she learned and got excited about. Some of the many words were: squirrel, bridge, kite, stick, ball, toy, treat, snack, bone, cat, camping, walk, out. She also knew the names of her toys so you could ask her to bring you a specific toy. Some of the words are obvious, but some need explaining. At our house in Burien we had lots of squirrels that Leah liked to chase. We would say "look at the squirrel", even if there wasn't a squirrel, and she would look outside and jump around. Then we would open the door and she would run a couple laps around the house and come back in. When we traveled in the Rodeo, Leah would sit or lay behind the driver's seat and could look out the front window. When she saw a bridge approaching, she would get all excited – I guess it was the different sound

and then the structure overhead that she liked. Because she could even be sleeping and would jump up the second you reached the bridge. She had a fixation on kites for some reason. Maybe it was the sound they make, but then she could be quite a long distance away and spot a kite. Sometimes it was tough to control her when she wanted to go chase kites. The rare times when we go somewhere without her and she goes to the kennel, she gets so excited to see us when we pick her up that she is totally out of control. It's amazing to see!

When both Max and Kelin were younger they liked to try riding Leah. Leah would support them, but would usually get out from under them. She has also had her share of knocking them over when they were younger or smacking them with her tail during her excitement. Or she would jump on them and practically knock them over when she was excited to see them. Kelin enjoyed taking Leah for walks quite often. Leah was tough. Even to the last day, weak with no energy, she still wanted to walk the stairs herself and stay near us (by following us). She would swim in near-icy rivers. Leah also chewed off a large skin mole thing from her leg that I had mistakenly burned thinking it was a large tick. When Max was young he was out playing with a plastic hoe and swinging it. Leah got in his way when Max didn't see her, and smacked her across the nose and cut it open. But Leah kept going like nothing happened. Even in her later years as her back legs were giving her some trouble and sometimes giving out, she tried so hard to do the things she did as a younger dog. We had gone hiking to waterfalls with slippery rocks. She used to be able to bounce off the rocks. Then later she couldn't always do it, but kept trying to get around on them.

Just over a week before Leah died she was out playing fetch with her toys for an extended session. Immediately after that she stopped eating her food, but continued to drink. I thought it was because I changed her food and she didn't like it. After a couple days, I went out and bought her normal food, but she still didn't eat. She went to the vet and lost at least 10 pounds and had a high temperature. The vet did blood tests that indicated all the major areas such as liver, kidneys, nutrition, etc. were good. It did indicate that there was muscle damage, which could include the heart. She then had x-rays which seemed to show an enlarged heart area and white splotches that could be melanoma. She came home for the weekend and started eating can food and was more alert, but very tired and moved slowly. By Sunday she was breathing heavier and drooling more and stopped eating and drinking that afternoon. But she still followed me around. At around 11:00 PM she went outside and did her duties and walked up the stairs by herself. At quarter after five I was awoken by the smell of poop. I looked around and realized that some came out while she laid there. I then petted Leah. Her heart was beating steady and then she wheezed a bit and at 5:16AM I felt her heart just stop. She waited for me. It was so sad, but now she is in a good place with God. I don't think she suffered and was happy to be home and next to me, and to be able to spend time with Kelin and me over the weekend. We will miss her much! She was Kelin's entire life from the day Kelin was born.

Alazay: August 19, 2004 to January 6, 2019



Received Alazay November 13, 2005

Died of old age – had to be put down after struggling to pass away at home

Alazay was a great dog and had a long wonderful life of 14.5 years! She was part Labrador Retriever and part Golden Retriever. We found and chose her when she was about one year old. She was a rescue from an Arlington rescue organization. They found her tied to a tree in a Mexican family's front yard, with fleas and puppies. Based on her nature with people and other animals, it seems to me that the family loved her, but maybe got into a situation where they could no longer care for her. Alazay was her name when we received her, and Kelin thought about other names for a week, but then decided to keep the name.

