

Alley Animals

Editor's Note

Recently, I saw reported on the news another case of animal hoarding. This along with a case reported a few months ago made the news, but I'm sure many other instances of animal hoarding exist in Maryland. The sad part is that the people (compulsively) collecting animals may have started from a standpoint of compassion. Caring about the suffering of other living beings and taking even small steps to make things better exemplifies the best in us—the ability to act intelligently and kindly for the benefit of others who can offer nothing in return. Somewhere along the way, however, people who hoard animals left the path of compassion in favor of compulsive collecting. These are people who do not or cannot link their actions with the real world; they may want to save animals from the horrors of homelessness, but to embark on such an endeavor is to discover the number of homeless animals is overwhelming. Compulsive collectors cannot reconcile their own physical and financial limitations with the limitless need of millions and millions of animals. It might be saddening that someone who started out with good intentions took a wrong turn and ended up in the fantasyland of believing he or she could care for every homeless animal, but it is sickening that such a person would become the cause of further needless suffering.

The caring person who stays connected to the real world recognizes and accepts his or her limitations in the face of overwhelming numbers of animals in need. The compulsive collector disregards limitations and continues to bring animals into an already overcrowded environment such that none of them receives good care, and eventually all are neglected. In the worst cases, the neglect becomes cruel mistreatment of innocent creatures.

This is not to say one person is incapable of caring for a number of animals most people would consider to be too many. Indeed, one person can provide proper care for many animals while doing them an invaluable service, so long as that person does not overburden his resources, either physical or financial. I know this is possible because I've seen it, and the result of hard work and single-minded resolve firmly rooted in a rational outlook is a group of healthy, well-adjusted animals.

The compulsive collector and the responsible caregiver are as far apart as night from day. The ordinary person watching news coverage will not be given enough information to gain insight into this difference because the responsible person caring properly for a large number of animals will not make the news. So, public perception of those who "care" about animals will take on the face of the hoarder, besmirching and soiling the reputation of true animal advocates. Those who advocate for animals must already swim against the tide of public opinion that animals don't deserve our best effort, but then to be linked with the disgusting acts perpetrated by the hoarder makes walking the path of kindness even more strenuous.

Compassion is the way of the thinking person. Human beings often assume (or accuse) those caring about the pain of other creatures to be overly sentimental or guided by their emotions. This is not the case. The person who takes seriously the pain of other beings begins from a rational assessment of the way things are and the way things ought to be; the thinking person rises above his or her own interests and recognizes that unnecessary suffering is wrong. Sappy emotionalism adds nothing constructive to any undertaking, and the overly emotional person could not

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stand strong in the path of compassion—too many obstacles (such as criticism from others and the endless suffering of animals at the hands of people) would inflict too much injury to fragile feelings.

The path of kindness must be traveled by those strong in spirit, resolute in their convictions, and ready to accept the inevitable challenges and frustrations without retreating in defeat. Sentiment has its proper place, of course. For example, anger can effectively motivate us to take action, but neither anger nor any other emotion is the controlling factor in the compassionate person's temperament. Rather than weakness, caring about the suffering of other beings represents an elevated character choosing to help ease the pain endured by the wholly innocent. While the arrogant and small-minded act from selfishness, the merciful and kind show us the Way.

The Laughter's Shadow

by Lillian G. Leslie

One hot, humid summer morning years ago an incident took place that I remember as if it were yesterday. Not unlike so many nights this summer, the sticky heat never lifted from the streets to allow any cooling relief for animals who could find nowhere to hide from the oppressive humidity, and no water to assuage the thirst that plagued them without mercy. We had finished the alley route and were rounding a corner onto the side street that would begin our course out of the city. On the street corner stood a group of boys, four or five of them who looked to be in their early teens. They were heaving great shouts of laughter into the hot morning air, one of them bent over as if by laughing so hard he had gotten cramps. The commotion caught our attention, but we didn't realize its cause until two of them pointed as the whole group burst into a renewed and rowdy guffaw.

