

Memories of Ivan

On December 8th, 1999, his first day at 340 East 55th Street, when I took him out and he stepped off the sidewalk and into the street to poop, I knew I had picked the most awesome dog on the planet.

The most important memory is Ivan's comfort on 9-11. He listened to me cry and was my sounding board when I was the most scared I've ever been and no one else was around. He was 2 years old at the time.

Going to the dog park on E. 51st Street 3 times a day for his first 2 ½ years.

I loved that he didn't need a leash in New York City & would stop on a dime if I said his name.

He never chewed up anything, ruined anything or did anything wrong – ever – until 2013 when he swiped the salmon right off my plate when I got up to answer the door. He had been so good for 13 years, all I could do was laugh when he stole my salmon.

He kept me company every night while I ate dinner and I always saved some for him so that he could lick the plate.

How sick I got on our move to California, knowing he was in the belly of the plane.

How he had his favorite playmates and didn't care much one way or the other for other dogs. His best friends were Peanut, Shug, Jacob, Cowboy, Sammy, Joyti & Sally.

He was kind to all dogs and people. He was tolerant and shared his toys. His hedgehog was his favorite toy and he always kept it in perfect shape.

He was one of the fastest dogs I've ever seen run. Until he was around 10, he out-ran every dog in the park. He was also really agile.

He protected me. Twice he protected me from dangerous men. Once he locked his teeth onto a delivery guy's leg and wouldn't break eye contact with the guy – but he didn't bite down – he just let the guy know he would, if the guy got 1 inch closer to me. Ivan held on to that guy's leg until I said it was ok to let go. He then paced between me & the delivery guy and wouldn't let him near me. The second time was when the crazy process server was on the 12th floor at 350 and Ivan and I were waiting at the elevator. He sensed this guy was dangerous and even though the guy was down at the other end of the hallway, Ivan again paced back and forth between me & the guy the whole time we waited for the elevator. When the elevator arrived, the process server tried to get in with us and after I got on the elevator, Ivan backed into the elevator really slowly, complete eye contact with the guy, and his mouth wide open baring all of his teeth.

He understood me when I spoke.

Ivan travelled in the back seat of the Honda all the way home from California.

The way he would circle around in the bed and then dive bomb into my side when he found just the perfect spot to sleep each night.

When I came home, Ivan always smiled, showing me all of his front teeth. His tail would be going so fast it reminded me of a helicopter.

He always kissed me when I asked for a kiss and always when I walked in the door.

He was always happy to get in the car and always happy to get out of the car.

He waited patiently when I would leave him in the car and knew I would always return with nutter butter cookies or string cheese for him – every single time.

Every night I would bring him treats at bedtime and every night, (even if I wasn't with him) when I shut the light off I would say "I love you Boo" and I still do.

He jumped off the bridge in New Hope, PA into the moss covered river because he thought it was a field of grass.

He wanted to go every single place I went. He always wanted to be with me.

Every time I left him alone, as soon as he knew he wasn't coming with me he would give me the sad eyes and then ignore me & it would break my heart every time. I would always go back and kiss him and tell him, "I'll be right back, I promise – I wish you could come – I love you." And then I would hold up my index finger & say "I'll be right back" a second time and "I love you" a second time as I closed the door.

Every single time I left him, even if was just to take the garbage out, I told him I loved him – every single time.

I told him I loved him more than 20 times every day – sometimes 50 or more.

He drove around with me for hours while I took pictures in Bedminster and in upstate NY.

He loved his bear bed. I loved to watch him on his bear bed especially when he used the head as a pillow.

Every time I rolled out a yoga mat, he thought it was for him and would immediately lay on it. I used to try and do yoga on ½ the mat rather than asking him to move. Sometimes I would put out two mats.

He did downward dog when I asked him to.

He would sneeze in threes, and he would sneeze so hard that if I couldn't get to him fast enough and hold his head, he would smash his nose on the ground and often gave himself a bloody nose.

He loved cheese – especially string cheese.

He loved his blue coat.

He loved the beach.

He loved resting and rolling in fresh green grass. He would get so excited when he saw grass out of the car window and would try to get me to stop the car and get out. Often I would.

He liked horses and cats.

He protected dogs when they were in danger.

He knew I was coming home up to 15 minutes before I actually walked in the door.

He was an amazing frisbee catcher.

Ivan would play ball for hours in Central Park, Balboa Park and the little park on the corner of 55th & 1st. No matter how tired he got, he didn't ever want to stop.

He was such a trooper going up and down the stairs 4-5 times a day when we lived on the 5th floor.

He loved snow. He loved to eat fresh snow. He would eat so much snow that I would have to take him out 20 minutes after our walks in the snow just to pee again from all the snow eating.

Ivan used to stand up and stare at me when he wanted to go out. I would be working on the computer and I could feel him staring at me.

Before he became hard of hearing, he was so scared of thunder and he hated lightning. He would get behind me on the couch or chair I was sitting in and shake.

He would not move when I tried to put shoes on him in the winter. He refused to go outside, or even out the door wearing shoes.

He tried his very best to get inside every single pet store we passed by during our walks. He always knew exactly where the local pet stores were no matter where we lived and on every walk, he would head in the direction of the store as soon as we got outside.

He loved my parents. He loved Vinny, Dale & Glenn.

Ivan loved freedom – just like me. No matter how far ahead he would go, he would always turn around to check and make sure I was in sight. And no matter how far away he went, I always knew exactly where he was too.

Ivan began to lose his hearing around 2011 when he was 12. By 2013 he was pretty hard of hearing and I had to keep him on a leash most of the time because I was afraid he wouldn't hear me if I called.

He would wait for me outside the cleaners, not tied up, staring at me through the glass door. Almost always, someone would comment on how he wouldn't move a muscle until I came out.

I loved the way he would "stretch" off the bed each morning.

Every morning when I got out of bed, Ivan would move directly to my spot and go back to sleep with his head on my pillow.

He always drank water before and after each meal.

He would not eat dog canned food. I bought him 2 roasted chickens every week. He liked hotdogs and salmon was his favorite food. Cheese was his favorite snack.

