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Oscar nosed his way into her life

Emily Seftel

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When Sondra Raines got Oscar 13 years ago, it didn't take long for her to appreciate the dog's loyalty and personality.

It took a bit longer for her to discover his artistic bent.

A few years ago, Raines was in her car with Oscar in the passenger seat. At a stop sign, she looked over and saw that he had drawn on the window with his nose.

"I thought it was a beautiful piece of art," the Scottsdale woman says. "I saw a bridge, water, a palm tree. It was like looking at clouds."

Raines wanted to capture the picture on the window, and the idea for Dog Nose Art was born. When Oscar draws on the window during car rides, Raines has the designs photographed, loaded into a computer and color-enhanced to create notecards.

"It's just with his nose on my car window, but it turns into something wonderful," she says.

What is your dog's breed?

Oscar is a 13-year-old schnauzer.

How did your dog get his name?

When he was brought home to me as a puppy, the first thing I said when I saw his little cropped tail was, "Look at his tail! It looks just like an Oscar Mayer wiener." We immediately knew that the name Oscar suited him.

Where did you get your dog?

My 14-year-old Chihuahua had died the night before. I had been up literally all night, mourning her. When my husband brought Oscar home for me, I was sitting on the floor of the den, staring out into the back yard, crying. Oscar immediately came to me, put his paws up on me and touched his nose to mine. There seemed to be an instant bonding between us. Maybe he sensed how much pain I was in.

What is your pet's worst habit?

Oscar's worst habit is incessant barking any time he sees another dog. I know there are many dog owners in our neighborhood who hate to see us walking down the street. Anyone who owns a schnauzer will understand the breed's belief that it really is their street.

Has your pet ever embarrassed you?

My most embarrassing time with Oscar occurred in Petsmart. I was volunteering for an Arizona Humane Society event. While waiting for others to arrive, I wandered around the aisles and looked at some of the products. I heard, "Wet mop! Aisle 8!" on the store speaker system. I looked down and saw Oscar lifting his leg on a dog-food display, and I knew they were talking about him. I don't know why I was so embarrassed, but I quickly ran with Oscar over to the next aisle. I heard, "Wet mop! Aisle 9!" I looked down and, sure enough, Oscar was already lifting his leg on another display. I hurried up to the front of the store and heard, "Wet mop! Holiday display!" Yep, you guessed it. A Petsmart employee appeared with a mop and

bucket, looked at Oscar peeing on the Christmas decoration display and said, "So, YOU'RE the one."

What's the best thing about your pet?

There's nothing more touching to me than knowing that this precious animal wants nothing more than to just be with me, to be where I am and participate in anything I do. His eyes are so expressive that many people have said they look human.

You can see Oscar's work at DogNoseArt.com. Part of the proceeds from the sale of his notecards is sent to the Arizona Humane Society.

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