



PRECIOUS LIFE ANIMAL SANCTUARY

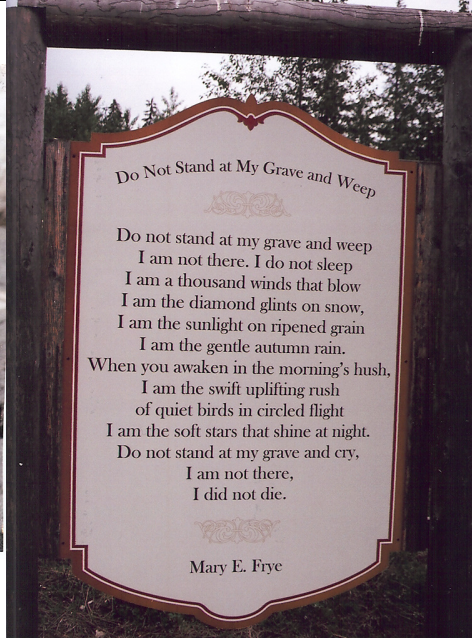
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MAXWELL
? - February 9, 2009



CHARLIE
May 1, 1998—September 10, 2008

CHARLIE AND MAXWELL *The Last of the Old Guard*

This newsletter is dedicated as a tribute to two of the most special dogs ever born, Charlie and Maxwell, both of whom passed away in the last year. Both have been with us since 1999 when Precious Life Animal Sanctuary was just a dream.

We have rescued other animals since the first of the year; specifically, an hours-old calf who could physically not stand and was slated to be processed (slaughtered) at four days old, a ten+ year old Great Pyrenees breeding female from a puppy mill raid by the Kittitas County Sheriff's Department, and a young rescued Saint Bernard from Yakima. While all their stories are compelling, we will detail them in our Fall newsletter. This newsletter is dedicated to Charlie and Maxwell.

In the memorable classic movie, *Forrest Gump*, Forrest asks his dying mother to somehow explain his destiny. She replies, "Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're going to get". Rescuing large breed dogs over the years has been a gift box, too, never knowing what you're going to get. Little did we know two Pyrenees we rescued in 1999 would possess such unique qualities and have such a profound presence that they can never be replaced.

Charlie died in our van in the parking lot of the veterinarian where we rushed him on September 10, 2008. He was ten years old. Maxwell died at the sanctuary on February 9, 2009. He was 12-14 years old. Following are highlights of the unforgettable lives we shared with them for nearly ten years.



CHARLIE



Charlie came to us in 1999 when he was two years old from a single mom who worked all day and had two young boys. Charlie received little care and attention, lived in a small fenced backyard and was rarely walked. He barked during the day and especially at night which is an inborn trait of this breed to guard against any kind of predators. After numerous neighbors complained and several police visits, she realized she had to give him away. It was a difficult adjustment for Charlie in the beginning who would lay in the corner of our kitchen with the small stuffed bear she had sent with him and stare up at us for hours. Charlie never seemed to get over being given away. He no doubt had a distant memory of the attention he received as a puppy.

Charlie was given a new life with his newfound companions, Emma, Aspen and Maxwell (all deceased) as well as later, Annie (deceased). He ran on the ocean beaches near Westport, regularly visited off-leash dog parks around Edmonds, Redmond, Seattle and Whidbey Island, experienced overnight visits along a secluded river in the Wenatchee National Forest, hiked in the Olympic National Forest and lived his later years at Precious Life Animal Sanctuary surrounded by forests.

Charlie was a sight to behold. He was enormous with a massive head, body and legs much larger than our full-grown Saint Bernards. He had thick, deep, beautiful white fur accented by buff markings and the deepest perfectly round black eyes that differed from the other Pyrs who all had almond-shaped brown eyes, Charlie weighed 203 lbs. in his prime. No other Pyrenees and few other dogs could come close to matching his size. To look at Charlie was to see a smaller version of an albino black bear found in the rain forests of British Columbia.

He was bear-like in nature, solitary, independent, and driven to explore with an uncanny sense of smell. Charlie was the envy of many dogs at the Edmonds off leash beach who played or retrieved near him as he explored patches of algae next to the shore. Charlie would look for and find filleted-out fish carcasses thrown overboard by fishermen and drag the skeletal remains to shore. He would tear apart and eat the head and tail with his large, curved nails and be heart-broken if his prize was taken away.

