Gifford's Charge

After 6 months of growing into what he was and having 4 months of that time to look at cows in a 60-acre pasture across from our house, Gifford charged the cows. By biology he is ½ Australian Sheppard and his dad is either a Pointer or Husky/Lab mix.

The Australian Shepherd is an intelligent working dog of strong herding and guarding instincts. He is a loyal companion and has the stamina to work all day. He is well balanced, slightly longer than tall, of medium size and bone, with coloring that offers variety and individuality. Besides working as herding animals, Aussies serve as police dogs, narcotics detectors and competitors in obedience trials. They also make great family pets.

We have watched Gifford perched on our hill contentedly stare at the cows. When he has too much energy in the house and we don't have the energy for him, we say, "Go look at the cows!" He runs out of the house, sits on the hill, and studies the cows. We thought, great, this will be a good energy pacifier.

Gifford's escape came when Roanne had walked down to get the mail and Gifford followed. We usually keep him behind the gate, but this time he tagged along to the road. It was too much for him. He zipped under the barbed wire fence and headed straight for the cows. I watched all of this from the house alerted by Roanne yelling: "Gifford...GiFORD...GIFFORD!!"

Within minutes, he got all 100 cows herded to the backside of the pasture; Roanne called our neighbors to apologize for our dog; I went out to get Gifford.

The pasture is waist high in grass, so though I knew where Gifford was from the vantage point of our house, once I started walking toward the backside of the pasture; Roanne called our neighbors to apologize for our dog; I went out to get Gifford.

I've been thinking about this theme of developing into who we are this week.

As the 2020 graduates enter the world, I can't help but ponder what I would have become without my senior year. Who I became as a senior has defined who I am to this day. My wish for the class of 2020 is that even without the traditional showcase of a senior year, they realize the best parts of themselves have always been inside them.

Covid-19 has forced the world to become something new, and each individual has needed to adjust. What we become next is still to be sorted out. Staying open to new ways of being and becoming will help us see the possibilities.

In Al Sharpton's eulogies for George Floyd, he challenged our nation to become something different. The ugliness of racism is still holding people back, still not allowing everyone the same privileges and rights and still used to justify murdering someone in broad daylight in full public view.

James Baldwin said, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." White America, which I am a part of, needs to face the hard reality of racism and all of its covert and overt ways it has been tangled in the United States for more than 400 years. We pledged as a country in 1776 that everyone has the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We cannot rise to our best selves and become the nation we pledged to be until we first acknowledge where we are right now. Einstein said it this way, "All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual."

Gifford is going to be happy as a companion pet chasing sticks, going for walks, stealing a few socks and herding our two cats. As long as he gets to do those things he was bred to do in some way shape or form, he will have intrinsic contentment. It is our job to continue to understand his needs and give him the opportunities and supports to fulfill these needs.

As the world changes, as we rise to face the challenge of racism in front of us, as we all grow into new versions of ourselves, my hope for all of us is that there are people in our lives that are watching us to see what we might need. Because like Gifford, we are often so busy herding our own cows and reacting from places so deep within us, we wind up in the wrong place. To become who we can become, we often need a gentle nudge back toward ourselves from someone who sees us, knows us and only wants the best for us.