



## Sissi Wilkerson

January 16, 2025

Sissi (pronounced ce-ce) was a beautiful German Shepherd brought from a special breed line in Germany whose goal was to minimize hip dysplasia. In her case, it worked quite nicely. She lived to be more than 13 years old, a great accomplishment for a German Shepherd. Sissi was born on November 1, 2011 and died on January 16, 2025.

Officially named Felicia in keeping with breed line requirements, she was given the Sissi nickname and that is what she knew. Sissi's original mom was Anne Fenton DeGraaf, who was a veterinarian and lifetime German Shepherd pet parent. Sadly, Anne passed in late 2021 and Sissi's care was continued by Anne's partner, Rick Wilkerson, and Rick's new partner, Debora Wise.

In her youth, Sissi was an athletic dog who was fast and strong. During the first several years of her life, she roamed on a 3-acre fenced yard and did her best to keep the squirrel and rabbit population under control. She loved to chase the lawnmower and frolic in the woods. She was Anne's shadow and close companion.

When Rick and Debora relocated to Indianapolis, she had a smaller fenced yard and learned to walk on a leash around the neighborhood, thanks to Debora's skilled training. She loved to play with and tear up stuffed toys, especially her little bear. With a heavy German Shepherd coat, she shed

constantly and loved to be in the cold and snow. Sometimes she would sit outside during a snowstorm and enjoy the cool snow covering her up.

She loved being chased around the house and standing in the back yard, barking covert conversations with neighbor dogs each night. Debora loved to dress up the dogs for holidays and one of our favorite moments was seeing Sissi dressed up for Santa patrol. Probably the hardest thing for Sissi was having to go to bed at night, she was full of energy and always hungry.

Sissi was a watchdog and protector from the earliest days. In Highland, Indiana, where she first lived, she kept a close eye on the driveway and the back door from her kitchen window. When Anne died, Sissi became Rick's companion and protector, helping him recover from the tragic loss of Anne. In Indianapolis, her favorite places were the front door (usually when Debora was gone) and in the doorway of the bedroom. Debora gave Sissi a completely different "mom" experience; she loved on her constantly and was deeply connected to a more playful and carefree Sissi.

Sissi had been an only dog, and then Flo the cat arrived. It took months but they learned to get along. Debora's sweet boy Payton, a Schnoodle, came into her life and Sissi learned to love her little brother and they both enjoyed walks together. Payton misses Sissi as much or more than we do.

In later years, Sissi's hind quarters weakened, but thanks to good veterinary care and her own determination, she kept fit and mobile until the end, battling to stay with us as long as she possibly could.

She was a loving dog with a beautiful spirit that filled our home with love. We are lost without her.

# Tribute Wall



“ 6 files added to the album *Sissi Wilkerson*



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