

Puppy Love

Mignona Cote

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Preface

This story has been a long time coming. It is a labor of love, intended to be one of inspiration and hope, true joy and a few tears. The following pages tell about the creation of my family. This story is dedicated to Marjorie Simon and Dr. Larry Bernstein, with whose consultations and faith keep me going.

To all pet owners - past and present.

Chapter 1: Simon

“Simon is dead - my kids watched him hit by a car and then his guts flying out and dying in the street. Simon is dead!! I am going to sue the organization! My kids are tormented. He is dead!!! I will get them.”

As with any story, there is a beginning. And with this one it was not Simon. It was Gizmo.

The Dallas home show in 2007 featured pets available for adoption. I did not have a pet, but my husband had mentioned getting a chocolate lab to be his pal while he worked. We have loved on a friend's two yellow labs for the past couple of years and in his opinion only labs and German shepherds were dogs that we could have. I wanted a small pet, but not so much that I had ever looked.

At the home show, through the wires of a crate, I saw the most beautiful eyes watching me. This is the moment where it all began. I opened the crate and held Gizmo. A truly wonderful and beautiful, orangey red, furry dog with huge warm eyes and a sad look saying "I need a home, come and get me." I held him in my arms, and loved him. I wanted him. At this time I had no idea about crates or crate training but I felt so sad putting him back in the crate. I left him there and went and visited more booths at the show.

As I went and visited more booths, my heart kept going back to the pet adoption booth: to Gizmo. A wonderful loving pet needing a home and me, alone most of time with lots of love to give. I went back and filled out the application for adoption. I was the first to complete an adoption form for Gizmo. I was so excited. I am going to be a Mom. YAY!! I called my husband, my Mom and told my friends. In fact, I even had a picture taken.

The rescue group told me to wait until Monday and they would provide me the details on the adoption. I just knew that meant, Monday, Gizmo was coming home, to his forever home. Monday I went to work and called the adoption agency to find out when I could pick up my baby. No one answered. I went to the web site and sent them a message. I kept calling and emailing. Late that evening I received an email stating

that Gizmo was given to another home but I could adopt another pet. I cried and cried and cried. Why? I wanted Gizmo, not another dog. Gizmo!

I sent several emails inquiring why, and finally got a response. I was informed Gizmo had been placed with a more qualified candidate. I cried, because what I heard in my mind was that the agency deemed me to be an "unfit" mother. My heart sank. I did not even qualify to adopt a dog!!

In discussions at my office, I was informed about rescue groups. It dawned on me that perhaps there's a Brussels griffon rescue site as well. So off to 'Google" I did go.

Lo and behold, www.BrusselsGriffonRescue.org. Aha, lots of pets for adoption, And wow, all these beautiful darlings needed homes. But I may not be qualified. What an understatement! I called a lady named Marjorie Simon and wow, the questions that lady could ask. I was at work, and I was determined to sell myself. She directed me to a form, of which, I completed it and sent it in.

Marjorie questioned me on my experience with dogs, history with using vets, whether I had children and if I had a fence and type. Oh, and my work hours. It was much easier to go through a job interview, be questioned by a police officer or have my Mom wonder why I was not visiting than to survive the Marjorie conversation. (In all fairness, Marjorie was firm but great) To this day, she has a special place in my heart.

Somehow, after not being a fit to own Gizmo, Marjorie conceded and agreed I could have one of the rescue Brussels Griffons. None of them were in Dallas and the closest location was Oklahoma City, three hours away. Simon, a beautiful red rough coat, was being fostered in Oklahoma City and needing a forever home. Again I was thrilled. I was going to be a mommy after all.

Off to the pet store I did go to by my welcome gifts: a green toy owl, a chew stick, bowl and the works. I had been approved to pick up Simon. Marjorie gave me the number of Simon's foster mom and on Saturday morning, 8am, Oklahoma City, here I come.

When I arrived in Oklahoma City, the foster mom handed over Simon. He was a gorgeous griffon but very frightened. He did not have a collar on, or a leash. I held him close to me and loved him. I felt as though I was handed a newborn child. I kissed him



and after a lot of petting he wiggled his tail. He was nervous but he relaxed and finally after about 20 minutes with me he kissed me and then fell to sleep peacefully in my arms. He was safe and now had a forever home.

I stopped to get gas and Simon escaped. He ran across a road and into a forest. I could not catch him. I was frantic. I called Marjorie. She gave me instructions on what to do - but I just could not get him. I walked the area over and over and then laid out a blanket, set out some food and positioned Simon's toy against the bowl of food. I did spot him a couple of times. After six hours of waiting and looking for him, I drove three hours back to Dallas. All along conversing with Marjorie.

Before leaving, I called the original owner and asked her to come out, as we were only 20 minutes from her house. The intent was that Simon would go to her, as he knew her. She said she could not as she did not have a car at that time. I offered to come and pick her up. She indicated that her husband would not allow her to get in the car with strangers – me, and that her husband was out. I asked her then if she would meet me back the next morning. She said yes, at 9am. That Sunday morning, my husband, a friend, two lab retrievers for search, got up at five am and drove three more hours to re-convene the search for Simon. The original owner did not show up at 9am.

The food was missing from his bowl, and I was not sure if he ate it, or another animal. In my heart, I wanted it to be him. We searched, gave his scent to the labs and kept calling the original owner to try and persuade her to come. After five exhausted hours, knocking on home and apartments and leaving our contact information with the gas station, we finally convinced the original owner to show up. We did this by offering her gas money and leaving cash with the gas station. We left as it was getting late and she and her husband agreed to go to the gas station and pick up the money.

