

Texas Medical Center in Tyler. There, she suffered a second, more severe brain aneurysm, and on Sunday morning, she died.

Dogs don't ask for very much – care, shelter, something to eat, a little affection – but hundreds of thousands go without, even in our ostensibly civilized nation. Most of us just sigh and shake our heads sadly at the hopelessness of the situation, but Pat couldn't stand it.

### **Their priorities clear**

The Arnolds didn't take vacations, and they lived on a shoestring budget. Every donated penny went to care for the dogs, even though the board of their nonprofit organization, Straydog Inc., urged them for years to accept a salary. They were always in debt to the vet.

It's obvious, though, that they would not have chosen any other life. Bill and Pat, junior high sweethearts who married at 16, were married for 47 years. They raised four children.

"We kind of never really cared about making money," Bill said – when he once told Pat they couldn't afford to get the house painted on the salary he was then earning as a schoolteacher, she borrowed a ladder and did it herself – "we just brought up our kids and had a lot of fun."

It was after the kids were grown and Pat took a job as secretary to a real estate appraiser that she started collecting strays. She would spot skinny, homeless dogs while driving around on appraising trips and find herself stopping the car.

When the Arnolds' dog population grew to about 10, they moved to the country. Every weekend, they faithfully loaded up their most adoptable dogs and drove to a Dallas-area pet supply store, hoping to find them new homes.

### **Plenty of love to share**

Pat found homes for plenty of dogs, but she usually wound up keeping the hardest-luck cases of all: blind dogs, deaf dogs, dogs with mange and heartworms, big dogs with crippling hip dysplasia.

"It didn't matter that there were 10,000 dogs who were going to die," Bill said. "She always came back with, 'Well, we can help these few.' They were part of our family."

Straydog was Pat's life. She cared for dogs all day, every day. She wrote a letter of thanks to every donor, whether they sent a \$5,000 check or a \$5 bill. She maintained a detailed Web site with photos and updates on the dogs ([www.straydog.org](http://www.straydog.org)). Now Bill and the staff will keep it going as a living memorial.

Bill said Pat will be cremated, in accordance with her wishes. The couple's children are planning to have a memorial service, but no details have been set.

Pat will be missed dreadfully by her husband, her four children, her friends, and by dozens of dogs that adored her so much that it almost seemed they discerned the depth of her compassion.

The best, and the obvious, memorial to Pat is a donation to Straydog at P.O. Box 1465, Gun Barrel City, Texas 75147. I am grateful and humbled to have met Pat Arnold, to have seen her patience and kindness and complete unselfishness.

The rest of us can't expect to match her. I hope, at least, we can try.