

February 15, 2004

Dear Mr. Tinsley,

Although we have never met, I would like to introduce myself to you. My name is Pam Marquardt. I live in the small town of Horicon, WI with my husband Al, our son Jordan, our dog Gracie and our cat Gizmo. Gracie is the newest addition to our family, she was adopted in mid-November from HAWS. She is a lovely dog, and a great addition! But still there is a spot in our hearts which is left empty. That spot belongs to our "gone but not forgotten" German Shorthaired buddy, Jess. He had been with our family for over 11 years. He was a very young puppy when I found out I was pregnant, so my son and he grew up together and were the BEST of friends. They did EVERYTHING together that they could.

In July of 2003, Jess started to have blood in his stool. He became sick frequently. He quit eating. Some days he could not even stand up on his own. He was bleeding to death internally and there was really nothing we could do. It was heartbreaking for all of us, but particularly for our son, Jordan. Finally in late August of 2003, we decided it was becoming a lot of suffering for him, and we held him, all three of us, as he was put to sleep. We cried and prayed together as we buried him, built up his beautiful gravesite and put in his memory cross. We cried again together the following weekend as we planted flowers there. Although we missed him terribly, my husband and I began to go through our grieving process and were able to begin moving on. Our son, however, was not.

In late October of 2003, my son's best friend had to move from his dad's house here in town to his mom's house, an hour away. He became even more moody and emotional.

I really began to worry as Christmas approached, and he spoke of how he would rather "be dead like Jess than have a Christmas with both best friends gone". He questioned incessantly about Heaven, and if Jess really was there. To discourage any further thoughts on his part, I also stressed that you get to Heaven by God's will and not your own. If you take your own life, God will not be pleased. But Jess was a great dog and the best friend anyone could have ever had, so I was sure God took him to Heaven.

Still, he questioned me daily about "how do I know that for sure" and "what if God didn't let dogs in, like a lot of places don't". It broke my heart, but I didn't know how else to reassure him.

Then one day, a friend from work who knew the story and what I was going through, brought me in this obituary. It was that of your lovely wife, Terri. How I wish I could have met her, and thanked her myself for helping my son by sharing "Rainbow Bridge". Just knowing that there is someone like her at Rainbow Bridge, keeping the animals company, playing with them, and offering companionship until we can see him again, means more than you will ever know!

I am terribly, terribly sorry for your loss, it must be the most traumatic thing anyone could ever experience. But in your grief, you still were able to share that part of your wife with everyone around you. And I truly believe that I was losing some touch with my son, until I shared her story with him. I typed out the saying, just like the one I've sent to you, except with Jess' name on it. I put it in an 11 X 14 frame with a mat for an 8 X 10, and glued some photos of Jess to the mat. I wrapped it, and he opened it at Christmas with my family.

There was not a dry eye in the place as he read it out loud. And as we talked of how I happened to hear of this, about this lovely couple named The Tinsley's, and your tragic loss. But I truly believe that even though my son still misses Jess, and he is learning to love Gracie, he is finally beginning to really heal.

Whenever he has a bad day, he goes to his room, takes the picture from the wall, and talks to Jess. He seems comforted by the time he comes to talk to me. And I cannot thank you enough, for sharing. I know it is your wife's words, and her request to God which we trust has been granted, that is offering that comfort. I pray you find the comfort you need as well, whenever you may need it.

In God's Love,

The Marquardt family

Pam, Al, Jordan, Gracie, Gizmo (& Jess)

Rainbow Bridge

Just this side of heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge.

When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge. There are meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can run and play together. There is plenty of food, water, and sunshine, and our friends are warm and comfortable. All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigor; those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our memories and dreams of days and times gone by.

The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing: they each miss someone very special to them, who had to be left behind. They all run and play together, but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent; His eager body quivers. Suddenly he begins to run from the group, flying over the green grass, his legs carrying him faster and faster.

YOU have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress his beloved head, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, so long gone from your life but never absent from your heart.

Then you cross Rainbow Bridge together.....

In Loving Memory of Terri Tinsley

"The Angel of Rainbow Bridge"

1964-2003