During the two days of the Simon search between calls with Marjorie and the owner, I called a pastor friend I knew to have her pray. And she prayed several times for us to find Simon. Sunday night, while sitting alone in my living room hoping to hear from the owner about Simon, I received a call. " Simon is dead, I went to the gas station, called his name, he ran across the road and got hit by a car. My kids saw him die in my arms bleeding and guts exposed. I am going to sue all of you. I am calling Marjorie. " I did not know what to say, my baby was dead. My one and only child ever. DEAD. I sent an email to Marjorie - "Simon is Dead." I cried.

To this day, I feel responsible for Simon's death. All of the "if's": if I had a leash, if I had a collar, if I would have gotten gas first. I shared his death with the pastor. Her words: "Be thankful, that God let Simon be with you those 20 minutes to experience true

human love." You see, we do not know what caused him to be nervous, or how bad his situation was. We do know for 20 minutes of his life, before going home to God, he did feel human love. Simon, I will always miss you darling.

I felt so ashamed that I decided to not contact Marjorie anymore. I was proven to be an unfit mother and her original questions were pertinent.

A few days later, I decided I would not give up on motherhood. I choose to go a more traditional route to find a dog. I looked in the classified section of the Dallas Morning News.

Chapter 2: Natalie and Gigi

Thunderstorms, heavy rain, and chilling weather - I set forth on my journey to motherhood. Commuting from downtown to where I live is a mere 75 minutes. Then a quick ride into the county (to a puppy mill / backyard breeder no less) and I would have a Brussels Griffon. I got home at 6:30 and asked my husband did he want to make the quick ride to see a dog. He asked how long, I said right up the street. Of course, it was raining and lightning, but I wanted to see this dog.

I had found an ad in the paper whereby two black female griffons and one belge griffon were available. I definitely did not want a black but was interested in seeing the belge. We drove for about an hour for what I had thought would be a 15-minute drive. We were looking for Bonham, Texas. Turns out we found it 86 miles from my home: all while in a pouring down thunderstorm.

Out in the country down a dirt road, we came upon a house. It was the house. Turns out there were two young guys living there and apparently they were running a breeding business. One guy's mom had put him up in the business so that he would have an income. I met him outside, and he asked that we follow him in our truck as he drove out into a backfield. He was raising 200 pit bulls. Near a separate uncovered fenced area. Perhaps 8 ft by 10 ft, he stopped. He said here they are. Still raining, we got out, he went in and grabbed the male and handed him to me. The poor dog was frightened. Then I decided to ask to see the females. He had to chase them to even pick them up. But he handed me one, then the other. These babies were shivering and cold but seemed to cling to me. I could not let go of them. On impulse I said I would take the two girls.

Turns out they were a year old and litter mates. They had never been separated. One had just had puppies and three of them had died from cleft palates.

These babies held onto to me and would not even get off my lap in the car. We paid the man, got their papers, and drove off. They were soaked and wet and freezing. I warmed them and held them. We took them to their new home.

Before I had left, I did question what would happen with the male, would he be left alone in the freezing rain, and the guy stated that he would be put in a cage with some other small breed dogs. I have no idea why I did not take him. I called back a few days later, and learned that the male did find a home with an elderly couple.

My poor two babies looked scraggly to say the least. First things first, the next morning at 7am I was at the groomers to get them bathed, then I picked them up and

took them to the vet. Well, both were underweight, each 6 pounds, malnourished, ear mites, yeast infections and dry flaky skin. In the daylight they looked horrible. So I loaded up on meds, food, and omega 3 fish oil and off to work I went. The turnaround was fast. Within a few days on good food their bad breath went away, the flakes went away, and soon the ears cleared up. We were a healthy family with our biggest problem: potty training.

These dogs started having lots of fun, they ran and zipped through the house, jumped on furniture, took classes and met dog and people friends including their Granny. All was well.

I called and told Marjorie. I finally was a mom and had two dogs that would be loved forever. We named them GiGi and Natalie. My sisters, mom and I did not want the name Natalie, but my husband insisted, it was his favorite name. GiGi was afraid of my husband and all males. To this day, she still is sometimes hesitant with me, but sometimes lets her guard down.

Well, two dogs instead of one. I justified a lot that these two would keep each other company and I would simply need to do things doubled: two sets of vaccinations, two bowls of food, two baths, and one in each hand when walking. I can do it!!

After about three weeks, Natalie starting losing her zest, and stopped zipping through house and playing with GiGi. Now what? Is she going to be sick? is it curable? Am I going to lose her? All of these things were going through my head. All Natalie would do was sit on my lap. I did some research and then remembered that when I picked up Natalie, GiGi had just had some puppies. The owner had stated that Natalie could have possibly gotten pregnant. So I researched on the Internet and found that Natalie did have the symptoms.

I called the original owner to find out more details. Well, he said that Natalie was definitely pregnant but her pups would not make it. Turns out he said that GiGi had five pups, lost three with only two surviving. How awful and sad I thought. First, GiGi had not even been a year old, second her heart must have been broken. He suggested I call his mom for more details. So I did exactly that. I wanted to know if Natalie was pregnant and now why GiGi lost three pups.

I learned a lot from his mother. Apparently she was also a breeder and knew a lot about dogs. She had set her son up in breeding so that he could have an income. She was disappointed in some of his decisions, however. For example, her son was going to a "Country Vet" and the vet had told her son that he could give all of his dogs the same worm medicine that he had prescribed to cows. It would be cheaper and it was the same thing.

Well, he did. Also, he continued giving worm medicine to the dogs during pregnancy. His mom informed me that this should not be done as it could result in birth defects. And of course, her son was now frustrated with dog breeding as he kept losing litters. So not only did GiGi lose three, just the week before, one of his 200 pit bulls lost her entire litter. The mother said that he had learned about the proper dosage now and hopefully would successfully breed dogs.

Well, DARN. So Natalie may be pregnant but with pups that will have birth defects. And incidentally, the birth defects were all cleft palates. How dreadful. I began my research on birth defects, and in fact, learned that worm medicine, too much vitamin D and hereditary genetics were all contributors to cleft palates. Well, Natalie had too much medication and then also cleft palates were noted as common for Brussels Griffons.

