

Soul to Soul

I worked at the Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital as a counselor¹⁾ in the Changes Program. We help people deal with the experience of losing a pet, whether through illness, accident or euthanasia²⁾.

One time, I had a client named Bonnie, a woman in her mid-fifties. Bonnie had driven an hour and a half to see if the doctors at the hospital could do anything to help her fourteen-year-old black standard poodle, Cassandra, affectionately called Cassie. The dog had been lethargic³⁾ for a week or so and seemed to be confused at times.

She had been told earlier that morning by neurologist Dr. Jane Bush that Cassie had a brain tumor⁴⁾ that could take Cassie's life at any time.

Bonnie was devastated⁵⁾ to learn that her companion animal was so ill. That was when Bonnie was introduced to me. The Changes Program often helps people while they wrestled with the difficult decision of whether to euthanize a pet or let nature take its course.

Bonnie had graying, light-brown wavy hair that she pulled back into a large barrette. She had sparkling light blue eyes that immediately drew my attention, and there was a calmness about her that told me she was a person who thought things through, a woman who did not make hasty decisions.

For twenty years, Bonnie had been married to a man who mistreated her. Bonnie had tried many, many times to leave him, but she just couldn't do it. Finally, when she turned forty-five years old, she found the courage to walk away. She and Cassie, who was four years old at the time, moved to Laramie, Wyoming, to heal the old hurts and begin a new life. Cassie loved her and needed her and, for Bonnie, the feeling was mutual. There were many rough times ahead, but Bonnie and Cassie got through them together.

Six years later, Bonnie met Hank, a man who loved her in a way that she had never been loved. They were married one year later. Their marriage was ripe with discussion, affection, simple routines and happiness. Bonnie was living the life for which she had always hoped.

One morning, Hank was preparing to leave for work at his tree-trimming⁶⁾ service. As always, he and Bonnie embraced one another in the doorway of their home and acknowledged out loud how blessed they were to have each other.

Bonnie worked at home that day rather than going into her office, where she held a position as an office assistant. Late in the afternoon, her phone rang. When she picked it up, she heard the voice of the team leader who headed the search-and-rescue service for which Bonnie was a volunteer. Bonnie was often one of the first volunteers called when someone was in trouble.

That day, Margie told her a man had been electrocuted⁷⁾ on a power line just two blocks from Bonnie's house. Bonnie dropped everything, flew out of her house and jumped into her truck.

When Bonnie arrived at the house, she saw an image that would be engraved in her mind for the rest of her life. Her beloved Hank hung lifelessly from the branches of a tall

cottonwood tree.

All of the training that Bonnie had received about safely helping someone who has been electrocuted left her. She wasn't concerned about her own safety. She had to do everything she could to save Hank. She just had to get him down. She grabbed the ladder stowed in her truck, threw it up against the house and began climbing. Bonnie crawled onto the top of the roof and pulled Hank's body out of the tree toward her. Miraculously, even though she touched his body, which was touching the power line, she was not electrocuted herself. She pulled Hank onto the brown shingles of the roof and cradled his head in the crook of her arm. She wailed as she looked at his ashen⁸⁾ face. His eyes stared out into the bright blue Wyoming sky. He was dead. Gone. He could not be brought back to life. She knew to the core of her being that the life they shared was over.

In the four years that followed Hank's death, Bonnie tried to put her life back together. She was up-and-down, but mostly down. She lived with the frustration of not having said good-bye, of not having the opportunity to said all of the things she wanted to say, of not being able to comfort him, soothe him, help him leave his life and move into the next. She wasn't prepared for this kind of ending. It was not the way she wanted her best friend, her lover, her partner to die.

When Bonnie finished talking, we both sat in silence for a while. Finally said, "Would you like Cassie's death to be different from Hank's? I'm talking now, Bonnie, about euthanasia. With euthanasia, you won't have to worry about coming home from work and finding Cassie dead, and you can ensure that she won't die in pain. If we help Cassie die by euthanasia, you can be with her, hold her, talk to her and comfort her. You can peacefully send her on to the next life. The choice is up to you.

Bonnie's eyes opened wide. Her shoulders relaxed and her face softened in relief.

"I just need control this time, " she said. "I want this death to be different from Hank's-for my girl. "

The decision was made to euthanize Cassie that afternoon. I left the two of them alone, and Bonnie and Cassie spend the next few hours lying outside under the maple tree.

When it was time, Bonnie brought Cassie into the client comfort room, an area that those of us associated with The Changes Program had adapted to be more conducive⁹⁾ to humane animal death and client grief.

The dog was lying down by Bonnie, who was on the floor on a soft pad. Bonnie began to pet and talk to her. "There you are, girl. You're right here by Mom. Everything is okay. "

The time for euthanasia arrived and Cassie was sleeping peacefully, her head resting on Bonnie's stomach. She looked comfortable, very much at ease. Dr. Bush whispered, "May we begin the procedure? " And Bonnie nodded in affirmation.

