

KATRINA UPDATE

I've just returned from New Orleans and although I am very behind in returning phone calls and re-scheduling private lessons, I feel it's important to post an update on the situation in New Orleans. I made arrangements to be part of a team with **Animal Friends Rescue Project (AFRP)** (www.animalfriendsrescue.org) We, Monica, Betsy, Sue, and I, left Salinas at 4:30 am on Thursday, Sept. 29 and pretty much drove for dawn to dusk and arrived in Tylertown, Mississippi on Saturday, Oct. 1, (we could have made it on Friday, but I was driving with people who like to sleep, go figure!). **Animal Friends** had contacted **Best Friends Animal Sanctuary** (www.bestfriends.org) and we were being asked to help with photography, writing and documentation of the intake and release of animals in the compound. When we arrived we were told that they did not need us for the skills they had requested. It was a little bit of the right hand not knowing what the left hand needed, but it was alright, since we had planned to assist in any way needed. So we set up our camp site and I must say one of the best ones there! Not too many people strung up their shade between and brand new Sienna van (AFRP's) or a H₂ (which was referred to as the "big ass hummer" in camp!). We quickly found out that the best way to help was just to jump in and begin and not wait for someone to ask you to help. For many of the agencies, this was really their first big attempt to organize this type of assistance program and there were holes in the system. We were told about some homeless people who came into one camp and set up their camp, ate meals, and just hung out getting a free meal and showers. They weren't noticed for about a week. Oh well, it's all good. There were several compounds set up by the larger organizations but there were lots of small groups doing rescue, also. There were stories of rescues being done on animals that were being feed and taken care of by their owners. People would write on their garage doors "1 dog/f/w/10/3/05", which translated into "1 dog in home food and water on Oct. 3, 05", they would then return the next day to find some group had knocked down their door and taken their pet. For the most part this was not the case. One woman would pick up dogs and cats and sell them on-line; if she had ones that wouldn't sell she would call an agency to have them pick them up. A terrible thing, but at least they ended up in rescue. For the most part these were the exceptions, not the rule. All the animals **Best Friends** picked up were posted on Petfinder (www.petfinder.com). We saw several animals being re-united with their owners, and *that* was the reason we were doing what we did.

Dear Diary...Day 1, They say we need to drink Gatorade, ugh! I hate it!

Each morning we would start at about 8:00 am, each team would start to clean, feed, water, and walk the dogs in their assigned areas. There were several areas, Pit Bull Alley, Back 40, Toy Town, Romper Room, The Heights; we claimed the Back 40. We had approximately 6 rows of about 10 kennels. Many of the kennels had multiple dogs in them, which meant we needed to stand by while they ate, because some were food aggressive. Our goal was to try to beat the mid-day heat, not always accomplished in the beginning.

Dear Diary...Day 2, I'm too old for this, maybe I should have just sent money!

By day 3 we were a finely tuned machine and could crank out all our kennels by 10 am. Because volunteers came and went each day some of the areas would be short handed. I was asked to run Pit Bull Alley one day with all new volunteers, which was a day to remember. So many of the volunteers were good hearted people but didn't have

much dog sense. That night I slept very well. Around 3:00 pm each day we would go back out to the kennels and check water dishes and swimming pools for water. Lots of the dogs loved their little kiddie wading pools to cool off in and would be there a good portion of the day. Some time after dinner, at about 6:00 pm we would give out a cookie and spend a little time with them before bedtime. Whenever we went out with the dogs we also cleaned their kennels, if needed. Many dogs were ill from diet changes, stress, bad water or worms. It really made you appreciate your own little guys back home.

Dear Diary...Day 3, I'm still too old for this, I talk with Amanda each day to remind myself why I'm doing this....for the animals!

Most days the temperature was in the high 90's or 100's with equally high humidity, it would sap all your energy within the first couple of hours. Within a couple of days and lots of water and Gatorade you didn't notice the heat as much. We arrived a couple of days after they finally set up some showers, but with the heat and humidity it didn't make that much of a difference. We set up our own solar shower and stall attached to the front of the H₂ and a fence, it was pretty nifty. We could shower at 11:00 pm and the water was still hot.

In the late evening or early night animals would be brought into camp from the day's captures and rescues. This usually involved unloading the animals, getting paperwork, and finding a place for them to settle for the night. The next day they would be photographed, vet checked, and paperwork completed before being placed in their new kennel. After we finished at the intake area the paperwork was forwarded to people that input all the information online. This meant, at the **Best Friends** compound, most animals were in the system within 24 hours. This was no some feat since some nights the intake would involve 40 or more animals.

Dear Diary...Day 4, Gatorade's not that bad after all. I sure miss California, Bill, Chase, Barney, Amanda, Casey, Kyle and all our motley dogs in daycare and training.

Jack, a friend we made from Florida, who was from Tampa Bay Beagle Rescue picked up a little Yorkie that a 79 year old woman owned. She had not eaten or slept much, according to her caregiver since her little dog was missing. When Jack called her to tell her he had little Penny in his hand, she fell to the floor crying. That was what the whole thing was about. We saw a couple re-united with their two standard Poodles, the woman had to keep sitting down because she was so emotional. As Martha would say "it's a good thing!" When Jack left for Florida, he had little Penny, a Shar Pei, a little Maltese, a beagle and a beagle mix in tow. He has since re-united all the dogs with their owners except the beagle and mix. He was such a kind hearted man we felt the need to honor him and named one of the rescue dogs we brought back Jack.