Back to the vet I went. The vet looked at Natalie and told me that she could just be experiencing a false pregnancy and for me to not be concerned. That was an interesting concept to me, and yet another topic to research. Turns out false pregnancy has all of the symptoms of a normal pregnancy. There was a lot of research on the Internet and it seemed to be common for dogs.

The vet indicated the only way to be sure was to take an x-ray. So I went back to the vet and had Natalie x-rayed. Well absolutely nothing showed up. Turns out, the vet's x-ray machine was old and he apologized. But he said, that he still thought it was a false pregnancy but for me to come back in two weeks.

I was not sure about the false pregnancy, so I took pictures of Natalie and emailed them to my sister-in-law, who is also a vet, but in Venezuela. She said Natalie was definitely pregnant. My mom said Natalie was pregnant and so did some other folks. I called the mother again, of where I got Natalie. She said that Natalie should be pregnant. They had bred her. But she also thought that her pups would not make it due to her son's over dosing the griffons on worm medicine. She chose to then vent about her son and her disappointment in his lack of responsibility with the set up they had given him and the frustration of him losing so many pups. She stated that the three pups GiGi lost were born with cleft palates and that they had tried to save them but could not. She stated that I should be prepared.

Wow. What a burden, poor Natalie and poor GiGi. No wonder GiGi was so withdrawn. She had just lost her babies. When I had gotten the griffs, GiGi had just delivered four weeks earlier. She was still grieving. Poor darling GiGi. And now to go through it again with Natalie. I called Marjorie. Her advice was to have Natalie delivery via a C-section and then she gave me more detail on the birthing process, the

difficulties with the breed and especially since Natalie was so small and the dad as much larger. Natalie was six pounds and the dad was 15 pounds.

I researched every night about whelping, what that meant, what to expect. I called the vet and the emergency pet clinic to let them know, as soon as I saw anything that looked like Natalie delivering, I was heading over and getting assistance. I was not going to do this alone.

Meanwhile, Natalie then underwent royal treatment. She got a new pink bed, pink and blue dog toys for her nursery and yogurt daily. Of course, this would be unfair to GiGi, so GiGi got the same treatment. GiGi started also gaining weight.

We still weren't sure if Natalie was pregnant, but Marjorie had shared with me how to feel the movement of the pups. Also I had read that with 24 hours of delivery, dogs would have milk. Okay, this was gross. But I did feel movement of the pups, so again, off the vet. Finally the vet agreed Natalie was pregnant and he stated that she was going to have a single puppy, possibly two, but that was it.

By this time, I was so frightened that she would have pups with birth defects that I kept researching and learning about delivery. The advice I was receiving was to "let nature take it's course," that Natalie would know what to do. Just let her do what will come naturally. Well I read enough articles that indicated on occasion the mother may not do what is necessary, and by this time, my experience with dogs had been to the point that I needed to expect the unexpected.

I do want to point out a critical fact here, I grew up with dogs, long living dogs, who even had pups on their own. We did not have to do much with these dogs, just feed and love them. Somehow, though an over powering sense of research had come over me. I am glad it did.

Chapter 3: The New Arrivals

On May 14, 2007, at 4 A.M. in the morning, Natalie started making weird sounds and movements. She tried to go under my bed. No, I was not going to let her do this alone. I called a friend, he came over, and we got the emergency pet clinic on the phone. Natalie delivered a puppy. It did not look like a puppy, rather more like a blob of mucus. She would not touch it. We picked up the blob, rubbed off the mucus, and a tiny beautiful little creature was lying before us. Not breathing.

We had done enough research and with the help of the clinic, we massaged the little creature to start breathing, we syringed the little nose to get out any mucus in the air passage, handed him to Natalie, who walked away. Oh well, she was tired, we cleaned up the baby, it was a male, with a very large white spot on his chest. He wanted his mom. We cut the umbilical cord, per the clinic's instruction and then said goodbye.

We did get him on his mom's nipple for a second. I called my mom, and she was elated. She instantly named him Jewel. May 14th was my late grandfathers' birthday, and his name was Jewel. This was in honor of my Grandfather.

Natalie did not demonstrate normal behaviors as nature would indicate, so we cleaned up the birthing matter, and settled down to watch her and baby to make sure all was well. It was 6 A.M. Uh oh!! Natalie was at it again. Looks like another pup was coming out. We had known there could be two; and indeed a second one showed up. The same story repeated. Out it came, and in comes the squad to get it to breathe. We took the pup from the sac, wiped it down, massaged it to breathe, cleared its air passage and then put him on mom's nipple. Natalie was worn out, scared and just rested for a while. The second puppy was also a male.



We knew that she still had some birthing matter to discharge, so we sat on the floor with her, keeping her in her whelping box. I called mom again, the second pup was named JJ for James Jewel, my Grandfather's full name. It was now 7 A.M.

Natalie had her two puppies. In an hour, when the vet opened we would take them in to have them examined. Well Natalie started discharging her birthing materials around this time. But oddly, it looked like a blob was coming out, similar to the other pups, but Natalie could not get it out. Oh my, what do we do? It looked like she had a pup hanging halfway out of her. She kept trying to get it out, but poor Natalie had worn out. She could not push anymore, and this bag was hanging halfway out of her. We loaded Natalie into the car with her two babies and got to the vet at 8 A.M., with the third puppy lodged in the birth canal.

Natalie was having a third puppy. She was indeed too weak to deliver. The vet stated that he would give her a shot to force contractions and if that did not work in five minutes, we would have to have a C-section. An audience gathered at the vet's office to watch, only to be scolded by Dr. Hamelin to allow Natalie privacy and courtesy as she was suffering. The puppy came out, this time the vet cleaning it up and getting it to breathe. It was a girl, her granny named it Julie.

