



A TRIBUTE TO KATHLEEN

BOB FRASIEUR, VOLUNTEER

Kathleen died of old age on June 24, 1997, at the grand old age of 16. She had outlived three companions and begun showing her years several months after her last one, Wakan, died. It is also possible that she had a brain tumor, which could have affected her behavior. During the winter of 1996-97 she had had a series of seizures, which were consistent with such a diagnosis. Unfortunately, there is no way to treat brain tumors in wolves, especially one as old as Kathleen. Earlier in the month, she began spending most of her time asleep at the back of her enclosure, and during her last week refused all food. She died peacefully in her sleep sometime during the night.

Some Native Americans call the wolf "teacher," and certainly dear, beautiful Kathleen was a tribute to such a proud designation. Those eyes, with their flecks of gold, were always patient, forgiving of those humans who had wiped out her fellow buffalo wolves. Her stocky build and wide muzzle were reminders of an era when her ancestors freely roamed the Great Plains, helping to keep the buffalo herds strong and adding their haunting howls to the sounds carried far and wide by the perpetual plains winds.

Kathy was a beautiful cream-colored wolf who taught us grace and sensitivity when Colorado died before her. Her mourning howl was at once soulful and chilling. Indeed, did we need any further demonstration of the depth and breadth of her pain and sorrow!

Kathy taught me about the stunning beauty and incredible elegance of wolves. When my personal life had turmoil, this delightful lady would look at me with those eyes and quietly remind me that things we perceive as "bad" do pass. Unfortunately, she was also one to remind me that the "good" things pass as well.

In her final weeks, Kathy said good-bye in her own way. As if to tell me that soon I would no longer see her face peering through the brush or watch her tail wag, she stopped coming to the front of her enclosure when I brought a tour to visit her. If she did venture out, it was only briefly. She preferred the solitude of her deck enclosure as she was preparing for her next journey.

And so, I must say good-bye to my cherished Kathleen. I still carry her picture with me and still hear her sweet voice in the breeze. No tour of the sanctuary brings the joy it once did, but I am mindful of her lessons in patience and her teachings of acceptance of those things in our world over which we have no control. May her beautiful soul know joy and peace. Farewell my precious.