

Compassion for Dying Animals

(After the announcement of the death of Venus, our miniature horse, we received the following letter. "Kanzeon" is the Bodhisattva of Compassion, and when we call on Him/Her it is said that "Great Compassion is with us and we are searching for it within ourselves". Kanzeon then manifests in our thoughts, words and actions, and in those of others too.)

Thank you for writing Rev Master Phoebe,

How sad, indeed, and what a loss to the whole community. She was so loved by everyone and so cared for... Horses can be awfully fragile for being such sturdy beings. It amazes me.

It must have been quite distressing to see her in pain, make a decision to move her, drive her all the way to Bakersfield only to be unable to save her. I am glad you owned her, or she might have died without help all alone, wandering about ignored. She at least died surrounded by love and awareness.

Monday our little Poppet the Cat – all 5 lbs of her tiny self – was so limited in her breathing that she could no longer walk about or move. She would not eat or drink, and I don't see how she could sleep. Even putting drops into her mouth took up more breath than she had, the lymphoma tumors so filled her lungs. After much soul-searching and agonizing and long talks with my friend and vet, Sheri MacVeigh, I decided that euthanasia would be wisest for her, as she was terribly close to full blown suffocation and I did not think the resulting panic would help her die peacefully. I took her in and kissed her and talked to her as she died, doing the animal ordination verse for her before the injection. I carried her about, petting her and telling her to go straight to Kanzeon right that minute – that Kanzeon was waiting to take her onward. She had a service at home, too, in front of my altar, and went to the crematory the next morning. I got her ashes back yesterday in a little box with her name and dates.

Actually, I was never able to make an intellectual decision for euthanasia, but it became clear to me after a while that I was waffling ridiculously, and then, unable to sort emotion from meditation from logic, I despaired and instantly knew to turn to Kanzeon and ask her – plead with her and cry to her, actually – to help make right any mistake I was about to make. I knew I was acting carefully and with love, and although I was unable to ascertain if my timing and method were the wisest, I knew Kanzeon would come to Poppet's aid, and help turn any error of mine into kindness. It was a sudden and utterly confident moment when I found myself saying that Kanzeon would help and would turn any mistaken effort to a good end for Poppet. I knew that the consequences are still mine, but I then willingly accepted that, as opposed to fearing I was making a mess of things. Every night Poppet and I would spend 1-2 hours together in bed, mostly hearing the Litany or the Kanzeon scripture of the Scripture of Great Wisdom, etc. Your advice to do that, and to turn to Kanzeon made SO much difference...I cannot tell you how that seed germinated and flowered at exactly the right moment. Your simple advice was exactly the medicine we both needed desperately. Bless you for that. Bless you.

With love and gratitude,

Day Yeager

Epilogue: Even though Poppet had only been in foster care with us for a few weeks, I wanted to offer her genuine hospice care. My dear 14 year old cat, Bhakti, died earlier this year of cancer and I struggled mightily to learn about animal hospice, with little success. Everything I read seemed to say "well, this and that palliative drug until you have to euthanize." I had never

ethanized an animal before Poppet. We'd been lucky that our animals had died of relatively manageable illnesses. But I needed help this time, and could not find much. Then, not many weeks after Poppet's death, I was following a car with a bumper sticker that said "SpiritsinTransition.org" and I looked it up when I got home. It was EXACTLY what I had been searching for, causing me to reflect on the many ways the Buddha's teaching can unfold. Here are a couple of sentences from the veterinarian-created website <http://www.spiritsintransition.org/>:

Many feel there is great value in allowing the natural dying process to unfold, yet they are not familiar with that process and how to best care for an animal loved one who is transitioning. Supporting a dying animal is an art that can be learned, and benefits greatly from preparing ahead of time, before the actual hospice situation arises. The [weekend seminar](#) "SPIRITS in Transition" as well as the [online classes](#) have been designed for that purpose.