

てしまおうというものではなかった。ソントッグのような大きな犬は世話をするのが難しいと言われたけれど。たくさんの理由の中でそれこそがきっと、ソントッグがあなたの方の反応に感謝したもっとも大きな理由だと思う。私はそうだった。

去年の夏の始めにソントッグが衰えを見せ始めたとき、私はソントッグを最後のドライブに連れていこうと思いたった。ソントッグはドライブが大好きだったから。

地図を見て、アラスカのブルードー湾への道のりが一番長いものと分かると、私たちは旅に出た。

途中はずっとキャンプをしながら進んだ。最北の千マイルは埃っぽい砂利道で見事な景色とパイプラインとに沿って進むのだった。これは私たちにとって信じられないほどすばらしい旅だった。しかし、



この12,500マイル、42日間の旅の途中からソントッグはついに深刻な衰えの兆候を示し始めた。

このアラスカ探検の後、ソントッグは前足に関節炎を起こした。幸いにも関節炎の進行は遅かったが、最近になって急速に進み、4日の間にソントッグは日々を楽しむ能力を失い、苦しむようになった。彼が氣力を失ったのはこれがはじめてであった。

3年前、私は誓ったのだ。いっしょにゴールを越えるまではソントッグを遊ばせはしないと。

私はこの誓いを守ってきた。

安楽死を頼んだとき私はランドローバーの後部座席でソントッグを腕に抱いていた。ソントッグはもうすぐ14歳だった。ソントッグが迎えた最期はこれ以上望みようのない完璧で人道的なものだった。これ以上完璧な犬もまた、望みようもなかった。

だから、ソントッグを見かけたすべての人、そして私にソントッグのことで話しかけてくれたすべての人に感謝を捧げたい。たぶんあなたは気づいていないだろうが、私がこの3年間でソントッグとともに過ごすことが出来たのはあなたたちのおかげだ。ソントッグもきっと皆さんに感謝しているだろう。

## Ed Mulrenin *Close to Home, Washington Post*

But if you said, "Ah, poor dog," you were wrong. The truth was Sonntag led an active life.

Some people asked if Sonntag would ever walk again. I always answered, "He thinks he's walking now."

If you were the couple who turned me into the police, thinking that I had Sonntag in some kind of punishment device, I forgive you.

Whatever you did, said or asked, every gesture and comment you made helped motivate me to keep the vow I made to Sonntag shortly after the accident in February 1998 left him paralysed in his rear legs. That vow was not to put him down, just because he was big and, therefore, difficult to manage. For that reason, among others, I am sure he would have appreciated your gestures; I did.

When Sonntag started to slow down early last summer, I decided to take him on one last ride, his favourite treat. I looked at a map, saw that the longest road was to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, so off we went.

We camped all along the way. The northernmost thousand miles were on dirt and gravel roads flanked by awesome

beauty and, more often than not, the pipeline. It was an incredible journey for both of us. But somewhere along those 12,500 miles and 42 days, Sonntag finally, after 13 years, showed serious signs of slowing down.

After his Alaskan expedition, Sonntag developed arthritis in his front legs. Fortunately it was slow to take its toll until recently when, within four days, he lost his ability to enjoy a pleasant life and began to suffer. His spirit, for the first time ever, dropped.

Three years ago I vowed not to let Sonntag go until we crossed the finish line. I had kept my vow. I cradled him in my arms in the back of my Land Rover as he was put down. Sonntag was almost 14. I could not have asked for a more perfect and humane ending than the one he had. I could not have asked for a more perfect dog.

So to all those people who saw Sonntag and spoke to me about him, thank you. You may not have realized it, but you had a role in keeping my dog with me for the last three years.

Sonntag surely thanks you too.

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