Charlie would play with his pack members that continued to grow in numbers but was more content to lay by himself and look out over the water or up in the sky for long periods of time, fascinated by anything that flew. No matter where Charlie was taken, once seen, people would stop in amazement and ask, "what is he?" and want to pet him. On the beach, children were drawn to him as if by an invisible bond. Charlie looked like the live Father Bear to the stuffed bears they had at home that provided so much comfort and security. Many kids would sit with Charlie for long periods of time to talk to him, kiss and hug him and lose themselves in his fur. Many grown-ups were drawn to him in the same way and were touched by his immense size, beauty and gentle nature.

Charlie was not aggressive, never fought and, when approached by threatening dogs, could disarm them and move on. He possessed a rare trait in that he never could harm any living thing, wild or tame. He could easily flush out raccoons and opossums from brush and looked surprised when they scampered away but was never interested in chasing them.

At times in the late evening walks at the Edmonds off leash beach, Charlie would slip away and head for the north rock jetty that protected the south end of the Edmonds boat marina. One evening, he got away, headed to the jetty and I went to find him. I could see him a distance away lying on the beach under a moonlit sky. Lying quietly beside him was a baby harbor seal that he had befriended. Charlie was wagging his tail so proud of his newfound wet spotted companion. As I approached, the baby seal was startled, awkwardly moved over the sand toward the water and disappeared. Charlie went to the water's edge, paced up and down and barked hoping for his friend's return.

On another occasion, I took Charlie and the rest of the pack to Twin Lakes Park off of I-5 near Marysville. While the entire pack moved ahead along the lakeshore, Charlie stopped at a marshy area by the water's edge. He had found a nest of newly-hatched mallards, sniffed each one of them while they emitted high-pitched squeaks and then moved on.

Charlie lacked one social grace he never overcame. Whenever he could escape from his leash, he would enter the homes of total strangers if they happened to leave their front or back doors ajar. He would then sniff around for cat and dog dishes or beg for handouts. Fortunately, while his presence created immediate alarm, it quickly disappeared with his gentle demeanor. However, one incident of an unauthorized entry backfired. On a warm August morning, Charlie and the pack were on a long stretch of beach that ended at the downtown waterfront in Port Angeles. The morning sun was hot and the pack had spent considerable time in and out of the water, rolling in the sand and were covered with algae and kelp. Charlie was way ahead and did not slow down when called. He climbed the steps of a bulkhead in front of the Red Lion Inn and entered their main entrance. Upset and embarrassed, I tried to close the distance between us and minutes went by with no sign of Charlie. Suddenly, Charlie ambled out of the hotel covered with sand and seaweed with several maids shouting and waving towels and dust mops at his heels.

Due to his size, Charlie suffered tears in his cruciate ligaments on both knees and underwent surgery. Afterward, he didn't have the will for long walks and tired easily. He was content to stay in the shade during the day and sleep in the van at night with a few others always hoping for another trip somewhere. If one of the dogs ever had an accident in the van, they would simply move to a clean spot. Charlie, however, would be so upset he would attempt to cover it with blankets until his nose was raw and bleeding.

During 2005, Charlie began to pant excessively which became worse with a definite shortness of breath. We took him to a surgeon who diagnosed his condition as laryngeal paralysis. He said, due to his age and size, to take him home, keep him comfortable and let him die. We took Charlie home heartbroken, tears flowing, trying to imagine the loss and a life without our gentle bear. We decided to take him for a second opinion and found a surgeon who believed he could successfully operate and increase his breathing capacity. Charlie lived through the painful surgery and recovered. He was now able to breathe easier and make his rounds, but sadly he had lost his powerful deep bark. For the next three years, Charlie enjoyed his sedentary life, rarely wanting to come inside. He was happiest outdoors even in the winter facing one snowstorm after another and laying and sleeping in blankets of new fallen snow.

On the morning of September 10, 2008, Charlie laid by the van in the bright morning sun which was unusual and would not raise his head for a dog treat which was even more unusual. He always hid his pain so well that on close inspection his eyes were glassy, unfocused and he couldn't raise his head. We rushed Charlie to the veterinary clinic and he took his last breath in our van in the parking lot.

It was difficult driving home through the tears knowing what lay ahead. I built a casket and we placed Charlie in it with his blanket and toy. We took him up the hill to the sanctuary cemetery overlooking the Olympics and buried him next to his favorite long-time companion, Annie.

Grief can't be measured in time because today it is still difficult to look at his pictures and know our gentle, sensitive bear is gone.





