



Skookumchoochee: An Inspiring Journey of a Life in Animal Welfare

Sunny Weber

Pups & Purrs Press

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A sympathetic and inspiring animal advocate's memoir, Skookumchoochee is filled with touching recollections of dogs' lives.

Sunny Weber's touching memoir *Skookumchoochee* is about fostering and rehabilitating traumatized dogs and cats.

Centering Weber's dog, Brillo—a “skookumchoochee” who kept beating the odds—this memoir spans Weber's career in animal welfare advocacy for dogs who have trauma. It relates how, after adopting her first dog in 1990, Weber fell in love with training service animals and fostering dogs in need of homes. Over thirty years, it notes, she fostered countless animals, worked as an in-home dog behavioral consultant, and welcomed several dogs and cats into her home as permanent members of her family.

Brillo joined Weber's household as a tiny puppy with a broken back and leg. After rehabilitating him, Weber found him a home, but he was returned when his new owner died. To prevent him from being euthanized, Weber adopted Brillo herself.

Weber explains this harsh reality of animal shelters in clean, empathetic prose, acknowledging that “limitations of resources and knowledge,” not heartlessness, lead to euthanasia. Her eloquent lamentations and touching recollections of her dogs' lives are sympathetic and inspiring. When the book divulges Weber's own lifelong hip problems, including a double joint replacement in her forties, it connects human suffering to that of dogs whose medical needs stem from injury or genetics to further bolster compassion and rapport. Her desire to widen her scope of care to include injured wildlife and local endangered animals is explored in a too-swift manner, though.

The book's timeline is achronological, with stories of dogs Weber adopted in different years told out of order, leading to some narrative messiness. Further, there is some repetition, as with the story of Weber traveling to an animal sanctuary in Utah to write a book, which is mentioned a handful of times and explored in depth but once. Different aspects of the experience are revealed with each retelling, though. Further, vibrant imagery arises, capturing the “distant sorrel rock vistas and wispy cream clouds set in the topaz blue sky” that Weber appreciated at the sanctuary. It also avoids anthropomorphizing Weber's canine companions: “Being dogs, they had no appreciation for views; their noses were always to the ground. I am sure I missed as much fascination in intriguing scents as they did in my visual enjoyment” of the landscape, she notes.

The moving memoir of an animal activist, *Skookumchoochee* exemplifies meeting dogs where they are and extending compassion to all animals in need of care.

AIMEE JODOIN (April 1, 2026)

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