The vet checked over mom and pups and all were well. I asked him to make sure none had a cleft palate, he looked and said no. I was thrilled, I bypassed the birth defects. My biggest challenge was to get Natalie to feed her babies. We went home.



I had to go out of town that morning and my husband was also gone, so we had a close friend watch them. The pups did actually start feeding, but little Jewel had such a mess of milk on his face. They were safe and I went to Charlotte.

I kept checking on the pups: they were OK, Natalie was OK. GiGi was fine too, but GiGi had not been allowed to see the pups. Natalie and the pups were kept in a separate room.

So many people had asked for the pups when they came. The Murphy animal control officer, even asked for Julie right after she was born. I had no idea that I would fall in love with these puppies so quickly although the time would come that they would have their own homes.

They were born on a Monday, on Wednesday, I received a call. Jewel was getting weak, hardly able to move and not eating. "No, this cannot be, take him to the vet." The Vet I was using was not in, so Jewel was taken to an affiliate vet.

The vet called me at work, "Your puppy has a cleft palate which is not conducive to life, he needs to be euthanized." I was stunned, tears started rolling down my face, I

said "OK." I called back to validate and asked for my friend to please do what ever could be done to keep Jewel alive till I could see him one more time and say goodbye. I greeted Jewel into this world, massaged him to his first breath and I had to see him before he left. Dear God, please let his last days be comfortable, do not let him suffer but please let me see him. I called the vet, and said, no, do not euthanize him.

I called Majorie to confirm that cleft palate puppies could not live. She told me that in trying to save Jewel, he could likely develop pneumonia and would die anyway. I cried, it just was not fair. How could this poor little puppy have to die so young. I already loved him. My mom and husband were waiting to see him. I called my mother crying, and she said to do it quickly before I became attached. But I was already attached. Please, please, please, save him.

Jewel was taken back home, at two days old. He was held up to the sun to feel the sunlight, to know its warmth. He was shown to GiGi and some other dogs so that he could say goodbye and then go to Heaven. Somehow though, Jewel would be saved that day until I returned home. Then we would say goodbye.

I had previously bought some "NewBorn" and adding Benebac to the mix, Jewel was able to take some food via a syringe. Jewel got two CCs into him at that first feeding. An hour later, Jewel received another CC. Then each hour for the next few hours. Jewel started getting some life in him. He would make it that day. I would get to see Jewel alive. My friend laid on the floor that night dozing and feeding Jewel every two hours. Natalie took care of the other two pups. The other dogs including GiGi stared through a gated fence knowing all was not well.

That night I sat in my hotel room researching. Now - how to save cleft palate puppies. There was so much on the internet confirming that euthanizing was required. I found one article though, entitled, "They are so worth saving." This one article gave me hope. It was written by a retired nurse who had saved cleft palate puppies and advised on over 200 cases. I read and re-read this article. I took notes and it became my lifesource. That night in my hotel room, I decided I was not going to euthanize Jewel. I was determined to give him everything I had because God trusted him to me, and I had already failed with Simon. For Simon, and the numerous pets who unfairly die - I was going to do my best to save Jewel.

Poor little Jewel, born weighing 4 oz. I held his frail body in the cups of my hands on Thursday, May 17th, 2007. Born on the 14th, suggested to be euthanized on the 16th, now struggling for strength to live on the 17th. Jewel was wiggling his legs, he was hungry, and I was going to give him his first bottle. He had been fed by my friend for the previous two days.

To feed him, a customized nipple was cut to get just the right flow of formula into Jewel. It took experimentation of about five nipples to get the hole correct. That Thursday evening at 6 P.M., I fed Jewel 3 CCs. We then put him in a homemade incubator, as Jewel was too fragile to be with his littermates and his mom.

We made an incubator first with a light bulb shining on his little tiny bed in a box. From research we knew it needed to be 85 degrees. He slept. Two hours later, I woke him up and fed him. He was so hungry, trying to nurse really fast, so fast that he was getting his formula up in his cleft. No, Jewel slow down. He took 3 CCs. We then put him in for a few minutes with his mom Natalie, to clean him and help him potty. Well Natalie would not have anything to do with him. We often think back and wonder, is it because nature only focuses on their strong, or was she just a difficult mom?

We soon noticed Natalie would not clean the other two pups. That evening I called my mom and said Jewel made it through a night and day on a bottle. That we were going to keep trying.

By this time Natalie had lost interest in all of her pups. I was holding her so that she would feed her other pups. And she would not assist them to potty. We used a warm cloth to stimulate potty time but then my Mom said, let Aunt GiGi help. Well as precautionary as I was, GiGi was kept away from the pups and Natalie to keep the environment as germ free as possible. I was so tired and stressed. I let GiGi come in to see the pups.

GiGi, sweet, shy, and afraid, came into the nursery. GiGi, our first message from God. She took over caring for the pups and from that introduction; she began to take care of the pups. She cleaned them and pottied them including precious little Jewel. Thank you forever GiGi. Natalie, of course, still despised feeding her own babies.

Throughout the night on that Thursday night, every two hours Jewel would be fed. He was gaining energy. We were tired but started a routine. Jewel would get 3 CCs every two hours, heated to 101 degrees and tested. We would scald his bottle and nipple after each feeding.

We made it to Friday morning. Jewel lived through two evenings on the bottle. He still weighed 4 ounces. His little legs would wiggle and his little mouth would suck. The article stated that the first three days were the most critical. We made it past that point. That Friday, I took the pups to the vet, as I needed consultation regarding the dew claws and tails. We took Jewel with us. The vet stated he would not do Jewel as he was too stressed and weak for the procedure. We knew what that meant. Julie and JJ were scheduled for Monday. (What a dreadful thought!)

