

It seems fitting that another Candlelight Vigil will be occurring on Saturday, August 21. Dan Knapp always spoke eloquently and meaningfully at these solemn occasions, paying tribute to the animal souls who left us for a better place than we were able to provide for them on this plain.

I had picked him up and then taken him back home after the 2001 Candlelight Vigil, since his doctor had ordered him not to drive. I had gone several blocks away from his home after dropping him off and stopped at a stop sign. A frightened young Golden Retriever scratched at the driver's side door and stuck his head in the window.

I found an id tag on his collar and walked him with me to a pay phone -- of course, there was no cell service in the area. I finally got through to an owner, who said she couldn't possibly drive up to meet me and pick up her dog, who apparently got out frequently. My car was too packed to fit in a forlorn Retriever.

With the last of my change I called Dan. He was the only one home, so no one would be able to drive him down to pick up the dog. He said, "Don't worry. For this I'll drive myself." After a long, exhausting day and evening, he got in his car, against doctor's orders, and together we loaded the dog into his car and drove to the address where the Golden lived.

He spoke softly, gently and kindly to the woman about the danger her dog was in when he escaped and convinced her to call a rescue group and get the dog into a safe environment. That night, and always, Dan Knapp was the epitome of what we should all strive to be as rescuers, loving and compassionate to the animals and to the misguided humans who often fail miserably at being good stewards to them.

He remained faithful and committed long after most of us would have walked away in disgust, always ready to be forgiving and caring, even to those who treated him most shabbily. He was the living embodiment of the Dog Owner's Prayer, "Lord, may I always be the person my dog thinks I am."

And, to complete the package, he was a Pug worshipper. Several weeks ago we spoke about him adopting another Pug. I thought

there was time to fly back to see him with a Pug in tow. "An Angel Flight," Dan said it would be. Dan took his own "Angel Flight" before I got to deliver that Pug to him and we're all the poorer for his passing.

Dan is at the Bridge now. . .

The young pug and the older dog lay on shaded sweet grass watching the reunions. Sometimes a man, sometimes a woman, sometimes a whole family, would approach the Rainbow Bridge, be greeted by their loving animal companions and cross the Bridge together.

The young pup playfully nipped at the older one. "Look! Something wonderful is happening!" The older dog stood up and barked, "Quickly. Get over to the path." "But that's not my guardian," whined the young pup, but he did as he was told. Thousands of animals surged forward as a figure in white walked on the path toward the Bridge. As the glowing figure passed each animal, that animal bowed his or her head in love and respect.

The figure finally approached the Bridge, and was met by a menagerie of joyous animals. Together, all the animals and the glowing figure walked over the Bridge and disappeared. The young pup was still in awe, "Was that an angel?" He whispered. "No, son," the older dog replied. "That was more than an angel. That was Dan Knapp. He saved many animals with his love."