Dear Diary...Day 5, I wonder if I should wash these clothes or just throw them out?

As each day began to draw nearer to your departure day, we needed to decide who was coming with us to California. I've always had a problem with dogs not having a name, so I give everyone a name, in the Back 40 it was no exception and we began to name everyone. We came back to camp one day to find they had placed a little rat terrier/fox terrier X in the kennel near our camp. He sat very respectfully and watched us as we went about our business, never being obnoxious. He became known as Jack and each morning I would tell him how many more moons before he could go with us. The first night we camped, we woke up to a little dog under my truck and she became Hummer. After several hours she was captured and placed in a kennel from which she could not escape. A friend adopted her and kept her name. During our morning rounds

we met a very nice older German Shepherd, she was skin and bones and not faring well in the barking environment, and so we would take her up to our camp and give her special food and quiet time. She began to thrive with the extra attention and we knew she would be one to come home with us, also. Since we named one dog after my car, I thought it only right we name one after AFRP's van and she became Sienna. Now we had two and thought with a little pushing and pulling, leaving some things, re-packing others, we could probably take 8 dogs and 8 cats. Next came a lovely little tan Pit, w named Jefferson, because he was found in Jefferson County. He is one of those dogs who can melt your heart with his smoky black eyes and muzzle. Jefferson is probably about 2 years old and like 99.99999 % of the dogs found, still intact. However, I don't think he knew it. He became my charge and learned to walk nicely on a leash and crate trained in nothing flat. He also learned that, because of my bad hip, I couldn't always bend over to pick him up to load him up but if he put his front feet up on my legs I could pick him up easier. Then he figured out if he put his feet up on the bumper it went even smoother, so when we returned to the truck he would wait for me to put the other dogs up and then very softly placed his feet on the bumper and waited for me to help him up the rest of the way. I don't need another dog, but if I did.....

We wanted to have a good mix of dogs so next on the list was a small dog. We went shopping in Toy town, a very cute, mischievous little Chihuahua made himself known to us and he was placed on the list. That night we had red beans and rice for dinner and since he was a red Chi, he became known as Bean. I think Bean and I had a love/hate relationship going. He would sleep in his crate during the drive and be still whenever we stopped for gas, but if I left him, he would begin to bark. I threatened to leave him at a rest stop once, (just kidding). I like this little guy a lot. I have always been drawn to dogs with a little twinkle of bad in their eyes. Bean is no exception. He too, is intact, and a little marker, so when we needed the dogs to eliminate at a rest stop we would let Bean go and mark and then everyone else would go, too. It is amazing how much water comes out of that little 3 pound guy! Sandy was one of those in between sizes that are usually easy to place. She may be a cocker, Shih-tzu/Lhasa X, she has a very nice, even temperament and very easy traveler. I think she may have traveled some before; when we stopped she would go do her thing then run back to the truck, ready to drive more. She was very interested in some deer that were at a rest stop, so she may be a little overly interested in cats that run. She never made a sound and seemed to be housetrained. Well, that was 5, now what?

As we drove into Mississippi, we passed Jolly, Texas. We all decided we would have to get a dog and name it Jolly. Sure enough, we had a little Corgi/Lab X, who was a very happy guy, always with a little smile on his face and yes, he became Jolly. Next was Tina, she was kenneled with Jolly and it was very apparent that this environment was way over the top for her. She would not leave Jolly's side and it seemed like a bad move to leave her; she became number 7. And last but definitely not least was Oliver. The minute we arrived in camp, Betsy saw this cutie in the Romper Room. He is probably a PBGV or Otterhound X. He has beautiful blue eyes that peer under his scruffy topknot. He had Betsy's number from the first minute they laid eyes on each other. Betsy had to do a lot of wheeling and dealing to get this little guy, one of the founders of **Best Friends**, expressed an interest in him but after a little coercion said he could become a California dog. Then there were 8!

Sandy can be adopted because her owners gave her up; Sienna is looking for a foster home. All the others have been placed in foster homes. Our agreement with **Best Friends** is that all the animals would be held for 90 days, during which time the animals would not be neutered. The hope is that the foster homes will want to keep the dogs and cats after the foster period. They will be neutered at that time, also.

All the cats we brought home were rescued by Monica, Betsy and Jack from a house that was uninhabitable. After much soul searching the couple who had these cats decided they needed to turn them over to rescue. These cats were scared when we first picked them up at the Cat Center at the compound, but by they end of day 1 they were much more relaxed and by day 2 were being plain old cats: using litter boxes, eating, meowing, and playing with the paper towels that hung over the edge into their carriers. They will be looking for homes very soon, so check out www.animalfriendsrescue.org for more info on them. Watch for periodic update regarding the Katrina dogs and cats. We will be conducting a Katrina basic training class in the near future.



BEAN



JACK



JEFFERSON



JOLLY



OLIVER



SANDY##



SIENNA**



TINA

Sandy can be adopted right now. Contact www.animalfriendsrescue.org or call 333.0722

** Sienna is looking for a foster home. You may contact AFRP at the numbers above.