Meanwhile, I asked the vet for advice for Jewel. He looked me in the eyes and said, “we all have tried to save cleft palate animals, we know what you are going through, but we have not seen much success with cleft palates.” Well, he said “not seen much.” That was good enough for me. It turned out when I inquired with the vet tech, that they had only seen three successes at this clinic in 15 years.

The vet showed us how to tube feed Jewel, gave us a tube and syringe and recommended we start tube feeding Jewel at least twice a day while continuing with his bottle.

Well, the tube was very horrifying to me and I had read enough by this time to realize, I could get the tube in the lungs and kill Jewel. The bottle had worked for two days, and in my heart it would keep working, I knew it would. Nevertheless the vet marked the tube so that we would know how far to insert it. It would go right below his ribs.

Meanwhile, I had called the world renowned veterinary school at Texas A&M University. They informed me that they would not help be able to help as cleft palate birth defects are common. Their recommendation was that Jewel should be put down.

The article I found stated that I needed to give the cleft palate pup an antibiotic, Cephalexin. I asked the vet for some. He said no, that this antibiotic was a broad spectrum antibiotic and it would destroy the



beneficial bacteria that were needed at this point in Jewel’s life. He stated that when Jewel got sick we would then put him on an antibiotic.

The vet did not give us much hope, but he did look at Jewel’s cleft and noted that he had both a hard cleft palate and a soft cleft palate and that maybe the way the cleft palate was formed, Jewel might have a slight chance. Again, slight was a very strong word for me and it was just the reinforcement I needed.

That night, we all went back to my friend’s house and took our shifts and worked our process. My naps were on the bed with my head facing the incubator. Jewel was still getting some mommy time with Natalie, and scooted a little. GiGi did the bathing of all the pups and Natalie, was still forced to feed. By this time, Natalie was so drained herself, she just wanted to sit on me. But GiGi always stayed with the pups.

By this time, since Natalie did not want to stay with her pups, we fixed two sets of warm beds - both beds being measured at 85 degrees. One for Jewel and one of Julie and JJ. Each bed was made with heating pads on low, with three different areas of warmth 1) no pad, just towel, 2) triple folding of towel over pad, and 3) double folding of towel on pad. I had read where I could over heat the pups, dehydrate the pups and so to be extra cautious, I measured the temperature and then gave them comfortable options.

The two healthy pups took turns on where they would lie. Jewel typically stayed where we would place him. Which was on the triple layer. He also had a bulb over him but we kept it pulled up as to manage his temperature very carefully. During this time, I was getting consultation from Marjorie. She once shared that she put tea clothes over her pups, so I did the same!! I lived by her words as well as those in the article.



As earlier mentioned, the article stated that I was to immediately put the cleft palate pup on Cephalexin. The article stated that the pups who did not get pneumonia and made it were the ones taken Cephalexin. That other pups who were on other antibiotics did not always make it. That was enough for me. Jewel was going to get his antibiotic. A vet in Mexico sold some to an associate of ours, who would then drive over the border and overnight the antibiotic to me.

Wearily Saturday morning came. We made it through another night. Jewel still weighed four ounces. My friend had gone three nights without any sleep. It was time to take Jewel home.

The plan was for me to take the weekend then back to my friend's home on Sunday night. My husband was on a critical business trip and still had not met the pups. Saturday was day 6.

I got Jewel home around 8am. Time for his feeding, heat one cup water in the microwave for 45 seconds, let it cool for ten seconds, pour 3 CCs of "Just Born" in a medicine cup, hold cup in water till reaches 101 degrees, pour in bottle, tilt Jewel's head back and feed. The routine was down to a science.

According to my article, this would be my plan for the next four weeks, increasing CCs as Jewel would grow. The plan was to get him to make it to four weeks then get him on kibble. Cleft palate pups do not grow much during the first four weeks as does their littermates since they are not feeding as much.

Jewel did fine on his first feeding. I too was getting tired. At ten, two neighborhood children came to peep at the pups, learned about the situation and then promised to pray for Jewel. Ten o'clock feeding came, Jewel's nipple was missing, I had to make a new nipple. Jewel would not take his food. I kept trying. 11 o'clock, still trying, but Jewel would not feed. He was declining and getting weak. I was frantic; I got a small bit in him but not much.

I started researching while he slept. I read several articles about "fading puppies" where the puppies would die. As defined from <http://www.petplace.com/dogs/fading-puppy-syndrome/page1.aspx>

"The first few weeks of a puppy's life are crucial. Puppies are fragile and they rely completely on their mother for **nutrition** as well as social requirements. Puppies that do not survive the first few weeks are afflicted with "fading puppy syndrome" and are called "faders." About 20 to 40 percent of all puppies born do not survive past 12 weeks of age. Causes of puppy death in the first 12 weeks of life are generally linked to problems developed while in the uterus, problems associated with the **birth** process or problems around the time of weaning.

Uterine Development Problems. Birth defects, which include both **genetic** as well as drug or environmental causes, account for a large number of fading puppies. The easiest birth defect to detect is malformation of the head, limbs, genital or anal area as well as a cleft palate."

My heart sank, I was losing Jewel. He gave us three days where as we had asked for one. Dear Jewel was drifting away and God was taking him home. I continued reading and found that the pup lets out a cry and tilts his head back as he leaves this earth. I am going to miss Jewel so much, I tried dear baby, I tried so hard to save you. I held him crying telling him how much I loved him. Jewel was dying.

I could not give up, I still kept trying. Finally, I had come across an article that mentioned using a dab of corn syrup to get some energy in the pup. That this method could sometimes work to get them to take food. Prayerfully I put a dab of corn syrup on Jewel's little tongue, he moved a little and then he took his food. I was able to get 3 CCs in Jewel. He was weak, but I got some food in him that Saturday. By evening, Jewel and I were back on routine; he was just in a weaker state. He did not die on Saturday.

