

Upfront

Old dogs, new tricks.

First, an actual rather than metaphorical dog: Digby. A name I refuse to say, because it sounds silly to my inner ear when spoken silently in by mind's mouth. So, I call him "Dog," or "Doggy," although, I surreptitiously renamed him "Winston," as he is the next best thing to come out of England – apologies to pig iron, Emily Blunt, and scones.

Dog/Winston/Digby is a concoction comprised of poodle and Labrador retriever DNA. He is six. Rough estimates of the mixed breed's life expectancy peg it at 12. So, he's not old-old, but he's no spring chicken...or puppy...either. He lived his first six years in the United Kingdom, blissfully unaware of the colonies and/or me. His mother, like Gen. James Oglethorpe, set sail for the promise of America, or, less idealistically, to visit her parents. Life and pandemic travel restrictions followed, both of which complicated her plans. Eventually, Dog's mom, Jenna, met me; and, unlike Oglethorpe, she never returned to Mother England. Aided by a pet-air-travel broker (which is...like...the definition of "niche"), Dog flew solo from Heathrow to Atlanta, and Jenna and I retrieved him (punny breed-reference intended) from a dark cargo hall that looks nothing like the Sky Club or the Hartsfield-Jackson International that I know too well.

Dog was right-away warm, which I attributed to his reunion with Mom. But despite my attempts to project canine-recognizable aloofness, he seemed to like me. And I him. Perhaps it's that his spirit is kindred to my recently deceased and very beloved cat, Mushu. They are/were both generally indifferent to most creatures, human and sub. They are "laid back," almost to surfer-cliché extremes. But, when provoked and only if necessary, they are formidable and fierce. Mushu was curmudgeonly but loving. Digby (if I can say "Mushu," I should be able to manage "Digby") is picky yet sweet. Moreover, they both have coats that are an adorable mix of copper and cream. And they like/liked to sleep on my feet.

To the new-tricks point: Dog is crazy about his current home. He hasn't whimpered wistfully for drizzle or Oxfordian pretension, even once. His adopted downtown rest-and-recreation area is Chippewa Square, over which the aforementioned Oglethorpe presides. When Dog first saw his fellow Brit, sword raised in symbolic defense of his king's new lands, he cocked his furry head in confusion, raised his hind leg, relieved himself, and walked back towards his new house. Dog, it seems, was always an American waiting to find his New World.



The Skinnie Magazine is not responsible for unsolicited materials and the publisher accepts no responsibility for the contents or accuracy of claims in any advertisement in any issue. The Skinnie Magazine is not responsible or liable for any errors, omissions or changes in information. The opinions of contributing writers do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the magazine and its publisher.

If Dog is the old dog in the allegory above, Jon and George and I are in the one that follows. Jon and George are friends of mine from graduate school, which means we met in January of 1988. We haven't lived close to one another since 1990, with homes in New York, Connecticut, Georgia, and the Czech Republic (even before it was known as such) among us since our shared time in Philadelphia. Jon and I enjoyed second residences on the eastern end of Long Island, so we'd sometimes connect on weekends or vacations near the beach, but such occasions diminished in frequency as the years slipped past us. Jon is married to Julie. She, too, is a friend from Penn. George's wife, Missy, is his second; she lost her first husband to cancer, as I did my wife, and his first marriage ended in divorce. Jenna and I are happily together now, as her long-time mate fell victim to the disease that imposed upon Missy's and my family, too. Old dogs, new tricks, with much of the familiar preserved for posterity.

Our group reconvened last weekend at Jon and Julie's "new" house (they've had it for 12 years but it's not the nearby family cottage that we knew as younger versions of ourselves) in Sagaponack, which is a "Hamptons" hamlet free of the weight of the "Hamptons" component in its name (South, East, Bridge...); but not free of the crowded roads, overpriced stores, or entitled New Yorkers that have overtaken the potato fields. Despite the venue shift, things haven't changed. These guys are hilarious, lightning-quick of wit. (I am funny, too, if I may say.) They/we bicker like old couples, though most of it's playful. Jon went so far as to yell loudly enough to temporarily damage my ear as he backseat (literal) chastised George who was piloting our minivan. We have built businesses, navigated careers, raised children who are now adults, endured loss, celebrated gains, and we are fundamentally the same old-young men we were in 1988.

I thought I would be a New Yorker forever. I loved the City. Or, at least, I loved the idea of the City...that I was conquering something that was almost-unnecessarily hard, like climbing Everest wearing a weight vest. We had a loft in Chelsea, a house in Easthampton, and a \$50,000 preschool bill...and this was 1999.

When we visited Jon and Julie, we drove by my former weekend home. The trees have thickened to obscure the view of the front façade. It is barely perceptible, as is any emotional tug I might have felt to the place. Seeing my old friends was priceless. Seeing my old place was inconsequential. For both, I'm glad.

Savannah is my home. Unequivocally. Thankfully.

Old dog. The newer tricks are the best ones.

www.theskinnie.com



Dental Harbor
COSMETIC & RESTORATIVE DENTISTRY

THE DENTIST
SAVANNAH HAS
TRUSTED FOR
OVER 14 YEARS

Abby L. Dew, DDS
Landings Resident



Schedule
Online Now!

WORLD-CLASS DENTAL CARE CLOSE TO HOME

COMPREHENSIVE CARE FOR COMPLETE DENTAL WELLNESS
BOTOX® • INVISALIGN® • SMILE MAKEOVERS

50 MEETING STREET, SUITE B • SKIDAWAY ISLAND • 912.480.0804

DENTALHARBOR.COM • f @DOCTORABBYDEW