My Friend with the black silky coat or A Friendship with a slow start

by Andreas Bruhwiler (first published 2010)



Preamble

This is NOT a story for educated and longtime Sloughi experts, because I am a Sloughi amateur and these are some of my very personal experiences with Alinghi.

Yes, there were dogs in my life (in Switzerland!) before. A Portuguese Water Dog and a black Golden-Lab mix.
The simple ones with four paws, with some fur, the ones which like to listen to your voice and obey most of the time, the ones loving some swimming and having their spot in the house.
Just dogs.

My wife Daniela had a Sloughi before.
During Daniela's first marriage, Ramla, bright sand colored, came to her as a 4 or 5 week old import from Tunisia. 1987 Daniela's brother bought her from a Berber, smuggled her in a coat's pocket through customs in Switzerland.
She came straight from the desert to a family with a 14 month old baby girl. Ramla became an important family member, was a friend to the growing kids, and she lived with them for almost 15 years, and died in 2002.

How to convince your husband to get a Sloughi?

When Daniela and I got married in 2004, it was one of these 'no discussion necessary issues': one day we will have *A DOG*, once our new life in the South (Georgia) is settled, we would be ready for one.

Maybe every six months we had an occasional talk about what breed might 'fit'; mostly because we did see a dog or read an article about a breed.
Some of my favorite breeds wouldn't fit our Georgia climate: no Hovawart, no Leonberger, no longhaired German Shepherd.
Actually, it was always me bringing up the breed discussion, Daniela never did. I didn't get suspicious about this fact at that time.

I remember very well the evening in February 2007.
At home, Daniela very rarely sits at the computer but that evening she did. I suddenly realized that she was cooking dinner and doing something on the computer at the same time, even more unusual!

"I am doing nothing, just searching for something to show to you."
Ok. At the very far back of my head some little alarms started ringing.

Ten minutes later (meanwhile I started being concerned …. about Daniela might burn the supper which was still on the stove of course):
"You need to see this! Watch these pictures."

I am a man. I am slow thinking, especially when I am having an empty stomach.
Well, this I got in a split of a second:
Looking at the pictures on the monitor, reading the title '**Moreau-Sipiere International Sloughis**', and I knew that we would get a Sloughi at the next possible occasion.

Daniela calmed me down:
"No, no, I just found this link I stored two years ago and thought to show you their Sloughis."

No doubt, Daniela knew from the years with Ramla what A Sloughi is, what A Sloughi does or doesn't and what A Sloughi wants and needs.

Ladies, here is the incomplete list of so called facts which works great (especially during a LATE dinner) to sell your idea of getting a Sloughi to your (inexperienced but loving) husband:

A Sloughi does NOT

- Steal, not even cookies
  from the coffee table
- Beg at all
- Shed a lot
- Ever drink water out of a dirt puddle
- Ever eat dirt (or worse) or
  food from the street

But *A Sloughi* DOES

- Love his people
- Need a strong relationship
  to his people
- Need lots of love and attention
- Need patience because
  a Sloughi is stubborn
- Likes HIS spot
- Understand everything you tell him

Me muttering, still late dinner food in my mouth: Ok. Let's 'get' us a Sloughi.

"I would like a sand with black mantle, female if possible." said Daniela.

How to get a Sloughi in the U.S.?

Short version of this part of the story:

A 'Prospective Puppy Buyer Questionnaire' sent to Ermine,
some phone calls, e-mails, and
a few days later we 'knew' our puppy.
A male was available at Ocerico Sloughis from Erika's A-Litter.

A male? Destiny?
Me, forcefully: It is a MALE?! He might be (very) different from Ramla just because he is a MALE?! He might behave macho like, especially with you?!

Daniela, convincing:
"Yes, but I do not see any problems, because he is *A*



Sloughi!"

I searched the internet and read a lot about Sloughis. Tons of controversial information from the U.S., Germany, France. I bought literature, including Ermine Moreau-Sipiere's 'The Sloughi', 1996. It turned out to become my by far the most expensive book purchase ever and second hand, too!

No doubt, I was (and still am) impressed about this very special breed, their history and heritage, and their life with the Berbers.
Indeed, a very special kind of dog.

Finally I was prepared …. at least that's what I thought.

How to live with my first Sloughi?

End of March 2007.
He was close to 9 weeks old when we picked Alinghi up at O'Hare, Chicago.
Ok, he was only 9 weeks, but tall for a 'normal' puppy.
He didn't seem to be a puppy.
My very wrong interpretation.

The third day.

Alinghi pulls on the leash. Just from my wrist I pull back, suddenly. Wrong thing to do! His reaction and his whining broke my heart!

