

Story from Tegelen about dogs

As many visitors probably remember from their visit to Tegelen, we had donkeys and goats right behind our convent. It was always a pleasure to see them and take pictures. The donkeys especially were photogenic.

Unfortunately, we had to let go of the animals when our gardener retired, and we could not find an affordable replacement to take care of the donkeys and goats.

Fortunately, we already had a dog in the house, so we still had the company of animals.



Boomer

We started with Boomer. He was already old when he came and according to the veterinarian, he had not long to live. He adjusted very well in the convent (thanks to all the spoiling and daily walks) and bonded with the sisters. Sr. Joanitha who lived in Rome for many years and who was used to the dogs in the Provincial house was very happy we finally had a dog..

When Boomer was 17, he could just not live a comfortable life anymore, so we put him to sleep. We were all devastated, even though we also had Balou, Kate's English cocker spaniel. Balou was only with us half the week when Kate was here. The other half of the week we were without dog and that felt awkward.



Sr. Sylvia with Roxy and Balou senior

When Balou was young, he would jump around the way puppies do and that would bring smiles to the sisters' faces. We all love a bit of naughtiness at times, don't we? So when Balou was not here, we missed having a dog around.

After over a year of mourning over Boomer, we told Kate to look around for another convent dog. We did not want a puppy, since it is too much work. You need to get out of bed to let them out! And you have to be very consistent in their training; something we were not going to do well.

So, Kate brought a four year old dog named Roxy that had lived outside on a farm all her life. We had told Kate we did not want a big dog and no long hair. Guess what? Between Christmas and the New Year Kate arrived with Roxy, quite a big dog and with long hair! She is a cross breed between a Berner Sennen and a Border Collie. But Kate liked her so much, she decided to take the risk and adopted her for the sisters.



Sr. Canisie with Balou junior

When Kate went to the pound to adopt Roxy, she took Balou with her to make sure the two dogs would get along. They were in an enclosed place for one and a half hours to get to know each other. It became clear they would match. That was essential to have them both in Tegelen. Roxy had lived with a shepherd dog on the farm, but when the owner passed away, his children wanted the shepherd but not Roxy. We wanted to be sure she would accept another dog.

Roxy has been with us now for five years and we are delighted to have her. Initially she was frightened of the sounds of a door opening and the vacuum cleaner. She would bark at the sisters who lived upstairs, thinking them to be trespassers. But soon she got used to all the noises in the house and accepted all the sisters.

Now she brings smiles to our faces. She is a good companion and she is a good guard dog. She is very protective and barks when someone tries to enter.

Last January Kate had to let go of Balou. His paralysis got the better of him and so he was put to sleep. Kate missed him badly and so did we. Kate did not wait very long and in the beginning of February, bought another English Cocker Spaniel puppy. Again, a Cocker Spaniel and once more named Balou. She thought that this was much better for the sisters, since no one had to get used to a new name. He is simply irresistible.

So, Roxy is now getting used to a puppy jumping on her and driving her crazy. When it becomes too much, she lets him know! But after a few weeks we can tell she is getting used to him. This new bundle of love brings joy again. The sisters are very fond of the puppy. They have accepted him with open arms.



Balou junior

Dear Sisters, there was a time we would never have considered taking a dog into the house. Now that we are older and more flexible in our thinking, we just did it!



Sr. Odilia with Roxy

Roxy lives with me. I feed her, I take her out for walks, ... I spoil her! So, Roxy considers me her boss. I think I can say that Roxy is a true blessing. When a sister sees her, she stops to talk to her and strokes her. The same thing happens with puppy Balou. We talk about the dogs during the meals. That is important. We don't have that much to talk about at the table because we are not as active as before anymore. In fact, you can give and receive a lot of affection when you have a dog which is still important when you grow older! They encourage me to move more and to spend more time outside. I believe they are good for us. Dogs simply have positive effects on seniors.

So dear sisters, get a Boomer, Roxy or Balou! Of course everybody in the community needs to approve of it so you don't get angry conversations around the table while it is meant to relax everybody.

You have my blessing!

Sister Sylvia