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FRIENDSHIP



The two golden retrievers trudged side by side, slowly, wearily along the shoulder of the heavily trafficked highway. They were panting heavily from extreme fatigue. Their fur was tangled and encrusted with mud. One limped very badly. They were in the middle of a life crisis. But they were confronting it together! Their behavior, very simply but eloquently, epitomized the meaning of friendship.

Aristotle has said a friend is "A single soul in two bodies"

Best friends come in different sizes, shapes, genders, ethnicities – even species. But one thing is common to all – the individuals involved have each other's back. Their focus is on the greater good of the other party.

I've had human friends. But one of my most cherished best friends was a dog named Jimmy.

Jimmy and I came together, when he first appeared on my doorstep one morning begging for food. I have no idea what power inexplicably led this big, black Labrador with an alpha male personality to me! But from the very beginning, we bonded in a very special way. It was as if we had a karmic, past life connection. Perhaps it was his mission in this life to teach me the essence of friendship – mutual trust, loyalty and support.

When Jimmy was with me, I knew no fear. I trusted him with my life! Memories of his loyalty and protectiveness toward me, are like precious jewels, which will warm my heart and nurture my soul for the rest of my life. Let me share a couple with you.

About a month after he entered my life, we were walking in a deserted park in the early hours of an October morning. While I was standing there waiting for Jimmy to collect the messages left in the grass and leaves by his canine and feline associates, someone knocked me to the ground. While I lay there dazed, Jimmy quite literally leaped into action. He grabbed the miscreant by the butt, and detained her, until I ordered him to let go. It turned out that, my "attacker" was just a woman jogging around the park. Neither of us had seen each other in the pitch blackness of the 5AM morning. But, in an instant, Jimmy decisively dealt with what he perceived as a threat to me! While the jogger's dog, also a black lab, did nothing to intervene on her owner's behalf, Jimmy was loyal and protective!

During a visit from a man that neither of us had previously met. My caller brought up an issue that required my going upstairs for some documents. I quickly jumped up from the couch and started climbing the stairs. Suddenly, I heard a scream. I thought to myself, "Oh my God, Jimmy has attacked my visitor"! I spun around on the stairs. Jimmy was at my heels. When I returned to the living room, my guest explained that as soon as I had reached the stairs, Jimmy

shot across the living room like a black, ballistic missile. Then, like an Olympic gold medalist, he vaulted over my guest's arm, and the carafe he was holding as he poured himself some tea – disturbing neither the man's arm, the carafe or the tea! Such was Jimmy's determination to be at my side.

You might say Jimmy had a flair for the spectacular!

As he aged, and physically deteriorated, it was my turn to support him in the unquestioning way he had taken care of me over the years. Some very basic instinct guided me in the care he needed and deserved – as my best friend! To me, the time, costs, creative measures I subsequently undertook to accommodate Jimmy's disabilities were inconsequential. Trips to the CSU Veterinary Hospital in Fort Collins, and to a veterinarian in the mountains who practiced alternative veterinary medicine were now just routine excursions. I had to maintain Jimmy's quality of life for as long as possible!

Like the two golden retrievers, Jimmy and I trudged together along life's sometimes rough road. For 14 years, we were at each other's side – supporting each other, trusting each other, caring for each other. We parted when Jimmy signaled his mission in this life, to guide me through the profound experience of friendship, was accomplished! It was time to say good-bye!!