

# Alice the Miracle Dog

My wife has long believed that I have the ear of the Lord. Indeed, she once called upon me to exercise my supposed special connection.

When we lived in Suffield, CT, one of the three dogs we had at the time was a Golden Retriever named "Nicki." She was AKC registered and her full name was "Matthew's Golden Nicki." My son, Matthew, named her. She was also as sweet and gentle a dog as one could wish for.

One evening, when she was in heat, Nicki, who had not been "fixed," was out in the front yard where she was set upon twice by male dogs belonging to our neighbors. One was a black Labrador retriever and one was a German shepherd. Sure enough, Nicki became pregnant and when her pups arrived, she gave birth to a litter of eight. The first was the smallest. It was stillborn. The last was the largest and it was stillborn, too. I know this because she gave birth to them in our bedroom closet and I was the midwife. All eight of the pups were black. As the six survivors grew older we could see that they had long hair like their mother but they were black like their father who we now assumed to be the black Labrador. I referred to the puppies as "Black Golden Retrievers."

By the time the puppies were about six or eight weeks old we had found people who were willing to adopt each of them. But one of the puppies, a female, had something wrong with her and so we called the person who had agreed to take this one and advised her it would be unfair of us to let her have the puppy. We kept this one. She had been named Alice by the person intending to adopt her and we saw no reason to change her name. Later she would acquire additional names: Alice Malice, Malice, Mallie, and Mallie Moo Moo. Mostly we came to call her "Mallie."

Alice would get pus pockets all over her body. Some were quite large. The veterinarian informed us that the disease was known as puppy pyoderma, a skin infection that can be quite serious.

One morning, before going to work, we took Alice to the vet. He advised us that if her condition worsened we should consider putting her down. That was sad news. We had come to care for Alice very much. And, of course, her mother enjoyed having her around, too. We took Alice home and as we left for work my wife asked me to pray to the Lord, asking for Alice to be cured. I said I would and I did.

When we returned home at the end of that same day, my prayer had been answered: Alice was cured. We knew this immediately because during our visit to the vet earlier that day, he had lanced a particularly large pus pocket in the center of her throat. When we left for work that morning there was a large, open wound on her neck. When we came home at the end of

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the day it was completely healed and there were no other pus pockets to be found. No more ever appeared. The vet had absolutely no explanation for Alice's miraculous cure.

Thus it was that Alice became known to us as "The Miracle Dog."

Alice, or Mallie as we came to call her, would go on to live more than 15 years, a long time for large dog like her. She outlived her mother by several years and the rest of the dogs with whom she grew up, too. All her life she would follow me around, upstairs, downstairs, into the kitchen and out into the living room. As she got older, the stairs gave her trouble and she would sometimes stop on the landing and wait for me to come back downstairs. But, otherwise, nothing stopped her from following me around. It was as though she could not stand to be separated from me.

As Alice neared the end of her life, we were living in Florida. During a vet visit there, we had occasion to refer to her as "the miracle dog" and relate the story of her cure to our vet there. She shrugged and said, "Her immune system must have kicked in with a vengeance." Maybe; maybe not. I prefer to think that my prayer was answered and that Alice was indeed a miracle dog.