

For the many years I worked at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center where pet visitation was prohibited. I begged, pleaded, and cajoled to have the rules changed, but always got back the same answer – NO! So, I resorted to sneaking in the tiny furry ones for our patients who were never coming out. At least they, and their beloved pets, could see each other one last time.

One morning, the Head Nurse on one of the units paged me to let me know that the parents of a 28 year old man were insistent that they HAD to bring his 14 year old Yorkshire Terrier to visit him, as he was dying. She wanted to warn me that they might complain about her to me, because the parents did not seem to accept the nurse's explanation of the rules.

The parents did indeed come to my office. They were not angry. Their grief had taken them past that. They were at the point of accepting what they could see so clearly was happening, although they were deeply sad. They explained that their son and his dog had been inseparable since he was 14 years old and they brought her home as a puppy. The dog was back at the motel, where they had been living for the past two months while their only child was receiving experimental treatment for stage 4 Lymphoma. The dog was grieving as deeply as they were, and was not in good health herself. They didn't raise voices, or threaten. They stated their case with their hearts, which were breaking. Before they finished, I asked them how big she was, and if she was noisy. I found out she weighed four pounds and never barked.

We plotted a strategy, and before long, Dad had returned to the motel and brought the dog to me outside the hospital. I explained to the little dog that she would need to hide under my jacket and be very quiet. She looked up at me with big brown eyes that blinked with great wisdom and understanding. Tucked away from sight, we hurried through the halls and up the elevators to the young man's room. I instructed the parents to stand with their backs to the door of the room, blocking the natural view of those entering. The patient was very, very weak. His bed elevated his upper body at 45 degrees. IV tubes and an infusion pump dominated his left arm. When we entered the room I placed the Yorkie on the bed on his left side. Her whole body trembled with happiness and she made tiny cries of joy as she quickly moved up to his neck and buried her nose under his chin. Her little tail was wagging so hard. Then, this young man, who had been semi-comatose for days, very, very slowly and laboriously, lifted his right arm and moved it painfully across his chest to rest on his dog, as he just as slowly turned his head to her. A tear trickled down his cheek. My composure was gone.

It is a scene I will never forget. The sight of absolute love, reunited. There was nothing else in the world that mattered to them, or frankly, to me, at that moment. The expression on his face, along with his parents, and that amazing little dog, are forever burned into my heart. Before I left I told them to call me immediately if anyone challenged them. Moreover, I'd take the dog back out to the car myself when they left. I dropped by to visit the nurse and reminded her of a few things she "owed me" and told her I was cashing in. Then I paged the physician in charge, who also owed me some "favours," and made certain he was aware and free of blame.

The patient rallied the next day, after having spent several hours with his best friend the day before. He and his parents were able to talk for the first time in days. The dog rallied, too. They said it was the first she'd eaten in 3 days. When I visited again, the young man was alert, and the dog was sleeping peacefully, curled between his shoulder and chin. There was a peace in that room that had not been there before.

The next day, in the wee hours of the morning before the sun rose, the young man breathed his last breath. When his parents left, they hugged me until I was certain my ribs would break, and we all cried together. They told me that for as long as they lived I would be in their prayers. Those couple of days were the best hours they had with him in weeks. They had said their goodbyes. Later, I learned that little Yorkie, too, died on that very same day. Like her beloved master, she slipped away. I know they went together.

Several days later my boss called and asked me about something he needed and before he hung up he said, "Leslie, I know about the dog." "What dog?" I replied. "Leslie, I know about the dogs. Could you just let me know ahead of time when you do these things, so that I'll be expecting the calls, OK?" With a huge smile on my face, I said, "I can do that!" It was as much a sanction as I'd ever get, and I was grateful for it.

Leslie retired from the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas in 1999 where she was the founding Director of Patient Advocacy. She spends her time assisting others with nutritional approaches to kidney diseases in dogs and teaching animal communication classes. Her love of animals led to the development of a unique diet that saved the lives of her own dogs, and which continues to help countless others.

犬の頭部 30 個が東京拘置所外堀に ——食肉業者が投棄を認める

2005年12月17日

〔東京＝共同通信〕中国から犬肉を輸入した東京の業者が拘置所外の水路に犬の頭部約30個を投棄していたことを警察は16日に明らかにした。

82歳の男性は「食用に輸入した犬の頭部を始末に困って捨てた」と取材陣に述べている。警視庁亀有署は廃棄物処理法違反容疑で男性から事情を聴く方針。

男性は、切断された犬の頭部と胴体を中国から輸入したが、胴体は全部売れた。10月下旬頃に、売れ残った頭部を「コイの餌になると思って」堀に捨てたとのこと。

警察によると、捨てられた頭部のほとんどは腐敗して白骨化している。見つけたのは通行人の女性で、16日午後1時15分頃に頭部を発見し、警察に届けた。

Dog meat importer admits dumping 30 dog heads in moat outside detention house

(Kyodo News) Saturday, December 17, 2005

TOKYO - A Tokyo meat seller who imported dog meats from China dumped 30 dog heads in an outer moat of the Tokyo Detention House, the police said Friday.

The 82-year-old man told reporters, "I dumped the heads of dogs that I imported for food because I had a problem disposing of them."

Officials from the Metropolitan Police Department said they will question the man on suspicion of violating the waste disposal law.

The man said he imported the severed heads and bodies of dogs from China and sold all body meat. The heads were left unsold. He said he dumped them into the moat around late October, thinking "it will be food for carp in the moat."

Most of the heads have decomposed to the skull, according to police.

A woman pedestrian spotted the heads at around 1:15 p.m. and reported to police.