"But first," she said softly, "I would like to say a prayer. "

She reached out to take our hands and we all reached out our hands to one another. Within this sacred circle, Bonnie softly prayed, "Dear Lord, thank you for giving me this beautiful dog for the past fourteen years. I know she was a gift from you. Today, as painful as it is, I know it is time to give her back. And, dear Lord, thank you for bringing these women to me. They have helped me beyond measure. I attribute their presence to you. Amen. "

Through our tears, we whispered our own "amens" , all squeezing one another's

hands in support of the rightfulness of the moment.

And then, while Cassie continued to sleep peacefully on her caretaker's belly, the doctor gave the dog the final injection. Cassie did not wake up. Through it all, she did not move. She just slipped out of this life into the next. It was quick, peaceful and painless, just as we had predicted. Immediately following Cassie's passing, I made a clay impression of her front paw. I handed the paw print to Bonnie and she held it tenderly against her cheek. We all sat quietly until Bonnie broke the silence, saying, "If my husband had to die, I wish he could have died this way."

Six weeks later, I received a letter from Bonnie. She had scattered Cassie's remains on the same mountain where Hank's were scattered. Now her two best friends were together again. She said somehow Cassie's death, and especially the way in which she had died, had helped her resolve the death of her husband.

"Cassie's death was a bridge to Hank for me," she wrote. "Through her death, I let him know that if I had had the choice when he died, I would have had the courage and the dedication necessary to be with him when he died, too. I needed him to know that and I hadn't been able to find a way. Cassie provided the way. I think that is the reason for and the meaning of her death. Somehow, she knew she could re connect us, soul to soul."

Eight months later, Bonnie traveled again from Wyoming to the Veterinary Teaching Hospital. This time, she brought her new, healthy puppy Clyde---a nine-month-old Lab mix, full of life and love. Bonnie was beginning a gain.

□by Carolyn Butler and Laurel Lagoni

心灵紧紧相连

我作为“生活变化”项目顾问在科罗拉多州立大学兽医教学医院工作。我们向由于疾病、事故或安乐死而失去宠物的人提供心理咨询。

我曾有过一个50多岁，名叫邦妮的来访者。她驱车一个半小时前来医院，想知道是否有医生能为她14岁的纯种黑卷毛狗尽份力。那狗叫卡桑德拉，爱称卡西。它已经萎靡不振了一个星期左右，有时还像是神志不清。

那天上午早些时候，神经病科医师简·布什医生告诉她说卡西有个脑瘤，随时都可能夺去它的生命。

邦妮得知她的宠物伴侣患有重病而身心交瘁。就在这个时候，有人介绍邦妮来找我。“生活变化”心理治疗项目经常帮助那些举棋不定的人做出让他们的宠物安乐死去或听其自然的决定。邦妮有着一头趋向灰白的淡棕色卷发，往后梳起并用大发夹束了起来。她有着一双立即吸引住我的目光炯炯的淡蓝色眼睛。邦妮焕发出一种宁谧，显示出她是个深思熟虑，一个不草率做出决定的女性。

邦妮嫁给一个虐待她的男人，生活了20年。邦妮无数次尝试离开他，可就是没成。最后，到她45岁时，终于鼓起勇气和那男人一刀两断。邦妮和当时只有4岁的卡西搬迁到俄怀明州的拉勒米来医治多年的精神创伤，并开始新的生活。卡西和邦妮相互钟爱，相互需要。以后虽又有许多艰难，但是她们俩相依为命，共渡了难关。

6年后，邦妮与汉克相遇。从未有人像他那般爱过邦妮。一年后，邦妮和汉克喜结良缘。他们的婚姻生活洋溢着幸福气氛，相互爱慕，彼此尊重，有事共同商量，分担日常琐事。邦妮

过着多年来一直向往过的生活。

一天早上，汉克正准备去他树木修整服务公司工作。像往常一样，他和邦妮在楼道里拥抱道别，倾吐因拥有对方而感到无比幸福的情感。

那天，邦妮选择在家工作而不去办公室。她是个助理员。当天下午早些时候，电话铃响了。她拿起话筒，听到是搜寻救援队队长的声音。邦妮是该队的志愿队员，而且经常是有人遇上麻烦时首先接到电话通知的志愿者之一。

那天队长玛吉告诉她说，就在离邦妮的房子两个街区远的输电线上有人触电了。邦妮放下手头工作，飞奔出门，跳上卡车。

邦妮赶到事故现场，映入眼帘的景象将在她余生中永远铭刻在脑海里。她心爱的汉克悬挂在一棵高高的棉白杨树干上，生命已经停息。

邦妮把所受过的如何处理触电事故的训练完全忘个一干二净。她没有考虑自身的安全。她必须尽一切努力抢救汉克。首先她得把汉克放下来。邦妮搬过放在卡车上的梯子，把它靠在房上，开始往上爬。爬上屋顶后，就把汉克的身子从大树往她这边拉。神奇的是，虽然邦妮接触了汉克的躯体，而汉克接触着输电线，可邦妮却没有触电。她把汉克拽上屋顶木瓦，用臂弯抱着他的头，看着那灰白的脸，嚎啕大哭。汉克两眼凝视着明亮、湛蓝的怀俄明天空。他死了，走了，不会再活过来了。邦妮再明白不过，她和汉克共享的生活结束了。