She was a friendly, gentle-natured dog that liked people and animals of all types, and liked to have fun. She liked to hang out in the front yard and lie down on the sidewalk or the grass and watch people, or wait for her buddies to come out. When someone would walk by, she would go out to greet them, being gentle with kids, although in her younger years may come close to knocking them over. When someone came to the front door, Alazay of course would bark, but then generally be ready to greet them with a friendly welcome. I wonder what she would do if it really were someone unwelcome.

We received Alazay a few months prior to Kelin's 9th birthday. Kelin was the center of Alazay's life - Alazay always watched her closely. The first time we went camping with Alazay was at The Gorge. Kelin went into the Columbia River to do some swimming, when Alazay swam out to her and carefully took her arm in her mouth, and swam her all

the way back to shore! She continued to do this whenever Kelin went into the water. It was quite amazing and funny, but became an annoyance when Kelin wanted to actually swim, and kept being "rescued". All through her life, Alazay wanted to be in the water when anyone else was. While camping, Alazay would keep watch on Kelin. For instance, when she rides her bicycle around the camp grounds, Alazay would wait and watch for her. She could spot her on the other side of the camp briefly in between trees. Her ears would go up and focus more closely. Prior to Kelin coming home (i.e. from her Mom's), I would tell Alazay a few days ahead that Kelin was coming. She would perk up and start to get excited, then I would say "not now, in a few days", and she understood. Just before Kelin got here, I would tell Alazay that she was coming soon and to tell me when she was here. She would then run to the front window and just sit there waiting and watching for Kelin. When she arrived, Alazay would run around and bark.

Alazay was not a fan of fetching (but sometimes she would), she would rather play with other dogs or explore. Her best pal for years was a black Lab mix next door named Jada. They would run around and attack each other, making a lot of noise. If you didn't know, you might think they were actually fighting. She could be rough with larger dogs, but then knew how to calm down and be gentle with smaller dogs, such as with Jessie from across the street. Sometimes there could be 3-5 dogs all playing in the front yard. And Alazay was mostly good about staying around even when not watched. When out camping, she liked to run on the beach with other dogs. For several years, we had pet rats and Alazay liked to be with them. If we held our hands together up to our face and made noises like we were holding a rat (but weren't), Alazay would get excited and try to jump up to look. In 2011 we got a kitten named Quinn, and those two were buddies for the rest of Alazay's life. They would play hard at times - Kelin would even be worried because Alazay would have Quinn's head in her mouth, but she was gentle. Once in a while one or the other would let out a noise because they were hurt a little, then the other one would back off. For a little while, when Alazay walked around the couch, Quinn liked to run up the couch and take a leap into the air. It looked like she was suspended in mid-air for a moment, and then she dropped and landed on Alazay's back! Alazay would ignore it and keep on going.

She knew what presents are and liked to open them. At birthday's she wanted to help open them. And at Christmas she opened her own presents. She was like a kid and would get excited and find her presents under the tree and start to open them when we were away. On Christmas, she would take each present into the other room and open them in her bed, and come running back in excited with her new gift!

She has flown to the island on Lake of the Woods a few times. Her last was 2011, as it became harder and more expensive to fly with a dog. The island is dog heaven (well, for people too) since she can run free and has access to water all the time. The only drawback with Alazay is that she couldn't stand when either of us left the land - either in a boat or water skiing. She would bark constantly. Sometimes she had to be isolated in the back yard while we did water sports. She loved to swim! At the island, she would leap far off the dock, and depending on the water level, it could be a few feet down to the water. She could even climb up the ladder to the dock all by herself! One year she discovered

crayfish, and was so addicted from then on. She would spend hours wading in the water to search for crayfish! She could see them scurry everywhere as she walked. When Kelin caught crayfish and put them in a bucket, she would stick her head in to watch and try to catch them (she never caught any that we know of). From then on, whenever we went camping and were around water, Alazay would wade and look carefully into the water to find something fun. While the kids were playing in an open field by the guest cabin, a small bear came running through. Alazay and Gail's dog Ollie started barking and chasing the bear towards the water!

