

**** “How Could You?” is included in a book of Jim’s collected writings, “Pieces of My Heart – Writings Inspired by My Life with Animals,” published March 2002 in both the USA and UK. All rescues and organizations may order the book at the same quantity discount that booksellers receive. See the book’s website:**

<http://www.crean.com/jimwillis/>

The book is now also available from amazon.com in the US and amazon.co.UK in England. Please ask your local bookseller to consider stocking the book and perhaps create a display of other animal-related titles.

We automatically grant all not-for-profit uses of “HCY?” and respectfully request that everyone who uses it includes a mention of the book in their publication/distribution, especially about the fundraising discount, which has already earned significant amounts of money for shelters and rescue efforts. (A jpeg of the book’s cover is available at the above site, if you require a higher resolution, please write: tiergartenjim@yahoo.com).

Dear Friends –

- **“How Could You?” was written as my attempt to change some minds among the general public and their perception of animals as disposable.**
- **“HCY?” has been translated and published in twenty foreign languages.**
- **If you distribute the essay or wish to publish it, please use the *complete* text, and please retain the title, my byline, copyright notice, my e-mail address and the URL for the book.**
- **I have had to decline requests from newsletter editors who wished to edit it down because of space limitations. The essay was carefully considered as I wrote it and shortening it will dilute its impact**
- **Was “How Could You?” inspired by a real dog? Yes, but a dog with a happy ending. Although I’ve been just as frustrated for three decades as you are by the mass dumping of animals and how they are often regarded, it took a nine-year-old Basset Hound, “Holly Golightly,” rescued by us on her last day from a kill shelter, to inspire me to write it. I call “Holly” my muse, and she will have a good home with us for the rest of her life.**
- **On behalf of the millions of pets who have lived and died in circumstances similar to the dog in “How Could You?” – I thank you for placing the message where those who need to read it most may do so. Please help tell the public that the decision to add a pet to the family is an important one for life, that animals deserve our love and sensible care, that finding another appropriate home for your animal is your responsibility and any local humane society or animal welfare league can offer you good advice, and that all life is precious. Please do your part to stop the killing, and encourage all spay & neuter campaigns in order to prevent unwanted animals.**
- **Thank you and we wish you good success with your own efforts on behalf of animals.**

Jim Willis

The Tiergarten Sanctuary Trust, USA & Germany

“How Could You?”
Copyright Jim Willis 2001
tiergartenjim@yahoo.com
<http://www.crean.com/jimwillis>

When I was a puppy I entertained you with my antics and made you laugh. You called me your child and despite a number of chewed shoes and a couple of murdered throw pillows, I became your best friend. Whenever I was “bad,” you’d shake your finger at me and ask “How could you?” – but then you’d relent and roll me over for a bellyrub.

My houstraining took a little longer than expected, because you were terribly busy, but we worked on that together. I remember those nights of nuzzling you in bed, listening to your confidences and secret dreams, and I believed that life could not be any more perfect. We went for long walks and runs in the park, car rides, stops for ice cream (I only got the cone because “ice cream is bad for dogs,” you said), and I took long naps in the sun waiting for you to come home at the end of the day.

Gradually, you began spending more time at work and on your career, and more time searching for a human mate. I waited for you patiently, comforted you through heartbreaks and disappointments, never chided you about bad decisions, and romped with glee at your homecomings, and when you fell in love.

She, now your wife, is not a “dog person” – still I welcomed her into our home, tried to show her affection, and obeyed her. I was happy because you were happy. Then the human babies came along and I shared your excitement. I was fascinated by their pinkness, how they smelled, and I wanted to mother them, too. Only she and you worried that I might hurt them, and I spent most of my time banished to another room, or to a dog crate. Oh, how I wanted to love them, but I became a “prisoner of love.”

As they began to grow, I became their friend. They clung to my fur and pulled themselves up on wobbly legs, poked fingers in my eyes, investigated my ears and gave me kisses on my nose. I loved everything about them and their touch – because your touch was now so infrequent – and I would have defended them with my life if need be.

I would sneak into their beds and listen to their worries and secret dreams. Together we waited for the sound of your car in the driveway. There had been a time, when others asked you if you had a dog, that you produced a photo of me from your wallet and told them stories about me. These past few years, you just answered “yes” and changed the subject. I had gone from being “your dog” to “just a dog,” and you resented every expenditure on my behalf.

Now you have a new career opportunity in another city, and you and they will be moving to an apartment that does not allow pets. You’ve made the right decision for your “family,” but there was a time when I *was* your only family.

I was excited about the car ride until we arrived at the animal shelter. It smelled of dogs and cats, of fear, of hopelessness. You filled out the paperwork and said “I know you will find a good home for her.” They shrugged and gave you a pained look. They understand the realities facing a middle-aged dog or cat, even one with “papers.” You had to pry your son’s fingers loose from my collar as he screamed “No, Daddy! *Please* don’t let them take my dog!” And I worried for him, and what lessons you had just taught him about friendship and loyalty, about love and responsibility, and about respect for all life. You gave me a goodbye pat on the head, avoided my eyes, and politely refused to take my collar and leash with you. You had a deadline to meet and now I have one, too.

After you left, the two nice ladies said you probably knew about your upcoming move months ago and made no attempt to find me another good home. They shook their heads and asked “How could you?”

They are as attentive to us here in the shelter as their busy schedules allow. They feed us, of course, but I lost my appetite days ago. At first, whenever anyone passed my pen, I rushed to the front, hoping it was you – that you had changed your mind – that this was all a bad dream...or I hoped it would at least be someone who cared, anyone who might save me. When I realized I could not compete with the frolicking for attention of happy puppies, oblivious to their own fate, I retreated to a far corner and waited.

I heard her footsteps as she came for me at the end of the day and I padded along the aisle after her to a separate room. A blissfully quiet room. She placed me on the table, rubbed my ears and told me not to worry. My heart pounded in anticipation of what was to come, but there was also a sense of relief. The prisoner of love had run out of days. As is my nature, I was more concerned about her. The burden which she bears weighs heavily on her and I know that, the same way I knew your every mood.

She gently placed a tourniquet around my foreleg as a tear ran down her cheek. I licked her hand in the same way I used to comfort you so many years ago. She expertly slid the hypodermic needle into my vein. As I felt the sting and the cool liquid coursing through my body, I lay down sleepily, looked into her kind eyes and murmured “*How could you?*”

Perhaps because she understood my dogspeak, she said “I’m *so* sorry.” She hugged me and hurriedly explained it was her job to make sure I went to a better place, where I wouldn’t be ignored or abused or abandoned, or have to fend for myself – a place of love and light so very different from this earthly place. With my last bit of energy, I tried to convey to her with a thump of my tail that my “*How could you?*” was not meant for her. It was you, My Beloved Master, I was thinking of. I will think of you and wait for you forever.

May everyone in your life continue to show you so much loyalty.

The End

Also by Jim Willis:

“The Animals’ Savior”
Copyright Jim Willis 1999
tiergartenjim@yahoo.com
<http://www.crean.com/jimwillis>

I looked at all the caged animals in the shelter...the cast-offs of human society.

I saw in their eyes love and hope, fear and dread, sadness and betrayal.

And I was angry.

"God," I said, "this is terrible! Why don't you do something?"

God was silent for a moment and then He spoke softly.

"I have done something," He replied.

"I created *you*."