

MURPHY'S DIARY – Part 3

2000 – 2001

This covers the years 2000 and 2001, when acupuncture gave Murphy 20 seizure free months. Acupuncture does not work for every dog, and it did not work, indefinitely, for Murphy. But those 20 months were a wonderful gift, for which I'll always be thankful.

January 13 – 7:45am: Very mild seizure of less than a minute. Long post seizure phase of 2 – 3 min. with lots of head twitching. It has been a full month since his last seizure. He was back to normal within 15 minutes.

Note: Murphy's periods of extreme ataxia wax and wane. Some days he feels good and can have fun doing normal "dog stuff". Other days he's in bad shape and falls over when he tries to go potty. For better or for worse, it's obvious he needs to be on his full bromide dose.

January 26 – 8:00am: Tiny seizure of less than 30 sec. Stayed on his feet the entire time. Instant recovery.

11:20am: Full seizure, but very mild. Less than 60 sec. duration. For the first time he seized while exercising. We were out on the play field chasing his tennis ball. Her made it home OK and was pretty quiet the rest of the day.

Note: He started the excessive water drinking this morning; similar to past "multiple seizure" days.

January 27 – 1:30am: Mild seizure of less than 60 sec. Calmed down fairly quickly. Gave him an extra dose of Phenobarbital (210 mg) at 1:45am.

3:00am: Becoming very agitated and restless. Gave 5 mg valium. Finally fell asleep around 4:00am.

January 28 – Murphy was severely ataxic for the day, on the 27th. He had his normal dose at 8:30am and again at 9:00pm. By 1:00am on the 28th he was unable to walk or even hold his head up. It was impossible to take him out to potty. By 3:00am he was placed in his crate, unable to move or help himself in any way.

8:00am: Taken to Sacramento Animal Hospital for the day. Phenobarbital and bromide levels done. He was only given 150 mg of Phenobarbital at 9:30am. No seizures during day. Able to stand and some attempts at walking by afternoon. Very agitated behavior. Valium didn't help much. Call in for Dr. Dickinson.

7:30pm: Erin brought him home this evening. Some debate over whether he'd be better off at the VMTH. He was worse by early evening, even though he'd received no

additional meds. Decided to keep him at home and he did get up on his feet, with some help, and start to walk unassisted. After talking to Dr. Dickinson, we decided to give him only 150 mg at his 9:30pm dose. Will continue to increase his bromide. He is managing to go out and potty with just a little help.

January 29 – Murphy slept in his crate from 10:00pm until 6:00am this morning. No breakthrough seizures (because of lower Phenobarbital) thus far. He was very unsteady when he first got up, but improved as the morning wore on. He's agitated, as is often the case. We're just letting him "walk it off" as it seems to help him grow steadier on his feet. He's more mentally alert and has played with his ball. (He falls over if he plays too hard). Both Erin and Cindy agree to just give him 150 mg phen., Again at 9:30am. If his ataxia lessens as the day goes on, we'll up it to 180 mg tonight.

10:45am: Still seizure free and much more alert. Has finally started to relax and nap.

February 1 – Murphy has pretty much returned to normal and is feeling happy and alert. He is presently on 180 mg phen. twice daily and, so far, has not had a breakthrough seizure. We started loading his bromide level on Sunday the 30th (7 ml). We will continue that dose through tomorrow, Feb. 2 then lower him to 6 ml. The goal is to cut his Phenobarbital to 150 mg, keep his seizures to around once a month and cut back on the periods of extreme ataxia. We'll see.

February 5 – 3:55am: Very mild seizure, while sleeping. 10 to 15 sec. Slight salivation and urination. Stayed asleep for another 5 min. then woke to go out to potty. Went right back to sleep and was fine in a.m.

Murphy is presently on 180 mg phen. twice daily, and 6 ml bromide. He has been feeling great and his quality of life is much improved.

February 7 – 3:10pm: Very short (15 – 20 sec.) seizure, while exercising. Approx. 60 sec. post seizure phase, lying quietly with no twitching. Walked home, slowly, somewhat dazed. Gave ½ tab. of additional Phenobarbital when we got home. Will give 3 ½ tab. (210 mg) for evening dose.

February 8 – Pretty "loopy" today. Murphy really seems to react to even the slightest increase in Phenobarbital. He may also be starting to feel the increase in bromide.

February 9 – Reduced Murphy's phen. by ¼ tablet (195 mg twice daily). He's still fairly ataxic, but nothing as severe as he was on Jan. 28th.

February 13 – Murphy still fairly ataxic. Cindy (Dr. Norman) suggested I drop him back to 180 mg phen. twice daily. Reduced his p.m. dose.

