


# Substantial Disruption



## Tears and Wonderment

By Mike Tully

### *Eulogy*

Penny didn't make it to spring. That's a shame, because she loved spring, with its freshness, smells, burgeoning new life and the noises and sensations of the waking desert. Dogs read the world through their ears and noses. For Penny, every walk was an olfactory library as she caught up on the neighborhood gossip, if walking nearby, or explored a larger world elsewhere.

*A song of love is a sad song, Hi-Lili, Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo*

Dogs love to “stomp on the terra,” as Lord Buckley once put it. Penny was like that, jumping excitedly when we reached for her harness and leash. Most of her walks were in the neighborhood until we retired a few years ago. Our retirement came as a blessing to Penny because we expanded the footprint – or paw print – of her walking territory. We added our favorite sections of the Chuck Huckelberry Loop, the “Smiling Dog Ranch” dog park on North Pontatoc Road, and Ft. Lowell Park.

*A song of love is a song of woe, don't ask me how I know*

We adopted Penny on November 4, 2005, Kris' birthday. We lost Spot and Augie earlier that year and I was still mourning them, especially Spot, who gave me 18 years of hiking, fetching, companionship and comfort. But Kris had been confronting a health issue and knew a dog would be therapeutic. I reminded myself that, despite the lingering pain, we were dog people and we had an opening. As our daughter Meg says, we don't dishonor the dogs we lost by loving another one. No heart is fully closed off by grief. There is always an opening for love.

*A song of love is a sad song  
For I have loved and it's so*

Penny was a little more than two years old when she joined us. When we adopted Holden, a larger, older male dog two weeks later, Penny showed us how smart and responsible she was. I was sitting in my home office and the dogs were in the back yard, which has a fenced-in dog run. We didn't realize there was a breach in the perimeter, a dog-sized gap between wooden steps and the lower deck. I suddenly heard a dog bark and looked out the window to see a dog walking by. I called out to Kris that one of the dogs had gotten out and ran to the front door. There was Penny. She had escaped, let me know, then waited to be let in.

I repaired loose fence fabric I thought she had pushed against to escape, then returned to my office. Penny went back outside. After a few minutes I checked on Penny and the dog run was empty. I ran out the front door and called Penny's name. She had wandered a few yards down the

street and ran home when I called her. Once both dogs were safely inside, I discovered and filled the hole in the perimeter. When I let Penny out, she went directly to the hole to inspect it. I then realized Penny had let me know about her escape so I would discover and eliminate the breach. She had obviously known about it for two weeks and could have left at any time. But she didn't want to leave and didn't want Holden to get out, either. Penny, on her own initiative, made sure the family – the pack – remained intact.

*I sit at the window and watch the rain  
Hi-Lili, Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo*

I learned that Penny had less than a month to live on January 29<sup>th</sup> when I took her to the vet and barely made it home because of the tears. Kris and I vowed to make her last days as pleasant as possible. We bought her special food and treats, since her appetite was waning. We took her on one last walk in Ft. Lowell Park. Penny loved that park, with its pond, ducks, turtles, grassy fields, natural areas and proximity to The Loop. She would bound ahead, her ears flapping happily, as she sniffed and pranced her way through the two to three miles we always covered. The final walk was shorter and slower than the others.

The night before she died, Penny went outside at 3:00AM. When I checked on her, she was lying down on the lower deck. I helped her up, she took a step and lay back down. I helped her get up again, then gently guided her back inside. After a bit of a rest, I helped her onto the bed so she could spend her last night the way she had spent her life with us: curled up on my robe near the foot of the bed.

### *Epilogue*

Penny died at home on the morning of Friday, February 21<sup>st</sup>. Meg and Clinton, our son-in-law, joined us for the last goodbye. After Penny died, we went to brunch at the Teaspoon Café, then, surprisingly, drove from there to the Pima Animal Care Center (PACC). I was in shock and didn't feel ready, but Kris and Meg insisted and Meg reminded me that we would not dishonor Penny's memory.

*Tomorrow I'll probably love again*

We wandered around the majestic new PACC facility for a while until a dog we had overlooked made an effort to get Kris and Meg's attention by standing up in her cage and visibly seeking it. We rendezvoused in the Meet and Greet area and met a 13-month-old shepherd mix with the PACC name "Red Jasper." We adopted her and renamed her Zoey. After we brought her into her new home, I realized she had Penny's eyes, iridescent almonds with natural eye liner. I knew she was the one and every moment since has confirmed it. One chapter ends, another begins, and the book remains unwritten.

*Hi-Lili, Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo*

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(Lyrics from "Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo" (Bronislau Kaper and Helen Deutsch, 1952).