

January 27, 2012

Dear family and friends of Arluk - Arctic Hero (2000 – 2012):



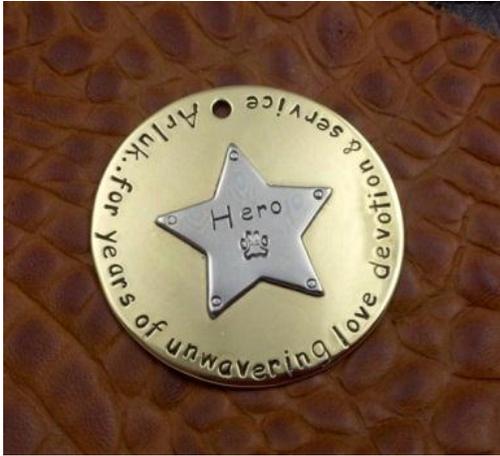
It is with a heavy heart I write tonight to tell you about our beloved hero - Arluk (Inuktitut for Killer Whale). Over the last year, we have witnessed Arluk's continued slow decline in health and despite all available modern veterinary treatment, he lost his battle today against the various medical ailments that haunted him. Arluk was a master at masking pain and he would always put on a brave face at home and even more in public. However, this week he could no longer find the energy to enjoy even the simplest moments of a happy dog's life. Therefore, after several consultations with our island's Vets, Robbin and I decided to relieve Arluk of his pain and suffering.

As we all grew up with so many loving pets and/or continue to share our lives with them today, I know you realize to make this decision on his behalf has been incredibly difficult. Equally, this has been extremely hard for our younger husky Sakku (Inuktitut for Harpoon Head or Bullet). All week, she has avoided Arluk, either refusing to come out of her sleeping "condo" or by not entering the living room where Arluk was resting. She knew before us I believe, it was his time as well. Luckily, as Robbin is leaving for the north soon, Sakku will be going to boarding and we believe a few weeks at her favourite K9 Country Cottage in Sidney the best-case scenario, as she will have the distraction of all her familiar playmates. We have asked they give her a little extra attention though as she has lost her life mate, a companion she has always adored and looked up to for direction.

It is so unfortunate that his health declined so rapidly this week as Robbin was left alone with this very difficult task today as I am back on board the ship in Newfoundland. In the end, I believe he appreciated all our efforts and countless pills (most of the time) that extended his retirement on Gabriola after life as a real Arctic certified husky. However, this week, he refused to swallow anything more. He will always remain Robbin's hero and it is so sad that a custom-made courage medal she recently ordered for him will not arrive in time for him to wear proudly, even if only once. Yet, this will always be proudly displayed at The Landing along with his many pictures for you to see on your next visit to Gabriola.

Arluk had a wonderful canine life. He traveled at the age of one to the high Arctic from the condominium life of Toronto. His rescue from the concrete city was his break in life and he loved his new home digs with Robbin. He went everywhere with her, to the office, to stores, for walks on the tundra and he grew to love her deeply. Arluk's life was all about Robbin and for Robbin, Arluk was her life. It was here, he became her hero. He literally dragged Robbin home in a blinding white out blizzard after a winter storm blew in unexpectedly and his instincts told him his "Mom" had lost her directions on the tundra. He tugged, pulled and towed her to their doorstep even though his eyes were nearly frozen shut.

He later journeyed to Dunrobin, Ontario in his later adult years only to discover and encounter many new strange four legged friends near his southern home. Notably, porcupines and skunks... and that they were not always so friendly. He did not learn quickly enough that these foreign little critters did not want his company. He suffered both times for his lack of southern local knowledge but he found the frogs friendly.



Arluk then ventured west as so many easterners do to retire. On Gabriola Island, he learned to love the beach dog life, he had a favourite warm spot or two on the large deck, he was allowed on the couch (only to become his couch) and he supervised Sakku's patrol of the property they shared. I am not sure if he ever figured out why the Bou (Caribou) on Gabriola were so small and strange looking compared to the northern ones (actually Gabriola deer Arluk!) and why they were just as curious about him as he was of them.

Robbin and I also know Arluk will miss his "K9 Greeter" position in Sidney as he brought extensive job experience with him from Iqaluit, Nunavut where he would welcome visitors at this arctic airport with deafening howls, just like his sled dog friends did on the tundra. Robbin always said it must have been the acoustics, but I wonder... if you ever caught that hint of magic in his deep brown eyes when he grinned, "I've still got it!" Yet, I believe his favourite (Robbin may differ in opinion) island activity was his love for a "Tracker" ride, where he would navigate the island roads over my shoulder with the wind in his face. He would stare down the RCMP at roadblocks (as we had things to do... move it!) and he knew a trip to the village always meant a treat somewhere along the way.

It was at The Landing where he again performed an act of heroism for a second time, but there was no blizzard.... and this time he was my hero. He cared endlessly for Robbin on his own when she fell so ill from Pulmonary Embolism in the fall of 2010 until her sister and I could arrive. He stood over her tirelessly, nudging her with his soft nose on a regular, almost nurse's like schedule to make her move and ensure she was breathing.

I know that once this month's sadness has passed, we will look forward to better times in the months ahead at The Landing with our Sakku and with good luck, welcome little Atii (Inuktitut for "Let's Go" *and also starts with the letter A*) into our home sometime in June. This new addition to the Pequod Pack has been planned for over a year and we had hoped Arluk would be around to pass on to the pup some of his wisdom but now, that will be up to Sakku through traditional husky story telling. Up to this moment, we did not really care about the sex of this new Siberian pup, but of late, we are leaning towards a male now. Atii will have big paws to fill around The Landing.

Robbin and I are so glad all of you got a chance to experience Arluk's loving brown eyes and had an opportunity to hear one, two or more of his Arctic tales. We hope he sleeps soundly now and that he will again be the unwavering, devoted, loving, powerful yet gentle animal he was... in a better place.

Show some kindness to an animal in Arluk's name... that is all he would ask of any of you. I have been entrusted with looking after his beloved Robbin and I will never let him down. Rarely, have I ever been so touched by an animal as this trusted furry friend. Arluk will be greatly missed by us all.

Jim and "Arluk's" Robbin.