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'Marley & Me' prompts book club to share pet tales

ROME -- Some time ago, the Lake Arrowhead Book Club read the book "Marley & Me" by John Grogan. It's a heart-warming, easy-to-read story about a family and their neurotic but lovable dog. I would recommend this book to all pet lovers out there, as you are the ones who will understand.

As our book discussion started, to my surprise almost everyone had a personal "Marley" story of their own to share with the group.

My "Marley" story is a "Moses" story, and like the story line, he has been a part of our family for more than 17 years. Those years are filled with mostly happy memories, a few hair-raising, frustrating times, and, looking down the road, sprinkles of sadness.

In his youth, Moses gave us a few hair-raising experiences with his ventures. At 7 weeks old we lost him, only to find him curled up sleeping behind the wheel of our trailer.

There were others to follow, that included his desire to play with the children at the 15th Avenue beach and then hide behind a trash container, thinking we couldn't see him. He explored Lake Camelot and visited the Kleins and Deckows unknown to us. Then there was the 3 a.m. trip back to Rome from Milwaukee to retrieve him.

One of our better moments was when our daughter found him and another canine friend sitting on water's edge looking like they just had the time of their lives. They were muddy and wet but safe and sound.

Moses became the approval committee in our house when it came to our girls' dates. On their first visit, if Moses didn't approve, our suspicion was put on alert. He has amazing instinct and always has been drawn to kind people.

Speaking of instincts, Moses also has doubled as our family counselor and has been there to comfort our family through rough times, illnesses and death. It might have been just a look or his famous one -- head on your knee as if to say "it will be all right." His answer to tears is a nudge under your arm that says, "Go ahead and pet me and you'll feel better."

He certainly has given more than taken. There are times when he has brought out the compassionate and caring side of our family as we have gone through illnesses and injuries with him.

Now is our time to give back and repay him for his loyalty. He can't always get up to greet us as he did but the effort is still there. Our trips to the vet are getting more frequent, and as our wonderful and caring Dr. Dave Wickersham said to us about six trips ago, one of these times Moses might not be going home with you.

We hope that nature will take care of it all, but as in the book, we are aware that we might be called on to do one final act of kindness and make a very difficult decision.

In the end, as in our book club discussion, we will share all the happy, crazy memories and the loyalty of our best friend.

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