Note: Murphy vomited (small amount) twice today.

February 14 – Continued to keep his phen. dose at 180 mg and he feels so much better today. Much more alert and steadier on his feet. Talked to Dr. Dickinson today. Scheduled appointment for re-evaluation on the 23rd.

February 15 – 11:00am: rather severe seizure – approx. 60 sec. (Jack was with him). 1 to 2 min. post seizure “twitching”. Gave him another ¼ tab. pheno. (15 mg) and will put him back up to 195 mg in p.m. Murphy continued to feel really good the rest of day, so I expect he’ll have another seizure in the next 12 hrs. Vomited again, in early afternoon. I’m going to split his bromide dose into two, in case it’s upsetting his tummy.

February 16 – 4:00am: Mild seizure (as expected) with small amount of salivation and urination. No post seizure phase. Gave him another 15 mg phen. This puts his dose up to 210 mg (where it used to be).

In reviewing Murphy’s seizures, of late, he started back to a weekly pattern on Jan. 13th. He was started on a new bottle of bromide Dec. 28th. Prior to that he was seizing about once per month, sometimes going over 40 days. He’s also starting to have more than one seizure per day. When his bromide level was done on Jan. 28, it was very low and we all wondered about it going down, when I was actually giving him more. This decrease showed up a month into his new bottle of bromide. This probably isn’t the case, but I’m concerned that his present prescription wasn’t mixed correctly. With Dr. True’s approval, I’ve ordered a new bottle and will start using it.

Murphy continues to feel pretty good today. I’m not seeing a lot of ataxia, even though I’ve put his phen. back up. This causes me to hold my breath, waiting for another seizure.

February 18 – Started on new bottle of bromide (6 ml). I’ve also started giving him 3 ml twice daily, rather than all at once, with food. He’s feeling really good.

February 20 – Still on 210 mg Phenobarbital twice daily. He’s feeling very good with only minor ataxia. Went out and had a good ball game. The first in awhile. No more vomiting.

February 22 – Very ataxic during part of the day, but feeling pretty good by evening. Ataxia seemed to coincide with his peak phen. period.

February 23 – Appt. with Dr. Dickenson for re-evaluation. Will load his bromide again, for 3 days (12 ml/day – divided into 3 doses of 4 ml). After that we will drop back to 6 ml/day. Will keep his phen. at 210 mg for now. Will do a bromide level in about 10 days. Goal is to increase his level to 2.5 (from 1.1). We will, hopefully, be able to then start to lower his phen.

February 26 – 10 days with no seizures. Have finished loading bromide. Pretty ataxic, but managing OK.

March 1 – 2 weeks without a seizure, but so severely ataxic he's almost to the point of non-functional. Tonight, will reduce his dose to 195 mg (1/4 tablet less per dose).

March 3 – Within 24 hrs. of having his phen. reduced by just 15 mg per dose, Murphy feels much better. This is such a strange reaction to such a slight decrease. He's still pretty "drunk" by normal standards, but I feel the improvement is pretty remarkable. He can function at this level of ataxia, so I'll be in no hurry to reduce his dose any further. Bromide level done today.

March 9 – Murphy's bromide level is good (2.4). Still on 195 mg phen. 23 days without a seizure. May lower his phen. by another 1/4 tablet, if he goes a full 30 days.

March 13 – Murphy is so ataxic. I'm going to lower his phenobarbital another 1/4 tab. to see if he'll "perk up" a bit. This will have him at 180 mg. (down from 210 mg). 26 days without a seizure.

March 17 – Murphy is still so severely ataxic, Dr. Norman and I have decided to lower his phen. by another 1/4 tab. This will have him at 165 mg. 30 days without a seizure.

March 19 – Improvement in Murphy's level of ataxia. Certain times of day he's still pretty "drunk", but better overall.

March 21 – 5:30am: Very mild seizure (less than one minute) while sleeping. Did not wake up. A little shaky for rest of morning, but O.K. otherwise. 34 days since last seizure.

April 9 – 19 days since last seizure. Ataxia leveling off a bit. Much more alert mentally. Can play with his ball most days. Bromide 6 ml (3 ml twice daily) and Phenobarbital still at 165 mg (2 3/4 tab.). I'm pleased with the improvement in his quality of life.

April 16 – 12:15am: Mild seizure while sleeping. Did not wake up. Approx. 60 sec. with another 2 or 3 minutes of very deep breathing. Woke up to go out around 2:00am. I noticed that he had urinated during his seizure. Seemed a little restless, so I gave him 5 mg of valium. Fine in morning. Chased his ball. 26 days between seizures.

