

Dog Pro Talks About “the Countdown” of Pet Ownership

An interview with Will Pflaum, owner of DBA Glencadia Dog Camp, Glencadia Corporation on the death of a dog

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Will Pflaum has been working with dogs since 2005 when he launched [Glencadia](#) Dog Camp in Columbia County, NY, providing [boarding](#) and overnight care in the country for New York City dogs. After more than 50,000 individual boarding stays at his facility, having hosted over 5000 individual dogs in the years, he has a different perspective on what Louis C.K. called the “countdown to sorrow” of owning a dog.



Here is Gustav on his last assignment.

The Best Dog

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Will Pflaum, founder of Glencadia

“All the original dogs I boarded here are gone,” Will said. “I am sure that this has somehow steadied me to the loss of an animal friend, but I’m not sure how much. When I find an old photo of the original cohort, it’s touching. ” The reason we can honestly say that each dog was “the best” to each owner without any contradiction is that the dog-human relationship is beyond language. A truism or a felt reality - that multiple “bests” make sense - only appears deceptive if you reason with the categories of language. Dogs don’t have language, so they have different truths. So, it’s true, the best dog. The essential non-linguistic character of the dog-human relationship is one of the

things we like about these relationships. No real sense of past or future, no real categories of

language, just being.

This fact is particularly pertinent when a dog dies. "Here at Glencadia, in fact, we just lost an old friend," Will says. Here is Will's statement about his own dog, [Gustav](#).

Gustav

This month, my dog Gustav, died at 16 years of age. Gustav was about the same age as my daughter, both born in 2008. Here they are as youngsters at Glencadia. When he was in his prime he defended the house and the whole dog camp from coyotes. I have since



Here is Gustav as a youngster

tried to get a new dog to do this job - wake up in the middle of the night and run up and down the driveway raising as much hell as possible to wake up all the visitor dogs. So far, no one has stepped up. Rather, Gustav's replacements have chosen to hide under the bed at the sound of a pack of coyotes far away in the woods. Here is Gustav showing his excellent reasoning skills to open a latch.

In 2018 (I think), he swam across the Hudson River. He was such a good watchdog: he never wandered away from the house. He knew who was supposed to come by and who was not... he was so smart, that we left him sitting on the porch to keep an eye on the house when we went to a party on July 3. While he was very reliable and stable, he did not like thunder or fireworks. Given that this was only a day before July 4, someone in the village must have let some firecrackers go in the cornfield across from the house.

Gustav, being a sensible dog, ran to my mother's house at the end of the driveway and knocked on the door. Unfortunately, my father-in-law, then 84, had dementia and didn't open the door. What happened between about 8 PM when Gustav knocked on the door on July 3 and when we got home at 11 PM we can never know. Somehow, and this must involve Gustav climbing into someone's car, Gustav traveled at least four miles to the Hudson River, then swam across the river and was found in the park in Coxsackie on the morning of July 4. The family that found Gustav took him home and posted on Facebook. My wife saw the announcement and picked him up from their house where we were relaxing on the sofa.

Here (photo) is Gustav on his last assignment, caring for an orphaned lamb. No longer very mobile, the lamb, saw with him every day on the porch. The end came on a fine day in May, as Gustav died just a few weeks after I write this here at Glencadia Dog Camp. Gustav ate, walked around, and took care of his lamb. Although he sometimes could not stand up, that day he

managed to walk quite a bit. Finally, he dropped down and simply expired.

A Month Every Day

Working here at Glencadia with dogs staying overnight, I have honestly wondered about people working in hotels. Does the staff at a hotel ever wonder why the guest in 204 didn't check out, knock on the door, then find that the guest is dead in the bed? It must happen from time to time. Humans can live to 100. The average age at death for a dog is 12. If we here at Glencadia average about 60 dogs, that is two months of dog life every day. Every six days is a year and every 72 days, or about two and a half months, is a lifetime of dog life. You could posit that we would find a dog dying here 5 or 6 times a year. However, dying at camp is vastly less likely than simple counting might suggest. Statistically, the life expectancy of a dog is vastly longer here than away from the dog camp, probably because people do not send sick or dying dogs to a kennel.

In fact, a dog guest dying here is extremely rare, but it has happened. It's terrible. Dog death is something that everyone who has a dog deals with. Working here at Glencadia, we obviously would see this more often.

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