

Best Friend's Death

My best friend died today; he would have been 14 years old this month. The sadness I feel at his passing is overwhelming, and yet, at the same time, I feel joy for the companionship he provided and the love that filled my heart. He was always there for me; he never asked for more than I could give and wanted nothing in return except my company, a walk in the woods, or a ball to retrieve. He was always a gentle soul; he never once hurt a living thing. Children loved him, loved to pet him, and he never, ever said no to a child's touch.

In his youth, he was as fast as wind, fearless, and yet wise. In the mountains, he would fearlessly chase the black bear that wandered into the neighborhood but was wise enough just to watch the coyotes as they passed by. He was part Husky and could run all day, and part Golden Retriever, and he could outrun a deer.

As the years went by, so did the speed until walking was difficult. His once strong, lean body became broken and unable to let him be the dog he once was. But I fought the fight, the doctors, the medicine, carrying him into the car, all the time not wanting him to leave, to not be there for me. No matter how long I was gone, he would wait by the door for my return, and the moment the key was in the door, he was there greeting me. No matter how bad my day was, he brightened it, and I did not want that to end.

Time took its toll, a slow loss of energy, and the walks became shorter and shorter. The end came quickly; the hearing was almost gone, as was the eyesight. I came home, put the key in the lock, opened the door, and walked past him before he finally noticed I was there. He had been struggling to stand, and walking was slow and shaking, but now he now he could do neither. I lay on the floor beside him and looked into his big, beautiful, soulful eyes. I know he said, "It's time."

They say God made man in his image and gave him dogs to keep him company; I say they are wrong. I say God made dogs in his image, an image of love and compassion, and put man here to learn from them.

I will miss my friend.