Looking in the direction the boys had pointed, we saw a small dog exerting a frantic effort to drag himself across the street. His hind legs paralyzed, the little dog pulled the weight of his body with his front legs. We stopped the car immediately. The dog paid no attention to us or the car, he was focused on the group of boys. The injured animal was fighting with all his might to drag himself over rough pavement toward people who thought his torment was fantastically funny. Crawling to them for help, he looked neither right nor left, only at the humans he believed might take care of him, somehow relieve his pain, make him better. The closer he got to them, the louder they laughed.

Alice grabbed a towel as she jumped out of the car and ran to the aid of the injured animal. Gently she picked him up in the towel and brought him back to the car where she laid him in the nest of bedding I hastily prepared. The dog now safe, Alice marched over to the teenagers. I couldn't hear what she said to them but I could tell from her demeanor she was scolding them. While keeping an eye on

Alice's confrontation with the boys, I ran my hand softly over the injured dog's head. He must have been in hideous pain, a massive wound tore his haunch wide open and thousands, maybe tens of thousands of maggots squirmed in and out of his lower body. Yet he lifted his head in response to my touch. I shudder to think what the boys would have done to him if he had reached the corner they occupied.

The vet who examined the little dog took one look and told us nothing could be done for him—his internal organs had been badly compromised. She was incredulous that this small creature hadn't already succumbed to his injury, severe by itself, but made worse by blood loss, infection, parasites, dehydration. In a matter of seconds the injection took away his pain, freeing his spirit from the wretchedness of this world. As his head fell limp in my hands, I couldn't help wishing we had found him before it was too late, before he lived through so much unbearable pain. The unpleasant consolation was that, at least, we found him before his torment increased—and it would surely have increased had we not arrived when we did.

More unpleasant still is the fact that this incident is not a glaring exception to what we encounter in our work. In plain view we have found animals dying from the effects of cruelty or automobiles or sickness, yet no one cared enough to offer help. Countless other times we've found them lying dead in the middle of an alley. The cycle of misery and torment spins endlessly on the backs of the innocent who always pay the price for our misdeeds.

The boys who laughed that morning long ago are adults by now, but many more have taken their place on the street corners while others go through the alleys looking for animals to torture. That one group of laughing boys was but a symptom of a darkness in the human heart casting a shadow of disgrace all too plain to see for those returning to the streets and alleys night after night.

Please Consider

remembering Alley Animals in your will. Animals on the streets go on struggling to survive at all cost, and we will go on fighting to better their lot.

If you have been blessed in this life, you can share your blessings and help us help them even after you're gone.

Alley Animals
410-823-0899
or 410-785-2665

Alley Animals

The Cost of Traveling the Alleys

If you regularly read our newsletters, you know the work we do is not child's play. Our teams cover hundreds of alleys each night, alleys in some of the most dangerous parts of the city. Because this is where homeless animals are concentrated, we return again and again, spending eight to nine hours each outing.

Although the animal work we do takes the lion's share of our time—every alley has its own feeding place(s) and its own number of homeless souls to watch for—negotiating the alleys themselves presents a unique challenge to making anything resembling “good time” through the night. Punctuated with potholes deep enough to damage even the sturdiest front-end, strewn with broken glass and bags filled with garbage, even large pieces of discarded furniture, the alleys cannot be driven in a rush. Were we able to pass through the alleys in a manner similar to the way motorists drive ordinary roads, my guess would be that we could shave an hour from our nightly schedule.

Even though we use fuel-efficient vehicles and keep up with scheduled maintenance, running the car all night nearly every night with frequent long periods of idling (when we're checking on a situation or an animal, or trying to secure an animal in a carrier) means we use a great deal of gasoline. When gas prices were reasonable we spent a lot to keep the alley cars going; now that the price of gasoline has risen through the roof, so has our expenditure for it. We put out between \$150.- \$180. a week on gas alone, a big expense for a small organization. And, alley work quickly ages a vehicle so that when something breaks, we can count on paying dearly to get the car up and running again.