MAXWELL
1999—February 9, 2009



During 1999, Caryl and I flew to New Mexico on vacation to see it for ourselves after reading many colorful brochures. After driving around and staying in Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Taos, we can only say we still feel nothing beats the great Northwest. The highlight of the trip was meeting several wonderful, dedicated individuals involved in animal protection in a state we were told leads the nation in animal cruelty cases.

We stopped at the Santa Fe Humane Society and were impressed by their friendliness and professionalism, as well as the cleanliness of the facility and, most importantly, the care the animals received. We asked if they had any Great Pyrenees and explained we had rescued several through the years from private parties, humane societies and a Kansas puppy mill. They informed us they and other rescue groups occasionally got them in due to the sheep population in the state where they are used for predator control. They further stated as a matter of policy they did not allow out of state adoptions. We told them to please call us before they ever put down a Great Pyrenees as we had excellent references in rescuing this difficult breed and sent them our references upon returning home.

Several months later, we were surprised to learn they had contacted all our references including our veterinarians and had done the most thorough background check of any humane society we had ever encountered. We then received a phone call from them and they explained they had a three or four year old Pyrenees named Maxwell who had been severely neglected and abused. None of their male personnel which included their vets could get near him. Several female staff members were attached to him and didn't want him euthanized. We agreed to take him sight unseen but couldn't drive to New Mexico to pick him up. Due to the August heat and a connecting flight to Seattle, we agreed that he would be flown to Salt Lake City where I would meet him and drive him back.

I drove to Salt Lake City on an agreed upon date and flight only to learn he couldn't be transported until the next day on a 10:00 p.m. evening flight. I arrived at the cargo hold facility which was next to the runways with incredible noise from jets landing and departing. An employee brought the dog carrier out on a pallet and I peeked inside to see a fearful face of white and buff looking straight back at me. I opened the carrier door slowly and grabbed the leash as he bolted out and desperately fought to escape. If the humane society had not put a tight collar on him, he would have been long gone.

I must confess, I was somewhat taken aback by his presence. He was very skinny with his ribs protruding and uncontrollable with a fierce wolf-like muzzle. He was terrified of the noise and immediately jumped into the open side door of my van. I drove to the motel next to the airport where I tried to walk Maxwell on the leash. He didn't try to escape but after an hour of walking he still would not let me near him. I opened the motel door and he quickly entered in front of me. I had previously bought a fully-cooked rotisserie chicken, boned it out and set it next to a full quart of cottage cheese. I moved them as far away from my bed as possible and watched Maxwell out of the corner of my eye. He cautiously approached the meal and greedily consumed it in a matter of minutes.

The next morning, I left early and, after an hour of driving, turned off on a desert road with a road crew a short distance away. Maxwell immediately pulled on the leash, nose to the ground, moving to cover as much ground as possible looking for anything that moved. This was familiar territory to Maxwell who had managed to survive living off the land. He presently weighed 70 lbs. when his normal weight should have been in the range of 125 to 150. As we headed back to the van, the road crew approached in our direction. Maxwell growled menacingly and I knew the bonding had begun.

Every day driving for eight hours Maxwell never once laid down but stood next to me with a worried look. I know he wondered where he was going, what fate lay before him, as he left the sweet smells of the desert air behind him and the only life he knew. Every day he feasted on the same menu of a full chicken and a quart of cottage cheese and left no scraps. We finally drove over the high barren hills outside of Yakima into the valley below and quickly started up Snoqualmie Pass. Maxwell stared out the window seeing for the first time everything covered in trees and fast approaching the largest city he had ever seen. I drove Maxwell to our Edmonds home and introduced him to our three other rescued Great Pyrenees, Emma, Aspen and Charlie. Maxwell began the slow process of adjusting to his new surroundings and overcoming his shyness. He began to spend less time under the kitchen table and

began to follow us around the house and his tail was no longer tucked between his legs. His bark would return later. Maxwell filled out quickly and looked sleek. He never was the biggest nor the strongest compared to the others, but simply born to lead. After several fights, he was seldom challenged and we could never have imagined that this unlikely star would rise and reign as the leader over Emma, Aspen, Charlie, Annie, Sunny, Barkley, Buddy, Harley (Saint Bernard) and Buster (Saint Bernard) for the rest of his life. The same leadership qualities we hold in high esteem in the human species were on full display in Maxwell. Above all, he was loyal, super protective, admired and respected by his pack and his human counterparts and avoided contact with anyone else.

