

Munchkin, Chip and me....healing souls
By Tony Matola, Hubbard, OH



In the beginning Munchkin and I would visit at one of the local nursing homes, and as always I would let her lead the way. She would stop and visit with the people she wanted to, and stop to be petted from others.

One day, she stopped at a door that was closed. I could hear the television set playing, so I knocked. No one answered. The next few weeks the same thing happened. She would go to the door and stop, and I would knock with

no answer. I asked the nurse one day and she said to go in, that the man is hard of hearing. I opened his door, and asked if he would like a visit with a dog. As he looked down at Munchkin, he asked if I had made the wheels for her (referring to her wheelchair). I explained that there was a company that made them.

As I looked around his private room, I saw many pictures on the wall, including some letters from different presidents. I asked about them. He explained that he had gotten one every year since he turned 95. (He was 98 at this point.) He proceeded to tell me about each letter, explaining how special they were to him. He petted Munchkin, and when it was time for us to leave, I asked him if he wanted us to come back. Emphatically he said he would like that.

The next visit, our new friend asked if I would take Munchkin out of her wheelchair, and put her up on the bed beside him. He asked, "What do you want to talk about today?" I suggested that he tell the stories behind the pictures on the wall. He said without hesitation, "I will start with that one" In the picture he chose, there was a man in his mid twenties standing next to a boy about 4 or 5 years old, a mule, and a saw mill. He told me that the man was his Father, he was the boy, and the mill was his father's saw mill. He explained to me that the sawmill was how he got his name, Chip.

With each week, he chose a different picture. One day, he pointed to a woman in her fifties. I noticed a change in him as he started to tell me about how when he met her, she was in need. He met her in church. She had seven children. Her husband had died, and she didn't have any family to help her. He continued to explain that he was a successful businessman in his late fifties, and she was in her early forties when they met.

His next words took me by surprise. "When I married her I didn't love her, I was just helping her with the kids. By the end of the first year, I was so in love with her I didn't want to leave her side for fear of something happening to her. I have never known feelings so deep. I was certain that there could be no feeling stronger.

He was quiet for a minute, sighed, and said "Until thirty years later when she died. I still carry the pain when I think of that day." As I put Munchkin's wheelchair back on her to leave, I felt sad having to leave him.