

Thank You Banner Burgin

My Golden Retriever Banner passed away this morning and I wanted you to know because if you knew her, you loved her too. She died like we'd all like to—happy and taking old-dog walks on Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday and Friday she slept and received visitors who sat on the floor with her, touching her, and telling her repeatedly how good she was. The last part to slow down continued to wag every hour or so. Then, on Saturday morning we said goodbye.

In October her ashes will blow down the beach at Oysterville with the same happy, frantic, random purpose with which she used to run.

Maybe you know that I named her "Banner" because she came into my life nearly thirteen years ago. After two tough years, my time in the "wilderness" was ending, and 1995 was turning into a Banner year.

Banner grew into a classic golden retriever: gentle, bright, loyal, graceful, strong and goofy. She'd want you to know that she was able to keep pulling on her leash until only recently.

Through those years, from a pup with two speeds (wide-open and asleep) to the gentle presence of the past years, she loved me and the rest of her pack. And, if you're reading this, Banner loved you too. Only once in her years as a "therapy dog and canine coach" did someone refuse to have her in the room with us. Banner and I found him a referral.

She helped people by helping them to breathe differently, to hold their shoulders and their souls a little more lightly. One afternoon a wealthy celebrity walked into my office, sat down and, in her most professional manner, said, "Patty, I've got a number of ideas I'd like to discuss with you today.

"First, I'd like to pet the puppy."

As Banner put her head in the woman's lap, I watched as the woman relaxed her shoulders, deepened her breath and allowed tears to come to her eyes.

In her thirteenth year, Banner found a new way to keep me in her loop. Each morning lately as I've headed for the front door, she's either been laying in front of it, not wanting to accidentally doze through my departure, or she's been sound asleep under the coffee table, asking for a day off. The ratio has shifted in recent months as she's slept more and worked less. She took it a day at a time.

*My heart is older and wiser and richer because of Banner and I'll miss and thank her daily for awhile. Jesus loved to use animals in his parables and metaphors: **"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God."** .He taught with them then, I think he still does.*

Dogs don't get all caught up in thoughts of mortality and meaning. We do. And their lives keep us reminded and on track. Most theologians inform us that there will be no dogs in heaven. But I'm not so sure about that.

