



Crissy. Photo by Julie Lawrence.

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Crissy

1988 - 2006

Have you ever made, what at the time, seemed like a mistake? Well, Wolf Haven did just that eighteen years ago. In the beginning we did not surgically alter any of our wolves; we merely separated males and females during breeding season – January thru March – and put them back together when it was over. In 1988 there were two wolves that showed us the flaw in our design. Noah and Princess Lillypad were put back together at the same time all the others were remixed, but nature's clock is not "set in stone." These two wolves were a perfect example of a prolonged breeding season... Oops!

On May 3, 1988 there was a litter of five pups born here which was quickly dubbed the "Oops litter." The litter consisted of Little John, Kiowa, Morning Star, Duchess, and our beloved Crissy. All of Crissy's siblings have long since passed from this to the next, leaving Crissy as the sole survivor of her family. Crissy, like the rest of her family, lived out her entire life here at Wolf Haven.

Crissy was always full of life. When I first met her she was 16 years young and as vibrant as

ever. She lived with our friend Onyx after she lost her companion Napanee. Unlike Napanee, Onyx was a loner and merely tolerated her effervescent personality bouncing around their shared home. Age didn't slow Crissy down though, so she wasn't about to let this new man slow her down either! She loved every aspect of life and poured her essence into everything that she did, especially eating. She had a bad habit of turning into a small land shark, snapping treats out of her caretaker's hands with a blinding speed generally not associated with geriatrics.

Crissy spent her life amazing others with her thick snow white coat, the warmth of her loving gaze, and the remarkable resilience of her body. Her mother died just shy of her twentieth birthday, so longevity was certainly in her genes. That, and a stubborn determination to get every drop of life out of the body that was given her, brought Crissy to the age of 18. Crissy never ceased to amaze me, even in her final year. She had an exercise routine that

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olves, most are off exhibit except for four 2-year old males from the Columbus, Ohio Zoo.

VOLF PARK attle Ground, Indiana

I'm sick of peanut butter. Tonight I'll cook chicken in an open fire. I collect branches and start a fire; then the rain starts and puts the fire out. I go inside the camper and feed Lucy the raw pink chicken. I stand in my wet clothes and scoop peanut butter out of the jar, while skimming through a wolf ethogram pamphlet written by Dr. Erich Klinghammer, the founder of Wolf Park.

What sets Wolf Park apart from other sanctuaries is its resident bison herd. Wolf Park invites the public to observe wolf-bison demonstrations. People get to watch how wolves examine their prey for weakness

and how the bison protect themselves. No animal has ever been injured during the demonstration because the wolves are well fed, thus, they have no hunger motive to actually hunt the bison.

Wolf Park feeds older wolves cut-down venison, while a younger pack of five wolves receive one intact deer twice a week.

The pack of five resides in a spacious 7-acre enclosure lined with river birch and huckleberry trees. At the heart of the enclosure is a shallow lake full of snapping turtles and gulping frogs. In the center of the lake there's a small island that the wolves enjoy swimming to.

One year when a female wolf was pregnant, none of the staff could figure out where the den site was, until, lo and behold the litter of pups was born on the island!

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she would do multiple times a day. First she'd do her "doga", a series of stretches that would relinquish her body from her sleeping stiffness; then she'd take a distinct route around her shelter up the hill past her big oak tree, followed by a sprint straight to the personnel gate for scratches from her caretaker. Next she'd rush over to her water bucket to re-hydrate and commence lap two. This strict exercise routine could have had a direct impact on Crissy's longevity but personally I think that it had to do more with her lust for life.

Crissy's last days were very hard to watch. Her body had lost the ability to keep up and was quickly starting to let go, although it was clear that Crissy herself did not want this to be the end. Her laps went from many per day to just a few, or sometimes none. She cut her exercise loop in half and there was no more sprinting down the hill. She did continue to get scratches from all of her loved ones though. Old volunteers and employees would come back to visit her in those final days telling her how special she was, how much she touched them, and how well she looked, even at her vintage state.

When Crissy's final day came it wasn't a shock, but a reminder that even the strongest of us has to succumb to the fate which walks hand and hand with life. In the end Crissy's will to live was surpassed by her body's limitations. It was in Crissy's best interest to aid her in her passing by administering a sedative. When Wendy



our Animal Curator left Crissy's enclosure to go to the veterinarians' office, Crissy immediately started howling and continued to howl even after Wendy got back and the sedative was administered. It was Crissy's way of saying she didn't want to leave. She quickly fell asleep and then shortly after, passed away.

I think that Crissy and her litter mates were the most beautiful "Oops" I have ever been privileged to meet. I can see you now girl, up the hill around your big oak tree sprinting down the hill at full speed once again. I will give you your much needed scratches again someday Crissy girl... until then you will have to stay 🐾