

A special gentleness has departed the world

Judy Loeven, Animal Care Special

On Wednesday, March 8, Wolf Haven International lost our beautiful and gentle friend Gris Gris to heart failure following a urinary tract infection. Barely two months before, she had lost her brother and lifelong companion, Gyrene. Both would have been sixteen years old this April, but their mother had lived to almost nineteen, so this double loss, even at their advanced age, was a deep sadness to us all.

As so often happens with wolves that are so much shorter-lived than ourselves, the past few years had aged Gris Gris considerably. We could see her thick fur, one of the most beautiful coats among all the sanctuary's wolves, inexorably graying. Her world grew darker as the cataracts clouded her eyes until, in the last year, we were not sure she had any vision left at all. If in a hurry or startled, she was known to occasionally bump into an obstacle – hence her slower gait as well. But her mind and reflexes were obviously intact, as she was still able to catch the occasional raven!

After Gyrene's death of cancer, Gris Gris had not shown the obvious signs



Gris Gris

Photo by Pat Colton

of depression and mourning we have seen in other wolves who have lost their mates. She still greeted her caregivers each morning as hungry for breakfast as always, and she appeared eager for our other visits, the chance to share our company, or perhaps to roll in an interesting scent we had brought, or to munch on a special treat. And if she did seem just a bit distant and perhaps slept somewhat more than usual, was that not merely the effects of age? After all, in human years she would have been well into her eighties.

Yet, looking back now I think that perhaps she had been keeping a silent vigil of grief inside. When an opportunistic infection attacked during her first breeding season without the mate she had known since the womb, was her immune system so old and weakened that it could not defend her – or did she literally not have the heart to go on alone? The infection, accompanied by a fever, put too much of a strain on her fragile, aged body. Despite our best efforts to treat her, her heart began to fail. Rather than prolong her suffering, we offered

the only gift we had left to give: a quick and painless death. Gris Gris slipped away as gently as she had touched the world.

She was buried next to Gyrene the following day. Staff members laid various tokens of their love and respect next to her body, including some bones from the last raven she had so proudly and so incredibly caught. I like to fancy that, wherever her spirit now roams, Gris Gris is again able to see Gyrene running and playing at her side. 🐾

Gyrene & Gris Gris Memorial Fund

As of publication date, the following individuals have contributed to the Gyrene and Gris Gris memorial fund:

Andrea L. Watts
Joan G. Mann
John V. Barbera
Janet K. McWhorter
Patricia Peugeot

Initial donations received have been used in order to begin our "Path of Understanding" (please see back cover) with a paver brick in their memory. Further funding received in their memory will be used for the care of our sanctuary residents.

For information on how to contribute

to this special fund, please contact Kari or Nita at (800) 448-9653.

Or mail your donation to the Gyrene & Gris Gris Memorial Fund:

Wolf Haven International
3111 Offut Lake Road
Tenino, WA 98589