

Ariel was the runt of our friend's litter of Bernese mountain dog pups. She was the last pup born and she stopped breathing. The first miracle- her breeder (Bill) was able to resuscitate her.

I visited that litter of pups to help socialize them, with no intention of taking one home. But when I held Ariel in my hand at 4-weeks-old, I felt a surge of electricity. I visited every week and at the end of each visit Ariel was the one in my arms. I wanted Ariel more than anything in the world but my parents were already taking care of my Tibetan Mastiff during the day while I worked and they felt a puppy would be too much. When the litter turned 8 weeks old, I was away on a business trip and I had a dream that Ariel was my puppy. I'd never been happier until I woke up and realized it was just a dream. When I got home, my sister told me to call the breeder. The breeder knew that Ariel and I belonged together and refused to place her with anyone else. That was the second miracle. The third was that after meeting Ariel, my parents fell in love with her and agreed to puppy-sit during the day.

The fourth miracle happened every day during the incredible 13 ½ years of life that we had together. It was clear that after fighting so hard to come into this world, Ariel was determined to live her life to the fullest. Nothing was an obstacle to her. She brought boundless enthusiasm to everything she did- and she did so much, including agility, nosework, draft work, paw painting, and skateboarding! She was a diva at heart and loved entertaining seniors and children with her tricks and freestyle dance routines and pulling her cart in parades. She had multiple TV appearances (Fetch, The Secret Life of Animals, Chronicle) and was featured in a rock video (skateboarding in Extreme's "King of the Ladies"). She graduated from Harvard's Canine Cognition Lab in 2011, and her photos were featured in AAA Pet Travel Guidebooks (2010, 2012) and the "Page-a-Day" dog calendar in 2014.

A few months after she was honored as the Bernese Mountain Dog of America's first senior ambassador in 2016, Ariel began slowing down due to a tumor in her lungs. For the first time in her life, she lost interest in food.

When our friend, Dawn, gave me a gift certificate to Diane Dewberry for an animal communication session, I was hoping Ariel would give Diane some insight into flower essences or remedies that would help her feel better so we could have more time together.

But I was not prepared for what Ariel told Diane she wanted- the fifth miracle. Ariel told Diane that she wanted a "departure" party- just like the parties that my sister and I often hosted for our dogs and those of our friends in celebration of birthdays and holidays. Ariel wanted to bask in that joy one more time, complete with all of the guests that usually attended our dog parties and the requisite cake and ice cream.

We were taken aback, the last thing we felt like doing was having a party when Ariel was so ill, but Ariel was very clear about what she wanted.

We contacted all our friends but it was going to take about a week before we could get everyone together. I told Ariel that I really needed her to hang on even though she was getting weaker every day and having more difficulty breathing.

We had the party on March 12, 2016. It was a beautiful day. Adorned in her halo and angel wings, Ariel loved being the center of attention. The people she adored got to spend quality time with her. They bestowed cuddles, hugs, and kisses and meaningful gifts (including prayer beads and white sage clearing spray) to help her on her journey over the rainbow. Our friend Steve even wrote a special blessing just

for her. We thought the gathering would be unbearable and flooded with the tears of goodbyes but Ariel's love outshined all of those fears and replaced them with joy at being together and an outpouring of love. Ariel's people left with homemade gifts of ornaments with a Berner in the arms of an angel and angel earrings as a remembrance of the earth angel they loved so much.

Our beautiful diva took her final bow on March 14, 2016, just two days after the celebration of her life. She was barely eating and very weak. I knew the hardest decision of my life was coming. When I got home from work, she was too weak to walk. I had to drag her bed to the door so she could go outside- where she collapsed. Seconds after my sister and I helped her back inside, Ariel took her last breath in my arms and that dreaded decision from my control- the sixth miracle. I called Ariel's vet and she said they would stay open late for us. By chance (or more likely part of Ariel's grand plan to leave on her own terms and to try to ease the pain of that transition for us) our friend, Phil, showed up at our house. He helped us carry her body to the car for her final trip to her beloved vet while her soul was soaring over the rainbow bridge.

We can't thank Diane enough for her journey with Ariel that led to such a magical day celebrating Ariel's life with her still at our side. The memory of the overwhelming love that we all shared that day helps to ease the tears we still shed over the loss of our miracle pup- the runt of the litter struggling to breathe who lived every moment to the fullest (even in her final days) and became larger than life. Diane's gift of animal communication made that day possible and we will be forever grateful for the miracle that Diane performed for us and Ariel.