

Spotlight on Members!

The Nelson Family How We Became a Swissie Household

When Laurie contacted me to ask if I wanted to be spotlighted ...

I felt a bit apprehensive. "Why me?" I thought. I couldn't imagine what I would write. Well, I still don't know the answer to that question; nevertheless, I did come up with some things to share. It is my hope that each of you enjoy our little family history.

It all began at the end of one chapter our lives.

On May 5, 2013, we lost our beloved Maccabee. He was a 14 year-old mixed breed and the love of our lives. This was not the first time we said goodbye to a four-legged family member, but it would be our last—or so we thought at the time. Our kids were grown and, for the most part, out of the house, and it was supposed to be "our time" now. It would be our time to go and do what we pleased, no time restraints...you name it...we were now free to do it.

While working in a summer school program,

A colleague first introduced me to the Greater Swiss Mountain Dog breed. During our down time, we talked about our teaching experiences, then our families, and eventually, of course, our family pets. I shared with him our recent loss of our Maccabee and how we were miserable without our dog. We missed his morning dance that greeted us each day; we missed the tail wagging that reverberated off the wall when we opened the door after a long day of work or even after a 15 second return from taking out the garbage; we missed our nightly walks that took forever because he had to stop and smell every little thing. During this time, many family members and friends tried to console us; they told us we now would be able to do all the things we previously only talked about but were unable to do because we had a dog. While they meant well, our hearts were empty. However, our home missed the soul of a dog. Little, did we know, we would be starting a new chapter in our lives.

However,
our home missed
the soul of a dog.

Little did we
know, we would
soon be starting
a new chapter in
our lives.

My colleague told me about how he first learned of the GSMD breed,

and then about his Swissie girl, Riley. At home later, I wanted to know more so I googled the website and...well... like many of you, I imagine, I instantly fell in love and was sold. BUT...how would I convince my husband? I called him at work and told him to check out the Swissie website. He told me he would yet quickly followed that with, "We ARE NOT getting another dog." He reminded me that we were finally free of both children and animal responsibilities; in addition, we had countless conversations during which we agreed to no more--on both accounts.

To my amazement, he researched and researched and researched some more ...

and despite his earlier protestations, well...you all know what happened. He, too, was sold and in love. We set a date and all went to my colleague's house to meet Riley and his newly rehomed Swissie, JJ. It took only 15 minutes to confirm our love of Swissies. As my son, Jared, said, "We need to go big or go home." Later that same day, we contacted the Barton Manor breeder in Maryland, submitted an application and they put us on a waiting list. We originally thought we wanted a male, but were so in love with the breed that we said we didn't care. As far as we were concerned, the sooner we had our Swissie, the better.

He, too,
was sold
and in love.

It took only
15 minutes
to confirm
our love of
Swissies.

Spotlight on Members!

The Nelson Family

How We Became a Swissie Household

On September 17th 2013 our Swissie was born.

Needless to say, we were beyond happy...but the 10 week wait was just awful. Plus, we felt the pressure to find the right name. We had only 10 weeks to pick out her name, not the 9 months we had for our children! We all researched names or threw out our favorite celebrities names, but none felt right or "clicked" with all of us. Nevertheless, in the end we came up with the perfect name and it was a unanimous decision. Our little girl was to be named after the car in the movie **Gone in Sixty Seconds**, the **67 Shelby GT 500**, Eleanor Shelby. The Saturday before Thanksgiving we drove down and picked up our "little beagle." Adorable! Adorable! Adorable! To quote a popular movie line, she "had us at 'hello!'" This little bundle of fur stole our hearts and would soon turn our world **upside down**.



Eleanor Shelby

About 2 years ago, I decided to retire after 40 years of teaching.

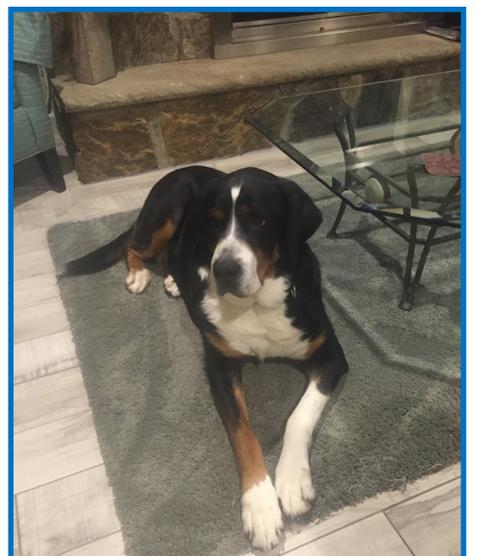
While making our retirement plans, my husband and I decided to downsize, leave Teaneck, New Jersey and move to Hopatcong, New Jersey. During this time, I came across a heartbreaking post in which a family was looking to rehome their male Swissie. Immediately, I thought this would be great for Eleanor—a brother, a playmate! They can grow up together! After all, isn't that what I did for our daughter, Melissa—surprise her with a brother??!! And look how great that turned out!! We were fortunate that our new home had plenty of room both inside and out for two Swissies. More important, we would be helping out an extended Swissie family. Needless to say, the same family members and friends who said we were now free of responsibilities, said that we had lost our minds. Still, we contacted the family and told them we were (very!) interested in learning more about their Swissie.



