

Going on the road with Albie

Author to speak at library about his, and his dog's recreation of John Steinbeck's famous tour of USA

By JONATHAN PAPPALARDO
CLIPPER REPORTER

Peter Zheutlin will always remember the day he and his rescue dog Albie, a golden retriever and yellow Labrador mix, visited the Grand Canyon. When they arrived it was fogged in, so he told Albie they would be waiting it out until it cleared. The weather went wild as the fog gave way to snow and hail.

They ended up waiting several hours, at which point the Canyon revealed its sheer, jaw-dropping beauty. Zheutlin, an author and journalist, recounts the experience in his new book, "The Dog Went Over the Mountain," which chronicles the 9,200-mile journey he and Albie took across the United States in spring 2018. The Duxbury Free Library will host him this Sunday at 2 p.m.

"I had re-read John Steinbeck's 'Travels with Charley' and realized Albie and I had caught up to each other age-wise," Zheutlin said over the phone last week. "Steinbeck, when he did his journey, was 58. He took off in the autumn of his life. He knew he wouldn't get a second chance. I had to go while I was young and healthy enough to do it."

It took a year of figuring out the logistics before he and Albie were on their way. While Zheutlin roughly followed Steinbeck's route, he did make some adjustments. "Steinbeck did his journey counterclockwise and we did ours clockwise," Zheutlin said. "My biggest concern was it had to be cool for as much of the trip as possible. So, we went down south in April."

At the time, Zheutlin was 64 and Albie was roughly 7 or 8. He adopted him in 2012 when he was two or three from LABSvrescue in Alexandria, Louisiana. He ended up surviving in a high kill shelter for five months before becoming their first family dog. "It was my wife's idea to get a rescue dog," he says. "I didn't even know what a rescue dog was. I was picturing a St. Bernard rescuing people from an avalanche in the Alps."

He's now written two of his eight books on the subject, "Rescue Road" and "Rescued," both bestsellers. "Before adopting Albie, I didn't realize how many people had rescue dogs from the south. I learned about over population and how the process works. Albie was found as a stray and ended up in a shelter. They get 4,000 dogs a year. Ninety percent don't make it out alive."

They started their journey at home in Dover, went from Dickinson, Pennsylvania to New Orleans on backroads,



Author Peter Zheutlin will be at the Duxbury Free Library Sunday to talk about new book "The Dog Went Over the Mountain."

Photo courtesy Ceci Ogden

traveled all 105 miles of Skyline Drive, all 469 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway, and took Natchez Trace Parkway to Nashville. "The backroads are a pleasure to drive, with little traffic and no commercial de-

velopment," he says. "We took interstates only when they were practical."

For lodging, he relied on the website "BringFido,"

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Holiday designs at the Garden Club

Nationally accredited Master Flower Show judges Elaine DiGiovanni and Linda Ladd of Floral Design Holiday Sparkle in Belmont will be the guests at the Dec. 10 meeting of the Community Garden Club.

DiGiovanni and Ladd have received numerous awards from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and have lectured on floral design at the Horticultural Society and the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts. Their designs will be auctioned off at the end of their presentation for the Community Garden Club.

The meeting starts 9 a.m. with coffee and tea at the Duxbury Bay Maritime School. The program begins at 10 a.m. Meetings are open to the public for a nominal fee of \$5.00. Everyone is welcome.

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Author brings his rescue dog on recreation of John Steinbeck's famous tour of America

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which gives recommendations on dog friendly hotels, B&Bs, and restaurants. They also stayed with family. "We didn't stick to a timetable or agenda," he says. "If we stayed in one place 7-8 days, I kind of felt like we were on the lamb. I would plan locations 3-4 days in advance and advance the schedule to account for weather. It was 110 degrees when wanted to go to the Mojave Desert."

One place he had to visit was Alexandria, so the two women who gave Albie his second chance at life could see him again. "The day we were going through, I didn't know if he'd have memory of the place or if he would think I was leaving him again. He didn't," Zheutlin says. "They see a lot of suffering and death and give so much emotionally but never see the dogs again once they've been adopted. We were there one and a half hours."

They visited Okemah, Oklahoma, the hometown of his hero Woodie Guthrie and stopped at the Silver Creek Store in Ketchum, Idaho, where Ernest Hemingway

bought all his hunting gear. "It was in Santa Fe I realized we weren't on the same trip. We saw a spectacular moonrise in the high desert under clear skies. I couldn't get Albie to turn around and look at it. In that moment I realized he's not going to remember the trip like I do," Zheutlin observes. "He was more interested in the new smells everywhere and squirrels. It really made me wonder if it was fair of me to take him away from where he was comfortable for six weeks or more. It was more interesting for me than it was for him. He won't be able, in a few years, to go back and look at pictures from the trip like I can."

Albie, who is older now, has arthritis, and is less mobile, has taught Zheutlin the virtue of patience. "I'm grateful fate brought us together. I never realized how intensely tight a bond can be with a dog. I didn't appreciate it all those years when I resisted getting a dog."

Zheutlin's journey came full-circle when he contacted the John Steinbeck Center in Salinas, California to see if he could stop there on his book tour, which kicked off offi-

cially in September. Instead, they invited him to give his presentation during the 38th annual John Steinbeck Festival this past August. "It was humbling and such an honor to be asked," he says. "I think about what Steinbeck would

say about my book. He would say, 'nice try kid.' I can't hold a candle to a writer like him. He's a Nobel Laureate."

Advanced registration is required for the event, which is a part of the Sunday Salon Series at DFL. Information on

how to register is available on their website. As for the presentation itself, Zheutlin says it's very informal. "It's not just me talking. It's illustrated and the images are fun to look at. People enjoy it."

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