

# OAK'S LEGACY

Thanks to acupressure, this young golden recovered from hip dysplasia surgery in record time.

By Amy Snow



Oak was a dashing, champagne golden retriever. He was bred at a service dog training facility. When I first picked him up at the airport, he was a sleepy little, nine-week old, golden-white ball of fluff on four stubby legs.

My job as a puppy raiser for the service dog organization was to love, train and watch Oak grow during his first year of life. I took him to weekly training sessions in public places. He came with me to my office, the grocery store, restaurants – anywhere I went. He was amazingly good, and loved to work and be around people. His temperament was perfect for a service dog and he was incredibly obedient, not to mention incredibly handsome.

When he was eleven months old, it was time to have his hips checked before he was sent back to the service dog organization for further training and placement with a disabled person. But the veterinarian who took the x-rays had bad news. He shook his head sadly and told me that Oak had severe hip dysplasia. He recommended a surgeon and sent us on our way.

To look at Oak, you wouldn't have suspected his hips were so bad. He was an active, happy-go-lucky, eager-to-please guy – perfect for service. The diagnosis was shocking, but I sprang into action. The service dog organization released him to me immediately, and we met with the surgeon that very week and set the date for Oak's triple pelvic osteotomy (TPO).

## ACUPRESSURE TO THE RESCUE

I had a background in a Japanese form of acupressure and was well aware of the healing capacity of this ancient therapy.

As luck would have it, I had recently met Nancy Zidonis, an animal acupressurist, so I gave her a call. I asked if she could come and help me prepare Oak for surgery, and also give me recommendations for his recovery. She agreed, and showed me specific acupressure points that could be used to support Oak both before and after surgery (see accompanying diagrams for the locations of these points).

1. The points selected for pre-surgery were chosen to help Oak remain calm, support his body's ability to produce nutrient-rich blood, and maintain clear well-functioning lungs. Nancy selected these particular "acupoints" because calmness helps maintain a harmonious flow of chi (life-promoting energy) and blood through Oak's body. Having rich blood is essential for healthy tissues. And when the lungs are functioning properly, the body can expel the anesthesia used during surgery.
2. For the post-surgery acupressure sessions, the calming, blood-enriching, and respiratory acupoints were still to be used, but Nancy added a few extra points to enhance the healing process. She suggested points that would increase blood circulation so that toxins could be removed from the surgical site, while fresh blood could help the bones and soft tissues heal. Another acupoint was selected to bring chi and blood to Oak's hindquarters, adding more "oomph" to healing that region of his body.

## PREPARING FOR SURGERY

After Nancy left, I called the surgeon and asked if I would be allowed to give Oak an acupressure session immediately after

his surgery, while he was in recovery. The surgeon thought it was a novel idea and was open to it. I knew the sooner we were able to start the acupressure sessions, the better.

In the meantime, the next few days were filled with pre-surgery acupressure sessions and other preparations. We also stopped in at the surgeon's clinic for blood work to avoid any unexpected complications during surgery.

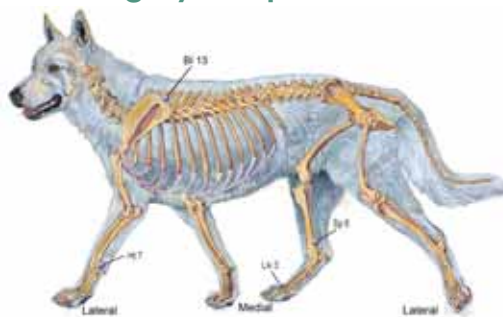
When surgery day arrived, we got up early and went for a short walk so Oak could clear his bladder and bowels. He hadn't eaten since 6 pm the night before, nor had water for at least eight hours, as per the surgeon's instructions. We drove to the clinic with Oak's favorite blanket. He carried his blanket into the clinic with his tail happily wagging. I must admit there were tears in my eyes as he disappeared behind the door of the pre-op area. He was such a good-natured fellow, and I wondered how he would be when I saw him next.



## AFTER THE OPERATION

I returned at the time I was told Oak would be in recovery. He was still under the influence of anesthesia – a beautiful, innocent-looking mound of light golden fur. I started the post-surgery acupressure session Nancy had given me. At first he didn't stir, but then his tail started to slowly thump on the floor of the cage.

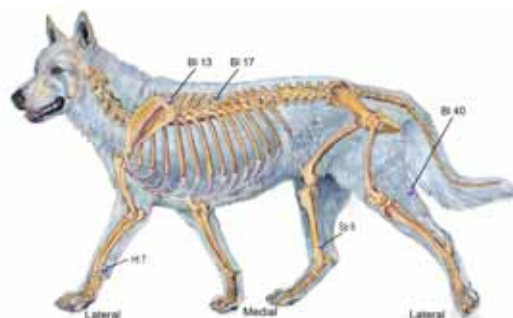
## Pre-Surgery Acupressure Session



Points	Location
Sp 6	Found 3" above the tip of the medial malleolus on the inside (caudal) edge of the tibia.
Ht 7	Located at the transverse crease of the carpal joint, in a depression lateral to the flexor carpi ulnaris.
Bi 13	1.5" off the dorsal midline at the spinous process of the 3rd thoracic vertebra.
Liv 3	Between the 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> metatarsal bones at the junction of the metatarsophalangeal joint.

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## Post-Surgery Acupressure Session



Points	Location
Sp 6	Found 3" above the tip of the medial malleolus on the inside (caudal) edge of the tibia.
Ht 7	Located at the transverse crease of the carpal joint, in a depression lateral to the flexor carpi ulnaris.
Bi 13	1.5" off the dorsal midline at the spinous process of the 3rd thoracic vertebra.
Bi 17	1.5" off the dorsal midline at the spinous process of the 7 <sup>th</sup> thoracic vertebra.
Bi 40	Located at the midpoint of the transverse crease of the popliteal fossa.

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Oak stayed overnight at the clinic for observation, and when I came to pick him up next morning, he was standing up and wagging his tail. He moved slowly and stiffly, but he seemed comfortable. During the next week, I kept him calm with short outings and gave him a post-surgery acupressure session every day.

At Oak's one-week checkup, the surgeon followed us down the hall to the examining room. As we settled in, he asked, "Is your dog here for his month check?" I looked at him, surprised by the word "month", and told him Oak's surgery had only been six days ago. The surgeon looked back at me, equally surprised. "Oh! He is walking and moving so well, I thought his surgery was a month ago!"

Oak's recovery continue to progress smoothly and quickly, and I definitely attribute it to the acupressure sessions he received before and after his surgery.

Oak was with us for 13 happy years, and served as a Delta Society Dog in hospitals and schools. I was so impressed with what acupressure did for him that I went to school to learn more and share the benefits of this therapy with other dogs. That was 17 years ago, but Oak's legacy – the gift of acupressure – lives on. 🐾



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