汉克故去后4年里，邦妮试着打起精神活下去。她情绪多变，但大多时忧郁低落。她生活在沮丧中，因为没有和汉克告别，没有机会向汉克倾诉她要表述的一切，没能抚慰他，帮助他结束生命，渡入另一个世界。汉克的生命就这么结束了，邦妮没有任何准备。她不要她最好的朋友、她的心上人、她的伴侣这样离去。

邦妮的叙述结束后，我们俩沉默地坐了片刻。我开腔问道，“你是不是想用与汉克不同的方式结束卡西的生命？邦妮，我指的是安乐死。这样，你就不用担心下班回来发现卡西已经死了；这样，还能做到它将没有痛苦地死去。如果我们帮它安乐死去，你能和它在一起，抱着它，跟它说话，安慰它。你可以心情平静地把卡西送往另一个世界。当然，由你做最后选择。”

邦妮听我说完后眼睛睁得大大的，两肩松垂，因忧虑消除，脸上绽出宽慰的神色。

“这次我一定要有所控制，”她说。“我要我姑娘死得跟汉克不一样。”

决定当天下午对卡西施行安乐死。我让邦妮和卡西单独在一起。她们躺在外面枫树底下，度过最后几个小时。

时间差不多时，邦妮把卡西抱进了宠物临终安抚室。那是经医院参与“生活变化”项目的医务人员安排，使之更适合动物无痛苦死去和更能抚慰宠物主人悲痛心情的场所。

邦妮坐在地上的软垫上，卡西躺在她身旁。邦妮开始抚摸它，跟它说话。“喏，孩子，你就在妈妈身边。一切都会顺利的。”

到了施行安乐死的时刻了。卡西的头搁在邦妮的肚子上，安详地睡着，看上去很舒服，无忧无虑。布什医生轻声问道，“可以开始了吗？”邦妮点了点头，表示同意。

“不过我想先做个祷告，”她低声细语地说道。

她伸出手来拉我们的手，我们也都伸出手，相互握着。邦妮站在这庄严的人圈中，开始轻声祈祷，“亲爱的主啊，感谢你在过去14年里让我拥有这只完美的狗。我知道这是你的赐予。在这无比痛苦的今天，我知道把它归还给主的时刻来临了。还有，亲爱的主，感谢你给我带来这些女士们，她们给了我无可估量的帮助。我把她们的参与归功于主。阿门。”

我们流着泪，各自轻声说了“阿门”，相互紧紧握住手，表示支持这适时的做法。

卡西继续安详地睡在它主人的肚子上。医生给它注射了终止生命的一针。卡西没有醒。它一直纹丝不动，只是缓慢地进入了另一个世界。正如我们预料的那样，整个过程既快，又平静，又没有痛苦。卡西死去后，我立即用胶泥做了个它前爪的泥印给邦妮，她轻轻地把它举贴

在脸颊上。我们都静静地坐着，最后邦妮打破了沉默，她说，“如果我丈夫不得不死的话，我希望他那时也能采取这样的方式。”

6周以后，我收到邦妮的来信。她把卡西的遗骨撒在同一个山上，她的两个好朋友——汉克和卡西——再次相逢。她信中还说，卡西的死，尤其是它死的方式，帮助她对汉克的死有了新的理解。

“卡西的死给我和汉克之间搭了座桥，”邦妮写道。“通过卡西的死，我让汉克知道如果当时他离开人世的时候，我有可能选择的话，我也会有在他瞑目前陪伴他的足够勇气和决心。我需要汉克了解这一点，我当时没有能够找到一种方式，而卡西以自己的死提供了这种方式。我认为这是卡西为什么死去的原因，它死的意义也在于此。不管怎么样，卡西知道它能把我们重新连接在一起，我们的心灵紧紧相连。”

8个月后，邦妮再一次从俄怀明来到我们医院。这回，与她同行的是头新养的健康小狗克莱德——一条9个月、充满活力与爱心的、与猎犬混种的猎狗。邦妮的生活又掀开了新的一页。

NOTE 注释：

counselor ['kaunsələ] n. 顾问

euthanasia [ju:θə'neiziə] n. 安乐死

lethargic [le'θɑ:dʒik] adj. 昏睡的，瞌睡的

tumor ['tju:mə] n. 瘤

devastate ['devəsteit] vt. 毁坏

tree-trimming [tri: 'trimiŋ] 数目清理

electrocute [ɪlektro'kju:t] vt. <美> 触电致死

ashen ['æʃ(ə)n] adj. 灰色的，苍白的

conducive [kən'dju:siv] adj. 有益的