

The last chapter of Oliver's life
by Judy Stanton

My stories of Oliver are fun and full of life that is how I see this man. We didn't always see I to I but we respected each other. He knew I loved him and would lay down my life for him to protect him. He would do the same.

Oliver was bed ridden, he had no strength in his legs to walk anymore, and we had to assist him to get around.

One evening my black lab Moses came charging in the house. I didn't notice anything and Oliver sat straight up and yelled "Judy, Moses, get Moses!" I turned and that crazy dog had porcupine needles all over his face, nose and inside his mouth. I didn't know what to do. He was bleeding everywhere and whimpering.

Oliver was in his bed trying to coach me and tell me what to do, it just wasn't working right. Oliver, remember he can't use his legs, got himself out of bed onto the floor to give that poor dog some help. Of course my attention then turned to Oliver. I said, "what are you doing", Oliver said, "I have to help him". My heart went from my crazy dog, to a crazy sweet old man that put his own feelings aside to assist a helpless animal.

Oliver loved God and this earth. He was always trying to teach us how to live on the land and be self sufficient.

One day Oliver told me to get a brown paper bag, his tool box, and his bag of cow hides and come sit on the floor next to his bed. Of course I scurried around not knowing what project he had for me today. He had me draw an outline of my foot on the paper bag; we were making moccasins. I made the cut out, then cut out the cow hide. He had me cut strips of leather for the string to sew the moccasins. I used a hammer and an awl to poke holes in the leather to string them up.

We had so much fun. He would tell stories of the Eskimos, how I would make a good Eskimo woman. He said I would keep a man warm in the winter and then laugh. I gave him a look and he would laugh harder. I loved learning from him. We made a purse, knife and axe pouch out of leather. I still have all of these things and cherish them.

Another day we were going to learn how to build a shelter in a storm. He said we needed lodge poles. Richard, Oliver and I set out on a day trip to look for poles for the shelter. (Of course when we made any trip I would fix a lunch for us and all of his essentials. His hearing device, cheese, fig newtons, his inhaler, knife, tools just in case we broke down somewhere.) We are finally on the road we come to a spot that Richard knew of, and Oliver would point and tell us "there that one", we would go and cut down the pole. One of my favorite pictures of him was this day.



We had several extra poles. He taught us how to make toy horses and rubber band rifles.

One of our evening traditions that Oliver enjoyed was us sitting next to him by his bed, with a dish of ice cream, and him telling his Alaska stories. How bears would come around and try to get into his cache and either he or the dogs would eliminate the problem. He could go on for hours about all his bear encounters. The time when he damaged his lungs by running in -40 degree weather with his dog team hauling caribou that he had just hunted. After story time, he would then call my black lab "Mo" to come and lick the ice cream dish. (Good thing I used a dish washer to sanitize the dishes.)

The last week of Oliver's life was pretty quiet; he had slipped into a coma due to kidney failure. His favorite people were right there by his side, Dorene who he was so proud of and always talked so highly of he would get excited knowing she was coming for a visit, Richard his eldest son whom his eyes brightened up when he'd come home from work, they'd all sit and visit for hours.

One evening we were sitting by Oliver's bed, Dorene leaned over and told her Dad it was OK, he could go now, and she loved him. She had made the statement, wouldn't it be good if his Mom would come and get him.

Later that night, Oliver sat up in bed, with his arm stretched out, as if he was seeing something, yelled out, "Mom, Mom, Mom". When Oliver passed we were all right there with him. Who knows what is going to happen when that final hour comes but it was comforting to know he saw his Mom to escort him over to heaven.