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Emily sits on Pat's lap in the waiting room at Dallas Veterinary Surgical Center Friday, May 30, 2003.

We have some very, very devastating and totally unexpected news to report: Saturday morning, May 31, 2003 Pat suffered a brain aneurysm while outside working with the dogs. She collapsed with a horrific headache and nausea, and one of the kennel team members called 911 immediately. The ambulance took Pat to the ETMC Hospital in Athens, and from there she was flown by medical helicopter to ETMC Hospital in Tyler, where she suffered a second, more severe cerebral hemorrhage, which stopped most of her brain function. The doctor said there was nothing more that could be done, and Pat was taken off life support Sunday, June 1, 2003 about noon. Pat has been cremated in accordance with her wishes, and there will be a Memorial Service on Saturday, July 5, 2003 at 1:00 p.m. at Christ Lutheran Church, 3001 Lovers Lane, Dallas, Texas.

The last words Pat spoke to our kennel crew back at Straydog while waiting for the ambulance were:

"Take care of my dogs while I'm gone."

Pat's husband, Bill, along with their four children, Erin, Stacey, Bill, Jr. and Joe *plus* Pat's dedicated kennel team members are all committed to continue Pat's work at Straydog with no changes to any of Pat's dog care procedures and methods, adoption philosophies, adoption policies and dog rescue philosophies. We WILL take care of Pat's dogs exactly as she would have wanted us to!

PLEASE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT STRAYDOG INC.

P.O. Box 1465, Gun Barrel City, Texas 75147 * (903) 479-3497 * EMAIL: straydog@straydog.org
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Hero to strays, inspiration to all

06/03/2003

By **JACQUIELYNN FLOYD** / **The Dallas Morning News**

This is a eulogy for a saint. I don't know the strict theological definition of the word, but if it encompasses boundless compassion, absolute selflessness and devotion completely unsullied by ego, then Pat Arnold qualified.



Pat quite simply could not endure the sight of a hungry stray dog wandering by the roadside or scavenging in a garbage can. The more sentimental among the rest of us might experience a moment of sadness, might be moved to spare extra attention for our own pets that day or even mail off a check to an animal shelter.

But Pat Arnold literally couldn't stand it. Her dream – hopeless, far-fetched, counterintuitively illogical – was a happy, lifelong home for every dog, even the sick ones and the ugly ones, the ones half-crazed by fear and starvation.

For the last 10 years, Pat and her husband, Bill, lived a rural, almost monastic life entirely devoted to stray dogs they rescued and cared for. They lived in a cramped mobile home in Eustace, about 100 miles from Dallas, surrounded by a sprawling complex of kennels housing a population of orphan dogs that averages about 70 or so at a time. They hired a small staff to maintain their strict goal that every dog receives food and shelter, exercise – and affection.

Pat, 63, died Sunday morning. Her final hours were spent in the same enterprise that commanded her life: caring for the dogs.



"She had had a headache Friday night, but it went away," Bill Arnold, still stunned by the terrible loss, told me Monday.

On Saturday, Bill left for Dallas to pick up a dog that was being treated by a local veterinary surgeon. While he was on the way, he got a call from the staff back home telling him that Pat had suddenly collapsed, that an ambulance was on the way.

FILE 1997 / DMN

Pat Arnold died Sunday at age 63. She and husband Bill devoted the last 10 years to taking care of dogs they rescued.

"I turned around and headed back home," he said. "Then they called again and said, 'Pat wants you to go ahead and get the dog.' " It was characteristic.

Still conscious but weak and failing, Pat told the staff, as she was being loaded into the ambulance, "Take care of my dogs while I'm gone."

They took Pat Arnold to a hospital in Athens, and from there, she was flown by medical helicopter to East 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). 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.

E-mail jfloyd@dallasnews.com

