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(he wasn't mine) who had been hit very badly by a car that hadn't even slowed down. There was nothing at all I could do except sit beside him and wait for my mom to get the car so we could take him to the vet's ... and he died on the way. But the look in those deep eyes seemed to say "I put myself in your hands. Whatever needs to be done, I know you'll do it. I trust you." I cried for days remembering that look, and it wasn't even my dog!

A lot of people who have lost pets they loved decide not to have any more. It's too painful, they say. People almost *always* outlive their pets, and the more you love the animal, the more you're going to hurt when it's gone. Why should anyone let himself in for an experience like that?

THAT'S LIFE!

Because that's what life is ... on any level. Any one of us could wall himself up, become a librarian or something, live alone all life through, make no friends (they can vanish from our lives, too) and probably never feel



MY BELOVED Kula is gone now, but I wouldn't give up any of my beautiful days & memories of her ever!!



HOLDING one of Sheesh's & Sam's pups was like holding a dream!

sharp pain or experience deep personal loss. But that's not living!

Living, for me at least, is going as high as you can. Loving people, pets, places, as much as you can, because love is the only emotion we feel that makes us stronger instead of using us up. Sure, there's pain when someone or something you loved is gone forever, but the *experience* of love is more than worth the sorrow that might (or might not) follow it.

And that's the thing that pets can teach you most about—love.

You see, it doesn't really matter whether your goldfish, or your king snake, or your rat loves you madly and dreams about you every night. (I'm not sure I'd like to be in a snake's dreams anyway.) What matters is you love them.

That's especially important for young people (myself included) who haven't married yet, or found that one person they'll love forever. Love needs to be practiced. It's like anything else; you have to learn to do it.

And pets are a great way. You learn to be worthy of trust. You learn to love something deeply enough to take care of it, and you *do* take care of it! And that's something you can't get from reading all the romantic books that have ever been printed!

And what a reward it is to realize that the animal loves you, too. Even a cat (I've always felt that cats were the one animal to which you don't speak unless spoken to) will come in time to trust you completely—and that's really something when you realize that, from a *cat's* point of view, people are too big, too noisy, too clumsy, and altogether too *sloppy* to be really respectable animals!

So get one: whatever it is—snake, rat, parakeet, ocelot, kangaroo, gerbil (love that word), or even a jar full of lightning bugs—but be sure to let them go before they die. Get one ... and keep "petting!"

Love,

David



TAKING care of a pet is a responsibility of love!