

Maggie

By Gail Grenier Sweet ©2003

It was easy for me to say “Put it out of its misery” before the euthanasia decision was mine, for a dog I loved.

Maggie was our seventh dog, and the first good one. By “good” I mean house isn’t toilet, furniture isn’t chew toy, garbage isn’t snack, other yards aren’t fields of dreams, and bark isn’t love call. Maggie’s only bad habits were crying at the ring of phone or doorbell, and shedding. I could live with those.

I found her at the Humane Society nine and a half years ago. She was five years old at the time and had a shining report from her former owner, who could no longer keep her.

She looked like a miniature white German Shepherd. Her picture could have been in the dictionary under the term “hang-dog.” Her eyes said, “Thanks for saving me from the Pound.” Maggie never left my side. Sometimes I almost tripped over my white shadow. But I adjusted.

Because I now had a walking pal, I mowed a maze on our land, following deer trails. Maggie bounded down paths with me, unleashed, never straying far. When she ran in long grasses, all you could see was head-tail-head-tail. For walks, I had “Happy Dog.”

But Maggie got old. First her hearing went. Not bad — she stopped howling at the phone and doorbell.

Then doggie dementia set in. She stood, staring at a wall, lost. Or she’d go outside and forget her mission. Her hip problems caused her to slide down steps or trip up steps, sometimes getting stuck. She whined. It was horrible to watch in our house of stairs.

Over the years I fed her the best food, had her lose 10 lbs., gave her Glucosamine for her arthritis, finally put her on Ascriptin as the veterinarian suggested. I knew the end was near when she couldn’t keep up with us on morning walks. No more Happy Dog.

I put off the inevitable for months, until it was vacation time and my usual dog-sitter didn’t want to have to carry Maggie down the steps every time nature called. Finally I phoned the House Call Vet (there are a couple of those who serve the Falls area). I figured Maggie had the right to die at home in my arms. The end wasn’t pretty. The vet gave Maggie a massive injection of anesthetic. Maggie yelped once and jerked her head towards me as if to say “NO!” Then her head lay down, eyes open. She was gone.

We buried her that evening by the lilac tree. Anna and Mike and I were a batch of sniffles. We said some words: “Maggie, you were the only good dog we ever had.”

I’m afraid to ever try another.

The End