

## MAX THE GOLDEN

Update 5/22/2009

Dear Tracie and Kate:

I am on the computer for the first time since last week. I pulled my back out and have been lying on the floor with Max all weekend. So, maybe the back thing happened for a reason.

My daughter told me about how you are raising money for Max and said I better write back as soon as I am able or you would think I don't appreciate your efforts. I can't even begin to tell you HOW MUCH I appreciate what you are doing for us. VPI just paid 3 claims - \$73 on a \$306 claim, \$430 on a \$980 claim, and \$210 on a \$590 claim. If I had Pets Best I would have received more than twice as much. I want to call them and tell them what I think of their outdated benefit schedule, but I am afraid to rock the boat. I just cancelled my policies for my other dogs and enrolled with Pets Best, and and I am so afraid that VPI will not renew Max's policy. Without ANY insurance for Max, I don't know what I'd do.

I can give you all the information for my Care Credit card account. I can send you the bills so you can see that every charge is for Max's treatment at AMC in NYC. There is nothing else on the account. AMC requires payment every time we go there. Under the circumstances I don't know if there is any reason for us to go back there. Unless there is another miracle and the "special stains" for the biopsy show something that Max could be treated for, there is nothing more AMC can do for us. That makes me so very sad.

I asked them "what do I do now?" They tell me to enjoy every day with Max and give him lots of love. I have been doing that all along. And every 2 weeks we took him into the City and every few days I spoke to some doctor on the phone and life was full of surgeries and treatments and recuperation and hope. Now that is gone and this awful helpless feeling is in its place. I wake up and look at Max and try not to think - but can't help but think - is today the day?

Kate writes - "for now live in the here and now, completely in the moment with Max. Nothing else matters - nothing else will ever be as important as this moment."

And that is so true, but how can I fight that horrible voice in my head that keeps asking "IS THIS THE LAST MOMENT?!"!!!!!!

Max has been so strong. He has recovered from this surgery as well as from the amputation. He wants to play again. But he has slowed down and doesn't have the same amount of energy. He plays tug lying down. If I throw a ball to him and my aim is off (as it is most of the time) he doesn't run after it. Julie and I both commented the other day that he looks old. We've never said that before. Max was puppy forever. But now we see that all he has gone through these past four months has taken its toll on his

beautiful body. He sleeps more. His wise eyes look very tired. He seems to have gotten grayer.

I feel very lost. Nothing feels right. Normal things take a tremendous amount of effort. I am terrified of life without Max. I know he is here now, I know, I know. I hold on tight and pray he never gives me the sign that he wants me to let go - but I know he will and I will have to honor what is right for Max. Like Kate said - "Max will tell you when staying is no longer about him... letting go becomes the final everlasting gift..." With as strong as my Max has been, I owe him MY strength. But to give him that gift - I will have to find strength within me that I'm not sure exists.

If I don't write every day, it is just because when you write the words down it is real, and you cannot pretend. Some days I'm just not interested in reality.

But I cherish your e-mails and everyone's kind wishes and thoughts. It certainly DOES help to know that people care.

Love, Max's Mom, Pam

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And Kate's reply was:

*We lit a candle for Max and Pam tonight and wished upon a star that they will have the time Pam needs to close the circle.*

*This is the part of loving someone with all your heart - the pain that accompanies goodbye.*

*The lesson for all of us - never ever take life or love for granted - never miss an opportunity to tell those around you how you value and cherish them.*

*I hugged my Hannah and Nikko a bit closer - and whispered in their ears.*

*"I love you with all I am and all I will ever be. I love you a million miles to the moon and back - a million times - in a million ways. I will love you for forever and one extra day".*

Kate

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MORE MAX

Dear Tracie - During this time, when I am feeling so overwhelmed, you ladies are doing this wonderful thing. I can actually feel the weight on my shoulders lighten.

I have had some difficulty accepting this kindness. My daughter says - "mom, let these people help you - they WANT to help you - and you certainly need the help." But this is all very new and foreign to me. But, she is right. I need the help.

I will be taking Max to our personal Vet this week. Just for a check-up and to ask questions that I don't want to ask. I need to know what to expect - and what more I can do for him other than love him more than I have ever loved anything. I feel bad when I say that - but Julie says she understands. She's always been the most amazing daughter.

She is very aware of the bond Max and I share. He's always been "my guy." Won't leave a room unless I go with him. In the morning won't go outside with the other 3. Stays in bed with me until I get up and go out with him. Hides behind my legs or under my chair or moves closer to me in bed if Julie tries to take him. We laugh about it. He adores her. But, like I said, he's my guy.

I could tell you so many more things about Max. And some day I will. I want to write everything down. Because I don't want to forget one wonderful moment about the past 10 years. What joy that dog brings me.

I don't know how I will ever thank you. But I will find a way. After the fog clears and I can see without crying, I will find some way to show my gratitude.

With love, Max's Mom, Pam

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*Dear Pam (and Kate for future reference)*

*Although I know the last thing you need to do now is BUY something, I am going to suggest that you do purchase a book written by the Official Oncologist of both my shows, Alice Villalobos, who is one of the most spiritual and caring people you could ever meet.*

*It is a textbook but easily understood by us - and why I think you need it is because she has an entire section on "Pawspice" (like hospice) for how to manage the time after all treatments are done - how to maximize the comfort and pleasure of that time and also a scale on how to evaluate your pet's condition so you can feel on top of knowing what "downhill" really means for your individual.*

*Go to my website where there is a page for Dr Alice under "Experts" and her book CANINE AND FELINE GERIATRIC ONCOLOGY is linked there with her author's discount. It's expensive but worth every penny- you can give it to your own vet or another friend later to pass on the wisdom and support and whole idea of Pawspice*

*care. I know it will help because you dread making a decision or knowing how to know - and this will be invaluable.*

*with love, Tracie*

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I was amazed when Kate replied: Actually have the book and recommend it to all pet parents confronting cancer. It was recommended to me by Dr. Chuck Kuntz, the oncologist who did my dog Maddie's cancer surgery

*And then it turned out Pam had already gotten the book! I forgot I had told her to:*

You are so right about this book being invaluable. I bought it - on YOUR recommendation - months ago. I have been reading the chapter on PAWSPICE ever since I got the biopsy results. I was especially interested in her view that vets suggest euthanasia much too early and do not respect the parent's feelings. She writes in length about this and I felt like she was talking to me. Remember what the ER doctor did to us? Well, Dr. Villalobos would be appalled.

This book is only one of many things you suggested to me these past few months that have been invaluable. Your support has been "invaluable."

You mentioned on one of your past shows about a place in Westhamptom, I think, where they have a pool and do hydrotherapy for animals. Could you give me that information? I don't remember exactly when you said it. I would like to look into it for Max.

I reminded her that "The water therapy for dogs is actually in East Hampton, a good bit further out East. It is owned and run by one of the dearest people you'll ever meet, Randy. S.S. Acqua Dog is linked on my website – just put it in the Google Search Box and it should take you to that page on my website.