

New Leash on Life

By Anne Mallore



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Dedication



This book is dedicated to my husband, Carmen. He pushed me to write what I felt and believed that I could write something that people would actually want to read. Thank you for your love, resilience, and for your commitment to Wags. I used to be the rock, I passed that on to you. Thank you for building my dream and making it wag.

Also, to the best two things I ever created, my boys, CJ and Sammy. Thank you for being my heart and soul. I love you with all that I am. Thank you for riding the wave, especially when it gets

rough, and for all of the hugs even when you gave them up reluctantly!

For my Dad and Mom, for your support, love and gentle healing. I thank you with all of my heart! I am so blessed to be your daughter!

For my "Angels on Earth", "Grace", you know who you are, Bonnie, and "Dr. Nancy" for giving me home, Longboat Key and sanity, in that order. But, most of all, for your friendship. I could never have survived without you! Remember, "small kindnesses"...

For all of my beloved pets, Woody, Princess Kitty, Wiley, Lola and Clark. No medicine works better than being loved by a pet.

Preface

I wrote this book with the hope that someone reading my story may get the courage to fight on and not give up when facing unimaginable circumstances. I want the reader to take from the story a will to continue on with the journey of life, to not give up, and to trust that God has a plan for you. The path given may not be the path you chose, but the one that will be the most gratifying in the long run.

Many great people have failed before they reached their true calling, but they persevered. Find what you truly love to do in life, and incorporating that into a means to survive, you will find peace. Contentment also comes with the job. Self-worth is reaffirmed and faith restored. Listening with your heart can bring you there. Don't be afraid. Choose a path of self-belief and step over your fears.

Everything truly does happen for a reason. We are as we are supposed to be right now. There are no coincidences.

Too many people fall into despair, or give up the fight before they even give themselves a chance to taste victory. Be brave! Know you aren't alone in your struggles. Everyone faces trials in their life. Be strong, don't give up. Hang in there! In your darkest moments, the sun still shines and isn't that a blessing in itself?

- Anne Mallore

Introduction

My name is Anne Mallore. I am the owner of Wag's Pet Center. I have always had a profound love of animals and worked for years in the pet industry. We opened Wags in August of 2007 as a means to survive and to fulfill a dream. I am asked frequently how we got into this business and how we started. No one knows the whole story. Some think they do. They may know part, but not really. That is why I'm writing this book, so I can tell my story.

I know that we are not unique in our experiences. I read about devastation like this all the time. Each case is unique as to how it is handled. We chose to survive, no, to thrive, to pick ourselves up and press ahead. The alternative was not attractive at all, and not an option.

Simply put, we had a very successful business before building Wags. We did not, however, surround ourselves with the right people and we suffered the consequences as a result. We delegated where we should not have delegated. We

misplaced our trust. We failed. This caused a ripple that engulfed us and overtook us.

We lost everything that we had, our vehicles, possessions, our home, and our sense of self. Our loss is a death and a death that took its toll. We also lost some of our closest friends. It felt like we had a plague and no one wanted to be around us for fear of our bad luck. That was really hard. Heartbreaking. We were mortally wounded, but we survived. The love of family and sheer will brought us through difficult hurdles, and faith. If you don't have faith, there is no hope and without hope, there is nothing.

BOOK EXCERPT-

Chapter 28

Summer, 2011

Midwinter break, spring break, Easter, Memorial Day. Any and all Holidays are absolutely crazy now. I have no time to feel sorry for myself. We have too much to do. Bad days seem to become less frequent because I am working so hard. The boys have things to do, like live their lives, so there are nights that it's just me for the walk. I don't mind.

I like the quiet time with my guests. They really help. I think this is my therapy, being with my kids. Not my boys, my furry guests. I like walking the dogs by myself because I can take my time and enjoy each one. They all have such different personalities, just like people.

Major came in with his dad, Bob, one day. Major is a huge black lab. Bob told us that Major likes to hang out and will nap in his crate most of the day. Very low key. We gave him a nice room with

a bed and set his crate up in there for him to use. Nope, that wasn't going to work. He barked his dissatisfaction very soon after we closed his door.

Barking, grumbling, and growling. Major was being a grumpy old man! Okay, we'll try something different. We opened his door and disassembled his crate. We took the disassembled crate back out of his room and reassembled it in the living room. I barely had enough time to put his bed and his teddy bear back in there, than he tried to get past me and into the crate!

During one stay, I thought I'd try putting Major's crate in front of the open door to a room so he'd still have the room to use. Nope, that wouldn't do. More grumbling and barking. Major had to have his crate, his den, in the middle of the room where all of the action was. He had to be the center of the Wags universe. We were his wait staff and we were here to serve his every need!

Major was our first guest to get a visitor. We quickly learned that that was a bad idea. One of Bob's neighbors stopped in to see how Major was doing.

I didn't think it would be a problem. Um, wrong. When our guests are vacationing with us and you bring a visitor in, not only does the visatee get all worked up, but every other guest does as well.

The dogs think the visit is for them or that it's time to go home. The disappointment they feel is very obvious on their face. Major barked his displeasure with the whole visitor idea loudly. He settled down after a bit, and a cookie, but I felt bad for him. We won't do that again! No more two legged visitors at Wags again!