Our need to buy gas is nightly, but we also spend significant sums to maintain the alley vehicles in good running order. Even if we could afford to purchase a new car for the alleys we wouldn't, because to enter the areas

we frequent in a new vehicle would be begging for trouble. No, our cars are banged-up old work horses doing the job we ask of them, while occasionally yielding under the strain of age and the stress of demanding use. Car repairs and gasoline are costly but necessary expenditures for the work we do, and I haven't mentioned how we go through tires, tires, and more tires.

The “average driver” isn't the only one feeling the sting of high gas prices. On a daily basis, the rising cost of fuel pokes gaping holes in our modest budget as well, but we will continue to fill the tank each night because thousands of animals wait for the sound of our engine.

Wish List

Cat Food (dry and canned) Paper Towels
Dog Food (dry and canned) Bleach
Large plastic trash bags

To everyone who drops off food and other donation items for us to use in our work, we offer our sincere thanks. Because donations are frequently left without any identifying label, we cannot send an acknowledgment. We want you to know we are always grateful for your thoughtful and generous contributions. Some people have faithfully left excellent donations without identifying themselves; we appreciate this and we would be more than happy to send an acknowledgment—but we need an address label or other identifying mark along with the donation items.

Again, many thanks to everyone who takes the time to drop off much-needed food and supplies to benefit homeless and abandoned animals.

If you have items to donate, call Dick at
410-823-3319

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Our web site: <http://www.alleyanimals.org>
Our email address: info@alleyanimals.org

Alley Animals

Memorials In Loving Memory Of:

Margaret Beardmore. *Clair and Harriet Cole*
Pat Madigan. *Ilse Madigan*
Oliver, my sweet boy—his purr was legend.

Cathy Soares
Leon Greczyn, who died 12/22/05. *Julie E. Hoppmann*
Arrow Bartolini, beloved cat of Carole and Toni Bartolini.
Dotty and Valerie

We miss Mary and Chupi, our world traveling cats.
Colleen and Michael Rogal
Shadow, who died 7/9/05. *Helen Needle*

My mother, **Blanche Trochio**, who died January 14, 2006.
She loved and took care of many strays.

Patricia Clingerman
Fararah, a cat abandoned by ex-neighbors. She lived for
years on our porch until she had the courage to come inside
with our two ex-wild cats. She was the most loving compan-
ion. She died of a stroke before Christmas and we will
miss her. She is a forever memory.

Mrs. Alden Addy
Dr. Allan Danoff, who was raised in Baltimore and who
loved animals. *Rita & Ray Flygar, and Harriet Hopf*

Ali, our terrier mix, who passed on 1/12/06. We adopted
her from Alley Animals on 1/12/92, when she was approxi-
mately a year old. There was something about her that
made her special to us and everyone who met her. What a
gift to have had her in our lives all these years. There will
never be another Ali. *Michael and Iris Sullivan*

Cinders, companion of Mary E. Riegart.

Maggie and John Miner
Lucille, 15 years old, passed away 5/11/06. We loved her
dearly and were blessed to have her in our family for
almost a year. We're happy she is walking and running
again. *Love, Dad & Mom Boldt*

Miss Thelma Soeller. *Phyllis J. Erlich*

Linda Shelton, our co-worker who recently passed away.
She was an avid pet lover.

Jayne Huck, GBMC Laboratory
Josie, Lorraine and Kenny Blumberg's dog.

Jody & Howard Kesner
Maggie, beloved friend of Maureen Mahar.

John & Maggie Miner
Zack, beloved friend of Bill, Lisa and Katy Busier.

John & Maggie Miner
Shadow, a kind and happy neighbor dog who gave only
love and gave it abundantly. We miss you.

Lois, Craig and Jeff

William "Russ" Berger, my loving husband who passed
away, and our cat, Snuffey. *Mary C. Berger*

My Mother, Doris Kelly Williams, who went to live with
the Lord on January 1, 2006 and her loving cat and
"sidekick" friend Mutsey who passed away before Mom.
Sharon Sorensen

In memory of Conan. *James Burnett*
In memory of my nephew, Charles W. Warren.