April 24 – 1:00am: Mild seizure (approx. 60 sec.), while sleeping, with some salivation and urination. Restless the rest of night, but fine in morning. Only 8 days since last seizure. Concerned about increased frequency. Will do bromide level on Friday.

May 3 – Bromide level 2.2 – Increased dose to 7 ml (3.5 ml 2x daily).

May 5 – 8:45pm: Mild seizure (approx. 60 sec. with another 2 min. post seizure heavy breathing, but relaxed). No salivation or urination. Very alert afterwards. Hard to tell he even seized. 11 days since his last seizure. Phenobarbital dose still 165 mg (2 3/4 tablets).

May 15 – Midnight: Very mild seizure, while sleeping. Less than one minute. Deep breathing for a few more minutes then continued sleeping soundly. Did not urinate or salivate. Fine in a.m. 10 days since last seizure.

May 24 – 2:45am: Very mild seizure (approx. 30 sec.) while sleeping. Remained asleep afterwards, with several minutes of deep, heavy breathing. Fine in a.m. 9 days since last seizure.

June 11 – 1:30am: Very mild seizure (less than 60 sec.). Followed by several minutes of deep breathing and snoring. Returned to sound, normal sleep without waking up. Fine in morning. 17 days between seizures. There is no salivation or urination with the seizures that he's had for the last couple of months.

June 12 – Note: Murphy is very ataxic today. (Much more than has been “normal” lately). Also rather restless. May need to do another bromide level soon. It's been almost two months.

June 16 – Decreased Murphy's phenobarbital dose to 2 ½ tab. (150 mg) 2x daily.

June 22 – Approx. 11:05am: Walked in on last phase of what appeared to be a very severe seizure. Lots of salivation and urination. Very long post seizure phase with lots of twitching and blank stare. Remained unsteady and confused for prolonged period. This is the first seizure in months that occurred during his waking hours and was so severe. My main concern was the break from what has been the norm for quite some time. The timing and severity concern me, in light of the recent decrease in his phenobarbital. He's so sensitive to it. It could make a difference. Will give him ¼ tab this a.m. and put his dose back up to 2 ¾ tabs tonight. Also gave him 5 mg valium to calm him down. This seizure left him very agitated.

June 29 – 5:05am: Very mild, very short seizure while sleeping. Woke up afterward, but was not particularly bothered by it. Very little salivation, no urination. My main concern is that it has only been 7 days since his last seizure.

July 4 – Between 4:00pm and 7:00pm – possible seizure. Murphy was in his crate and no one was home. Small injury to his top skull consistent with banging his head on his crate. Crate pad was damp as if he was salivating. No urination. Can't be sure, because he seems O.K. otherwise. Hope I'm wrong, because this would only be 5 days since last seizure. Will call Dr. Dickenson on the 5th.

July 13 – 4:00am: Very mild seizure. Approx. 15 to 20 sec. As has become usual, he stayed asleep with 2 to 3 minutes of post seizure “deep breathing” and snoring. No salivation or urination. Fine in morning. It has either been 14 days or 9 days between seizures. This depends on if he had a seizure on July 4th or not. Results from Murphy's bromide level – 2.6.

July 24 – 2:35am: Very mild, short seizure. 15 – 20 sec. duration. No urination, only slight salivation. As usual, went into deep sleep afterwards, with lots of snoring. Normal in morning. 11 days between seizures.

August 16 – Murphy still pretty ataxic during certain times of the day, but is still able to play with his ball in the morning hours. 23 days without a seizure is the longest he's gone for several months. Still on 2 ¾ tab. (165 mg twice a day) of Phenobarbital and 7 ml of potassium bromide. Has appointment on the 22nd to consult with Dr. Pascoe, at UCD, about acupuncture therapy.

August 24 – Murphy had his consultation and first acupuncture treatment with Dr. Peter Pascoe at UCD. Scheduled for next treatment on Aug. 30. Dr. Pascoe is looking into using "ear pins" on Murphy. This has shown most success in dogs with epilepsy. Murphy has now gone 31 days between seizures. This is the longest seizure free period since mid April. Listed below is Murphy's seizure protocol:

- Phenobarbital – 2 ¾ tabs. (165 mg) twice daily at 9:30-10:00am/9:30-10:00pm.
- Potassium bromide – 7 ml (3 1/2 ml twice daily, mixed in food at lunch & dinner).
- 1 tablet B complex – a.m. only.
- ½ tablet (125 mg) B-12, in a.m. only.
- One 400 IU vitamin E – a.m. only.
- 500 mg vitamin C – twice daily.
- Acupuncture treatment once per week.