That evening I found the lost nipple, chewed by either Natalie or GiGi. Since Jewel was so weak, I returned Jewel to my friend's house so that I could get some help with the other pups. We made it through Saturday night.

Sunday was another day of ups and down. Jewel would take his food sometimes and other times he would not. He remained weak. We adjusted his temperature and gave him a lot of mommy and littermate time. His siblings kept him going. Jewel decided to hang in there and get us to Monday.

This first weekend was really bad - with so many up and downs. We did not know what else to expect. My research came across many stories of cleft palate pups, some made it and some died even after a couple of months.

Monday evening Jewel had regained some energy. By now he would suck his nipple so fast that milk was coming up through his cleft and into his nose. This was the next area of concern. How do we prevent the formula from being breathed into his lungs or causing sinusitis in his nasal cavity. We received the antibiotics, measured the correct dosage and began a routine of adding the antibiotics in his morning feeding and evening feeding.

The schedule was on two hour intervals and that Monday it continued with me taking the 5am feeding, my friend gave the day feedings, I took over at 5pm, 7 pm, 9pm and then my friend had 11pm and I had 1pm, 3pm and 5pm again. We alternated naps. The pups were one week old. Jewel was alive.

Tuesday, I took the pups back to my house. The neighborhood kids came by to peep and poor Jewel got weak again. He was not growing and hardly getting any food. I could not find local vet help so I continued searching the internet. I came across Dr, Bernstein, a holistic vet in Miami, Florida. I sent him a plea for advice.



Meanwhile, I had engaged my sister-in-law, Inez, in Venezuela who was also a vet. Inez indicated to keep feeding. Poor Jewel - he could not take in his food though, he was starving. I then gave him a small dot of NutriCal; NutriCal is very sticky and in order to keep it from going into his cleft I would put a dab on the inside of my small finger, then let him suck it off while keeping my finger in his mouth as a barrier to protect the opening to the nasal cavity.

Jewel was so weak on Tuesday, I had decided once he got better again we would not move him anymore. Jewel still weighed four ounces and the other pups had almost doubled in size. Jewel was returned to my friend's house on Wednesday morning. Jewel got better and we finally came to realize Jewel was relating to my friend as his mother and took to his feedings much better. We were not sure of the comfort there but Jewel would feed better. We put a shirt in the incubator and continued giving him mommy time.

There were so many near death / weak moments during that first week. By Wednesday of week two, I took a cloth to the preacher I previously mentioned to have her and another pastor pray and anoint it at church. This cloth was prayed for at the altar and then placed in Jewels incubator. Jewel then slept on the cloth. The pastor commented that he had never been asked to do this for a dog. Meanwhile we mailed a photo of Jewel to my Mom. It broke her heart to see her grand puppy and she too prayed for him. She kept his photo next to her reading chair and each morning she would hold the photo and pray. We turned Jewel's care over to God.

Chapter 4: All Eyes on Jewel

David, Jewel's dad returned home and met Jewel and the other pups at their age of 1 and one half weeks. David engaged into the routine, which relieved us a bit. He stayed at my friend's house too, we slept in shifts in our clothes and continued feeding him on two hour intervals. Jewel was not growing but he was stabilizing and taking the food.

We moved the pups home again that second weekend and the two healthy pups eyes opened. Poor little Jewel tried to open his a day later, but a terrible infection had crusted over the lids. Back to the vet I went. We were given an antibiotic cream for his eyes and would first wash with Visine then put in the drops. Jewel – always requiring something; this treatment went on for a week.

With Jewel stable during the second week, we started gaining hope. We had a routine. The first and last feeding each day included the antibiotics. We were using New Born the first two weeks and heated it to 95 degrees. Liquid people baby vitamins were added at the end of week two. The vitamins were a mess. We first tried to drop them in his mouth but they were too sticky and got up in his nasal cavity. When this happened Jewel could not breathe and we had to flush lots of water in him.

Jewel's feeding evolved into a very meticulous art. Due to the cleft, liquid would get into his nasal cavity. His nose would stop up and he would not be able to breathe. Observing this behavior was incredibly frightening, as Jewel would panic and gasp for air.

Jewel was practically starving as the vet would tell us, so when we fed him he would suck his food incredibly fast. This would lead to even more liquid getting into his nostrils and then he would panic due to his inability to breath. We used two tools to help us during these episodes.

The first one was the ball syringe with a cutoff nipple at the end. We tried several syringes but we found one specific one that was supple enough to create the suction we would immediately syringe out excess liquids from Jewel's nose. The backside of



the nipple created the suction space across his nasal holes. The cup of the nipple had to fit over both holes with a very deep squeeze to extract the liquid.

It usually took three to four times to get the liquid out, then we would take the nipple off and squeeze the excess liquid into the sink. Many times however, during very close calls, we would spend up to thirty minutes squeezing and trying to get the liquids out. Jewel was suffering and his breathing would be very difficult. This led to the second tool we used.

The second tool was a needle syringe with the needle replaced with an outward facing nipple. When Jewel would feed we would put this open syringe in his mouth and get him to



suck on that nipple while we syringed his nose.

We did this to teach him to

breath through his

mouth. This device came in very helpful as we would stick this nipple in his mouth to have him suck it then take a smaller syringe (the size for diabetes) and inject water to the very back of his throat, this would allow us to bypass the cleft palate altogether.

Our goal was to get through the first four weeks so that we could then try to get him on small kibble.



By week three we had found a vet who would work with us. He was located in Miami, Florida and practiced holistic veterinary science. His practice was based on keeping pets alive. Dr, Bernstein was my special gift from God because by this time, we were all sleep deprived and stressed.

I had an initial consultation and this was when I learned that Jewel was starving. We would pull at his skin and it would not sink back to his body, a sign of dehydration. As well Jewel only weighed five ounces at three weeks, one ounce more than at birth. The other pups were nearing a pound.