Major came and stayed often and became one of our extended family. I found this to be happening pretty frequently with returning guests, come to think of it. But he definitely was special. If Major wanted a drink and his bowl was empty, he would pick it up and "prison cup" it along the sides of his crate. The boys gave this practice its name after old movies where prisoners in jail would rake their cups across the jail cell bars. Major would pick the bowl up, walk over to his crate, and run it down the sides of his crate! He got his point across!

He would “prison cup” when he thought it was time to eat too. It didn’t matter if it wasn’t time yet. Major wouldn’t eat his dinner until after he was told to sit and wait, which he did. He wouldn’t touch it, however, until you snapped your fingers to let him know it was okay to eat! Major was on his own clock and we were to serve him when he wanted, not when it was time. He also liked to check out what everyone else was having to eat. He’d follow us around during meal times, sniffing all the while, just checking, and grumbling, waiting for a morsel, or better yet, a treat, to be dropped.

Bob, Major’s dad, would call every now and then to see how his boy was fairing, but he told us he never worried about Major. We get that complement a lot. We have been told repeatedly that parents don’t worry when their kids are with us. A complement like that is really nice.

If you spend a few minutes with us you will see how we are with our guests. They are a part of our family. Loving them makes it very hard when it’s time to say goodbye. Unfortunately, having

to say goodbye happens, and the more guests we get, the more times it will happen.

Such was the case with Major. Bob stopped in a few days prior to Major's last stay. That is not unusual. People stop in all the time to say hi or drop something, like cookies, off. This wasn't one of those visits. He had to tell us Major was failing.

Bob asked if we would still take Major as he had to go out of town. Bob knew that he probably wouldn't be taking Major back home. He knew how we felt about Major and more importantly, how Major felt about us. He didn't want to leave him with anyone else, just in case.

Of course we would take him! We then made a plan of action. Major's esophagus was slowly closing and it would come to a point where he would not be able to breathe. Reminded me of Woody. Nothing could be done because of his age. It was just a matter of time. Major had had a good, long life and now it was all about quality over quantity.

We were instructed that if Major went down, we were to call Bob's son. Major

was his dog growing up, but ended up with Bob when his son moved on. Bob wanted to make sure his son was there for Major in the end. Their vet was also notified and would be ready when Major was.

On an April evening, we had finished doing the dinner feeding. Major was going door to door, as usual, checking on all of the other guest's menus. He was sneaking a pat on the head, nosing hands as we tried to feed everyone. You couldn't bend over for anything without getting a face full of that huge muzzle. He was very interested and interacting, even more than usual. After dinner, everyone settled in for a quiet evening.

At about 8 pm, we started doing a walk and Major was kind of hanging out, observing everyone and everything. We got done with the walk and as usual Major was the last one to go out. He got his leash on and we started out the door. Major got about two steps out when he collapsed. Carmen, CJ, Eric and I were by his side immediately. I cradled his head in my hands and just cried. It was his time to pass. This wonderful,

beautiful baby was leaving us. He was struggling for each breath. Eric was by my side and we talked to him and told him how great he was.

Carmen had sprung into action, first calling the vet, then Bob's son. CJ went inside and got a blanket. I kept telling Major to hang in there, and not thinking, to not go. I couldn't help it. I know I shouldn't, but I cried, and hugged him, and loved him, and cried some more. I knew for him, I had to stop. I had to be strong. I had to tell him it was okay. I couldn't ask him to fight anymore. It wasn't fair for me to ask that. I soothed him, and Eric and I held him until CJ and Carmen could get him in the car.

The three of them picked Major up. He was struggling for breath. They got him in the car. I was able to say goodbye and to tell him how much he was loved by us and by his family. I told Major he was a great friend, a strong protector, a beautiful boy, and a great dog. I just sobbed as Carmen and CJ drove off.

Eric stayed with me and came and gave me a big hug and he was crying too. We waited together for Carmen and CJ to get

back. I couldn't sit still so I started to clean. It's what I do when I'm upset or stressed. After what seemed like hours, my men came back.

As he laughed and cried, CJ told us about Major's last ride. On the way to the vet's office, CJ held Major in the backseat. He cried and rubbed Major's side as he soothed him. Major tried to roll on his back, struggling as he did. As he fought for breath, he pushed to get over on to his back. CJ thought he was trying to situate himself so he could breathe better. No. Not that. He wanted his belly rubbed! CJ obliged, and rubbed his belly all the way to the vet's office!

Bob's son met Carmen and CJ at the vet's office. He got to say goodbye to his old friend. Two days later, without ever knowing our Major, a customer sent us a picture of a grave marker they had seen in a pet cemetery while interring their pet. The stone said, "Major. Born a dog, died a gentleman". Perfect.

About the Author



Anne Mallore feels writing “about the author” is like writing her obituary. Speaking in the third person is one of her pet peeves. However, she will give it a whirl.

Anne Mallore is an author and owner of Wags Pet

Center in Marcellus, New York. She and her husband, Carmen have been delightfully married for thirty-two years. They are blessed with two sons, CJ and Sammy that are the joy of their lives. She lives in her forever home in Camillus New York with her husband Carmen, and their two shih-tzus, Lola and Clark.

Anne is currently working on a second book about some of the guests from Wags. Anne is inspired by the animals she has met along her life’s journey, and by the special bonds formed along the way. She is looking forward to going back to Longboat, as it is always on her mind. Connect with Anne at Livelaughwag22@gmail.com & Facebook