

GALLAGHER'S STORY

BY MARCIA MARTIN





That afternoon, when my 13-year-old black Labrador Gallagher, was gasping for air and collapsed on the ground, my heart stopped.

He had always been the most energetic and fun-loving animal – bouncing and jumping and running and hardly ever at rest. We quickly took him to the most renowned animal hospital in all of Colorado in Colorado Springs. They discovered something wrong with his heart and said it had been an abnormality since his birth. In all Gallagher's years, nothing had ever stopped him; we had never suspected he might have a heart defect.

"I used to think of wellness and health in terms of human beings and their nutrition, exercise and meditation. But I learned more about wellbeing and wholeness from my animals during that time, than any other time in my life."

Gallagher was the third eldest of my animal gang of five - Summer was oldest, a beautiful 15-year-old yellow Lab with the loving heart of a Nun and a smile that was pure sunshine; Nipper was next in line at 14 and the princess of the family – a perfectly groomed and elegantly delicate calico cat; then came rascal Gallagher, and after him Cinco, the Prince of the family, a long-haired black 12-year-old male cat the size of a fox; and finally Simon, the baby of the family at 11, a very fat short-haired black cat who could climb into any cupboard and open any door.

We had always been a “homeward bound” kind of unit. Everyone - including all the cats – followed my instructions to a tee. Everyone knew their names, and came immediately when called. Even the cats knew commands such as ‘sit’, ‘stay’, and ‘lay down’. The cats thought they were dogs, and the dogs thought they were human beings.

We lived in Aspen, Colorado and we would all romp together through the forests and in the mountains. And then Gallagher collapsed. Tyson, my partner, and I were devastated, and we drove down the mountain to the hospital in a flash.

We were scared, and Gallagher was just a heap of dead weight in my lap. Summer was in the back seat, watching over us, being very quiet and somber. Her big smile was nowhere to be found.

At the hospital they immediately took Gallagher into surgery. They told us later, he had a very rare disease where one of the cells was in the wrong place during the development of his heart. Looking back, I can now remember the times Gallagher lost his breath while running. At the time I thought it was just from the heat or altitude. It never stopped him for more than a minute, so I didn't give it a notice all those years.

Now he lay in my arms, very still, and barely breathing. And it had happened in the blink of an eye. One minute he was jumping for joy, and the next second he was on the floor, collapsed in a heap.



For seven long hours Gallagher was in surgery.

We waited in the courtyard with beautiful views of the mountains and Summer at our feet. We meditated and prayed and forced ourselves to have happy thoughts – we focused on seeing Gallagher running and playing again. Summer never left our side.

It was a roller-coaster seven hours. The nurse would run outside to share his progress at each stage of the surgery unfolding inside. Our emotions flip-flopped at each report – the highest of highs, the lowest of lows.

She would yell, “He’s not responding!” and we would stiffen with fear. Then later it would be, “He’s responding!” and we would be in ecstasy.

For seven hours it dragged on.

“His heart stopped!”

“His heart started again!”

“He’s not breathing!” “He’s breathing!”

“They can’t get his heart sewn back up!”

“They’ve sewn it up!”

He’s on a ventilator!”

“He’s off the ventilator!”

On and on and on. Up and down. Seven very long hours. Then the nurse came out and said Gallagher had made it through, and he was okay. I was thrilled and collapsed on the bench in tears of joy. She said we could come in shortly and be by his side when he woke up. Tyson and I were laughing when suddenly we noticed the nurse and the doctor were walking side by side towards us. I held my breath. I saw the nurse was crying.

I stopped breathing altogether.

I couldn't really hear the doctor talking to us, I just noticed his mouth was moving. But I knew what he was saying. I sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. I finally heard him say, "We think he was just too tired, and had to leave." Gallagher was gone.

The nurse stayed with us outside for some time. We were all crying. She told us she had never experienced anything like it in her whole time as a nurse. Every single doctor had come into the operating room to help, 19 in all. They were all in love with Gallagher because of his amazing strong fight. They thought he had the strongest heart ever – a bit comical as that was what was the problem.