Helen Needle
In memory of Loggie, who was 18 years old when he died
on Easter Sunday. God bless you Loggie.

Theresa Chonoski
Squeals Magee: Our ancient agouti feline who licked my
son's hair, mothered us all and spoke heartily to me every
day of his life. 1987 - March 16, 2006. Joining his brother,
Max Mahoney. The silence is deafening.

Wendy, Cal & Forrest
In Loving Memory of my Mother, Kay Garrett, who died
8/18/05. *Michele Garrett*

Pooks, Gray Angel, Morris, Bear, Rascal and all our
other babies we loved so much.

Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Hoffmann
In loving memory of my sweet little cat, Jennie, who died
in October 2005. *Marlene Pegg*

To Snowball, my pretty girl, the perfect cat. I miss you
more everyday. Thank you for eleven years of love and
companionship. I'll always love you. *Carol Ayres*

Our cat Tinkerbelle, we miss you. *Mary & Tim Detzel*

Barry Hawkins, 70. Artist, lover of fine arts, devotee of
cats. *Dorian Borsella*

Our beautiful, beloved cat Reckless who brought joy to
our lives for 16 years. We miss you so much.

Jean Razulis & Todd Cunningham

In Honor Of:

Ann Prifitis, in honor of her birthday. I know that she
would be honored to know that her presence on this planet
has benefitted a creature who has nothing.

Vanessa Taylor
In recognition of the many kindnesses given to animals in
need by Arlene Anderson. *James W. Halbert*

Raisin's recovery from a life threatening injury.
Dot Merianos

Motley.

Alley Animals

My Labor of Love by Maria Brannon

It was early Labor Day morning a year ago when Dee and I were finishing up the last of our route on the east side. At one of our last stops, I noticed a very pregnant calico cat and pointed her out to Dee. Because we didn't have an available carrier to put her in, Dee told me that we couldn't take her unless she's friendly enough to let me hold her on my lap, otherwise, we'd have to wait until next time.

Dee got out of the car, tuna in hand, and walked over to the cat. She appeared to be somewhat friendly, but wouldn't let Dee touch her. When Dee got back to the car, she told me just to feed her and we'll make a point to look for her on our next trip through this area. I asked Dee if I could get out and try to touch her. Dee said yes, but she also told me to be very careful—if I frighten her off, we'll never see her again and we don't want her to give birth out here.

I stepped out of the car with a can of food and approached the pregnant cat. To my surprise, she let me touch her. I glanced back at Dee and gave her the signal to roll up the windows because I'm going to take this one off the streets. I held her securely in my arms as I rushed back to the car. As we began our trip back across town, I held her on my lap and I could feel her unborn kittens moving around inside her. I asked Dee, "what do I need to do to take this cat home with me?" Dee replied, "since we already know you and know you'll provide a good home, you don't need to follow the standard adoption procedure. You can just take her with you. I'll get a carrier from my house to use for the trip home."

When I got home I snuck the cat down to the basement that I rent from my roommate. I set up the extra large dog crate for my new companion—I had to keep her separated from my other cats until after she had her kittens and a clean bill of health from the vet. Later that day, I confessed to my roommate what I referred to as my "labor of love". I told her I knew she would be angry that I brought home a pregnant cat from the streets. But lucky for me, she is a huge animal lover and was totally accepting of the situation.

I named the cat Pandora, and a week or so later she had her kittens. Only one survived due to the lack of proper food and water as well as a lack of any kind of proper care a pregnant cat needs to deliver healthy infants. I placed the kitten, now named Turbo, in a good home and he is doing quite well. Pandora, my labor of love, is one of the sweetest, most affectionate cats I have. She is now spayed, very healthy, and gets along well with my other feline companions. I love her dearly and I'll always be glad she crossed our path that morning.

Although she refers to Pandora as her "labor of love," all of Maria's work in the streets can be characterized under this heading. Each member of our street teams exercises the labor of love by refusing to buckle under the danger or the difficulty of the work we do. Only those with an abiding love and respect for animals in need persist in carrying out our mission in the streets. —ed.



Alley Animals

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