

The Story of Lucy: She had too many friends to count

Written by Jean Bartlett, April, 2018



Lucy was known throughout the East Bay complex she lived in. When she went for a walk, people driving by would stop their car and say, "Hello, Lucy!" This of course was greeted with a wagging tail and a smile. Lucy loved to smile.

"Everyone always asked us about Lucy," her guardian Ara said. "One of our neighbors always kept bacon treats in his pocket for Lucy."

Lucy was born on October 1, 2003 in Riverside, California.

"Both my sister and I were going to college in Riverside. My sister had a friend who told her that this little Pit Bull, who was almost all white with a few little brown spots, was going to be abandoned at a hotel. Of course my sister could not let that happen. She adopted the three-month-old puppy and named her, Lucy.

"My sister just liked the name Lucy, but Lucy was most definitely an energized puppy and she did her share of ripping things up when my sister wasn't home. My sister used to joke that in her puppy days, 'Lucy' was short for Lucifer."

It was close to Christmas when Lucy found her forever family and the first time Ara saw Lucy, Lucy was sitting by her sister's Christmas tree. "She wanted her presents," Ara laughed. "She was always smart."

Ara and her sister had never had a dog before but they did grow up with animal companions.

"In my family we all love animals. We had cats growing up, and chickens as pets as well, and we had a bunny named Snowy. We also had a wild turkey. This turkey and I were super close. When we got the chickens, one of them turned out to be a turkey and admittedly she did look different from the other babies. I called her, 'Turkey!' Turkey was a huge bully. She was like five feet tall and the chickens were probably a foot to a foot and a half tall. She never hurt them; even though she made it clear to them that they annoyed her. But she would peck at them and reach right past them to eat their food."

Lucy introduced her new family to the community of dog lovers.

"She was so adorable," Ara said. "And right from the start she was incredibly emotional and compassionate. She could read how we were feeling and if we were in need of comfort, she was there. Plus she was just so cute. Because of her energy, she compelled us to do things that we wouldn't have normally done, such as: take longer walks and hikes, and go to the beach more often. She taught us all about what was good for dogs and what was not good for dogs."

Ara and her sister each had their own apartment in Riverside and about a year after Lucy was adopted, Ara adopted a cat whom she named, Ricky.

"I adopted Ricky immediately when I found him. He was a stray, and just a little kitten, and he was so hungry. He moved in with me and after college, Ricky and I moved back to the Bay Area. When Lucy moved in with me, she and Ricky were friends – though Lucy loved to chase Ricky. Ricky was cautious around Lucy. He would tiptoe past her. But Lucy

would see him instantly and run after him, and Ricky would always dart into small spaces that would stop the chase. They liked doing this. The only thing Lucy did not like was if Ricky pounced on her tail. She never liked people touching her tail, especially if that person was a cat! Funny, she didn't mind having her toenails painted. When we were living in Riverside, occasionally my sister would take her to get her nails done. Lucy would just turn her head and let the groomers hold her paws and use their special dog nail polish on her. I remember Lucy having pink nails."

Ara's sister, who also moved back to the Bay Area, met her future husband when Lucy was four. Immediately, Lucy spent some serious time, up close and personal, right in this young man's face every time she saw him. She did that for about two weeks and then not only warmed up to him, but she fell in love with him. Ara's sister and Lucy's newest best friend married. When Lucy was six and a half, the couple had their first child.

"Up until that point, Lucy had been the center of their world and when their son was born, she didn't know how to adjust," Ara said. "She wanted to play with their son but he was just too little. So Lucy came to live with me.

"Lucy also loved my parents and they loved her, and when she met my future husband, who is a big animal lover, the two of them were attached from the start."

Besides her love of her people, Lucy had many "favorites." Her favorite outing was going to the beach. She enjoyed splashing in the water as she dashed along the sand. Hikes were pretty high on her list of things to do as well. Her bed at home was a real favorite and she never wanted a new bed. Her original suited her just fine, especially because it was perfect for curling up in and it was always loaded with stuffed animals.



Meals that offered chicken, beef, cheese or lobster were always a huge hit, and she additionally enjoyed sour cream, yogurt, peanut butter and almonds, among other nuts. She did not care for vegetables or fruit. She did like her doggie kibble and could always be counted on to be a professional vacuum after her family got up from the dinner table. She did not care for car rides. They made her nervous. But she loved going to her paternal grandparents' home. The first time she went there, she sniffed the air and knew immediately this was where Ara's husband grew up. Her tail wagged nonstop.



"She had such a zest for life," Ara said. "And it was absolutely infectious. It also kept her young and I think free of the kind of debilitating things that Pit Bulls can go through once they turn 8 or so. It wasn't until Lucy turned 13 that she really had any issues. She had a stroke at 13, although miraculously she recovered pretty well and was about 70 to 80 percent of what she was like before the stroke. She had moments when she was exhausted and she couldn't tolerate the heat like she used to, but mostly she was full of energy, still good at reading exactly how any of her family was feeling and she never missed a meal."

Lucy died at 1:15 in the morning on March 23, 2018. She was surrounded by her family. The 14-year-old had really only been sick for a few days and just the weekend before had thoroughly enjoyed all the company and delicious treats that came with Persian New Year. Ara thinks Lucy lived to celebrate this last New Year, because she knew it was the final time to really visit with all her immediate family that she had loved and been loved by, for so long. Her veterinary team believed she died of pancreatic cancer as she exhibited some of the signs of this her last few days on Earth.

"I want to really emphasize that Lucy dispelled any of the bad press regarding negative stereotyping of Pit Bulls. I detest that these dogs are given such a bad reputation because these dogs are so loving and sweet. When I hear a horror story, I look towards the Pit Bull's

guardian. If a dog has been systematically abused, they are going to harbor some trauma. Many dogs bite people but the media often focuses on Pit Bulls.

"Now, Lucy definitely was a good protector. She was vigilant with us. We were part of her pack and she did a wonderful job of keeping us safe. She also had more friends than we'll ever know; so many who reached out to us after they heard of her passing.

"One of my long-term goals is to open a sanctuary for animals. Lucy really inspired this thinking. I had such an interesting connection with her, separate from any other animal I have loved, and I have loved quite a few. Lucy was just so in sync with my feelings and so aligned with my family – she tapped into the nuances of everyone's personality. I never called myself her 'owner.' I was always her guardian. She gave us so much and we gave her so much. It was very symbiotic. Knowing that she really had a wonderful life gives me a great deal of comfort."

Following Lucy's death, there was a memorial for her and her family came from all over the Bay Area to honor her. Stories were shared, food arrived in abundance, and a number of quotes by the Persian mystic/poet/philosopher Rumi were spoken. "Don't grieve. Anything you lose comes around in another form." "Goodbyes are only for those who love with their eyes. Because for those who love with heart and soul, there is no such thing as separation."

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"We must value the lives of animals," Ara said, "and we must dispel the harmful myths of Pit Bulls. I think Lucy can help us all do that."

If anyone would like to make a donation in Lucy's name, please consider any of the following: the Golden Gate Labrador Retriever Rescue; the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), or the New York Bully Crew, an animal rescue group concentrated on saving Pit Bulls.

