

Coming to Terms with Dewey's Death

After Dewey's death at the hands of my neighbor, Ed Smith, I lived in terror that he would eventually kill my other dogs as well, if they happened to get out of their yard and meet up with him on the road at the top of my driveway, as Dewey had.

He never said a word to me after I delivered my letter regarding Dewey's death to him; he never acknowledged me when we met on the gravel road we both live on; he just went on, his eyes averted from mine which were boring into him, wishing him dead, wishing he would move away, wishing none of this had ever happened.

I wished him dead more out of fear than hatred, but I was serious about my wish. I nurtured it; I visualized him dead in a casket at the local funeral home as many times a day as Dewey, his happy life and horrible death, came into my mind, and that was many times a day. I was still living in a haze, numb with grief; the only thing I saw clearly was the image of Ed, dead as Dewey, in that casket...

This went on for some time, and every once in a while I'd run into Ed, either in town or on the road, and it was hard not to notice that he didn't look well. In fact, he looked horrible. He was bloated and red, and looked like he was going to explode. Neighbors said his Blood Pressure was sky high. Maybe the visualization was working. 'Good,' I thought.

Time past, but I don't remember how much. I was too stressed during that time over having fence problems. My dogs were getting out again, and every time they did, they would dash straight up to the road—the road I walked them on as much as possible, the road where Dewey died.

Sometimes when one or more dogs would get out I would see Ed's truck coming down the road, and frantically run up my driveway, screaming for the escapee to come back, terrified that I was going to see him kill another one or more of my dogs.

But I didn't see that. What I'd see instead, time after time, was Ed going out of his way, sometimes nearly running into a ditch, to avoid hitting my runaway dogs. It was hard to believe, but he seemed as desperate to

avoid the dogs as I was to keep them from getting out and running to the road. Around that time, I realized that I'd stopped visualizing a dead Ed in his casket, probably because I was too busy trying to redo my faulty fencing.

I couldn't ignore his efforts. I didn't want to talk to him, but I felt I had to at least acknowledge his consciously avoiding running over my dogs, as well as my own current inability to safely contain them. I dreaded talking to him, but one quiet afternoon I looked up his number and dialed it. I didn't know who would answer, and I hoped it would be his wife and I could just relay a message through her. But she didn't answer; he did.

I told him who I was and heard silence on his end. I told him I'd been watching him, and couldn't help noticing how hard he was trying to avoid hitting the dogs. He stuttered and sputtered and said he was trying; that he didn't want to hit them; I explained that I was trying to keep them fenced in but was having a hard time and was going to have a new fence built. Then I told him how much I appreciated his efforts; he was still stuttering when he told me he appreciated me noticing. We said goodbye, and the line hung up. I was shaking; he may have been as well.

Shortly after that I had a new and very much improved fence put in, and my dogs were once again safely contained, and I felt a huge weight lifted from me. I continued to meet Ed on the road or in town from time to time, and I noticed that he looked much healthier than he had; we began to chat for a few minutes if we'd meet at the Vet's or in the market.

I wondered if my agony and expression of it to him over losing Dewey, (not to mention my visualizing him dead) had somehow affected him as deeply as it had affected me. I know losing Dewey hurt my health; I also know letting go of my fear and hatred of Ed helped my health, and I'd like to think it helped his health as well.