Maxwell separated himself from his pack with his incredible speed and endurance. He was light-footed and when he played he would lower his rump almost to the ground and pivot on either foot, instantly changing direction so no other dog could catch up with him. He also operated on a higher level of consciousness than the others and related to his human family as one of them. Maxwell had keen insight into the personalities and behaviors of Ralph, Caryl and Lisa which made it uncomfortable to quarrel around him or communicate at times because he seemed to understand much of the conversation. Max sensed Lisa was the most vulnerable and, when she was home, he slept downstairs by her bedside. On one incident, Lisa and her boyfriend got out of the car and were standing close together. Max had never seen a male this close to his Lisa and ran toward them biting her boyfriend several times before he could be restrained. Maxwell was incredibly close to Caryl who he knew had a deep caring nature and he could always count on for comfort. During any kind of sickness, whether it be a migraine or chemotherapy, he could be found lying next to her bedside. On hikes or at off-leash dog parks, Max was always vigilant looking back with a worried look as his pack moved ahead of him while he stayed back for Caryl to catch up never letting her out of his sight. Ralph represented freedom and adventure for Max and the pack as they disappeared on hikes into two national forests. Later, the pack would return separately or in pairs to the campsite. Max, however, would never return to the campsite until he located Ralph who was resting down some unmarked trail by the river. Max would arrive with his muzzle pulled back, tail wagging, teeth protruding into a smile, and plant kisses on his face.

Max had an inherent responsibility over his pack which was heightened at busy off-leash dog parks. If a four-legged intruder became too playful or aggressive with one of the pack, he would immediately confront it with a stare down and growl or fight the outsider until he backed away. This protection also carried over to Lisa's little Lhasa Apso, Nutmeg, even though she was not one of his pack.

Countless times on the beach when Maxwell wanted to bring the pack together he would drop down, roll over, with his legs straight up in the air. This was a sign for the entire pack to rush toward him, converge on top of him tails wagging, gently biting him all over uttering bravado growls. He would then roll over, stand up and playtime would be over and the rest would follow him to wherever he was headed.

As the years passed, Maxwell had to have operations on both knees due to cruciate ligament damage. Afterward, he could still outrun every one of the pack but never again could he instantly cut, pivot and change directions as before.

When Maxwell barked, compared to the others, it was a serious alert and all would follow him along the fence lines or pasture in pursuit of real or perceived predators. When he laid down to rest, he could always count on Sunny or Buddy to be at his side as they idolized their leader. There was a wild, untamed side to Maxwell that never changed and was difficult to reconcile with running an animal sanctuary. Buried deep within was a primordial flame to hunt when he no longer needed to that could never be extinguished. Maxwell spent long periods of time digging in sod in pursuit of field mice to eat while pack members looked puzzled and kept their distance. On one occasion, he caught a wild grouse and ate it feathers and all. Sadly, during his last years at the sanctuary, he managed to down two deer and devour parts of them. It was difficult to comprehend why the deer would jump into the fenced dog enclosure given the pack's incessant barking and patrolling it, day and night.

One late afternoon, November 24, 2008, the pack had been fed and preparations were being made to spend Thanksgiving the following day with Caryl and Lisa in Edmonds as Caryl had just gotten out of the hospital after surgery. Maxwell was the only dog allowed to go and the side door of the van was opened for him. He watched but didn't get up eager to go which was highly unusual. He had to be coaxed to get in as he appeared to not be feeling well. Later that evening, Lisa and I decided to take him to the Lynnwood emergency clinic as a precaution. Maxwell walked in, laid down and had to wait for hours before he could be seen. When his turn came, he could not get up and had to be wheeled away on a stretcher to determine the cause of his illness.

Hours later, a veterinarian informed us he was stabilized but the outcome looked grim and it appeared he had vascular cancer. As he was sedated, she asked if we wanted him euthanized. We were in shock, couldn't comprehend the suddenness of it all and asked if we had any alternatives. She said they could keep him overnight, give him a blood transfusion and an ultrasound to determine if it was cancer and if it had spread.

On Thanksgiving morning we went to the emergency center and a vet informed us that Max had several cancerous tumors next to vital organs and one had burst, spilling blood which was the reason he couldn't get up when it was time to see him. She said, if another tumor burst, the symptoms would be identical and he wouldn't be able to rise again but would slowly die. We asked if he would suffer and feel a lot of pain and were told he would weaken, have symptoms similar to anemia and pass away. She further stated, in good conscience, it was too risky to operate and he could very well die at any time before he got back to Sequim.

