

The Value of Life

By Dana Schlieman

My dog died yesterday. She had been sick with the tick fever for 3 months, but she was getting better. Night before last, my mother and I fed her and put her in her house for the night. She was fine, happy, bouncy, eating. She used to have this funny way of smiling. She would peel back her lips and show her nice, white teeth. It was her 'trademark'. Sometimes she smiled so hard it made her sneeze.

Yesterday morning my mother woke me up at 6:30 am to tell me Lucky was dead. I couldn't believe it. Part of me still doesn't. Yet there she was, on her sleeping pallet, limp and lifeless. My brother had just returned the night before from a four-day trip to the beach. He hadn't seen her since the day he left, and he never would again. It was so hard for all of us. Lucky left behind our memory of her memory, and her six-year-old daughter, Sol.

Lucky had been a noble animal. She had a hard life. She found us when we were building our house. She was a year old, maybe less. She had eight puppies. We gave the puppies away one by one, keeping three. One died, one ran away, and Sol stayed behind. We already had one other dog, Winnie, a very sweet mutt, half Golden Retriever, half Cocker Spaniel. So, we then had three dogs, Winnie, Lucky, and Sol. Lucky was a healthy dog until the tick fever got her. Winnie is a little overweight, and Sol is about the healthiest, most agile dog I have ever seen. Sol and Lucky were so close. Wherever one was, the other was sure to be around. Now I know Sol can tell that something has changed, and that her mother isn't around.

While burying Lucky next to her late daughter, my mother, brother and I realized the value of life. Life is so delicate, so special; a miracle. People don't consider it. Whoever said "Live each day as if it were your last" really knew what they were talking about. Lucky did live each day of her life as best she could. That makes my family's loss much less painful. She had a full, happy life, and she had to die sometime. We all have to die sometime. That's why we have to treasure our existence, tiny though it may be; our existence will always be *big* to someone we love.



Lucky