

WHAT'S GORDY THINKING?

February 14 2010

Every morning, after he has his breakfast, Gordy goes outside, does his duty, and rushes back into the house. He rarely likes to stay outside, especially during the summer when it is hot. Today, instead of pawing at the door to be let in, he went up onto the pool deck, rested himself at the edge of the pool, and just gazed into the water. He remained motionless for some time, and I stood there, transfixed, and wondered what, if any, thoughts he was having. Given his weakening situation with his rear legs, I have recently started worrying about how much longer he will be with us before a total inability to stand or move creates a crisis for us all. I think he knows that his problem is becoming more and more evident each day. When he gets out of my car, even though I am holding him under his abdomen, letting him gently down onto the ground, his rear legs initially give out under him and, were it not for my intervention, he would collapse to the ground. After a few seconds, he pulls himself together and is then able to walk, in a swaggering way, into the house. But today, I wonder as he lies poolside, if he



contemplates his future.

Everything I have read says that dogs live in the present, they do not think about the past or the future, but I am not sure that I agree with that.

There is something sad about him when he just gazes out into the distance. I cannot help wondering what he is thinking, if anything. Am I just projecting my thoughts onto him? Quite possibly. I hope so,

for he is still so mentally alert, his eyes so observant, taking in so much around him, never missing any details of his immediate environment or the

human activity going on around him. Maybe I am getting ahead of myself, but his changing physical condition prompts these thoughts on a daily basis.



I sense an urge to get my camera and record these moments, lest I have few opportunities to do so again, as the unexpected usually comes upon us so quickly, without time for planning. How often, when looking through old photos, I have thought to myself, that I should have taken more photos of those moments which exist only in memory now. I think of the dogs I had in the middle of my life, when I was so busy with family, household, office, emergencies, and rarely had time to even think about taking a few photographs. And so it is, when I look back, that Dolly, my German Shepherd, and Grendel, my Dobberman, are scarcely represented in two dimensions, stored in a photo album for me to reminisce over. Lost opportunities...so busy living in the present that I could not project into the future to see how satisfying it could be to hold that photo in my hands and dwell on all the wonderful moments I had with these dogs. Grendel, catching snowballs in her mouth; Dolly, charging to the picture window at the front door to scare off any intruders with her vicious-sounding protests. Every new rescue dog brought into this household gets the attention of a new born baby, and the focus of all photo-taking moments seems to be upon the newcomer. And so,

Gordy, the second oldest resident of this abode, Molly, our Chocolate Lab, being the first, gets short shrift as of late. I catch myself at this point, and become aware of the life cycle to which we are all prisoners, and rush to the other end of the house to get my camera, hoping that Gordy will still be lying at the edge of the pool. And meditating.



He senses my presence with camera and turns toward me. The moment has passed. He gets up, with difficulty, from his reclining position, and slowly walks over to the near end of the pool.

He crouches down cautiously, trying to lap up the water from the pool. There are times when I think he will not be able to reach down that far, but he succeeds again.



I think I worry about Gordy more than about any of the other six dogs in our care. In a way, all of our senior dogs are living in Hospice, with love and care till their end. My wife and I know very well that heartbreak is always waiting in the wings, where one overwhelming crisis will snatch our hearts and dash them on the rocks. But the mission is clear, and these are the consequences of extending ourselves to the creatures over which God has given us dominion. Responsibility comes before immunity from grief.