



"Good Bye Old Friend"

A loving tribute to a special dog

The old dog lay quietly on the soft, white blanket looking up with trusting eyes at his master of thirteen years. The once proud and strong Dalmatian was now feeble and mostly deaf. The limbs that once trotted powerfully up the driveway to guide arriving cars to the house, now shook uncontrollably. The intelligent and gentle eyes that looked out from the sleek head were now mostly filled with confusion and great pain.

The old dog's master and friend held up the syringe filled with the clear, pink solution and looked at his long-time companion. "I'm going to miss you old friend," he whispered. He placed a hand on top of the broad soft head and gently stroked the great dog's velvet ears. The tail thumped weakly in response. Then with a precision that comes with long years of experience, he inserted the needle expertly into the old dog's vein and slowly depressed the plunger. A sob caught in his throat as he watched his friend crumple into the folds of the blanket. He sat and watched the chest rise and fall as he murmured gently to the dying dog. As his old protector and companion took his last breath, he placed his stethoscope to the now silent chest and listened for a moment. Then he folded a portion of the blanket over the lifeless body.

He let the other dogs in so that they might understand the new status of the household. No one knows what a dog really thinks and feels, but he felt that doing this was important. Two of the dogs ran around as if nothing new had transpired. But the smallest of them all, the one that had grown up with the old Dalmatian, lay down quietly next to the inert body and rested his tiny muzzle on the great dog's paw.

Silently he dug a grave in the wet ground, his tears mingling freely with the rain. He had picked this final resting spot carefully, placing it between two other old friends, a beloved dog and cat that the old Dalmatian had spent many happy years with.

It had not been an easy decision. He had counseled and empathized with many of his clients who had wrestled with the same choice. He himself had agonized over it for a long time. But he finally knew that he needed to help his friend escape the constant pain that all of his veterinary training and years of experience could not erase.

As the last shovelful of dirt was placed over the grave, he felt deeply saddened that he'd never again gaze upon the soft, wise eyes, but knew in his heart that his old friend was finally at peace.

The act of grieving is often complicated by feelings that perhaps we should not be "over-reacting" to the death of "just" a pet. Many friends and family members don't understand what the pet has meant to us in life and don't empathize with these very real and deep feelings. If you are having trouble coping, would like more information about the grief process, or are considering euthanasia, please call. We're here to help you.