



Photo by Julie Palmquist

A tribute to Little John

Saying good-bye to Wolf Haven's self-appointed guardian

Linda Lewis, Wolf Haven Volunteer

It is with a very heavy heart that I must inform you that "Little John" has passed away. As you may know, Little John was quite old, and recently had been having some health challenges. Little John was euthanized on March 8, 2004 at the age of 15 years.

My friend Little John was majestic – intelligent, playful, tolerant and kind. He was a strikingly beautiful wolf with a gorgeous coat of various shades of gray, white, brown and tan with the most intense and expressive golden eyes.

I first met him and his sisters, Kiowa, Cris and Morning Star, when they were six years old. Wolf Haven staff and volunteers lovingly refer to them as the "Oops Litter" because they were born at Wolf Haven in 1988 to Noah and Princess Lilypad. Wolf Haven tries very hard not to have puppies, as they would be forced to stay within fences all of their lives, but Noah and Lilypad managed to get around all the precautions taken at that time and produced four "surprise" pups. They were so incredible, and each had their own special personality. Little John resembled his handsome father, but had his mother's loving yet dominant alpha nature.

Little John lived with his sister, Kiowa, all of his life, and they were the very best of friends. It was such a treat to watch them play in the summers. They would race each other around the perimeter of their enclosure – a sight to take your breath away – and when they came to their big galvanized tub of water, they would take turns landing in it with their front feet, splashing and spraying until the water was nearly gone. Then, they would take off again in a happy game of



Above left: Wolf Haven office manager, Kari Taylor, begins Little John's memorial ceremony by smudging his burial site with smoke from a sage wand. Above: Wolf Haven file photo of Little John.

tag. Pretty soon they would be looking at you as if saying, "Hey! We need more water over here!" and they would get their tub filled again. Little John was a loving companion to Kiowa and I know she will really miss his presence.

I also remember when a young man who helped raise the "Oops Litter" came to visit. It had been over four years since they had seen each other, but Little John recognized him from the moment he walked in the sanctuary gate. I was leading a tour at the time, and we were approaching Little John and Kiowa's enclosure. I was astonished to see Little John leaping, flat-footed, almost to the top of the fence in his excitement at seeing his old friend. I had never known a wolf could jump so high! It was an amazing sight – pure happiness.

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I thank Little John for his strength, joy of living, inquisitiveness and patience. He was a very special soul and a wonderful teacher. Though he will be sadly missed, I know he will now be running free and happy with his sister Morning Star and saving a place in the pack for his sisters Kiowa and Cris. Sometimes "mistakes" are special blessings in disguise.

