

## In memory of Teddy

By Anne Munford

(Reprinted from *Cats and Dogs Magazine*, July, 2010)

"I've been blessed by the loving spirit of many dogs in my lifetime. They have each given me an unexpected gift that I didn't know I needed until after it was given. Teddy's gift to me was especially meaningful.

"My teenaged sons knew of someone who had a little of chocolate lab puppies, and it was their idea to buy me my cute little brown teddy bear puppy. When I first saw Teddy, I was immediately taken by his incredible cute factor, but there was more — an instant soul connection. He always seemed like an old soul hiding in that cute little furry baby dog body.

"When Teddy came into our lives, my house was a noisy, rowdy place, full of testosterone and male adolescent humor. As the only girl in the house, I was really in over my head. It wasn't long before we all realized Teddy was special, as in cognitively challenged. He was almost a year old before he was housebroken, and he grew to be a very large dog, about 120 pounds. Even very basic tasks were difficult for him. He struggled to drink water efficiently because he couldn't seem to lap it up using his tongue. He would put his whole face in the water bowl and sort of gulp and inhale (we had to keep the bowl full to accommodate him). Drinking resulted in a long sneezing bout to get the water he inhaled out of his nose. My sons and their friends would laugh themselves silly watching him drink, much to my disapproval. Being a special education teacher, and being especially sensitive to those who are challenged, I gave many lectures to my sons and their friends about not making fun of others. The word "stupid," which I had always disliked, was definitely not allowed in our house.

"My dear Teddy had a very unusual neurological disconnect. He could not relax his muscles to go potty and hold a ball or toy in his mouth at the same time. The minute he would start to urinate, he would relax his jaw, and whatever he was holding in his mouth would fall out. He would stop urinating to pick up his toy or stick, only to drop it again when he tried to finish urinating. We had to make sure that he wasn't carrying anything in his mouth if we wanted him to empty his bladder completely in less than 15 minutes.

"Then something happened in our family that changed the lives of all of us. I fell over backwards from the top of a ten-foot ladder, landing on concrete. My life was in danger for a few days, and I suffered a fractured skull and a severe brain bleed, resulting in a serious closed head injury. I spent a year in bed, sleeping as much as 18 hours a day while my brain healed. Teddy was next to me in bed the whole time, even walking next to me when I would briefly get up to eat. I was sad, confused and frightened. Teddy had an unusual way of lying next to me for that first year after I fell. He would lay with his hind end at my shoulders, and would wiggle around so my right hand rested on his head.

"About a year after I fell, my short-term memory had healed enough that I started to become aware of my situation and how things around me had changed. I remember the day when I realized the top of Teddy's beautiful brown head had turned white, along with hair around his nose. When I placed my hand on the top of his head in the position where it had been all those months in bed, I could see where he had absorbed my pain and confusion.

"For the most part, I have recovered. Sometimes we are given a gift so special it takes us unaware. We are seldom deserving of it. Teddy's life was such a gift. He died in my arms at the age of 12."•



Calvary School's kindergarten graduates are now big first-graders! (Photo by Perry Burns.)

## Annual Fruitport school reunion scheduled

By Betty Weise

The annual Fruitport school reunion will be held on Sunday, August 1, 2010 at Fruitport Auditorium (corner of Pontaluna and Airline roads) from 12:30 to 4 p.m.

Students who attended Fruitport school, any grade up to 1947 and teachers are welcome. If you have old school pictures, we invite you to bring them along to share with us.

Please bring a dish to pass, your own beverage and utensils.

Everyone is welcome, and we would love to see more attend. The reunion is always held the first Sunday in August, so please spread the word.

For more information, please contact Betty (McMamey) Weise at (231) 865-3293. •

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