

A Dog Named Dixie and the Art of Aging

By Bob Taylor

Dixie was a long-haired, beautiful, brown and white collie. She was my best friend and my anchor in the river of reality that swept my mother away to the next great adventure in 1927. I was nine and my world had just crashed and burned, but Dixie would nuzzle her cold, wet nose against my cheek at just the right moment as if to let me know there was someone else who cared about me.

You and I may not possess cold, wet noses, but I'm certain there is something we can do to help comfort someone. Every night at bedtime Dixie would race with me, up the stairs to my room. She always won. But, this night at bedtime, I sat in the parlor across from the silver box waiting for Mom to say, "Robert, it's time for bed. Don't forget to brush your teeth, son," but only loneliness and silence were in the parlor with me. Dixie waited patiently at the foot of the stairs. Finally, she trotted into the parlor took my sleeve between her teeth and pulled me toward the stairs. We walked up the stairs together, no racing this evening, got in bed together and she licked the forbidden tears (boys don't cry) from my face, curled up in my arms and we both went to sleep.

Two years later Dixie left me for the Great Master above the clouds, but I still remember her. None of us ever knows how important a little comfort can be in a time of need. Between Dixie and me not a word was spoken, but our thoughts and feelings were in perfect harmony. Her warmth and gentleness has contributed greatly to the art of aging in my life. From age 9 to 88 the image of Dixie returns whenever I call her and perhaps that is part of eternal life. If you have a similar memory of a person or a pet - use it. The loving memories will make aging easier.

I think Dixie was not just a collie dog, I think she was God's UPS person, delivering a package of comfort and peace to a kid who needed to be told he was loved and that life is good. Now that you and I are old enough to understand the Art of Aging, the contents of Dixie's heavenly package can be even more effective. Use it and know that life is good.