

GUNDOG

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“Gundog” is simply the greatest honor that can be bestowed upon a dog; a far greater honor than champion, champion of the field, or grand champion. A gundog can be any breed, sex, color, or size. A gundog is not always the biggest or fastest, but a gundog is always the most loyal, a confidant, a refuge, and a window in time.

A gundog retrieves on three legs with the fourth dangling. A gundog sits for hours in frozen sleet waiting for the flight. A gundog will collapse from exhaustion and still lick the hand that drove him to it. A gundog drags back the goose larger than himself. A gundog sometimes fails but never quits. A gundog knows all but tells nothing.

I have seen a gundog, just a pup, in a fight to the death to protect his young master. I have seen a gundog that was left behind wait for hours, days, and weeks for his master’s return. I have seen a gundog being physically hauled outside for she wouldn’t willingly leave the side of her ailing master. I have seen a gundog jump out the window of a moving vehicle rather than be taken away.

A gundog puppy turns old men in to children, lifts the permanent frown with a joyful lick, and chases away the fears of the night with a simple presence.

I have gotten something in my eye while watching an old gundog make an arthritic retrieve. I have seen the strongest of men to weak to walk after burying a gundog, and in the night I have tripped over a sleeping gundog’s spirit years after he was gone.

Gundogs rest in unmarked graves in grassy meadows all around the world, under small wooden crosses in the garden and beside mammoth granite tombstones on the lawns of the well healed. They live in our hearts, dreams and memories long after they have gone. Rarely is the passing of a gundog mentioned as dying is a gundog’s only crime.