A puppy, but he could be rough with his sharp puppy teeth! Especially with Daniela. I felt that she was suffering sometimes about his behavior, so he really needed some education. Conditioning, get conditioned response ….

One time as Alinghi was jumping at Daniela by surprise from behind, my reflex was throwing my light and soft slipper. Wrong again!
I felt as a convicted dog abuser and had to comfort Alinghi (and Daniela) for some time that day.
I did learn to talk to Alinghi but not with my naturally rather loud voice. Try to convince him but not to threaten him.
I did learn to be patient but persistent.
And I've learned how great treats work!

Walking this beautiful puppy made me proud, and I have got in touch with more people than ever just walking him in a populated area!

No, it is not a Greyhound and
no, we did not rescue him.
No, he is not a Great Dane.
He is a Sloughi. No, not a Saluki, a Slooooughi.

The most stubborn dog expert to-be and Greyhound owner, a woman turned after one of these 'conversations' to the lady besides her, explaining:

"Well, you know my dear, there are all kinds of mixes and they call them whatever they want."

Anyway, Alinghi attracts people everywhere and if I were a consultant for single males, my 'hottest advice' to meet women would be: Get you a Sloughi and walk him in the park!
Isn't there such a movie? Maybe I should start a consultant business and rent out Alinghi ….

You know one, you know them all??!!
We - yes, also my wife, the experienced Sloughi owner - had to learn that *A Sloughi* isn't any Sloughi!
Ok, Ramla didn't steal, not even cookies from the coffee table, but Alinghi steals everything he can reach!
Well, Ramla didn't beg at all, but Alinghi did.

Ramla never drank water out of a dirt puddle, but Alinghi



does (rarely now).
Ramla did never eat dirt (or worse) or food from the street, but Alinghi does (he loves goose dirt and analyzes each trash can).

I felt that Alinghi does love us.
That he needs a strong relationship with us and lots of love and attention.
That he needs patience because *A Sloughi* is stubborn.
Although he likes his spot, he prefers to lay wherever we are, but BETWEEN us.
Of course, I believe he understands everything we tell him, but I KNOW that he doesn't always do what we tell him to do!

Nevertheless, Alinghi's behavior started to become - not a surprise for me, an experienced male dog owner - very macho.
Maybe because I am bigger and (sometimes) more consequent in my reactions, he directed his macho thing towards Daniela (it did end when he was about 16 months old). Even though she was spending much more fun time with Alinghi, walking him, playing with him, feeding him.

At that time he was already tall and pretty strong and I sometimes had to protect Daniela.
Suddenly I was the one with the 'bad cop' role and my relationship with Alinghi was more about correcting him as his boss and not as a friend.

How to take care of Alinghi 24/7?

Alinghi was about 14 months old and the moment of drama came with the day when Daniela left us!
Well, she went to visit our newly born Grandson in Switzerland to stay there for 10 days.
TEN days!
All by myself with Alinghi! Tell me again what kind of food and how much and how to prepare it for breakfast? And his dinner? When does he need to go out during the day (Alinghi always stays with us at work and he has always been a great 'office dog')?

First part of this new experience was that we suffered and mourned about our temporary 'loss' together.
Both were developing a deep depression and we had the same sad Sloughi look in our wet eyes.

Ok, no good cop around anymore; so no need for a bad cop either.
Fed on time and always a little bit more than in Daniela's instructions.
Talking to Alinghi, because there was nobody else to talk to.
Daily walks. The two of us went early in the morning.
Getting to the office an hour later, so what?! Go out with him at noon and walk with him half an hour at 3:00.

All these activities changed my work day positively and I started liking it.
But much more, Alinghi and I started a new relationship, being together all the time, 24/7.
Go to places, just the two of us, visiting friends, and walking and playing.
Pet him in the evenings, watching TV together - although I was choosing the program - cover him with the blanket to make him sleep.
Alinghi changed his behavior.
More often he wanted to be close to me, he did 'pet' me, he was more attentive and listened to me, and more often he responded with his Sloughi like noises to show his happiness.

Lucky we, Daniela came back after ten days and things got more normal again.
Not everything turned back as it was:
I am still walking Alinghi in the morning, I am spending more time with him, and we pay each other more attention.



We are not just a guy and a dog as we were before; Alinghi, the Sloughi and I are friends.

On January 2, 2020, I promised Alinghi that he will forever be my friend with the black silky coat.

Multi BISS BVIS RBIS Multi CH Ocerico Alinghi CM2 JC CGCA TT
January 29, 2007 - January 2, 2020