

PROFILE



CAMMI & CLYDE

KANGAROO LOVER HAS MOB MENTALITY

By John Kinmonth

To most, kangaroos are relegated to the wild grasslands and outback of Australia. To Cammi Libby, they're simply out back.

Along with two golden retrievers and a Yorkshire terrier-Chihuahua mix, the avid tennis player and CFO of Legacy Commercial currently has two much-loved macropods—an adult wallaby named Mac and a nine-month-old kangaroo named Clyde.

"They really think we are part of their family," she says.

Cammi has a simple explanation for how her family ended up part of a mob—the Australian term for a group of kangaroos.

"When our son Ben was in high school he became interested in raising a macropod after reading an article in the newspaper about it," she says. "It wasn't difficult for Ben to convince me, but my husband, Jeff, thought it was a ridiculous idea." It took about a year to soften Jeff up to the idea before they acquired Jack, a six-month-old wallaroo, from a family in Redmond. Six months is the first age when they can safely be removed from their mother's pouch.

"Jack was small enough to fit in a large purse, and he went everywhere with us—restaurants, movies and concerts," she says. Indigenous to Australia, wallaroos are best explained as a slightly smaller version of the Down Under's hopping icon. When Ben went off to college at Western Washington University, Cammi stepped in as Jack's primary caregiver.

"Jack obviously wasn't going to be living in a dorm, so I guess he became mine," she says.

To keep Jack company, the Libbys acquired a young wallaby from a kangaroo farm in Arlington. Jack's new little friend was named Mac, after the Redmond brewery Mac & Jack's.

"They need to have friends and be part of a mob," Cammi says.

Unfortunately, Jack eventually developed health complications and passed away, which was a huge blow to their family.

"I didn't think I could do it anymore," she says. However, her love for macropods won

out, and they found a young red kangaroo from a breeder in Texas. Named after NBA hall-of-famer Clyde "The Glide" Drexler for his jumping ability, Clyde will stand approximately 6 feet tall when full-grown.

But at just nine months old, Clyde is still considered a "joey" or young kangaroo, and must be bottle-fed every four hours. The Libbys' daughter, Haylen, currently takes the day shifts and Cammi does the late-night feedings, which she finds therapeutic.

"A lot of people have concerns that kangaroos are mean and dangerous, but when they are hand-raised like this, they truly don't have a mean bone in their body," she says.

To create an acceptable habitat for Clyde and Mac, Cammi and Jeff have turned their Lake Sammamish backyard into a small grazing pasture with a 6-foot fence and barn.

"We'll need an 8-foot fence and will need to add space when Clyde is older. We have an acre now, but we may need to acquire a small farm, especially if Clyde gets a Bonnie and our mob grows," Cammi says. While Cammi has always had a love for animals, she wasn't always a kangaroo expert.

"It wasn't until we got Jack that I realized how gentle, affectionate and hilarious they are," she says. "They are very social and extremely inquisitive—if I'm working in the yard, their nose is right in there, with a paw on my shoulder.

Because Clyde is still in his makeshift pouch, he's able to go almost anywhere. He has even been on the sidelines of the tennis court at the Club a few times.

"I've gotten some pretty funny looks, but it always brings a smile," Cammi says. The local shop owners in Leavenworth and Sun Valley have gotten used to seeing the joeys inside a pouch or backpack, as they travel right along with the family when the Libbys spend time at their vacation homes.

"The type of travel you can do is definitely limited when the joeys are still so dependent," she says. "When they no longer need to be bottle-fed and can stay out in their pen we are able to hire a pet-sitter for them, like our dogs."

5 REFLECTIONS

FAVORITE BOOK(S):

"Pillars of the Earth" by Ken Follett and "The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth" by Edward O. Wilson.

FAVORITE FOOD:

Vegetarian cuisine.

BEST ADVICE:

Bless the beasts and the children—and the old people. And don't forget to reduce, reuse and recycle.

HERO/GREATEST INFLUENCE:

Gandhi for his gentle leadership and his strive for peace, and my mother for her kindness to all and complete lack of selfishness.

FAVORITE ACTIVITY AT THE BELLEVUE CLUB:

Tennis—What a fantastic group of ladies I have met on the court. Many have become dear friends.

CARING FOR KANGAROOS

Cammi is no passive pet owner. Since getting Jack, Mac and now Clyde, she has become deeply interested in the fate of their relatives in the wild.

"What I'm most interested in is the orphaned joeys in Australia," she says. "Mothers usually have a joey in the pouch and a slightly older one at foot. When mothers are killed by hunters or hit by cars, the joeys are often left to die."

She has become a supporter of organizations that work to protect the kangaroo and plans to visit Australia with the intent of determining how she can best aid in this effort.

"Nine million kangaroos are culled per year. They send a lot of kangaroo meat to Asia and Russia, and leather to the United States and Italy. Conservationists are concerned about the future of the animal," she says. "I don't generally condone the idea of keeping exotic animals as pets, but after hearing a noted Australian biologist state that she believes the ONLY place the kangaroo will be able to survive is in captivity, I want to do what I can to provide a place for that. It would be tragic if this amazing Aussie icon disappeared."