Dr. B as we would call him, shared with us how he had saved a cleft palate pup of his own and then he spent about 50% of his time being my psychologist as I was at a near breaking point. I was tired, worn out, sleepy and worried. Jewel just had to make it. We loved him so much.

Dr. B's first instruction was to get liquids in Jewel ASAP. Also, he put him on Calcarea Phosphorica, which is used to stimulate growth. It is a holistic approach that is used even with small people to get bones to grow. We were to put a drop or two in Jewel daily. We used the open syringe coupled with the diabetic syringe to get water in Jewel and would do this now after every feeding. Also Dr. B took Jewel off the New Born as it did not have as much nutritional quality as he needed at the time. Jewel was put on Esbilac with goats' milk. The goats' milk had a more enriched content and was closer to Mom's milk.

Jewel started growing – he got to six ounces. But with that little bit of growth, also came enlargement of the cleft palate. The original article we read indicated there would be a period when the cleft would appear larger due to growth. We were there. Due to the growth, Jewel started having more choking and flooding through the nostrils.

Midway through week three, Jewel started having more frequent episodes where he could not breathe. We would keep syringing his nose, then blow in his nose and he would shake frantically but would be able to get air through his mouth till we got it cleared out. He had an episode that lead to garbled breathing sounds, and that night he slept on his dad's neck.

During this time, we had to keep Jewel by our faces while we slept as he started having breathing episodes as well when he was not feeding. As we had started giving him water, he increased in his saliva, which in turn would get in his nasal cavity. This of course, led to his inability to breathe and each time that would happen, we would have to syringe out his nose and put the other syringe in his mouth to facilitate breathing through the mouth.

Jewel's episodes got harder and harder to clear. We just did not understand, but Dr. B said it was time to stop feeding him with a syringe. Now we would have to tube feed him. Oh no, oh no, oh no! Exactly what we did not want to do. We had read so many horrors of what could go wrong. How we could mistakenly get the tube in his lungs and kill him. I froze at this. I took every single word of Dr. B to heart though. Jewel was still at five ounces, whereas, the other pups were at a pound and a half!

Jewel was on four hour feeding intervals at this time so we did start getting some rest. At least one of us would get eight hours of sleep at this time. But with the tube feeding, we would have to use two people. There were three of us in this, so we would alternate.

We were scared to death. After Dr. B's instructing us to tube feed, I fed Jewel by syringe again as I was alone. He simply could no longer take syringe; milk was coming out of his nostrils, and his mouth. I was forcing water in his mouth and syringing out his

nose all the while holding the other syringe in his mouth – saying hang in there, come on we can do it. This time took several minutes to get Jewel cleared up and to have him calm down. By this time it looked as though he was foaming at the mouth.

It was Saturday afternoon, we had two tubes that the local vet had given us. Fortunately the local vet had shown us how to insert a tube in case we needed to know how and marked the tube for us. Naturally having seen this though had only elevated our fear of tube feeding. Nevertheless we had to get food into Jewel and he was not taking it well during the syringe. Plus he was five ounces at four weeks.

We watched a video demonstration by Dr. Bernstein twice as we prepared for that first tube feeding. This was the beginning of a new ritual. With tube feeding if the tube is accidentally placed in the trachea, then the liquid would get into the lungs leading to pneumonia and death. The death would be in a day or two. The article previously mentioned “They are So Worth Saving” described how the author did save one pup by intravenous feeding, however, she had 25 years of emergency room nursing experience. We knew this could not happen to us – we had made it this far. But we knew where the emergency hospital was, just in case!

We had a list of tube feeding rules, and each feeding followed each step.

1. Check measurement of tube – the tube should be inserted to the beginning of the stomach which one could determine right below the rib cage.
2. Sterilize the tube with hot water.
3. Lubricate the tube with a non petroleum base lubricant. We used the Equate brand from Wal Mart.
4. Prepare formula – 7 CCs of Esbilac, Cephalexin and vitamin in first and last feedings, warmed to 101 degrees.
5. Draw into syringe, attach tube
6. One person hold pup with head tilted upwards to make it less likely the tube would enter the trachea.
7. Tip of tube injected into formula to create yummy taste,
8. Pray
9. Insert tube into pup till reach marking (top of stomach)
10. Watch pup breath easily twice
11. Depress slowly small drop of formula
12. Check breathing
13. Slowly inject remaining formula
14. Pull out
15. Insert finger to let him suck.

Wow, we were very precise that first time, all of us sweating and praying. We were on pins and needles scared to death. Then Jewel regurgitated. Oh no, poor Jewel, and stress level back up. Out with the syringe and clearing the nose.

While clearing the nose never went away during this time, tube feeding actually was much easier than what we thought it would be and Jewel took to it well. This was a turning point for us. It took several tries to get past the regurgitation, which was largely due to an increase in food as he was not used to it. We were to start increasing his intake to try and get him to grow.

With the tube feeding, Dr. B put us on a cycle whereby we fed him five times a day and at the end of week four, we had nights back. Jewel was tube fed at 6am, 10am, 2pm, 6pm and 10pm. We were giving him 7 CC's each time getting 35 CCs in him a day. We increased to 8 CCs a feeding and then ten CCs. At week five we dropped to four feedings a day, then to three feedings week 7 forward.

Tube feeding gave us back much time. It took about three minutes to prepare and only 8 seconds to feed. And what a delight! Jewel LOVED his tube. His little mouth would reach up to it as he wiggled and wiggled to get his tube. He knew he would soon have a tummy filled with delicious, warm food. What a delightful and wonderful feeling. Jewel was making it!!! Hang in there baby.

