



Rest In Peace

Akicita

(ah-key-ché-ta)

Spring 1992—Winter 2005

Loving Four-Legged Companion to
Celebrant Stacy Willhoit and Family

*Dear old dog--a little furry face
I hold you in a last embrace.
You, who never heard of sin---
Surely God will let you in?
And when I kneel outside the Gate
A penitent, awaiting fate,
God may shake his head and sigh
Then, maybe, he'll catch your eye--
One melting glance, one plea from you
And God will laugh, and let me through.*

~Yvonne Lynton

We gather together to pay tribute to a loving and faithful four-legged friend. She was, and will always remain, the light of my life. My constant and mystical companion, my spiritual guide, and a beacon of hope and love no matter what my situation in life. As we lay this beautiful dog to rest, I would like to share with you some words from Jean Houston that certainly describe the relationship we shared:

“With dogs, my experience is that words and theologies are not that necessary. Because with them you are in the presence, you can pat and caress the most holy. You can run and play and dance with spiritual company. And you can also enter into profound silence and they are there with you. They are there as copartner and witness and deep friend of our spiritual journey. That's why since ancient times they've always been the guides through our darkness, guides to our greater journey.”

Akicita was born into a hateful home. She was beaten and left to die by a despicable human being who had no understanding of the blessed power of the four-legged race. I was privileged to rescue her from certain death from fear and starvation, huddled in the vacant home of her birth. But what I did not know at the time, when she jumped frightened and shivering into my waiting arms was that she was sent to rescue *me*. Being blessed with her presence in my life saved me from the loneliness and heartsickness of traveling life's pathways alone.

It was not long after coming to know her that she earned her name: Akicita. Akicita is the Lakota word for a male warrior. Although others have at times found it strange that this small, furry, mixed-breed female chow, with short legs and little mane, would carry such a name. She and I know that she earned her name every day of her life. Because of the abuse she suffered, she was always timid and frightened around men—she rarely would let a man pet her or even reach for her—but the bond she shared with me was absolute and unquestioning. Although she was too timid to defend *herself* from harm she never wavered from being *my* defender. She never backed down when she thought I was in danger, and was always on the lookout for any potential harm that could come my way. This is the way of the warrior...to face down your inner fears through unconditional love and devotion. In the Lakota way, a warrior's life is defined by four qualities: bravery, fortitude, generosity, and wisdom. Akicita exemplified each of these qualities throughout her long life.

Throughout my college experience, Akicita was there with me. Always excited to see me come home and happy to be with me no matter what I was doing or where I was going. She loved the outdoors, especially our daily runs. She was always much faster than I, but would patiently curb her pace just so that we could be together. She loved chasing smaller animals, especially squirrels; thankfully she never caught any, but she was proud to be quite the hunter!

When Mark and I began dating, she was weary of him, like all men she met. But she graciously accepted his presence in my life because she could sense that there was

something special between us that even in all her glory as my four-legged friend she could not offer me. She was never too happy to have Mark in her life, or in mine, but the longer she knew him the more kindred they became and their relationship was one of mutual respect and understanding.

Akicita has always been a part of our family and will forever be missed. She is big sister to her wolf stepbrother, Wanagi Wasté, and her stepsister Peggy, both of whom she helped us to raise with love. She likely would not claim the cats as her family members (afterall, they are quite similar to squirrels with their bushy tails and annoying tree climbing habits!), but she was never cruel to any of them and allowed them to peacefully co-habitate in the home we all shared.

The last two years have been a struggle for her as she aged beyond what her little body had the capacity to endure. Along the way she lost her hearing, most of her sight, and gradually her ability to walk. But until the very end, she fought with the strength and commitment of the warrior she has always been! She lasted 8 days unable to eat or even stand, taking only a tiny bit of water from an eye-dropper now and then. But even in her dying process she remained: *Akicita*. She did not whimper or moan and seemed to be content with her decision to journey on alone. She was surrounded by all those who love her those last days and hours, and I believe that that time was her last gift on earth to me. We stand here today to say farewell to this wonderful friend, knowing without question that we will all meet again.

In the words of artist, Kristine Nedderson, “dog spelled backwards is, of course, God. The fully present, always delighted, unconditionally loving dog possesses the qualities I hope our higher power has. God couldn't be that judging, punishing old guy we sometimes read about. If he/she were, people would have been wiped out long ago. Here's to the DOG for showing us what satisfied, happy living can look like. Now, Let's go play.” Akicita would not want things any other way.

[Song: Wakantanka Pilamaye \(Thank you God \(for this life\)\)](#)

