

TRIBUTE TO NALA

The bond between humans and animals is a powerful thing. It has been a month since I had to say good-bye to my best friend and life companion, a yellow Labrador named Nala. She came into my life as a little, light-colored puppy, highly bred from a pure English line. She was the first dog I ever bought. In only three days she was housebroken; and, to the day she died, Nala never destroyed anything in the house.

When Nala was seven months old, she was diagnosed with a rare condition called OCD. This insidious disease causes all major joints to start peeling off the cartilage, causing severe pain and deformities of the joints. I made up my mind that I would help her any way I could and dedicated myself to making her life as enjoyable as possible. She seemed to intuit what was in my heart and became the best dog anyone could wish for. We were together 24/7 and cherished each other's company.

My wife used to call Nala my first wife because Nala would force her way to be the first to welcome me home. She was always happy to see me—even when I had a syringe in my hand. After the divorce, Nala came to live with me. Happily we were never apart. Nala would come to work with me, go shopping with me and guard my bedroom at night.

Nala's devotion to me was unspoken and never wavered. The privilege of sharing life with Nala reminded me of the many reasons I wanted to be a veterinarian in the center of my soul. Knowing that her time was getting shorter as her condition worsened made me realize how much I loved my steadfast companion and best friend. My dear Nala, who suffered with illness throughout her life, taught me a very powerful lesson of unconditional love. Knowing Nala has left me a better man, a better veterinarian and a humble lover of all pets.