And now my heart was broken. The nurse told us it was the first time she saw grown men – doctors all – crying in the halls, they had all cried.

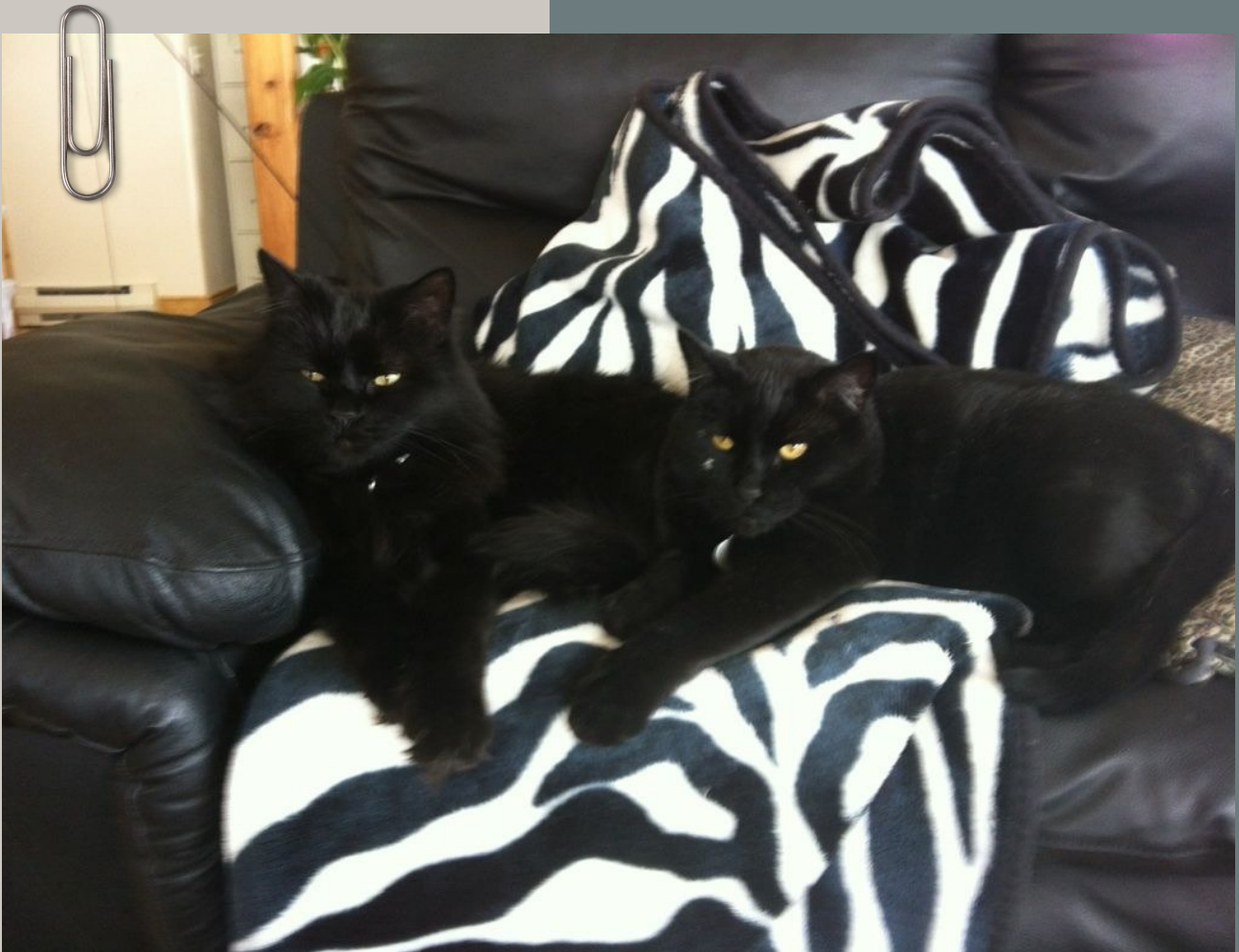
Our doctor asked us to bring Summer in so she would know Gallagher was gone.

