

## JACK'S WORLD

Jack is a dog.

He's a very smart dog, and he's very friendly.

He's a good size dog, around 75 pounds. He used to weigh over 80 pounds, but that was last year.

A year ago, he was mostly content with his life, not always, but mostly.

He only had a small area outside during the day, about 10 feet by 40 feet, and a fence blocked his vision of the world beyond. While standing on a chair on the deck, he could glimpse a little of what was happening outside his domain.

Most days, Jack would go on an evening walk, unless it was muddy outside. He loved those walks, especially if he was allowed to go off leash by the railroad tracks, as long as no one else was around.

His world was limited; however, he was invited into the house for the evening and overnight. It was cozy, soft and warm inside, and he received lots of attention.

If he wanted to play with his ball, he'd get it and insist that someone play with him. And, when there wasn't food in his metal bowl, he'd use his paw and bang it loudly, by flipping it about, until he was served.

To be sure, Jack contributed.

He gave kindness and great hugs, and he made sure everyone was safe.

He was the protector / the keeper of the stability.

Whenever, he'd hear someone walking on the front wooden steps or if someone rang the doorbell, he would yell out with his deep, fierce bark.

He felt very satisfied to be the guardian;..... *however,..... if there every was a threatening intruder, I doubt they'd use the front door and ring the door bell.*

That was Jack's world, .... and I have a feeling that he thought he was fairly well in control of things.

Then ... one day, a puppy appeared in his life.

That was okay, in spite of the attention that the puppy was getting... because the puppy, who's name became "Rusty"... was like Jack.

In fact, Rusty acted like Jack, had the same values and interests, smelled like he belonged,..... and best of all, Rusty knew Jack's natural language. Jack didn't have to listen to English all the time, and that felt good.

Yet, Rusty was merely a precursor for more changes in Jack's world.

Jack's situation and location changed, last Spring.

There was lots more room, with lots of possibilities. The wooden fence was gone, and the leash was no longer needed.

Jack and Rusty owned everything. The world was theirs to conquer – with magpies to chase and gophers to hunt down.

They must have thought that they went to dog heaven,..... until they met Mr. Porcupine.

That wasn't fun..... at all.

In addition, a fenced in area was erected for them..... to make sure they didn't roam too far..... when no one was around, but that was okay.

They didn't spend too much time confined.

Their self indulging came at another price. It made them muddy, smelly and a host to ticks; therefore, Jack and Rusty no longer slept in the cozy, soft, warm house. They had to sleep in the garage at night. Still, their domain was very inviting... There was lots of room.

.....room for more.

The first to arrive was "Fat Cat."

His owner was moving away, and Fat Cat needed a place to live.

He was accurately named, but it was a demeaning label. So, his name was changed to "Moe".

Jack was excited by this new arrival because Jack's biggest passion was to chase and pick on cats, ..... yet... Moe wasn't a normal cat. He had an attitude....., and he was used to dogs.

Jack couldn't get Moe to run and play chase, and Moe stood up for himself, even though he was a .... worthless cat,... in Jack's opinion.

Jack was disappointed by a cat that insisted on being treated with respect,.... and by having to share his space with Moe.

Before long, a new place was built in Jack's world.... It was a safe and secure place..... A home was being made – a home for..... chickens.

Goldie, Ralph, Blue Bell, Penelope and Penny joined Jack's world.

Jack and Rusty thought these big birds were rather strange—they didn't fly away,... and they felt unthreatened in their new home.

So Jack and Rusty gave up barking at them. The birds were boring,..... and worse: they had a knack for sounding the alarm about anything and everything.

One of Jack's big contributions, an essential part of his purpose in life was being challenged. Those birds didn't wait until someone rang the door bell. Jack felt like he was no longer the protector, *even though Jack ignored all visitors, even late night visitors.... unless they rang the door bell.* [Jack needs to do some adjusting, if he wants to be a guard dog]

As it happened, the old apartments near the airport are being torn down, and three cats living there were about to be homeless.

A "rescue cat" organization caught them, and another feral cat from a different place, and asked if a home could be made for the four .... in Jack's world.

There was room, plenty of room, and the four cats were powerless, hungry and in need of shelter. Jack wasn't thrilled,..... especially when he found out that he wouldn't be allowed to chase them.

Room was made for the cats, and some of Jack and Rusty's access to the barn was limited so that the cats would feel safe. In addition, since the cats like to roam at night, Rusty and Jack acquired a night time curfew.

The cats names are Prince, Snowball, Casper and Thumper.

They provide a valuable service; they catch mice.

Jack knew he wasn't good at that, and Jack can't lay eggs, and it was hard for him to accept that others were contributing.

Yet,..... he knew he was the strongest and smartest, and if it wasn't for him, the coyotes would come and get the cats.

So, his identity was still in tack, and in a way,..... he was helping to provide a safe place for the cats, besides he Rusty were having a great time playing with each other.

Still, he missed being known as the "One" – the important one.

The cats are all barn cats, but when they come out in the evening, they come near the house to share their affection and appreciation.

