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WEEKEND BREAK



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Mary Shaver and her dog.

SAVED BY EACH OTHER

Woman recounts tale of taking in dog

By MARY SHAVER
For *The Astorian*

It was a dark and stormy night, not quite night, but a very dreary, rainy 3 p.m. Dec. 31 on the North Coast. My mom would have said “It was raining cats and dogs and leaving poodles in the road,” but in this case it was a Labrador retriever.

My family was at the house in Arch Cape preparing for New Year’s Eve. I was on my final shopping trip into the Safeway in Seaside. I was almost to the Bell Buoy seafood market and running toward me in the middle of traffic on U.S. Highway 101 was what looked like a filthy brown dog. I pulled the car over to the side of the road and thankfully so did the car behind me.

I got out of my car as did the other guy. The other fellow had a little yapping dog in the front seat and this big filthy dog thankfully came over to investigate. This animal didn’t have a collar. I gently took hold of him by the scruff of his neck so he wouldn’t bolt. I asked the man if he wanted to take the dog and his immediate response was that he couldn’t. I asked if he would help me get the dog into the back of my car and I would take him. Together we got the dog into my car.

“Pearl,” my yellow Labrador, a prior intentional rescue from the Washington County animal shelter, was in the back of my car. She was quite happy to make room for this unexpected guest. I think that having her close was comforting for this sad, dirty dog.

Overwhelming gratitude

I called my daughter from the car and told her the story. I asked her to be on hand to help me get this animal into the house and shower. Arriving home, we got the dog into the shower. I stripped down, got into the shower with him and was using the handheld sprayer to clean him up. He was so dirty. He had a slit on his throat that between the dried mud and blood was like a collar. I was working on cleaning his neck to see how bad the cut was.

My daughter was very concerned. She told me to get my face away from the dog’s face, that I knew nothing about this dog, and he could really hurt me. I told her that I knew he wouldn’t hurt me and that all I felt radiating from this animal was overwhelming gratitude. I’ve never felt anything like that before or after.

He was a beautiful intact male yellow Labrador. My neighbor across the street at Arch Cape is a vet. I had him come over and check out the boy. The cut was old, and he felt that the dog had been on the lam for at least a couple of weeks. The animal was skinny. He gave the dog a shot of antibiotic, just in case. I towed him dry and fed him.

New Year’s Eve commenced and for a while this dog was the center of attention. What, where, when, how? He seemed so broken, no collar and that cut on his neck, we all concluded that his story wasn’t

a very happy one.

On Jan. 2 I took “Hogan,” named after Hulk Hogan, to the Seaside vet to check for a chip. No chip. They weighed him and he weighed 62 pounds. I drove to the Seaside police station to notify them that I had found this animal. I left my contact information in case the owner showed up.

I drove home to Portland and took him to my vet for a complete checkup. My vet told me that I needed to contact the Washington and Clatsop county animal shelters and if no one claimed within 30 days she would neuter him, and he was mine. I was so relieved when the 30 days was over. He was mine.

Rehabilitation

My property in Portland was 3 acres of grass, woods and gardens. The beach was the beach. Both environments were wonderful for Hogan to rehab into a loving and safe world.

Hogan topped the scales at 108 pounds. He was a healthy, beautiful, sweet, lovely boy and was frightened of just about anything. Loud voices, fireworks, crackling firewood would have him hiding in the smallest, safest places he could find.

I had never liked dogs that drooled. Hogan drooled, not always, only when he was stressed, which was pretty much all the time. I didn’t care that Hogan drooled. He would wake me up in the morning by nosing the covers up and sliding his muzzle along the mattress until he found me. Needless to say, the sheets had drool tracks, but I didn’t care.

Everyone loved Hogan. He reminded me of Ferdinand, after the children’s story about the bull that would rather smell flowers than fight in the bull ring. That was Hogan. I have a great picture of Hogan after the granddaughters got a hold of him and put on lipstick, blue eye shadow, blush — oh, my we laughed so hard, and he was such a good sport.

Hogan was maybe 3 or 4 when I found him. He lived until maybe 13 or 14. It was July at the beach. I was sitting on the bottom stair smooching his beautiful face in my hands. It had been a rough night for him. His eyesight, hearing, bowels, bladder were all failing him. He was so sad and embarrassed. He put his head on my knee and we both knew that it was time to go.

I called the vet and told her I was bringing Hogan in and would be there in a few hours. I called the family and told them if they wanted to say goodbye to Hogan to meet me at the vet. There were so many of us to say our final goodbyes to this beautiful, sweet boy.

Whenever I would tell my story about Hogan, people would say how lucky he was that I saved him. The truth is we saved each other.

This essay was produced through a class taught by Tom Hallman Jr., a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter at The Oregonian.