We walked into the hospital room with Summer by our side to say goodbye. Gallagher was lying on a low table, so still, so quiet. We stood by the bed for the longest time, sobbing, stroking his fur and sharing our love.

Summer went slowly up to the table and seemed confused. She smelled him a couple times, then looked up at me with a quizzical expression and then smelled him again. Then she nudged him with her nose and tried to wake him up.

After doing that a couple times, she looked up at me again, as if to ask me to fix him. Then she laid down slowly and covered her eyes with her paws. I cried more. We left Gallagher there to be cremated and drove home to Aspen, through the beautiful mountains and forests, mostly silent the whole way. It was a long and very sad ride.







Gallagher's ashes arrived the following week in a beautiful square, hand-carved box. We decided to hold a memorial service to celebrate how much we loved him.

We wrote some poems, gathered some pictures, picked out some special music, and lit some candles.

We placed the square box in the middle of the glass coffee table, and I said "OK, let's begin."

The very minute those words came out of my mouth, suddenly from the other room, all in a single row, in came all the animals.

First led by Summer, and following behind, Nipper, Cinco and Simon. Cinco and Simon jumped up on the coffee table and laid down like book ends on either side of Gallagher's box.

Summer quietly laid down at the foot of the coffee table, and Nipper jumped into my lap.

They all lay quite still and quiet, looking up at Tyson and I, as if they were waiting for us to begin.

Stunned, we began our service. We shared our stories – about Gallagher and our wondrous adventures together, we sang songs, and we read poems.

Then I said, “Let’s finish by saying the Lord’s Prayer.” Tyson and I joined hands and spoke the Lord’s prayer out loud with our eyes closed, to end the ceremony. Then we said “Amen”.

*“At that EXACT moment at the end of that prayer,
a miracle happened. All the animals stood up
immediately, reorganized themselves into the same
single line that had brought them into the room with
Summer leading the way,
and they walked quietly out of the room.*

*They had come, they had paid their respects, and
they had gone. Just like that. Simple and beautiful.*

*That was the day I truly understood wellbeing,
and that we are all connected.
We are all ONE.”*

I had been told this by the Chief of the Achuar tribe long ago when I had traveled on a spiritual quest to the Ecuadorian Rain Forest. He said we needed to act as if we are part of the whole. He held up his fingers, showing only the fingers of his hand, and said, “You people of the North operate like you are a single identity, and separate from everything else. You make your individuality the most important thing in life.” He continued, “But you are actually connected to a larger whole”, at which time he showed his entire hand, and we saw the fingers connected to the whole of the hand.



Then with even more emphasis, “And worse than that, you don’t realize you are part of a whole eco-system”, as he demonstrated his hand was connected to an entire body.

“You are connected to everything, including the animals, the rivers, the Earth, the sky and every living thing, and you must operate in that way, if you are to be healthy and experience wellbeing.”

I had heard his words that day, and I had understood his metaphor, but not until we had Gallagher’s memorial service, did I really experience the magnitude of what he was saying. Mother Earth is alive, and we are her children.

We are all connected, and our wellbeing depends on us acting in that way. On that very special day Gallagher taught us all about true wellbeing - that we are all one. One mind, one body, one Soul.

Marcia Martin



One of THE MOST PROLIFIC influencers on the who's who of the most innovative minds in thought leadership in the last 40 years, Marcia Martin is CEO of Marcia Martin Productions, LLC, an executive training firm specializing in transformational leadership training and communication arts technology. She is renowned as one of the top transformational trainers and executive and life coaches worldwide in the arenas of championship performance, relationship coaching, communication mastery, and public speaking; and she has personally trained over 300,000 individuals and corporate executives around the globe to be more effective human beings.

Committed to creating global transformational impact, Marcia has now created the Marcia Martin Membership Club – a digital video and audio library collection of her past workshops, podcasts, seminars, speaking engagements, and keynotes designed to accelerate human growth, power and wealth

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