

# Puppy Love in the Gables

Small, specialty breeds are available for adoption – but prepare for an interrogation  
false



By Patrick Alexander

Jan  
12  
2010

When I was a small boy my pet dog had to be put down. One day I came home from school and my mother told me that Spud had gone to a nearby farm where he spent all day running around the meadow with other dogs, his tongue lolling out and his long ears flowing behind him. I pretended to believe her, because I needed to. In the years since then, as various dogs passed through our lives, I in turn have told my own children about “the farm” where dogs chase each other happily through sunlit meadows. They, too, pretended to believe.

Throughout our marriage, my wife and I have owned several dogs, all of which have been mutts from the animal shelter. We have always loved our dogs and taken an extra pleasure from knowing that these otherwise abandoned animals have found a loving home. Eight years ago, however, after our youngest daughter left home, my wife had her heart set on a Maltese puppy. I had always had a horror of fluffy, yapping little lap dogs but, being an excellent husband, I bought her a puppy from a Maltese breeder.

Naturally, I imposed strict conditions: My wife would be responsible for looking after it and walking it and under no circumstances would it sleep anywhere other than in the kitchen. Two nights later it was sleeping in our bed, and now I never go anywhere without Frodo. The following Christmas I bought my wife a second Maltese from the same breeder.

Sadly, after seven years, our second puppy died, and so this Christmas I prepared to buy another puppy from the same breeder. It never crossed my mind that it was possible to buy a thoroughbred dog except from a breeder – just as it never occurred to me that people would ever give up thoroughbred dogs for adoption.

Luckily, my daughter told me about the Animal Rescue network and specifically the Shitzu Rescue organization in Davie. The Shitzu Rescue organization specializes in small fluffy lapdogs – mainly Shitzus and Malteses – which are in need of adoption. It turns out that for various reasons, especially during this time of foreclosures, even the most expensive or exotic of dogs can find itself abandoned and in need of a loving home. So people who do not want a mutt but have their hearts set on a specific breed, can still get the dog of their dreams while saving some poor animal from a life of neglect.

I accepted a position at the University of Miami a few years ago and was subjected to the most rigorous vetting process, but that was nothing compared to the process of adopting an animal from the Animal Rescue Network. In addition to contact information for our vet, we had to provide three personal references for people who knew our family and our previous animals. All of them were telephoned and interrogated in detail – this is before we had even visited their offices to inspect the dogs.

When we were eventually invited to the Shitzu Rescue offices to select our Maltese, I finally discovered “the farm” where Spud and all the other lost dogs run “happily ever after.” There were maybe 20 or 30 little Maltese and Shitzus all running around energetically, chasing each other and barking. Some were adults and some were still puppies but they were all clean and well cared for. We were impressed that the people who run the shelter knew the names and the history of all the dogs in their care. Seeing all these happy little dogs playing in the meadow conjured memories of what I had tried to believe and to picture years before when my mother told me that Spud had gone.

The shelter is in Davie, near the IKEA store, but since so many Coral Gables residents have small pedigrees, they should be aware that an alternative to puppy-mills and breeders does exist. We came home with a 3-year-old Maltese who had been given up because her owner could no longer afford her. Lucy now has a loving home, and Frodo has a girlfriend.

For more information visit <http://www.shihtzurescue.org/as/home.shtml>

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