August 25 – 2:15am: Murphy had the shortest, mildest seizure I have witnessed. Could not have lasted even 10 sec., probably less. Very mild in intensity. No urination, very little salivation. 5 to 10 minutes of deep breathing (snoring), then normal sleep. Did not wake up. Fine, no residual effects in morning. Compared to the way it used to be (very restless and agitated after seizure), Murphy is doing very well indeed. 31 days between seizures is the longest he's gone in many months.

August 30 – Acupuncture – Dr. Pascoe. It may be my imagination, but Murphy seems more energetic for a day or so after his treatment. His ataxia returns and is worse in the afternoon.

September 5 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe.

September 8 – 14 days since last seizure. Murphy is doing very well these days. If he were just a little less ataxic, it would be great progress!

September 12 – ½ tsp. herbs – once daily (Ban Xia, Bai Zhy, Tian Ma Tang). Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. Ear pins inserted. 18 days without a seizure, but very ataxic for last week.

September 19 – Increasingly ataxic. Starting today, decreased Phenobarbital by ¼ tab. a.m. dose only (2 ½ tabs. a.m./2 ¾ tabs p.m.). 25 days without a seizure. Have decreased herbs to ¼ tsp. in case this may be cause of increased ataxia.

September 24 – 2:15am: Mild grand mal seizure, approx. 30 sec. duration. No salivation or urination. 1 to 2 minutes deep, snoring type breathing. Woke up this time and was a little restless for a few minutes, then back to sleep. O.K. in morning (a little sleepier than usual). 30 days between seizures.

Note: New Neurologist – Dr. Helena Rylander.

September 26 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. Discussed concern over amount of ataxia. Will have a bromide level done on the 27th. No other changes.

September 30 – Murphy’s bromide level 2.2

October 3 – Murphy still very ataxic, but seizure free. Stopped using the herbs because they were the only thing I could think of that might cause this change. If he improves, will try to reintroduce them and see if it happens again.

October 10 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. He noticed that Murphy seemed a little “brighter”.

October 17 – Murphy has felt much better this past week. More energy and more alert. 23 days seizure free. Will decrease night dose of pheno. by ¼ tab. starting on the 19th.

October 24 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. Still no seizures. We have decided to lower his nighttime dose of pheno. by ¼ tablet. Starting with tonight’s dose. He will now be on 2 ½ tabs. (150 mg) twice daily.

October 26 – 32 days seizure free. Feeling very good.

November 2 – Less ataxic. Feeling good. More alert. 39 days without a seizure! Longest period between seizures since Dec. ’99. Longest period of “once a month” (3 ½ mos.) in almost two years. Acupuncture treatment with Dr. Pascoe. Will start having sessions every two weeks.

November 11 – 48 days without a seizure. Feeling great. Most active he’s been in a year.

November 16 – 53 days and still no seizures. Very active and alert. Able to enjoy playing with other dogs for first time in nearly two years. Acupuncture session with Dr. Pascoe.

November 30 – 67 days without a seizure! At times still very ataxic, but generally more alert and active.

December 4 – 71 days, still no seizures, but more ataxic at times.

December 6 – 73 days! Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. He seemed a little peppier in the evening, but still fairly ataxic.

December 7 – Reduced a.m. dose of pheno. to 2 ¼ tablets (135 mg). p.m. dose remains at 2 ½ tabs.

December 15 – Still seizure free and a little less ataxic. It's been 82 days!

December 19 – 86 days! Acupuncture appointment tomorrow.

December 23 – Feeling very good after acupuncture on the 20th. Always more hyper for awhile. Will continue on present med. Dosages for another 3 weeks. Next appt. in 3 weeks, on Jan. 10th. Also Neuro recheck with Dr. Rylander on Jan. 16th. 90 days seizure free.

January 8 – Still seizure free (106 days)! Feeling very good, with only modest ataxia. Able to be active and enjoy playing with other dogs.

January 12 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. Will stay at every three weeks for now. Will drop his p.m. dose of phen. to 2 ¼ tablets (135 mg). Still seizure free.

January 16 – Appt. with Dr. Rylander for recheck. Overall he's doing fine. She observed his ataxia. I confirmed it was greatly improved over 6 mos. ago. Blood was taken following day for phen. level, bromide level and liver function.

January 18 – Dr. Rylander called with Murphy's test results. Phen. level is 26. Liver function and chem... panel normal ranges. Bromide level back next week. Rec. we stay at 2 ¼ tab. (135 mg) and not try to go any lower now. (Maybe after he's been seizure free for one year!!?). Still no seizures – 116 days!

