



**Chelsea**  
**May 1988 – December 2007**

### **What's In a Diet? Chelsea the Half Sighted Shi'tzu**

Chelsea is a 14-year-old Shi'tzu. She came to us when she was five months old, and within a week, our Lhasa Apso had bit her and partially detached her eye. The vet was able to re-attach the eye, but unfortunately, Chelsea never regained the sight in that eye.

Chelsea had a lot of health problems for such a small dog. In addition to the eye, she had a hernia that had to be fixed when she was two. Then, when she was six years old, she developed a structural problem that was never identified. Up until then, she had been an exuberant girl who loved to jump, on our laps, on the furniture, on chairs, you name it, no matter how high it was, Chelsea would jump on it.

When she was six, the structural problem became so severe that she literally screamed when she tried to move faster than a very show walk. And the jumping was over for good. She spent most of her life for the next six months confined to a very small bathroom which we could gate so she could see all that we were doing.

We took her to specialists who ran all kinds of tests, one even kept her with him and his wife for a weekend, sure that she would share her pain if she could become so familiar with them that she would trust him enough. Finally, our general practitioner vet suggested using Cosequin. She said that she had used it on another dog and it seemed to be working. She said we had nothing to lose.

So we put Chelsea on Cosequin, and within two months, the pain disappeared. Within, two years, she was able to jump again. Not the excited popping up and down of her youth, but a good strong jump up on a chair in the office.

When Chelsea was seven, we brought home an Airedale puppy. The vet was worried that the Airedale would be too rough for her, but not to worry: Chelsea had a no-funny-business growl, and the puppy kept its distance (except when Chelsea was urinating, and the puppy would swoop in and dive at her tail, the neatest toy in the house).

By the time Chelsea was nine years old, we had two Airedales and a litter on the way. After years of trying one dog food after another with dismal results (the dogs would not eat them after the first few weeks), we switched all the dogs to the raw diet.

The Airedales were quite reserved about accepting the new diet, but not Chelsea. Chelsea dived into her first meal, looking over her shoulder at me with a look that said “Now, that I am at the end of my life, you bring out the real food? Where has this been all of my life?” And she thrived.

Three months after starting the raw diet, we were able to take her totally off of the Cosequin, and we never had any screaming from pain again. Jumping? She could jump on the chair in the office, on the couch, even on the bed. She had more energy than she had had for the past three years.

When she was 11, she developed glaucoma in her blind eye. We worried about the recommendation of surgery to remove the eye, but the vet said that they had done her blood work and had never seen an 11 –year-old dog with such excellent blood values. So she had the surgery, and recovered quickly, becoming even more energetic. She never worried about moving around beneath all those Airedale feet because her growl kept them from stepping on her no matter how excited they were. It became her job to teach the puppies in each litter that her tail was not a toy, that she was worthy of the respect owed to a matron, and more.

Then, when she was 13 years old, she fell in love—with Jennifer, our housesitter’s daughter. The feeling was mutual, and with our blessing, Chelsea went to live with Jennifer, and has become the grand dame of a household with several large dogs, several cats, and other animals. Her favorite is a kitten that she has adopted.

Chelsea recently had a complete check up, and her blood values are still excellent, and she is in great health. So when anyone asks about switching an older dog to the raw diet, we usually tell them Chelsea’s story.



Chelsea playing with four-month-old Holly: Chelsea has never had any problem holding her own with a larger dog!