

ELIZABETH ANNE JOHNSON

WILBUR *to the* RESCUE



Wilbur came to me in a dream—three vivid lucid dreams, actually—my first dreams in seven months, after a severe head and spinal injury caused by a horse, changed my life.

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IX DAYS AFTER THE INJURY, I lost Luna, my sweet older water dog, following a long, hard bout with an aggressive mast cell tumor. I was dogless for the first time in 40 years, and if I ever needed a dog to give me courage and a will to heal, it was then.

As soon as I was able, I began searching for a dog on the internet. It was the summer of 2020 and the pandemic was raging across the country. Everyone was working from home and adopting dogs like crazy. As soon as a young dog came up on an adoption site, it was gone. Forlorn, needy, and lonely, I kept trying, while visualizing daily to manifest “my best dog ever”—a tall order, as I have lived with so many amazing ones. I said many prayers asking the Creator to help me out. Turns out, someone was listening...

One night, in my dreams, a mature male yellow lab appeared, saying he would be here soon to help. I told him I was looking for a puppy, but he persisted, dream after dream. As an animal healer, I have a lot of animals visit me in my dreams, some passing through to the Beyond, some just wondering when I’m coming back to see them (their mom usually calls the next day), and some just visiting

to thank me for helping them. This was different—purposeful and aimed right at my heart. This unknown yellow lab was for real, and somehow I knew that.

The morning after the three nights of dreams, I was on the phone consulting for a Texas horse and dog rescue center and jokingly asked if they had a yellow lab puppy. “No,” she said, “but we have six-year-old Wilbur! He’s perfect for you! He’s a mess!”

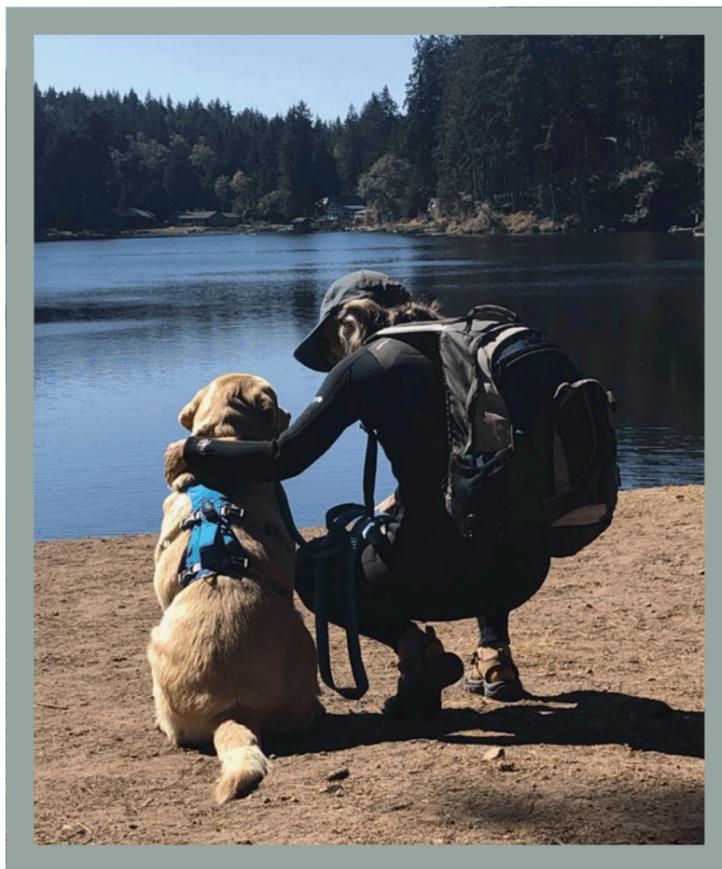
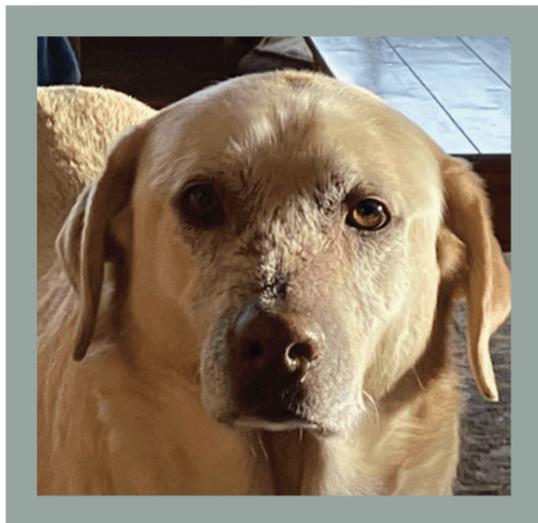
Wilbur, a male yellow lab, was picked up by the rescue organization that same morning, the day he was slated to be euthanized by a kill shelter. He had been dropped off at the shelter by a disheveled, broken man, Wilbur’s former owner, who could no longer care for him. In a hazy flash I suddenly realized this was the dog visiting in my dreams.

Wilbur then made the crazy long trek from Texas to the Pacific Northwest in a Sprinter van, along with 34 rescued chihuahuas. The harried and weary yellow lab from my dreams was here.

Wilbur arrived nearly hairless, starved, very ill, wild-eyed with worry, and almost unmanageable. He had clearly been extracted from a life of

►
Swim Therapy

▼
Handsome Wilbur
2024



love, fun, and family. He whined, wagged, and cried when he saw a young child or a teenage boy, as if searching for the family he left behind. Yet, under all that chaos was a kind, sweet, loving family dog with a gentle nature, who had been traumatized by the stress of change. Our wounds immediately bonded us, our sorrows, our major life changes, our broken hearts. Considering my injury, physical condition, and emotional state, it was not surprising that a nurturing Earth element dog came to my rescue.

Recognizing him as a Five Element Earth Dog, I found my purpose and partner again, who facilitated healing for both of us. With that purpose, we healed each other. I stabilized routines for him, gave him oodles of praise for the smallest things, let him help me when I needed it, and of course made sure there were plenty of “Earth Dog security snacks” to re-channel his worry and obsessiveness. In return, he gave me pure devotion, laughter, a purpose to move when it was hard, gentle kindness, snuggly protection, and a warm, loving presence that is hard to describe, but I’ll try...

When one is wounded deeply in body, mind, heart, and spirit, having a kindred and knowing

furry being watch over you, protect you, hold your tears, wag when you need it most, and just be there when you need someone, is a profound gift. Wilbur is brave, strong, and gentle, and carries that presence with grace, ease, and a little chubbiness... just like an Earth element should.

Earth Element Dogs are the quintessential caregiver, nurturer, and foodie. They, like the Earth, are solid and always here for us. Sometimes we just have to ask, keep our feet on the ground and click our heels together. They come into our life like a gentle breeze on a hot day, a rainbow when you need a smile. They live and breathe comfort, and are as good at giving it as they are finding it. Feed them comfort treats and give them snuggles and they will love you forever.

Wilbur is sitting next to me as I write this, a warm sweet presence leaning against my leg with his head on the edge of the laptop pillow. We are feeling our deep connection, remembering our challenges, and embracing our many moments together. A dream can be a reality, a second chance at life, a gift... and a tiny tear of gratitude, precious. ■