

Aug. 12, 2008 Sky-Hi News

Cliffview loses a faithful companion

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SKY-HI DAILY NEWS

Cliffview Assisted Living Center residents and staff are mourning the death of a beloved resident.

Sissy, an Australian shepherd, was put down Monday. She lived at the Kremmling center for about 13 years, almost as long as the facility has existed.

Valli Shaw, Cliffview's residence services director, said Sissy's heart was giving out.

"She had been labored breathing throughout the night, and we did not want her to suffer," she said. "It's kind of like with people. You can't stand to see them suffering."

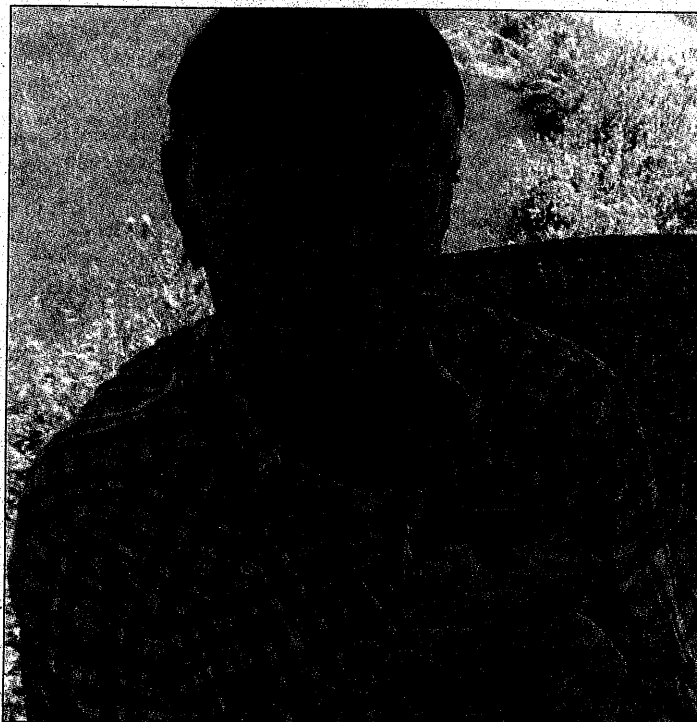
Sissy was 2 years old when she came to Cliffview after being abused by a former owner.

"She's just so sweet," Shaw said. "She loved everybody. She never was aggressive. Just a good dog, definitely part of the family here for sure."

Sissy was a good companion when Shaw worked overnight shifts and would alert staff if a resident was in trouble, she said.

Sissy had cataracts for the past two years but was accepting of all new employees and residents, she said.

"That's a very rare quality, particularly in old dogs," Shaw said. "As far as I'm concerned, she's irreplaceable. I'm not



Cliffview Assisted Living Center resident Adlor Mahon displays a photograph of Sissy, who provided companionship to residents for about 13 years until she had to be put down Monday.

sure if we'll ever get another dog, but it's never going to replace Sissy — she was unique."

Resident Adlor Mahon also misses Sissy.

"She was a neat little dog," he said. "She was always going around picking up the crumbs.

She didn't bother me none.

"Are we gonna get another one? She was a lot of company to a lot of us. They liked her. Oh there's a couple guys here that didn't like her, but I'm not mentioning no names.

"She'd come in my room once in a while and check me

out and see if I was all right. I'd leave the door open and she'd come on in — I didn't care."

He said he wouldn't mind if Cliffview got two or three more dogs. "(It) would drive these people out of their minds if they brought three dogs in," he laughed.

Barb Elliott, Cliffview co-manager, rescued Sissy from Grand County Animal Control 12 years ago.

"When I called they were like, 'Oh she would be great for that facility,'" Elliott said.

"She'll be dearly missed by staff, residents and probably people from around town."

Cliffview co-manager Mary Joe Hargadine, who has worked at the facility for longer than a decade, said she cried when she found out Sissy had to be put to sleep. Sissy has been pet therapy for the residents and an "integral" part of the facility, she said.

Fred Baessler also got along with the "good old girl."

"Lately, she'd come looking for me, but with no eyesight she would go right by me, and then she'd turn around and come back," he said. "I'm the closest male she got to, probably because I was friendly to her. ... I used to talk to her all the time. I just naturally like dogs. I guess it showed. I don't know where she is, but she's probably better off than she was here."