

Reflections on a Life with Dogs

Singer-songwriter looks back on all the dogs he's loved in a new book.

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Fittingly, singer-songwriter Gary Shiebler's first book, "The Power of Paws," is an ode – to the many dog loves of his life.

The cast of characters includes not just dogs Shiebler has owned, but also neighborhood dogs, strays, and shelter dogs he connected with while volunteering. From Cocoa, an abused pit bull, to Squeeze, his mischievous Mixed Breed from the docks, each dog has made its own distinct and lasting mark on Shiebler's heart.

Of his first dog, Rusty, Shiebler writes, "he would become the dog against which I would measure all others. To this day my mother says there will never be another dog like him. And though my memories of him are fuzzy and gilded by a simpler and more innocent time, an imprint on my heart says it's so, too."

Most of the dogs haven't just impacted Shiebler – they've left lasting impressions on others, too. Take Sable Sue, a shy, skittish shelter dog that captured the tough heart of one of Shiebler's pupils, an adopted child who recognized a kindred spirit in the abandoned animal.

And although Shiebler has owned several purebred dogs, including a Golden Retriever and two Border Collies, it's "the brown ones ... the dogs that are about a hundred different breeds mixed together" that have stolen his heart.

"The Power of Paws: Reflections on a Life with Dogs" by Gary Shiebler is on sale now.