

GOOD BYE, SWEET GALENA

Empress Carlotta Galena Rose came boisterously into our lives on January 1, 1992, then left oh so gently on February 17, 2005. Some people would say 13 years and 5 months was a good long lifespan for a dog. Those people didn't meet Galena.

She never fully adjusted to the car, but grew to tolerate it. From her perch in the backseat, we'd hear her noisy intake of breath through that long nose of hers.

Always one to love her play, she enjoyed her "birdie" even at the very end. Though blindness made her noticeably depressed, we'd sometimes hear her root around in her toy box late at night and, invariably, it was her "birdie" we'd hear go off two or three times.

Two of her teeth never came in, her ears were slightly crooked and hers was a very high maintenance personality . . . You couldn't touch her feet without her growling, and you couldn't dare mention "vet" or "shot" or "car" or "ride" without noticeably upsetting her. And throughout her life she suffered piteous anxiety attacks during thunderstorms, even when we used tranquilizers. The only blessing in her losing her hearing was that by closing the shutters to lightening, she was none the wiser that a storm was brewing.

And yet - for us - the sun rose and set on those sturdy little shoulders. As infirm as she became, she'd still greet us at the front door, and she managed to find her way into any room where we happened to be. Her presence lingers in each room of our house today.

Although her final breath may have been taken as I cradled her in my arms at the vet's office, Galena's last cognizant moments on earth were spent beneath the lovely elm in her garden. It was a clear spring day that Thursday, and the cool breeze brought just enough scent to keep an old blind dog's interest. When the stroke incapacitated her, she lay in the shade on the soft green grass, lifting her head, I know, with each breath of wind . . . Calm and untroubled she waited for us to come home, to say her last goodbye.