

## David Andrewson

My name is David, and I came into Kathy and Laird's life in February of 2021. I'd just moved to town and was looking for part-time work that would be rewarding. At that same time, Kathy was looking for someone to spend a few hours each afternoon with Laird. We were connected through mutual friends in our spiritual community, and it was a perfect match.

As it turns out, I'm also a personal trainer, so Kathy was happy to know that I could do the OT and PT homework with Laird. I soon found that I could really support him by putting my own twist on things.

He liked challenging his body and often would initiate a physical workout session without any prompting from me. Even after a rough morning he would sometimes let me know he was "rarin' to go." Laird was sometimes so motivated to do physical workouts that it took him a day or two to recover enough to train again.

One of the most remarkable things about Laird was that even when he seemed to be most challenged physically, and probably emotionally as well, I never heard him lament his situation. Day in and day out, for all the months I was with him I never heard him complain or feel sorry for himself. Remembering fond or treasured events could bring tears but they were usually heartwarming as well, for all of us in the room.

I soon became aware that I didn't need to fill all our time together with some kind of engagement or entertainment. We were both comfortable with long stretches of silence — just being there, hanging out. Often looking over at him I would see him gazing out the window — not just at nearby things like the bird feeder that Kathy had put there, but even to what seemed to be beyond the homes and nearby hills, someplace far, far distant.

I enjoyed and I'm sure, benefitted, from being able to observe Kathy and Laird together, to see how close they were, her caring and devotion, his willingness to receive. Her sensitivity in their new dynamic together, his one-liner or one-word deadpan humor—all the different facets of their tender, loving relationship. It was a privilege.

I watched both my own parents go through similar experiences to Laird's, and I have to say that it was spending time with Laird, day after day, that expanded my capacity for empathy and compassion, in a way that I wish I'd had in those days with my own parents. Spending time with Laird gave back to me more than I probably even fully realize.