

| tribute

Daniel Curry, *Animal Care Specialist*



Amrock

In my time here at Wolf Haven I have been given the gift of friendship from people and animal alike. I must say that I most treasure the animals that I have had the privilege to call friends. I find a purity in them that is not commonly found among humans. They have become, and will always be, my family.

When I met Amrock in the little shelter in Chico, California on June 4, 2006, my heart went out to him. Physically, mentally and spiritually he was not doing well. He was losing himself in this new shelter life that had found him. When I saw him he was barely holding on to the life that bound him to his body. But in looking at him, you could see a glimmer of the greatness that he would become, if given the chance to live his life. During the drive home I could see a slow, but noticeable change in his eyes. A look of hope now resided in those eyes, that previously housed only despair, sadness, and a longing for a different life. This would be the last day that we would look upon him and see a spirit in turmoil, a body that was physically shattered, and a mind that was frayed. From here on out we would see only Amrock.

Amrock lived at Wolf Haven for a little over 2 years. But during that short stay he accomplished much. He taught many people why wolves make bad pets, he touched the lives of all who had the privilege of meeting him and opened their hearts. Most important of all, he finally found a life filled with love and happiness; he finally found his home.

Amrock and I became very good friends during his time here. I can only hope that he looked forward to the time that we were able to share as much as I did. Amrock became a true friend, one that would drop everything he was doing if you needed him, even if it was breeding season. Amrock was the best medicine for ailments that seemed incurable. He was able to lend an ear when you needed someone to just listen. Even though he could not understand the words that I would choose to describe my predicaments, he would wholly understand the feelings that I attached to them. He would respectfully soak them in with a level of understanding and attentiveness that rivaled any human that I have met. And then he would prescribe his best medicine, fun.



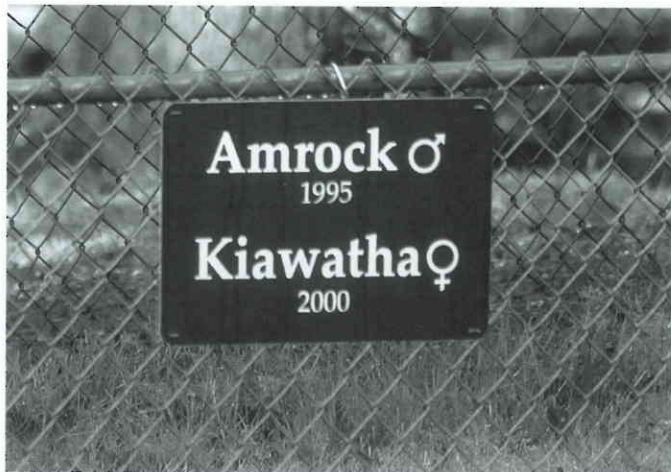
Amrock. JULIE LAWRENCE PHOTO.

Amrock had a gift that shone brighter than his warm golden eyes. He was always able to have fun no matter what was happening. One thing that brought Amrock much joy was to work on his den. All you would see through the cloud of flying dirt and rubble was a grayish butt wiggling around. Occasionally, you would see an exhausted debris covered head pull out, to quickly survey his surrounding area. Once all was deemed safe he would then swiftly return to his subterranean project. If only he could design his dens as well as he dug them he might have been able to fully use them.

One of my fondest memories was when I would stop at his enclosure during morning rounds. He would come up to the fence to say "Hi" and take his meds while I looked him and Kiawatha over to insure that they were okay. Like clock work, every time I was done and ready to move on

he would start tearing around his enclosure at top speed. He would leap stumps and dodge trees and then head full speed into his deck pen, were he would stop just for a minute. Not to catch his breath, but to see if anyone else had caught his infectious mood. He would then launch out of the deck pen like a guided missile from a silo. His target destination: his den entrance. Without any inhibitions or grace, he would fully launch himself head first into his den. The problem with his game was that only the first half of his body would fit into his den. You would then hear a sound similar to that of a cork escaping a bottle of champagne. This sound, though, was of a hundred-pound wolf lodging himself into a den entrance. His bottom half would squirm until he dislodged himself from the predicament that his front half had gotten into. He then would greet the surface world with a smile that stretched from ear to ear, secretly hoping that no one noticed his miscalculation.

One day we noticed Amrock was limping very slightly on his front right leg. The decision was made to bring him to the vet to assess his ailment. Amrock's world took a downward spiral that day. We found out that our friend had osteosarcoma (bone cancer). It didn't take long for the disease to take its toll, not only on Amrock's health but his spirit as well. During his fight with cancer was the only time that I saw Amrock unable to have fun. Not because he didn't want to,



Among the first wolves to be seen on tour in the sanctuary - Amrock's welcoming presence will be missed but not forgotten.

but because his body would no longer allow him to do the things that brought happiness to him. He did not have to battle with the disease for long before the decision was made to help end Amrock's misery. Amrock's suffering ended on July 14, 2008 with his friends at his side. (I believe that was the day that he started having fun again.)

I am learning more and more that when a family member passes away, they are not lost to us. In fact, they are more *with* us when they depart from their bodies, than they are when they physically walk beside us... This isn't always easy for me to realize, though. It is my belief that when we leave these physical shells that we grow to know as "us", we are truly free to discover who we really are. No longer do the restraints of the physical realm apply; age does not matter to the spirit, time is no longer limited, and great distances are only as long as we want them to be. Family will never leave us because once love is found between two beings it cannot be taken away nor lost... it may change, but it will never leave. When we truly love another, we take them into our heart forever; they become a part of us, and we a part of them. There is a "oneness" that is found only in love, a feeling that cannot be extinguished.

There are things in our every day life that are intangible – things we cannot see but must accept. Wind is a good example: When the wind is done dancing with the trees it does not leave the trees; it simply moves on to others that feel the need to dance. As long as the trees stand, they will surely dance with the wind again. And when the trees do fall, they will no longer dance with the wind, but will still see it and feel it, only with a new perspective.

When family parts from the tangible world, we cannot see them any longer, per say, but we can find them in us, in every fissure of our being. The bond that we forge with one another is the fundamental force that molds us, and this bond transcends our mere physical reality – just as our so called "lost" loved ones can grace and influence us from beyond the grave. I will always have Amrock with me as long as I live, and when I pass from this physical world, I will see him again, just in a different light.

Amrock, you touched my life in a way that only your charismatic spirit could have. The stalwart friendship you gave to me, and the lessons that you imparted upon me will never be forgotten. I only hope that I was a good friend to you in return, for all that you ever deserved was love, kindness, and respect. I will always remember you as your effervescent, carefree, loving self – for that is truly you, not what I saw in the latter days of your life. I pray that in those last few moments you knew my intentions were filled with love and respect. I appreciate you always being there for me, you were a rock that I could hold onto while the turbulent currents of life pushed against me. You are, and always will be, my beloved friend, Amrock. 🐾

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Julie Lawrence
FINE ART DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

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