

Future Irregular fan!



Little guy

Daniel Sweetser of Phillips holds his son, Edward Joseph Sweetser, at the Strong school craft fair. Edward was born prematurely and only recently left the hospital. "He fit in my hand when he was born," said Sweetser, who contentedly held the child for the entire four-hour-long event. (Steve Mitman photo)

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shy, somewhat quiet creatures, giving and receiving affection without fuss and without fanfare. Just the two of them —one offering caresses and soothing words, the other offering devotion and trust.

She was solitary. She was timid and withdrawn. But she made an impression on this family, nonetheless.

Cancer isn't selective. Its victims come in all shapes and sizes, all breeds, and from all walks of life. It invades the good and the bad, cuts short the lives of the gregarious and the introverted. Cancer chose Priscilla, and I had to let her go.

For those who have had to make the decision to peacefully end a pet's life —to end its suffering and allow it the same dignity in death as it tried to maintain in life—the final act is heart-rending. Yes, it is quick. It is merciful and pain-free. Pain-free for the pet, but not for the pet owner. Not for the family that has loved that grinning dog or that purring cat, that nibbling goat or that nickering pony. Oh, no. Not pain-free.

I chose to hold Priscilla in my arms as the vet administered the euthanasia. I caressed her and held my forehead to hers. I looked through my tears into those soft brown eyes, those eyes that had always held a bit of reserve, but incredible trust at the same time. I whispered and I crooned. I apologized for every wrong the world had ever done her. And I told that little, sick and quiet pup that she was going to be okay. That there were great things in store for her. That she was going to go cuddle with Papa. She was going to go sit on Papa's lap. For as long as she wanted, this time. Her own bliss. Her own bit of personal heaven.

We are heart-broken. We've been through this before, and we know that time will help to make the hurt diminish. But tonight, that truth doesn't comfort us. We've lost our dog. Our pet. Our friend. A member of our family. And the rest of us need each other tonight in a way that we usually don't.

For, Priscilla is gone. I'm going to go cuddle with Papa, and maybe sit on his lap. That little dog taught this grown woman something important. I will remember it. And I will remember her.

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