January 25 – Murphy has gone four months without a seizure. This is better than I could have ever hoped for, considering how bad he was a year ago. Dr. Rylander called with bromide level of 3.1 – over therapeutic level, but we'll stay at present dose nonetheless.

January 31 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. Noted he seemed more ataxic during third week between treatments. We will go only two weeks this time, to see if there is a difference. Still seizure free.

February 14 – Acupuncture. Feeling good overall. Still seizure free. Will go three weeks before next appointment.

March 1 – Murphy continues to do very well. Ataxic at times, but moderate overall. Over 5 months without a seizure!

March 7 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. Doing very well. Will continue on “every three weeks” schedule for now. If he goes 6 months without a seizure (March 24), we will drop his a.m. phen. dose to two tablets (120 mg).

March 24 – 6 mos. Seizure free and doing fine. Well adjusted to this level of ataxia. We hope this will improve if we are able to continue lowering his Phenobarbital. Dropped his a.m. dose to two tablets (120 mg). p.m. dose still 2 ¼ tabs. Will wait another month before lowering again.

March 28 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. Will have one more appt. in 3 weeks, then try going to 4 weeks.

April 11 – Doing very well. Still seizure free. A little more active. Getting more exercise. Hope this will help him with his weight.

April 18 – Acupuncture appointment. Will now try going to every 4 weeks. Murphy continues to improve. It is most noticed by those who haven’t seen him as regularly. Will drop his evening dose of phen. to 2 tablets (120 mg) on the 24th. By then he will have gone 7 mos. Without a seizure.

April 24 – Phenobarbital dose dropped to 2 tablets (120 mg) in the p.m. also. Continues seizure free and feeling good. Taking longer walks (1 ½ - 2 miles) and seems to have lost a tiny bit of weight. All of this is good!

May 16 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. He seemed to think Murphy appeared more ataxic. To me, he seemed about the same. His ataxia waxes and wanes in the course of a day, but never appears to get in the way of his activities. He continues to be seizure free as we approach his 8th month. If all continues well, we’ll lower his a.m. dose by another ¼ tablet on the 24th.

May 24 – Reduced Murphy’s Phenobarbital to 1 ¾ tablets (105 mg) in the a.m. Still 120 mg in the p.m. He seems a little more ataxic (at times) lately. 8 months seizure free!

June 13 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. Murphy continues to be seizure free and feeling good. Level of ataxia about the same. Does not interfere with his fun. Will continue to reduce his phen. by ¼ per month (1 mo. in a.m./1 mo. in p.m.). If he is still seizure free in Sept., which will be a full year, we will increase reduction to ½ tab. per month (1/4 a.m./1/4 p.m.).

June 24 – 9 mos. Seizure free! Reduced phen. dose in p.m. to 1 ¾ tablets (105 mg).

July 11 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe.

July 14 – Murphy’s ataxia improved after this last acupuncture visit. He’s been very up and lively.

July 18 – Recheck nuero visit with Dr. Rylander. Physical exam normal. Phen. level the same as last Jan. Will continue to lower ¼ tab./month. Bromide level much lower (2.6) than in Jan. exam (was 3.2).

July 20 – Discussed bromide level with Dr. Rylander. We agree that Jan.'s level may have been a false reading and present level more consistent with results of previous year. Recheck in 6 mos.

August 8 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. Murphy is approaching 11 mos. seizure free. He's feeling extremely good. Very active and mentally alert. Less ataxic for longer periods. Admitted this makes me worry that as his Pb levels drop, he's likely to have a seizure. Yet I want to believe he can be maintained just on Kbr. Maybe when he reaches 60 mg of Pb BID we'll just leave him there for awhile.

August 24 – 11 mos. Seizure free. Feeling very good. 90 mg Pb BID.

September 7 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. He noted how much more alert Murphy is now.

September 24 – 12 mos. Seizure free. I can't believe we made it! 75 mg Pb a.m./90 mg Pb p.m.

October 4 – Acupuncture with Dr. Pascoe. Murphy feeling very good. Very alert (for Murphy!).

November 8 – Acupuncture. Still seizure free after 13 mos. 75 mg Pb BID. Will stay at this dose at least until we see Dr. Rylander in January.

December 13 – Acupuncture. Over 14 mos. Seizure free. Very "perky" during visit with Dr. Pascoe. Murphy has even lost a little weight!!

Note: The above was the last entry for Murphy's Diary in the year 2001. Part 4 of his diary will continue with the year 2002.