

Niki and Her Pups

By Sharon Buchan

The year was 1979. We were stationed at Satellite Beach, Florida. My husband was rarely home in the evening as he seemed to always be working on a weather forecast for the Space Shuttle. However, on this most important night, he was home and helped to deliver the quadruplets. It became obvious that Niki had been in labor for some time and would not be able to deliver by herself. We all piled in the camper and hurried off to the vet. I was amazed at what a simple surgery a Cesarean section was for a dog, as my own recovery was not so simple. I knew that our Boston bulldog might need this surgery to deliver as their heads are large.

The vet whose name was Dr. Finger - I will never forget that name - we used to kid about his name behind his back that it was probably a good thing he did not become an O.B., G.Y.N. doctor. He quickly gave Niki a cocktail putting her to sleep and making an incision in her swollen abdomen. There was little to no bleeding. He then literally slapped four tiny black and white puppies in our hands and told us to start rubbing them. I was glad he did not expect us to lick off the membrane. That would have been way out of the box for me. The whole procedure took no more than 30 minutes and off we went with Mom and her four pups in the box we had prepared for them. I slept on the Terrazzo floor next to the box. No wonder I have a bad back today! The blind puppies quickly found Mom's tits and began expressing milk by pressing one little paw and then the other. I wondered if this hurt the Mom with her brand new incision. Niki did not show any signs of pain, but looked up at me with those beautiful, brown, bug-eyes that bulldogs have, as if to say "What the hell just happened?"

It soon became apparent that motherhood was not for Niki as she took every opportunity to escape the box. The box grew taller and taller but she learned to throw that little body against the box until it tipped over. I would sometimes find her hiding under a bed and I would spend the next four weeks sleeping on the hardest floor imaginable. After repeated trips to Dr. Finger, I was told that I would have to feed these four pups with an eye dropper full of baby formula and tiny bits of raw hamburger, every half hour for four to six weeks. I often wondered if Niki had gone through the normal birthing process, if she would have taken to motherhood.

The vet assured me that that was not the case as some dogs do not have that natural instinct. Two months later, the people who had the male dog that Niki mated with came over to get the pick of the litter. Though Niki seemed fond of their Brindle Boston bulldog "Butch" during the mating season, she was now furious to see the father of her four adorable, well fed puppies. This reminded me of some choice words that some women hurl at their husbands during the last stages of labor.

Needless to say, neither of us journeyed into that wonderful, out-of-the-box experience of motherhood again.