

# Mousse

Ken Kalish

March 9, 2017

In December of 2009 the Cass County Sheriff's office raided a puppy mill somewhere near Walker. They found more than 200 dogs in an old house trailer. Puppies made up about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the animals housed there. No single local shelter had enough capacity to take all of the dogs, so they were distributed throughout the area. About thirty of the dogs and puppies made their way to the Park Rapids shelter.

I didn't know about the raid when I went to the Park Rapids shelter in early January. I was just looking for a puppy for the farm. We hadn't owned a dog since the loss of our sweet Molly some years earlier, and I missed the company. I had arrived at the shelter a few days after the Cass County diaspora, and the staff had not yet had time to sort through all of the puppies and ready them for adoption. The pups were all in the building, about ten to an enclosure.

When I asked if I could see the pups, members of the staff told me I was in luck. It was puppy play time, when the pups are set free in the hall so their enclosures could be cleaned and restocked with toys, food, and water. I was invited to join the madness in the hall and see which, if any, I thought would be a good fit. I was delighted to accept and was sitting on the floor cross-legged with my back against the wall when the gates opened. I was engulfed by a tsunami of puppies. Name a breed, and there was probably some representative of it in that pack of playful pups. They were wrestling, yapping, and playing tug of war with sock dolls. A few took a moment to sniff at me, but they all were drawn back into the pandemonium. All, that is, except one.

A tiny, eight-week-old pup, medium brown with white paws and a white chest, sporting a pair of grossly oversized ears, walked up to me. She didn't want to share in the riot so she climbed into my lap and fell asleep. My dog had found me. I was delighted.

When I showed her to the shelter manager and announced my intent to adopt that one pup, her reaction was not what I had expected. That pup had birth defects in all four of her legs. She was obviously lethargic, something that might indicate internal issues. No, that pup couldn't be adopted. It would have to be "put down" because it was clear she could never have a "quality life."

I tried to argue my point, that this pup was the one I wanted. It was Sunday afternoon, and the shelter was closed on Mondays, so I was told to come back Tuesday and see if the pup was still available after a "health and fitness" exam. I was horribly disappointed. How, I wondered, could such a momentous decision be made after a cursory exam? I left, but all the way back to the farm I was building arguments

designed to save that pup. By the time I went to bed, I knew what I would do. I would go back and demand that specific pup, defects be damned.

Early Monday morning I was sucking on a cup of coffee when I realized that the shelter manager might choose that day of being closed to the public to end the life of my little misfit. I jumped in the truck and pulled up at the shelter door just as the manager was coming out, puppy in hand and headed for the vet. I immediately became guilty of dognapping. I snatched the pup, jumped into my truck and drove back to the farm.

Apparently Minnesota law says that animal shelters do not actually own the creatures that come their way and so “stealing” the pup was not much of a legal issue. Tuesday morning I was called by the shelter and asked to drop by and fill out the paperwork that goes along with adopting a shelter pet. I didn’t have to comply, but I did. While I was there, I also picked up the pup’s sister, a hale and hearty chew-your-slippers kind of pup. My total outlay included spaying of both pups and totaled \$100.

I named the quiet one Mousse, as in chocolate mousse, because of her sweet nature and middle-brown coat. Her sister, who was an absolute terror whenever she wasn’t sleeping, earned the name Bayer for her pain-in-the-butt tendencies. I immediately lost much of my heart to the two of them.

Our farm is surrounded by woodlots and other farms. No Trespassing signs are often ignored. One evening, shortly after they turned three, Mousse and Bayer were wandering our property. Bayer found a yummy chunk of fresh liver and dove to claim it for her own. It was bait, and a Conibear trap snapped shut on her neck. By the time Mousse came home to let me know Bayer needed help, it was too late. She had been strangled. We had her cremated and buried her ashes on the top of a ridge on the West side of our property. She shares that spot with about twenty other family pets, and every time we have to make another hole for another pet, sorrow hangs over our work for days.

Since then we have adopted another pup, a Boxer/Pitty mix named Tank. He resembles an Abrams in stature and is spoiled rotten. Mousse immediately adopted the pup as her own and she still corrects his behavior on a daily basis. But this story isn’t about Bayer or Tank. This story is about Mousse.

A month ago, shortly after turning seven, Mousse began to drink much more water than usual. Her abdomen became swollen to the point that her appearance became much more like a barrel than her usual svelte, overactive adult dog look. She stopped chasing rabbits. She ate in drips and drabs, never really consuming her daily dog ration. She became very “sticky,” constantly wanting to touch and be touched. She gained 27 pounds in two weeks. It was obvious that she needed to visit the vet.

The vet visit took an hour, requiring blood samples, urine tests, and a stool exam. I feared it might be heartworm, something that could be managed and while limiting her physical activity could still be chronic rather than fatal.

I was wrong. The samples showed that her liver is failing, forcing her kidneys to overload. The distended gut is the result of literally being full of water, which is an effect of her kidneys beginning to fail. All of the signs point to cancer. The speed of the onset is something of a predictor for how long Mousse has to live.

We now have medications we give her twice a day. One, a small bottle containing 40 tablets, bears the ominous instruction to give her one and a half tablets twice a day “for life.” She is swinging back and forth between good days and bad days. She is in no pain and as long as that remains true we will simply love her and keep her home with us.

Tuesday and Wednesday were bad days. All she wanted to do was lie in the back seat of my truck and sleep. Fortunately the cab is well insulated and between her own body heat and sun streaming in through the windows she has a nice, warm place to call her own. I got her out a few times for potty breaks, but she lacked the strength to get into the truck by herself so I had to lift her in and out.