Jack can hear them. He knows what's going on.

All the cats are doing well in their new home, and their home welcomed two new adopted kittens – "Buster" and "Priss".

Buster and Priss are very weak and needy, so they get special attention, and when that happens, Jack and Rusty are put in their fenced area.

\*It can be hard adjusting to others finding home in your home.

And there is more: a friend who owned two horses moved away, and said, "If you board my daughter's horse for a while until I can arrange transportation, I'll give you the other horse."

Horse require LOTS of alterations to feel at home. They are big, and they need lots of space,..... and worse. Horses are friendly, smart, not intimidated by dogs or coyotes, and they have special gifts, too. They don't play fetch very well, but they provide a new kind of fun—they can be ridden.

Flash and Gracie arrived with much fanfare,..... and so did the electric fence.

That fence is not as bad as porcupines, but close.... as Jack and Rusty have learned.

Jack and Rusty's world is a little smaller, and they are not getting all the attention like they used to. The personal service has declined.

Jack has to wait to be fed, and all the banging of his food bowl matters little.

And, it doesn't seem to end:

There was a poor abused chicken that was “literally” being hen pecked to death. She needed to be rescued, and she was.....

All battered and bloodied, poor little “Henny Penny” joined the group.

There was already a Penny, so her name was changed to Betty Yetty ... *some sort of cadence,.... don't you think?*

Goldie the dominant rooster,.....he's named Goldie because it was thought he was a hen, but he turned out to be a rooster.

Names are important. Names bring value, and using names instead of generalizations and stereotypes... bring respect .... and.... new insight, too.

Betty Yetty is a beautiful chicken, no longer picked on because Goldie the dominant rooster has made a point to stand up for her.

*Actually, I think Goldie kinda of likes her.....*

The abused Henny Penny no longer exists.

Born anew is Betty Yetty,..... who contributes with her presence and by regularly laying nice large eggs.

Thumper is free spirited, and enjoys playing with Buster and Priss, even though they are both much younger.

Prince is rightly named as he acts like he's royalty. Everyone else knows better.

Casper is very affectionate, and a little timid.

Snowball..... is cautious, and so keeps to himself, yet..he is a practical joker because he loves to get on top of the chicken's outdoor fenced in area, and peer through the fence at the chickens with KFC eyes.

Most of them ignore him, and Goldie will eventually scold him.

Gracie is just a little over a year old. She loves to have her neck rubbed, and usually follows Flash around. Her name used to be Grace, but everyone else got a new name for their new home, so it only made sense to change her name.

Well,..... almost everyone..... Flash is still Flash because she's just visiting, and that's okay. She's a nice horse.

And,..... Jack didn't get a new name..... because he already did,... a long time ago.

He originally was named “Mano”.

Mano apparently had a rough life. He likely was abused. For a while Jack was afraid of men, and quivered if anyone held a stick, such as a broom.

Mano ended up in SPCA, and was adopted and renamed Zack. But, that arrangement didn't last long as his keeper had to move away.

So, Zack was invited to a new place..... a permanent home, and since the neighbour boy was already named Zack, Zack got his own special name, “Jack” to signify his new world.

Jack was once broken and abused, but no longer

We all get a new name when we find home.

For some that happened long ago, for some more recently and for some .... they are still getting settled.

We have been given the name Christian because we've discovered that our home is following Christ.

As Jesus did, we welcome all into our world, especially the broken, the weak and the nameless.

Our new name means that we do justice and hospitality, no matter the adjustments required.... because no one is greater than another / no one is in control.

No matter how long someone has had their new name or how long they have claimed this home, we are all as children—humble, weak, trusting in God..... and ready for the next surprise / the next person to join us.

Our open arms are as beacons— a light that illuminates ourselves, and calls out to the broken hearted, the weak, the forgotten and the powerless.

This is God's way,... as presented in Isaiah.

This manner of being is how Christ lived and taught....which was God's way.

Paul referred to Isaiah in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4 when he said, "Let your light shine..... we proclaim Christ, and not ourselves.

Oh, and something interesting happens in the light / in being as God intended us to be: we discover the comfort and peace of being real / of being truly ourselves.

Jack's world changed a lot when others found a home in his world and when he wasn't the centre of attention.

No longer does he have that troubled, tormented look in his eyes of one who is pretending / who is trying to be someone, something else.

He no longer has to struggle to be..... a human.

Jack is very much at peace being himself / being a dog.

He is still loved. He still barks when the door bell rings..... and when coyotes are around.

Moreover, he is no longer roaming / searching for a fence to hold him back.

I think he is at peace being Jack who lives with Rusty, Goldie, Ralph, Blue Bell, Penelope, Penny, Betty Yetty, Prince, Thumper, Casper, Moe, Snowball, Pris, Buster, Flash and Gracie,..... and those darn porcupines and ticks.

I think God made us to be children— children with open arms.

We no longer have to pretend, be in control or .....be alone.

It is amazing how the light illuminates all things, even home.