Maxwell was brought out to the waiting room, wagging his tail and couldn't wait to leave. He jumped in the van and seemed almost normal. We decided to give him a chance and, if he died on the way, at least he would be near our cemetery for burial. After seeing Caryl one more time and tearful goodbyes, Max and I started back to Sequim. I prayed he would live long enough to see his pack who anxiously awaited his return. I stopped halfway at Port Gamble to check on Max. He was alive, although he was not standing in his normal position but lying down. We arrived home to the pack's joyous barking, put up the ramp and Max walked down surrounded by whimpers, wagging tails, licks and curious sniffs as to where he had been. The next day, I built a casket in anticipation of the fateful day we knew was not far off and called a backhoe operator to dig his grave.

Weeks passed, then December, January and Maxwell seemed to be his old self running and leading the pack along the fence lines, excited over one snowfall after another and barking through the night. Some days, Max ate his meal quickly and other days he would skip it which made it difficult to monitor his condition to know when to end his life. We knew full well he would fight to live until his last breath. Max was given all the foods he liked which any pack member would dream to eat. He feasted on liverwurst, cooked chicken, scrambled eggs and plain cheeseburgers as well as his kibble which he conveniently left.

On February 6 and 7, Maxwell began lying by himself under a large cedar tree where he had a good view of the livestock and wandering deer on a far hillside. It was as if he wanted to be alone and knew he couldn't lead anymore. He seemed less interested in his gourmet dinners and it was difficult to determine if he was eating much or if one of his pack had eaten his meal by morning.

On February 8, I decided to give him a bowl of vanilla ice cream which he could never resist. I thought, if he wouldn't eat it, it was time to call the vet. He stared at the bowl for a while and then began to lick it all up. It seemed reassuring that he felt well enough to continue living.

On the afternoon of February 9, Maxwell had moved and was lying closer to the pack on frozen ground. Snow was predicted and I had to go to town to stock up on supplies. On the way back, climbing up to the property, the snow fell heavily. I unloaded bags of grain in the lower barn and drove up to the house. As I walked along the side of the house, I saw Max lying next to the basement door, partially covered by snow. I immediately knew he had died.

A beautiful part of our pack (human and dog) was gone and with him special memories we all shared. Lisa always said Maxwell reminded her of her grandfather who was always there for her to protect and comfort her. Caryl and Max seemed to connect on a spiritual level. He knew her thoughts and was closer to her than some of her human companions. To Ralph, he was a guiding light that always led the way.

Only a few hours of light remained and I put a bed of alfalfa in the casket with a blanket. I used the forks of the tractor to bring it to where Maxwell lay. As the pack watched, I lifted his limp luke-warm body and placed it in the casket and covered it with the blanket. Several of the pack went to where he had died, could smell death and circled around his outline in the snow.

Maxwell was taken up the hill to the sanctuary cemetery. By now, the snow was falling horizontally in blizzard conditions and sticking to whatever stopped it. It began piling up on the sides of the pack members as they watched the lid being nailed to the casket, lowered into the ground and covered with dirt and snow. Maxwell was now warm and safe from the storm and laid to rest next to his lifelong companions, Charlie and Annie. That evening the pack finished the last of Max's special food and his favorite Trader Joe's treats.

The strength and unity of the pack died with Maxwell and will remain splintered as he was one of a kind and impossible to replace. We can only look back to a magical time while he was alive. So many memories are buried with him. Tears still flow at inappropriate times, driving, entering stores and private moments as the essence of Maxwell will never fade.

It is now the middle of March and deer are visible feeding on new grass above patches of snow. Crocus, daffodils and tulips have pushed through frozen ground and new life is budding everywhere. The chorus sounds of frogs have begun. New rescues will occur and they will be reborn and have a glorious new life at Precious Life Animal Sanctuary, but never, never will there be another Maxwell.



* *"You think those dogs will not be in heaven! I tell you they will be there long before any of us."* *
* *Robert Louis Stevenson, 1850-1894* *



Martini and Kaliska



Lucky



Lisa and Dodge

DONATIONS AND FEED SUPPLIES CRITICALLY NEEDED!

We appreciate each and everyone of you who contributes during this financial crisis brought on by humans resulting in increased neglect for many animals. In order to continue our rescue work, we survive solely on donations and volunteer help. Believe me, it is not getting any easier. Thank You!



Martini, Sparky and Dodge



Lucky and Buddy



Rocky and Sally

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