Alazay loved to camp and hike. A lot of the hiking we did for a while was for geocaching. When hiking she would run up ahead, then run back to check on us. We often liked to hide from her when she ran ahead, then when she returned she scrambled to find us, and was excited when she did! She always did her duties far off the trail in the woods, so that was nice not to have to clean up after her. One place we camped often was at the sand dunes in Oregon. Alazay would over-do it the first day by excitedly running up and down the sand dunes and wear out her pads. So, the remaining days were sometimes troublesome for her. She couldn't resist chasing Kelin when she ran down a dune and into a lake, and would wince at her when she knew Kelin was about to run down, because she didn't want to have to run too. Another place we have camped is Lincoln Rock in Eastern WA. Alazay discovered marmots there - they would hide in the rocks and peak out once in a while. Alazay tried to find them, but of course they moved fast. The next year we returned, and Alazay remembered the marmots and knew exactly where they were. When camping on the coast, Alazay liked to climb the rock structures, following us wherever we went. Sometimes while Kelin climbed something steep, Alazay wanted to follow her, but couldn't. Then she would figure out a way to get to the top before Kelin and wait for her to get there.

She always got excited over squirrels. We could say "there's a squirrel" and she would look where you're pointing and get excited, even if there was no squirrel. When she did chase one, of course they are faster. She was not a very fast dog (like Leah), but did manage to catch two squirrels. Her advantage was tricky moves. Once when we arrived back to camp, I opened the back of the truck and her cage, and continued to other things. Next thing I know, I look over to the camp next door (where no one was there at the time), and see Alazay chasing a squirrel. Suddenly, she jumps up while doing a twist and roll in the air and quickly comes down from above the squirrel and gets it! Another time was at the same campground, Memaloose, while Kelin was walking Alazay and she pulled the leash from Kelin when she saw a squirrel ahead. Neither case was a good situation, to see a squirrel get hurt or die, but it is a natural instinct.

Alazay also liked to play in the snow. We would go up to the pass to sled. Alazay would chase us down the hill, often trying to nip at Kelin. Kelin and her friends got an advantage - using a harness, Alazay would tow them on the sled while running! Whenever we encountered snow, she would get excited and run and bounce through the snow. Even when she was 12.5, we got a big snow storm and Alazay was excited to run and jump in the snow, even though it was not easy for her.

Alazay ran with me regularly most of her life. There were a couple times that she ran non-stop for 8 miles at about an 8 minute per mile pace. Once was at The Gorge on a hot day with Kelin. When we were done, Alazay went straight into the river and just stood there cooling off. She was a good running buddy!

For almost a year, Alazay knew Belinda and her kids. But at first she was nervous when they came over, actually shivering. Don't know why she was like that, but it took her some time to get used to them. Eventually, when Belinda would arrive, Alazay would follow her for a treat! And she would lay in the middle of the action. Sometimes Bibo would try to ride her, but of course she couldn't support him and we had to watch that. We were all there for Alazay's last moments.

Her last years were sometimes tough, because she started to get arthritis in her rear legs, and then later lost a lot of her hearing. I had to stop running with her a couple years prior, and taking her on hikes was no longer feasible. Eventually, it got to the point where I could walk in the house making some noise and she wouldn't know – still sound asleep. It was also tough towards the end to keep her eating so that she doesn't fall into a cycle of losing energy and weight and eating less and less. Also had to keep her taking her medicine. Of course she would always eat treats!

At Christmas, Alazay got to see Kelin again after about a year. It was very obvious to me that she was so very happy to see Kelin again. She couldn't jump around, but I could see that she wanted to. After that, Alazay started to go downhill quickly for the next two weeks. It was like after seeing Kelin one last time, her life was fulfilled and she was ready to go. She stopped eating entirely, even treats. The vet tried various medicine to help her, and also did an ultrasound and x-ray to check for Cancer. All that and blood work showed nothing wrong with her. As far as we know, it was simply old age. On her last day, she couldn't walk. On her last night she was at times in agony and also had a seizer. A little while after, I felt her heart stop and thought that was the end. But a few minutes later she was making noise. She continued to decline, so we had to take her on a Sunday to be put to sleep. She had two more seizers and finally at peace. It was a very sad moment.

