

## DOES SIZE MATTER?

We have lived in Heritage Harbour since Dec. 2005 on the street designated as Royal Harbor. (Lennar never had it engraved on the lower right blank of the monument at the left turn onto Heritage Isles.) About four months after we arrived, I looked across the lake and thought to myself, "never noticed that huge log on the far bank of the lake before." Looking through the binoculars, it became apparent the log was a large alligator. Wouldn't you know it my husband was out of town for ten days! We have two dogs . . . not small, not large, but just right. I had always taken them into the back yard when nature called. Now the front yard became their haven. The big guy had his regular sunning spot on the opposite bank except when he was swimming, so it was easy to keep an eye on him . . . in the daylight. Our dogs are not frequent barkers unless a golfer comes into our yard or is sometimes in the sand trap on our side of the green. As Tess and Rudy let a golfer know he was in their territory one fine day, I watched the big gator turn around and float closer and closer to our side of the lake. I had heard stories about gators coming through lanai screens on occasion so I hustled my two Lhasa's inside the house. When darkness descended, I was terrified to take them out even in the front yard.



I made lots of noise even on our last late night outing and waved my arms in front of our motion lights in an effort to scare the big fellow before he jumped out and gave me a heart attack. When my hubby returned home, he could see I was not exaggerating when I had told him on the phone how big our new lake resident was. He called the alligator trapper who finally made the catch after several unsuccessful tries. SNN from Sarasota came up to film the capture as they had been searching for a gator story during that mating season. When the caged truck drove off with the ten foot gator hog-tied and gator-taped inside, I let out a sigh of relief but have never since taken the dogs out in the morning without checking behind our hedges, just in case. Mostly my hubby takes them on the morning outing.



Today, New Year's Eve 2011, my husband called to me and said "Come here . . . Quick!" I rushed into our bathroom, jumped up on the vanity stool to see out the clear top of the frosted window . . . and what to my wandering eye should appear but a miniature alligator making his way through our side yard from the lake to the street. This little fellow is just about 22 inches long but he is a feisty little guy. We have seen him swimming in the lake recently but apparently he is a bit braver, stronger or maybe just a bit more curious than his predecessors.



With my hubby following him, camera in hand, the tiny tot decided to turn around and beat feet back to the lake.

Our newest family member "Chance", is a Havanese puppy tornado and often makes a break for freedom on his own. He is just as brave and curious as this little gator guy and I would rather . . . never the twain shall meet! So if you hear clapping and noises late at night with motion lights blinking off and on, go back to sleep. You'll know what it is!

Sandy Berberich

