

## Boat Dog

My dog loved boats. He was a 110 pound black mutt, half lab and half shepherd. His mother's name was Tequila, and his father's name was Kilo, which should have been an indication that he was not going to be a normal dog. I named him Opus in honor of my favorite cartoon, Bloom County.

He was fearless in the face of danger, as long as there was no thunder and lightning accompanying the danger. He would protect me through thick and thin, as long as the sky was clear. Throw in a little thunderstorm, and you had to drag him from under the bed.

He had never been on a boat until I moved to Florida for the second time. I ran away to the Keys, taking nothing but two small bags of clothes and one unruly black dog. We lived in a trailer that was so small that I had to take a half of a shower at a time. That's no joke, I had to slide my right side in, get clean, then slide out and slide my left side in to finish up. Oh yeah, and there were ducks living in a shopping cart in the yard, but that's another story.

I didn't have much, but of course I had a boat. I bought a little tri-hull outboard shortly after I got down there, and kept it in the canal that ended just behind my trailer. I could walk out, jump in the boat, and be in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico in about 5 minutes. (well, maybe not the middle.)

I didn't always take Opus along for the ride, there wasn't much shade and I didn't think a shaggy jet black dog would do well in the Florida sun for long. However, if I was just going out for a short ride, he always went with me.

He always knew when we were heading for the boat; he'd bounce down to the dock and jump on to the bow before I got there. He'd bark at me while I untied the lines, and then stand in the back with his head over the side as we buzzed out towards the Gulf. He would stand with his mouth open and his tongue flapping just like he was in the car with the window down.

Opus had one problem with boats, he got seasick. He would start out thrilled with the ride, but after about 15 minutes or so he'd start to look a little green, which was a good trick for a black dog. Usually I could tell, but every so often he'd catch me by surprise and I'd turn around to find him sprawled on the deck and throwing up. He always looked a little sheepish, like he was trying to say "Sorry, I was having such a nice ride". That was always the signal to go home.

Boats have a funny effect on people. I can never get enough time on one myself, and Opus was no different, I'd always have to pour him back on to the dock and just about carry him in the house when we got back from a ride, but no matter how bad he got on the last trip, he always beat me back to the boat for the next one.