

## **Homage to Mr. Ruff**

My last good memory of him was his ear-to-ear grin beaming at me as I walked into the room. It was the kind of grin that tells says, "I am really glad to see you and I have a lot to tell you, where do I start?" He always made me grin too when he was in one of these moods. After all, is there anything better in life than the unfettered, uninhibited and enthusiastic greeting from an old friend?

When I was gone, at work or elsewhere, he would sit in my chair by the window next to my desk. He had a commanding view of the meadow but his world, our world, was my study, our study. Some days I'd sneak up to the window and peer in to find him sitting on my chair but not looking outward at the meadow as I would have but rather he looked inward, mesmerized by the tank of tropical fish that he could only see by sitting in my chair. Other days I'd find him sound asleep, snoring as he waited for me to come home but always, or nearly always he would be in my chair.

When he jumped off my chair this last time he more or less fell flat on his face. That was a little unusual since for the most part he was quite graceful, graceful even for someone who spent the vast majority of his available free time asleep.

The cancer that had been growing in his lungs and we knew nothing about had slowed him down but we had attributed it to age. He wasn't a young puppy anymore. When he leaped off my chair he ruptured something within that cancerous growth and blood began pouring into his lungs.

At first his cough was a dry hacking cough but it soon became wet with little blobs of pink velvet foam. We took him to the hospital where they said he would not last the night. He didn't. Oxygen calmed him down and eased the coughing and I thought he might be OK but the look in his eyes said otherwise and reminded me of the look my mother gave me after her heart attack where even sucking pure oxygen as hard as she could failed to give relief. It's a look of wide eyed panic as you realize what is happening. It's the look that says, "Do something, please," and you wish you could but can't.

-- Steve Glines

