



Cassady

By Patti Smith-Perazzo
(SmithPatti@AOL.com)

Think back to the first time you ever met a greyhound. Remember the moment that you knew you *must* adopt one of these sweet, gentle dogs? Do you recall the excitement you felt when you got the call saying a greyhound was ready for you ... frantically canceling plans for the weekend so you could pick up your newest family member? And the butterflies in your stomach as you waited, watching for your "baby" to arrive at the meeting point! And then of course, there was love at first sight as you laid eyes on the most beautiful creature in the world: your greyhound. I remember it like it was yesterday; although the day Cassady became ours (or we became his) was three years ago.

In those three years, he was patient with us as we learned his fears, thanked us for giving him a companion greyhound (Joon), forgave us for having a baby, and gave us the beauty and honor of his absolute trust.

Recently we bought a house. What a wonderful, exciting time for our family. The first few days in the new house were a whirlwind of activity. We were inundated with tradespeople: roofers, painters, linoleum layers, and representatives from every utility company. With each worker, I made sure they understood we had a toddler and two greyhounds, and that it was imperative that they never leave a door open. Each and every worker was extra careful, especially after meeting Cassady and Joon and learning the ex-racer story. Every worker except one, that is. This guy left the door open not once, but twice. What luck that neither the baby nor the dogs were anywhere near the door at those times. He actually apologized for leaving the door open the second time, then promptly walked through the door and *left it open a third time!* This time we weren't so lucky.

Cassady slithered out the door and made a mad dash to the street. I was after him in a flash but he was way ahead of me within seconds. Although I was running at full speed, *he* was barely trotting, and the distance between us widened with every stride. I ran for about a half-mile before I had to turn around; my children were home alone and I had to get back to them.

Then came the search parties. I took the van and the kids and called the GAC toll-free number from my cell phone. My husband Tom left in his car and his friend Paul went out in the moving van. My dad came over and joined the search. Many people on the street reported seeing Cassady, but we could never catch him.

After more than four hours of searching, we got the call. Cassady had been hit by a car five miles from home. He was alive but he was hurt pretty badly, we were told. While my husband stayed at home to comfort the kids, my Dad and I tore off in the night. I couldn't seem to drive fast enough. It wasn't hard to find Cassady. There were police officers, flares, an animal control van and many concerned bystanders. Up until now, I had been able to maintain my composure and kept telling myself that we would find Cassady and that he would be fine. But now, with this scene, I lost it completely. When I got to him, he was barely conscious. I spoke to him anyway. A woman in the crowd of people came up to me and tried to calm me down. She told me that she had seen the accident happen and watched the driver speed off without even

stopping. She pulled over immediately, and with the help of three young men, diverted the oncoming traffic into another lane. On this cold February night, she took the coat off her back and covered Cass, hoping to keep him from going into shock. She stayed by his side, talking to him and petting him until help arrived.

We arrived at the emergency animal clinic a few minutes before the animal control van pulled in. As Cassady was being carried in, I spoke to him again telling him that I loved him and that he had to hang on. The veterinarian began working fast and furiously to try to save him, but within five minutes he went into cardiac arrest and all attempts to revive him failed. He was gone. The vet, the technicians and the animal control officer cried with us as I told Cassady the last "I love you" and kissed him good-bye. I asked the vet to remove his collar for me, paid the \$343.00 bill and went out into the cold night, without my dog.

We were able to get the workman's company to admit fault. They agreed to pay the vet bill and the cost of another greyhound. Sure it helps a little having somewhere to point the blame but it doesn't bring my Cassady back.

It helps my healing to write this. It helps to hold his collar sometimes at night when I sleep. It helps to love Joon and our new greyhound, Clio. And it helps to know that by reading this you will become even more aware that no matter how well-behaved and loyal your greyhound is, he is trained to bolt at *any* open door and is bred to run like the wind. This dangerous combination is something from which your greyhound can *never* be broken. Please do not let Cassady's death be for naught. Don't ever believe that this can't happen to you. It can. Even if you live on a quiet street, remember that at 45 miles per hour, your dog can be miles away in just minutes.

Now go give your dogs a hug ... for Cassady.

Greyhound Adoption Center seconds Patti Smith-Perazzo's advice.

This article is reprinted with the author's permission.

(1/2004)