



**Canine: Barkley Sept 16<sup>th</sup>, 1991—February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2004**  
**Handler: Michelle Eldridge, MA-TF1**  
**FEMA Certification: Type I**

Ten and a half years ago I rescued an Australian Shepherd from the vet one hour after he was supposed to have been put to sleep because he had been unclaimed in the pound for four months. My friend said "You saved his life someday he will save someone else's." Ten months later he found a lost teacher who had been given up for dead. Barkley and I were together 24 hours a day for the next ten years. He went to the Atlanta Olympics, was the first dog in the eastern U.S. to be certified as a Federal Disaster Dog. We traveled extensively and his final mission began on Sept. 13, 2001 at the World Trade Center. He turned 10 while he was there. He gave every ounce of himself while he worked that week and performed like a true hero.

Barkley always slept on the first floor, upside down, in front of the door. He had never slept in bed with me. One night in January he followed me up to my room when I was heading off to bed. He put his paws up on the bed and insisted I let him sleep with me. He had not been feeling well and I obliged him. He lay down, with his head on my pillow and his back against my chest. I put my arm around him and was hugging and stroking him. I was enjoying this time with him, wondering why he was not feeling well. It was then that I discovered the lump on his neck. He stayed with me for most of the night. I believe Barkley knew then that he was sick and he needed to tell me. Barkley developed cancer and it was discovered at the end of January 2004. The vet told me that he may only have a few weeks to live. We started chemotherapy and he seemed to be making a startling recovery. The vet now said he may live another year or more. While he was sick and on chemo I often tried putting him in bed with me but he never wanted to stay.

The night before he wandered off into the woods he asked to go out in the middle of the night. I let him out and he stayed out all night. The next morning I was feeding the horses and he passed by the fence. I tried to stop him and he sat in the most unusual way. He looked like he was on a mission and did not want to stop. He sat briefly, watching me, with his head slumped over like Snoopy on top of his dog house. I looked away for a moment to finish dropping hay and when I looked back

he was gone. I didn't realize it then (he had seemed so much healthier lately) but I think he was saying good-bye.

On February 8, 2004 he wandered off into the woods. I found his body 5 days later on February 13. He had gone down to the lake, crawled under the cottage and gone to sleep...it was a beautiful spot and one of his favorite places to be...he never woke up. He was my best friend and constant companion. He will always be my hero. I miss him so much.