We will miss Alazay so much. Thirteen and a half years seems so short, yet it is so long.

Rats:

Kiko - December 26, 2004 to September 16, 2006

Harriett – December 26, 2004 to November 03, 2007

Croissant – February 15, 2005 to November 03, 2007 (received April 2, 2005)

Ricotta – November 26, 2007 to May 28, 2010 (received January 5, 2008)

Pisa – November 08, 2007 to July 08, 2009 (received January 5, 2008)

Petunia – January 02, 2008 to September 14, 2008 (received February 16, 2008)



The rats ... we've had a couple adventures. The first was in March 2005 when Harriett found a hole under the cabinets next to the dishwasher. I got her out and temporarily stuffed a rag in there, but the damage was already done. A while later after Kelin had left and I was coming downstairs I could hear water. I wondered how the dishwasher got on, but then found my kitchen was flooded! Harriett chewed the intake water line and then it later burst. It took a long time to mop it up with beach towels - about 8 gallons. Then I remembered I have a 16 gallon high power wet/dry shop vac! That helped with the remainder and to suck it out of the carpet (about a foot into the carpet). The builder used a stainless steel looking hose that was actually made of a fiber. I replaced it with stainless steel, which there was no cost difference. I know, you're thinking that rats cause

damage. But any pet can cause damage - cats can urinate and destroy carpets, dogs can chew and destroy good furniture (especially as puppies). The breeder said she doesn't let them roam and has a play area. So, we are back to playing with them in the spare bedroom.

We got the third rat from a breeder in April 2005. It is so very friendly and a fun rat! We were playing with them in the room on Sunday and the new one (Croissant) figured out she could slip under the door. She escaped and we looked for over an hour in every crevice. It was overdue to bring Kelin to her mom's, so we left treats with strong fragrance throughout the house. I figured with a couple hours of silence she would come out and I could see where she's been. I got home and no sign of her - I was very concerned for her. It was time to move and search everything in every room upstairs (I didn't really think she would go down all the stairs at her size). I called in Leah and told her we needed to find a rat. She looked at the cage, and I said "no, not in the cage". She knew exactly what I was talking about and started sniffing around. We did the easiest rooms first and then went to Kelin's room. I pulled back the crate with her books and the hermit crab tank on top, and looked. Then I put it back and I did the same with the next crate. In the meantime, Leah was sniffing around the tank and I thought she smelled the crabs. Then she started getting all excited! I said to her "I already looked there, but I will trust your senses" and pulled the crate out again. Sure enough, Croissant was tucked in the crate behind the books all scared! I guess she was so scared she wouldn't come out for the treats when the house was silent. Leah was a hero and got many Scooby Snacks for that! And Croissant was so happy when she got back in the cage with her new buddies! Leah never saw the new rat, even when she found it (she just smelled and/or heard it). The next day I was playing with the rats and Leah was in the room too watching the other two rats. She looked up and got this sudden look on her face as she saw Croissant sitting on my shoulder, like hey that's a new rat and the one I had found!

Rats are a lot of fun as they interact with humans. They like to climb on things, including us. They also like to be pet and explore their environment. We have built mazes for them and it's amazing how quickly they figure it out. They like to climb on the dog, and amazingly both dogs allowed it (Alazay took some time as she wanted to eat them). The cat has allowed them to climb on her too, but gets a little annoyed with them. Rats know their names and what they should and shouldn't be doing. Sometimes they (especially Harriett) will test you like a little kid - they will sometimes try to nibble at clothing and after you say "no", will stop and then pretend to start to nibble. They each have their own personality (like any living thing) and it's fun to watch the differences. It's amazing the reaction we get from some people when they hear we have rats. Some people don't like the long tail for some reason, and they think of wild rats and their traits. Rats have been domesticated for a century, yet many people don't realize how good of pets they make. They aren't an easy pet, and take some time and work. It's recommended that you spend an hour a day playing and interacting with rats. We try for daily play, but not an hour - that's why we have two or more and they live in a large cage so they can run and climb.