God gives us things in our life to teach us and make us better. I look back at this, while crying, amazed at the adrenaline that flowed through me and the over bearing focus on saving Jewel. But during this time, I must admit while a blur, I somehow became a neighborhood mystery. Two very special little girls would come by to visit. Alli who saw the pups right when they were born and Lindsey who lived across the street.

Now it takes a special patience to have children visitors, and I have never been known to be patient, nor do I have children. From the moment Jewel came into my house, these girls came over at least three to five times on weekends and then every evening. The old Mignona would have been annoyed; the saving Jewel Mignona simply threw them into the routine. They sanitized their hands and were allowed to gently hold the pups. On three occasions they came when I would open the door crying saying Jewel is not doing well, pray. They would pray. And they blended into saving Jewel.

Looking back I realize these girls were a gift from God. They taught me a lot about courage and faith as they were confident we would make it. Also they gave the other four dogs the attention needed that I had been neglecting. You see, Jewel was all encompassing, but Alli and Lindsey spent hours with all of the pups playing with them,

dressing them and later teaching them to jump off the couch – what? Yep, the kiddos taught the pups to be better pups.

At week 7, Dr. B told us that we needed to think about surgery. He wanted us to start Jewel on kibble. Well here we go with new incidents. We tried a kibble. The article on “They are so worth saving” recommended cat kibble as it was the smallest.

Even with the smallest, kibble it was still too large. The feeding consisted of a dab of Nutri-cal underneath our fingers, and a single cat kibble cut in half force feed by pushing into the back of his mouth. We would get two to three kibbles in this way and would do it for the next few days only twice a day. Meanwhile we would continue to tube feed Jewel. He was now at a pound and would get 60CCs. Still very underweight for 7 weeks.

By week eight, Jewel was taking five or six kibbles through force feeding. We then increased the count to ten kibbles coated with AD diet by Science Diet. This is a high fat and protein content food from the vet used in extreme cases for pet nutrition. By the end of the week, Jewel’s diet consisted of 10 – 15 kibble coated in AD twice a day, two Nutri cal drops twice a day, and a more fattening formula for the tube feeding. He was tube feed three times a day at 60 CCs.

We changed the formula so as to assist Jewel in gaining weight. The formula used was found at <http://leerburg.com/bottlefeeding.htm>. This recipe has 11 calories per CC.

1. 10 oz. of canned evaporated milk or goat's milk (not pasteurized cow's milk - this will cause scowers - dogs cannot drink normal cow's milk) Goats milk is by far the best to use. Wal-Mart sells it.
2. 3 oz. sterilized water (baby water or boiled water) this is not needed if using goat's milk
3. 1 raw egg yolk
4. 1 cup of whole yogurt (avoid skim or fat free if at all possible)
5. 1/2 Tsp Karo Syrup or Corn Syrup (NOT HONEY !!!)

Jewel grew to 1.4 pounds by week 9. By this time his body was unbalanced whereas his front part was developing quicker than his back. He had started walking but he could not support himself to potty. To compensate for this weakness we would get in his pen at potty times and use our index fingers for Jewel to prop against to potty. This activity lasted for three or so weeks.

Meanwhile, it was time to teach Jewel to drink water. To bypass the cleft, we used a gerbil water bottle at an elevated height so that Jewel would tilt his head back slightly to get water. This helped in bypassing the cleft to reduce water getting into his nasal cavity and choking.

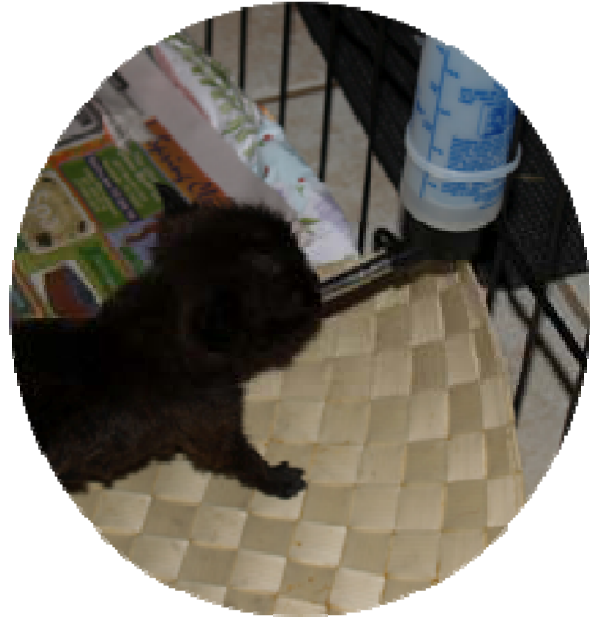
We progressed to feeding Jewel about 50 kibble twice a day by hand coating with the Science Diet AD. We now were ready to teach Jewel to eat on his own.

However, he had great difficulty in picking up kibble. In order to keep the kibble from sliding around we would feed Jewel on a computer mouse pad. The pad had a bit of friction that kept the kibble from moving so that Jewel could pick it up.

Jewel was taken off of the tube at 11 weeks and was hand feed kibble for the first four months of his life. At four months old Jewel weighed five pounds and had surgery for the cleft palate. One tiny hole was not closed as part of the surgery and we elected to not have a second surgery. Jewel would spend his life solely on water and dry kibble.

Jewel is now four years old. He weighs 23 pounds and still is known as the miracle pup. He still only eats dry kibble, takes water from his bottle as well as from a bowl. Occasionally, we have had some breathing mishaps when Mommy (me) would secretly give him a taste of cake batter or Granny would let him "lick the bowl." Each time is so traumatic that we vowed to not do it again. From time to time the other Griffis get liquid treats and we separate Jewel and give him a dry treat.

Saving Jewel and keeping five griffs together has been a great blessing in our lives. Our hearts have expanded and knowing the painful and frightening midnight hours lead to extend my experience to those who face those times now.





The author's sister Lisa and the five Griffis.

