

A VERY SPECIAL TRIBUTE

From out of the wild and into our hearts – Tenino Montana

Joe Engel, Animal Care Specialist

On Tuesday, May 1, 2001, Wolf Haven International lost one of its most unique and popular residents. After a long battle with sinus cancer, a decision was made to euthanize Tenino Montana.

We first knew her as wolf #10. A gangly wary-eyed yearling, huddled fearfully in the back of her transport kennel. Fresh from the wild, she had no way of comprehending any of this – from the wrongness of the livestock she had preyed on, to the sharpness of the dart that brought her down, and to the confines of our sanctuary. It was a lot to ask a young wolf to take in. Especially one who'd been through as much as she had.

Tenino was one of six pups born in the Ninemile Valley, near Missoula, Montana, in April 1990. Her mother and father were pioneers – fundamental wolves in Montana wolf recovery. Her's was the first known pack to have a den in this area in over 60 years. In spite of this status, by the time Tenino was six months old, her parents would both be dead. Her mother was lost to a poacher's bullet and her father killed by a car. She and her brothers and sisters had to learn to fend for themselves. Unschooled in hunting for herself, she made a grave mistake. Instead of wild game, she killed livestock.

While most wild, healthy wolves avoid contact with humans and livestock, Tenino never learned to hunt proper prey. For many wolves this would result in a quick death sentence, but for wolf #10 fate was kinder. Biologists following her progress sought sanctuary for her. In June 1991 she came to live at Wolf Haven International. Though it is unwise and unfair to expect wild animals to live in



This recent photograph of Tenino Montana at Wolf Haven, taken only two months before her euthanization, can only hint toward the dignity contained within.
Photo by Julie Palmquist

captivity, her youth made everyone hopeful that she could adjust to living within Wolf

Haven's boundaries. And, quite frankly, she had run out of options.



This June 19, 1991, article from the Spokesman-Review, tells the sad saga of Tenino's family including two brothers who were illegally killed.

She was originally paired with Joe Montana. Like her, he had been born in the wild, though he was stolen from his den by a hybrid breeder long before he was a yearling. The adjustment period, for both wolves, was

a long and arduous one. As to be expected, Tenino behaved quite differently compared with wolves that have been raised in captivity. Her first couple of months saw more than a few attempts at escape, and for a time it was feared captivity was too much for her. Unsure of people and unaccustomed to living in an enclosure, Tenino wanted little to do with the animal care staff at first. She faded into the trees whenever people approached, watching cautiously from behind the underbrush. As time went by,



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24 May 91

Honorable Jack -

The wolf is a 13 month old black (one side) female. It is not pregnant and has had its shots. She weighed 70 lbs when we moved her to Glacier National Park last month. She was involved in killing livestock, in the area N. of Missoula and now is apparently involved in killing a couple of goats along the East front. She is one of the famous spotted pups that was written up in the West St Journal. We will have to find a place for her or destroy her. We can hold her a couple of weeks while we look for a place to keep her. Appreciate any help you could offer.

Thanks,

Ed Bangs

The original letter of inquiry regarding Tenino Montana's placement written by Ed Bangs, Wolf Recovery Coordinator for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service


little by little, the animal care staff started seeing more of her - at times in a moment's hesitation before she disappeared into the shadows, and at others as a face sticking out of the bushes. Tenino, slowly but surely, began to interact with her new surroundings.

From the beginning, it was clear that she had never lost her wild instincts (the many raven's that inhabit the sanctuary can attest to this). Tenino's ability to dispatch ravens (who steal the wolves' meat) merited respect from her captive-raised neighbors. Even the manner in which she moved distinguished her from the other wolves in the sanctuary. The fluidity in her gait and graceful athleticism personified her wild origins.

As the years passed, Tenino grew more comfortable here with us. Known for being a serious creature, she began to lighten up, play-bowing at the staff she recognized and excited over what the morning's treat might be. She would be, at times, almost goofy. This playful demeanor was a far cry from the frightened yearling we had first encountered. Whether the pair were running and playing, or simply lying beside one another in the grass, it was obvious that her affection for Joe ran deep. In time the pair developed a strong bond.

Tenino outlived Joe and was eventually introduced to her second companion, Ramses. Ramses, like Tenino, had survived the loss of a mate. Whether it was this

common bond, or just luck, the pair formed a special relationship.

Earlier this year Tenino began showing signs of illness. A prolonged bout with sinus congestion and listless behavior hinted at a more serious prognosis. By May 1, 2001, the time had come to bring an end to her suffering. Cancer had gotten the best of her. Tenino passed away peacefully at the age of ten years. For the people that knew her, directly or indirectly, she will be sorely missed. 

If you would like to purchase an 8x10 signed special edition color photograph of Tenino Montana (seen on the previous page) for \$15, please call (360) 264 4695 or (800) 448-9653 (cost includes shipping).