Sometime around the Spring of 2006, Kiko started to form a bump on her hind leg and stomach. It continued to grow, and the vet said it was a tumor, which is very common in rats. It got so large that when she walked, she had to stretch her toes to clear the tumor and do a little side-ways walk. She was always ready to play and her diet never changed, but it finally got to a point where her breathing was hard and she couldn't move very well. So, she had to be put to sleep, and then we buried her in our backyard. Kiko was purchased from a pet store and we did not realize until later that she was a feeder rat. They treat feeder rats differently than fancy rats and Kiko was very scared. We tried to play with her, but when it was time to go back in the cage we would have to chase her, which would scare her more. We eventually left her in the cage when we played with the other rats. After talking to the breeders, I tried working with her by holding her while petting her. She would fight to get free, but I held on – sometimes even getting scratched. It paid off, because after several sessions she started to come around and eventually became a friendly pet like the other rats. You could always hear where Kiko was, because she had this unusual clicking noise she would make almost all the time. When we got Kiko and Harriett, Harriett was a little bigger and would groom Kiko and lie on top of her as if to protect her. They were always buddies, along with Croissant when we got her.

Land Hermit Crabs: January 2003 to September 2005



Kelin had many land hermit crabs. Some would last awhile and some would die for unknown reasons. We lost a couple of them because they molted and we were not ready. When they molt, they produce a smell that attracts the other crabs. Their skeleton is soft at this point and the other crabs tend to eat them. We did not get them separated in time. There was one successful molt where we moved the crab to another small tank and when it was ready we put it back in the main tank.

We would let the crabs crawl and climb around in Kelin's room after a weekly bath. They would also crawl on our hands. At one point we had a few fairly large crabs. The largest crab was on my hand and decided to grab hold. It pinched so very hard and held on tight for awhile. I had to grin-and-bear-it until it let go. It didn't cut, but did leave a mark. The second time another crab was crawling around and grabbed the skin at the base of the finger. I tried putting it under water as was suggested, but it squeezed tighter. I just held it under water until it let go. We didn't let the larger crabs crawl around on our hands after that.

Pebbles: July 18, 1995 to March 27, 2011



Received Pebbles in September 1995

Passed away suddenly, as her body functions gave out within a day or two.

Pebbles lived a long life of almost 16 years. And with no vet visit or annual shots. We got her as a kitten and knew her mother. Pebbles was named because of her assorted coloring, which looks like river pebbles. She was a friendly, but cautious cat. People that took care of her while we were gone usually did not see her. In her later years she was better around strangers.

During Pebbles early years, she was an indoor cat, until she started urinating in our Burien house. When we moved to Black Diamond, we decided to give her a fresh start. She wasn't in the house very long before she started urinating again. So, most of her life she was an outdoor and garage cat. She was actually comfortable with that – we would let her in to be with us when we could watch her, but after a period of time, she would want to go back to the garage. Sometimes she would also sleep with Kelin until I went to bed.

Pebbles liked to play at times, especially with the laser. She couldn't resist chasing that little red dot. When working around the yard, she would quite often come hang out around us. She liked to talk a lot by meowing, almost as if she could understand us. When we went out running with the dog, Pebbles would greet us at the end of the driveway when we finished, sometimes following us up the street during our cool-down. She would then rub against Alazay and walk under her. She liked both Leah and Alazay! Pebbles wasn't always the brightest cat, as she could spend days on the back porch trying to get in that way, even though it seldom worked, and the garage was open.

The first time we got rats we let Pebbles come relax on the couch. She saw the rat run across the top of the couch and almost in slow motion; she dropped her paw across the rat's path. She soon allowed the rats to come up to her and even crawl on her, but really just tolerated them and didn't care much about them.

Pebbles was with us a long time and was a good cat overall. She got to spend her last night lying on the couch with us, barely able to move. We will miss her.

Quinn: May 7, 2011 to



Received Quinn June 26, 2011