

My Story

Goodbye, Old Friend

Anna Knapp

Some of my earliest memories are of a Boxer named Heidi. Her tail was docked and her ears floppy. When she ran outside, her ears fluttered like bird wings. Throughout the years, we matured together. I confided my secrets, and she was always there to lick away my tears. When I came home from school, she welcomed me with joyous barking, her stubby tail dancing.

The night Heidi passed away, Mom took her outside before bedtime. She was running around exhilarated, and came dashing through the door for the last time.

As Mom got ready for bed, Heidi wandered into her room. Mom sat on her bed, and Heidi looked up at her and gave her a gentle kiss. Later that night, Mom was roused by the sound of toenails clicking up the wooden stairs leading to my room. Mom thought it was strange because Heidi never went upstairs, but she rolled over and went back to sleep. I was sleeping at a friend's house that evening.

Heidi's lifeless body was found beside my bed that morning. My lifelong friend had come to say goodbye and I wasn't there to receive her last gift. That was 13 years ago, and sometimes, late at night, I still shed a few tears.

My friend Tom placed Heidi's body in a large sack. Nobody else in the family could endure that pain.

With shovels in our hands, Tom and I walked down to the cluster of poplar trees in the corner of our backyard. I can remember that day vividly. It was May, and the world was waking up from the long winter slumber.

As I sank my shovel into the earth, the spring breeze dried my tears. I thought about all the special times we had together, and I couldn't believe that she was gone. I felt as though I was burying part of my soul with my canine companion.

Mom and I, hand-in-hand, went down to Heidi's final resting place. The poplars rustled gently in the wind.

"Goodbye, old friend. Go in peace," Mom sobbed. She slowly stood up and waited for me to say my farewell.

"My Heidi girl, I'm sorry that I wasn't home to pet you one last time." I was crying, my throat tight. "I'll never forget your cheerful barks or those floppy ears." I rose quickly and ran all the way to the house.

We planted a rosebush on her grave. It produces the sweetest smelling roses you can imagine. Sometimes on a pleasant spring day, I walk down to those great poplars. Kneeling next to the roses, I close my eyes and imagine Heidi in doggie heaven. Her droopy ears have become wings, the color of late snow. Her happy bark rings in my ears, as I remember my childhood sister.

What's your story? Dog World would love to hear about you and your dog. If you believe you have a unique story about your working dog, show dog, performance dog or companion dog, please e-mail it (500-word maximum) to letters@dogworld.com

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