



The author's makeshift memorial to his late husky.

AUTHOR GRIEVES THE LOSS OF HIS BELOVED HUSKY



By **MATT LOVE**
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I was utterly lost how to handle my grief after Sonny the husky passed away. Almost 17 years rambling Oregon's publicly-owned beaches together is not something lightly transitioned. I hate the word "transition," by the way; I much prefer "change."

There I was, early morning on a low tide, walking for miles down the beach at the wrack line. My mind contained not a single clarifying thought. Was I expecting an epiphany? Was I a fool for expecting anything from the ocean. The ocean is not a commodity to me, as it is to others. But I like to think the ocean has provided for me during sad or unknown times in my two decades of living on the Oregon Coast.

To my right, in the distance, the ocean seemed listless. Clammers clammed in too much haste. A dog hurled itself into the water. Two girls did little jigs on the sand. A man was inexplicably rowing a row boat out into the surf. Four \$60,000 trucks lined up end to end, gleaming in the sunlight.

I looked to my left and saw two massive logs and an ample supply of driftwood scattered north and south of my position. I veered toward the logs.

They were ancient bleached beauties and interlocked and enclosing in such a way to form an asymmetrical triangle with small entrances at two corners. The whole natural architecture screamed in a language older than



Matt Love/Submitted Photos

The author would build the driftwood forts for Sonny.

words for an immediate driftwood fort! If only someone would build it.

Sentinel of the Fort

Sonny used to help me build driftwood forts. Then when I completed one, which is never, she would invariably find her way inside and take up the role as Sentinel of the Fort. I've got about a thousand photographs of this pose.

The great Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist Carl Jung once wrote:

"Enchantment is the oldest form of medicine."

I would build the fort for Sonny. I would enchant myself in the process because building a driftwood fort to me is a supremely satisfying act of enchantment. And I needed old medicine because I had never felt sadder in my life than that morning.

My tattered V-neck sweater came off. I rolled up my sleeves and went to work with no preconceived plan. The unconscious mind would guide me.

I spent 90 minutes building the fort, although it could have been three hours, too. It was a unique construction, but then again, no two driftwood forts are ever alike. If they were, I wouldn't participate. I'm a fort builder in threadbare corduroys, not a developer in pressed pants.

'Druidic fashion'

My mind felt empty. It seemed time to leave the beach, but not before a final scavenge here and there for the special flourishes meant to enchant anyone who would encounter the fort. Most likely, they would be curious people and they'd probably be walking.

I decorated the fort with shells, crab legs, sand dollars, rocks, feathers, spires and what I like to think is my signature touch, beaver sticks arranged in Druidic fashion, whatever that is. I stepped away and admired my handiwork.

Something was missing, though. I hunted around for a stick the appropriate size and came across a crooked marvel, alone, with no other flotsam and jetsam around. I found an undisturbed drift near the front entrance, went to my knees, and then with the stick, wrote "Fort Sonny" in the sand.

I got up and kept walking, which way, I had no idea.

Matt Love is the author and editor of 14 books, including two where Sonny is a featured character, "Of Walking in Rain" and "The Great Birthright." His books are available at coastal bookstores or his website, nestuccaspitpress.com