



Nila's Happy Ending - Summer 2006

The summer of 2006 is a period that will stay in my memory forever as one of the most painful and traumatic times of my life. It began with the sudden death of a dear uncle, soon followed by the unexpected onset of lymphoma in my 13 year old Basset, "Sam." He fit in the palm of my hand on the day he became mine, and had been my baby ever since. He declined quickly and within 3 weeks I had lost my best friend. I had no time to mourn properly because, at the same time, my father was declining rapidly due to cancer. I am grateful that I was able to

be there to comfort both Sam and my father as they took their last breaths, but these experiences have left traumatic scars and the healing process takes time.

We knew we'd eventually add another dog to our family (but was I ready?) so I started poking around on Petfinder.com and looking at all the Bassets that needed homes. I'll never understand why so many beautiful and loving dogs lack someone to cherish them. Enter "Nila"- the Beagle/Basset mix who stood out from all the rest. Rescued as a puppy from a high-kill shelter in the South, she spent the first seven months of life in a crate. She was extremely shy and fearful of an outside world never before seen or heard. Despite this, her true nature, playful and affectionate, showed while in the presence of Donna, her foster mom. I immediately fell in love and knew I could earn that same trust. Nila was in my life from that moment on, and no other dog would suffice. Even our (very) possessive Corgi fell in love with her! Nila symbolized a new chapter in our lives...moving on.

Nila was adopted into our family on a warm and wonderful Saturday morning. It was wonderful until it came time for Donna to leave. She had worked hard to earn Nila's trust and love, and instill much-needed confidence. Donna's departure was painful and upsetting for everyone and very confusing for Nila. An hour later, nearing panic, Nila slipped away from me! She quickly headed for the woods that surround our house for miles in all directions. Donna returned immediately, and so began the search that would continue around the clock for seven days.

Hundreds of fliers were made, and we posted in local papers as well as on the Web. People called to offer help, a few token "crazy" calls were received, and there were dozens of sightings. Tons of attractive and stinky food, water, and toys that smelled like home, were disbursed around town where Nila would likely find them. Donna's friends drove an hour's distance to spend twelve-hour nights helping with the search. Trying to understand Nila's thinking, we plotted all sightings and movements on aerial maps... to no avail. She simply didn't want to get close to people. We were sick with worry and lack of sleep. Finally, an email came to us referencing the invaluable information available on LostDogSearch.com. If only we had seen it sooner. Realizing many things were done wrong, we quickly changed tactics, and followed Debbie's advice to the letter. Our

local animal shelter lent us a humane cage trap, but we lacked trusted sightings over the previous day, and didn't know where to put it. Finally, it was decided that our own back yard was better than letting it sit unused in the garage. The cage was set up with a hearty mix of beef soup, Vienna sausages, and sardines, and a bowl of water. Then her blanket and toys were put inside. None of us were very confident.

We were wrong! I can't describe our surprise, much less our excitement and relief, when the very next morning, Nila lay in the trap, relatively happy, as if it were her crate at home. Despite a surprisingly few number of ticks, she appeared healthy and none the worse for wear. After a very long sleep, she awoke with a happy, playful and confident disposition we hadn't seen in her before. It was as if the experience made her stronger and taught her not to be afraid because she could take care of herself. That, however, didn't overshadow her need for the love of a family, and she's been the sunshine in our household. She's also quite the clown!

One last note....I went back and reviewed all the information on Debbie's website. Nila followed every pattern that Debbie described. Her information was accurate, reliable, and it saved our dog. Now that I've become involved in trying to give something back to all the people that helped me, the first thing I tell everyone is: **GO TO DEBBIE'S WEBSITE**. It will save time and energy, and will keep you motivated and hopeful. Our search lasted a week. Many take longer, but these dogs **ARE** out there. You just need to stop, formulate a plan immediately, and don't give up! Thanks again Debbie, from our whole family!

J.Y. in CT