

## Rescue Corner

### Trash to Treasure

By Jean C. Keating

At regular intervals during her first ten years of life she was taken from the confining world of her wire crate and bred. In pain and loneliness she delivered her puppies, the only things that showed her love, only to have them taken from her side a few short weeks later. Then came the time she struggled in pain to bring forth her babies to no avail, and the human hands she knew threw her out as trash.

Though she didn't know it, a long journey to a better life was beginning. In the gentle and loving care of Judy Hill, the dead puppies inside her were removed when she was spayed. She received her first dental care. And she got a name in place of a number. She'd come to Judy on March 17<sup>th</sup>, St. Patrick's Day, so Judy named her Erin. She ate well, objected weakly to the eye-drops which she continued to need, and sometimes joined the other resident Papillons on Judy's bed for the night. Thunderstorms frightened her, a characteristic often displayed by dogs who have been housed in outdoor crates.

Judy put Erin's picture and story on the web, and read through many wonderful applications from people interested in this little ten-year old. Finally she settled on a home in Hampton, Virginia with an industrial engineer and her nine-year old Pekinese. In route to this new home, little Erin flew with Judy from Kansas City to Dallas and finally to Orlando to attend PCA Nationals 2003, enjoyed the cheers and good wishes of the crowd at ringside as Judy carried her in the Rescué Parade, and travel by van back to Virginia and her forever home.

In Florida, Judy stayed in touch via internet while the home visit was conducted and adoption details were documented. My fifteen-year old Papillon Ivory accompanied me for the site visit to Julie Owens and her resident nine-year old canine partner. Tiny, five-pound Ladye graciously showed Ivory the beautifully kept and shaded exercise yard off from the delightful sun room end of the house. She invited him to play and to share her bed, but he accepted Julie's invitation to share the sofa cushion beside me. I knew Julie and Ladye were special at first meeting. The confident and comfortable relationship was evident even before I learned that this nine-year old had been a cherished part of Julie's life since she was six-weeks old and had traveled with Julie to duty stations around the world. I've listened to too many lame excuses for getting rid of dogs when people's lives change and require more effort to maintain a relationship than the human partner is willing to expend. The strong bond between Julie and Ladye was obviously one for life; changes were something to be dealt with together. And this was the home that was waiting to welcome Erin.

At Nationals, Erin was held and entertained often by Barbara Foley of Newport News, Virginia, to get her comfortable with the next leg of her journey.

At the end of Nationals, Judy wore sun glasses to hide her tears, as she bid goodbye to Erin and sent her on the trip back to Virginia from Florida with Barbara and the Keepsake pack. On the road trip north, Erin started the night loose in the living room of Barbara's camper, but another thunderstorm brought all the dogs including little Erin into Barbara's bed. Erin found the night a little easier to take from the safe haven under the covers sheltered in Barbara's arms.

Erin was wary and confused when Julie Owens and Ladye came to Barbara's home to get her and her extensive baggage of toys and goodies, for she had to say goodbye to yet another new found friend. She entered her forever home, found a quiet corner of the kitchen and curled up on a braided rug to await the next upheaval in her life. Two loving entities, one a remarkable little dog, undertook the job of making Erin feel welcome.

Julie took a week's vacation to stay at home and help Erin adjust to her new family. Ladye showed Erin where to go potty and stayed with her wherever Erin chose to be. This savvy and caring little Peke gave up her normal bedtime habit of sleeping in the bed with her adoring mistress to share the braided rug in the kitchen beside the lonely newcomer. When Julie came back from doing an errand on the second day of Erin's life with her, she was met at the front door by both little dogs that greeted her with happy body language and then raced to the back door to be let out.

Erin's bottom eye lid folded in on itself again, so another trip to the vet and eye drops had to be endured. Even if she didn't care for the eye drops, Erin surely sensed the caring that surrounded her from her new family. Even her new neighbor came over each morning at 5:30 am to help in holding her while Julie put the hated but needed eye drops in her bad eye.

By her fifth day in her new home, both Ladye and Erin had moved from the braided rug in the kitchen at night to Ladye's big lounge bed in the living room for sleeping. A particularly loud thunderstorm one night awakened Julie who found both dogs on the rug beside her bed, seeking comfort from their human. But Erin went back to the living room when the storm was over, and Ladye went back to stay with her new sister.

Erin now goes to sleep in Julie's lap, turns her belly up to be rubbed, and has gained a whole pound in the two short weeks she's been home. She is only a short hallway away from joining Julie in the big bed at night to sleep. Ladye will be glad to get back to her accustomed place among the soft feather pillows on the bed with her mistress and Erin will find a permanent haven of safety from thunderstorms and loneliness. What was once trash is now a treasured part of a loving family.