Eleanor

We soon learned that Eleanor and Riggins were from the same breeder and—get this—they are half-siblings!

They have the same father and are only 6 months apart in age. We took this as a sign! Having had two children who were athletic in school, and occasionally watching the show, it was such a pleasant surprise to learn that Riggins was named after the quarterback character, Tim Riggins, from **Friday Night Lights**. Again, another sign that this was meant to be. The family and I emailed back and forth for a few days, and then set up an initial meeting. After that, there was weekend sleepover, an invite for their family to join us at the lake house, and then another sleepover. We were tickled blue to learn that we were going to be the lucky family to forever love Riggins! Soon after moving into our new home, the family made a most heartbreaking trip and gave us their boy to love and to spoil. We didn't take this responsibility lightly and assured them that we would take care of, treasure and forever love their boy. Eleanor was very accepting of Riggins. I believe he helped her gain more confidence in herself and helped with her interaction with other dogs.



Riggins

Spotlight on Members!

The Nelson Family

How We Became a Swissie Household

My friend told us about the online GSMD group & suggested we join.

Denise and Caboo (Caboodle to us) Mitterando accepted our request to join and that was the beginning of a terrific friendship. She is one of the kindest, outgoing and most informative ladies that we have ever met and has helped us expand our network of Swissie families. Denise has always encouraged us to step out of our comfort zone and come out to play. We have had some sleepovers, gone to the dog park, gone on a hike, went for a doggy swim and on doggy group playdates. We have learned so much about this breed of dog, all due to the GSMD website. The GSMD Facebook Groups have shared both joys and sorrows and we have come to learn that no one is alone with their decisions.

I know that many Swissie families won't agree with all of the decisions we have made for our Eleanor and Riggins;

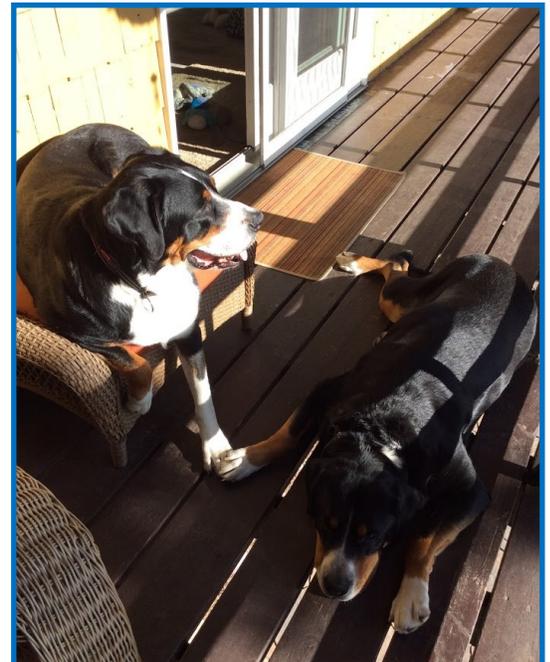
nevertheless, each decision has been made with much forethought and love and they are decisions right for ALL of US. Eleanor and Riggins are not show dogs, although they both have the qualifications. She was spayed after her first heat, and he was neutered before joining our family. They both have had their stomachs tacked; they eat kibble, fresh fruits and vegetables; they both enjoy the baking of Melissa Bryant Mountain Dog Cookie Company as well as Denise Mitterando's homemade dog treats. Let us not forget—chips. Yes, chips. Eleanor and Riggins love any kind of chip—they are not fussy! They hear the sound of the bag opening or crinkling and they come running! They wear pinched collars when out walking, are not crated when left alone, do not sleep in or on any bed, and are not allowed on the furniture. (That's not to say they haven't tried!!) Each dog has its own bed and they respect each other's space... this they have done on their own. Other than that, they share everything. They eat side by side from a 3 pot planter which was converted into their feeding station. They share boat rides, car rides, and walks. In fact, each one will wait for the other, never getting too far away from one another. As siblings, they can rile one another in a second, play hard both inside and out ,and come back panting when they are all done.



Riggins & Eleanor enjoying a meal together from a planter that was converted into their feeding station



Inseparable!



Holding Paws!

Spotlight on Members!

The Nelson Family How We Became a Swissie Household

If I had to guess, their favorite activity is cruising on the lake.

Just mention the word “boat” and they go crazy—barking and jumping. That is a lot of body being thrown around! We learned to spell word “boat” just so we can finish a conversation and we know not to ever pick up the boat keys unless we mean business! Once one of us opens the gate, the two will tear down to the boat, hop in and take their seats. If the boat is left out, they will jump in and wait us out until they get their ride.



Having said all that they do together, just like children, each dog has its own personality.

Eleanor is persistent, energetic, affectionate, loves drinking from the hose and, given the choice, prefers her belly rubbed. Riggins is calm, laid back, gentle, loves crunching on ice cubes and prefers his ears rubbed.

I would like all the Swissie readers to know ...

that I did wrestle with the same thoughts as I did with having a second child—could I love another? The answer is **YES, ABSOLUTELY, WITHOUT A DOUBT!! And I DO! WE ALL DO!**

These two are full-time jobs **AND ...**

we wouldn't think of changing either one of them or want them any other way.

They are perfect...perfect for us!

Toby Nelson