Today has been a good day. She stomped her way through two-foot snowdrifts to play, and even worked up enough strength to catch a cottontail and eat most of it. She won't eat the food the vet wanted her to eat, so we're back to her favorite – Old Roy from Walmart. She gets lots of treats. I hide her meds inside of hotdogs, so she hasn't yet begun to spit out the pills.

In a week or so all the snow will be gone. Then, Tank, Mousse, Lila, and I will walk over to the ridge and see where best to put our girl. I'm thinking it's a tossup between a space beside her sister or just above Molly's bed. Given the fact that this dog adopted me, she may have some strong opinion about where to spend her afterlife.

The Internet is no philosophical marvel, but I saw something heartening yesterday: “Heaven is the place where all the pets you have ever known run to greet you.” Wow. Molly and Pepper, Cookie and Blue, Mousse and Bayer, Toby, Shadow, Darker, Ishmael, Harley, Peanut, Loki, and dozens more. I'll have to tell the mortician to pack my coffin with treats!

## Some Comments from Ken's Friends

Hi Ken

Best wishes to you and your little loved ones...

Bob M

Ken,

And once again, you outdo yourself. Now, Gracie, please pass me the tissues.

Randy

Ken,

There is no perfect response to your story, except to express empathy for the ordeal you are going through. Whoever said "our pets are like family members," were speaking from experience. So are you. You do heroic work.

Rick Fredericksen

## To Continue the Story of Mousse – November 27, 2017

Our sweet Mousse will be granted release from her pain at 11:30 tomorrow morning. The only way she has been able to get around today has been pulling herself across the floor with her front feet. Her liver has swollen to the point where her breathing is labored. She shivers even when covered up with her favorite blanket. She has refused food all day and has been unable to pass either urine or feces. She is saying goodbye, and we are losing an incredibly loving companion. She will be cremated and her ashes will be buried in the spring with those of her sister, Bayer.

I am 71, and this dog is the only one of our many who chose me rather than me choosing her. I went to the local shelter and asked to see the puppies. The entire crop of about 25 pups were released for pen cleaning and began chasing one another and tugging on toys. Mousse would have none of that. She walked over to me, crawled into my lap and took a nap.

These pictures show how swollen her liver has become, and how badly her hind feet and legs are tonight. She's actually darker than the picture shows, but her skin is stretched so tightly that there's not enough hair. The picture of her and Tank sleeping on a daybed shows how tightly these two's family is knitted. Tank will miss her greatly. Even now he keeps coming over to me and telling me to make Mousse feel better.

My throat feels like I've swallowed a rock. When she meets Molly tomorrow morning, the two of them will have much to talk about, and then they will sit down and wait for me to show up with some nummies (yummies?).





### Some Comments by Ken's friends

Jean LeRoy -- When your pets depart it is as debilitating as when any member of your family, human or animal leaves our family. When they are in your life your life is incredibly enhanced, when they are no longer there we miss them terribly and years later you still remember the good days, they will never go away so savor them, we have done that with our Franci and Charly. We wish you only the good thoughts from your memory. I feel your pain and you will be foremost in our thoughts tonight and on the Morrow! Your friends Clarice and Jean.

Miichael Goucher -- So sorry for Mousse's pain & suffering and yours & Lila's too. Peace, Brother.

Thom Whetston -- Very sorry to hear that.

Robert Morecook.-- Hi, Ken. I am sorry for our loss. I believe that animals are people too. They just can't do long division. Love, Bob

Robert Curry -- Losing your dog is a very emotional event, they become "family" over the years! I still miss my last dogs, but in my present financial state, cannot afford to replace them. Whoever discovers a way to give dogs a healthy, active life of 50 years or more will become a multi-millionaire! --My sympathies to you, and may she be happy and forever blessed, in "doggie heaven"!

Mike Raidt -- She is going to be missed. Her personality was top notch. I honestly like her company more than most humans I've met. I'm sorry the farm and family have this sadness to cope with. My thoughts are with her tonight.

Jason Boyer -- This makes me so sad, she was and always will be one of my favorite pups ever, I love how she cuddles and gives her hugs, I will miss them and her greatly.. I love u mouse mousse..

Mary Ann Lewellyn -- I feel your pain. Granting her peace and no pain is the best you can do for a fur baby that you love. RIP pretty puppy.

Alix Armstrong -- So Sorry. Hugs!

Kathy Agerbeck -- So very sorry Ken Kalish and Lila Buerkley Kalish...sending hugs.

Forrest G. Brandt -- Ah, Ken, they worm their way into our hearts and their departures shatter us.

Nancy Schumacher -- The love you have been given will always be with you. Peace.

Linda Long -Oh, so sorry about Moosie. give her a smooch from me. Hugs to you all.

Nancy E Gertner -- I'm so sorry you have come to this bridge. Those of us that have had fur kids for 17 and 18 years understand the process that goes in to deciding when to say goodbye. I hope you treasure your time together tonight.

Robert Howard -They do get into our hearts.

Pam Trowbridge -- It hurts us so much when we have to make these decisions. But you are doing the most loving action. Safe journey to Mousse. Love to you.

Susan Moravec -- Our puppies always bring us so much joy, so much love. You clearly are giving Mousse love, and fully!

Kristie Oliver Hennes -- Oh my heart breaks for all of you. Sorry

## The Story of Mousse – The Ending on November 28, 2017

Ken Kalish-- Mousse left us at 12:17 today. Thanks to my friends, Steve Ekholm and Eric Landstrom. Eric for providing the muscle to get her into and out of my truck, and Steve for the yeoman's job he undertook to try and define what she had - and eventually for using the pink stuff to give her relief from her life of incredible pain. They knew I loved Moussie, and they also tossed in a good helping of consolation for me. Moussie is now with Molly and Bayer and Toby and Blue and Pepper and Loki and Harley and the big black beast over in our West 80, on the hill overlooking the slope we call The Neck.