
Lost Souls: FOUND!™

Inspiring Stories About Dogs

Kyla Duffy and Lowrey Mumford



Published by Happy Tails Books™, LLC

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Rescue Resources:

Confessions From the Shelter: What you didn't want to know

<http://confessionsfromtheanimalshelter.com>

Dog Breed Info Center: Learn about breed characteristics

<http://www.dogbreedinfo.com>

Mill Dog Manifesto: Free eBook about puppy mills

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Petfinder.com: Find an adoptable pet

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Pit Bull Resource Central: Pit Bull advocacy information

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Trust Takes Time



The crazy cat lady—every neighborhood has one. In my neighborhood, she appeared to be *me*. Throughout my adult life, I have owned quite a few cats. I never wanted a dog. It's not that I disliked dogs; I was more or less indifferent to them. But then I met my neighbor's Australian Shepherd. She was sweet and loveable, and we were smitten with each other. One day I actually had a startling thought cross my mind: If I ever owned a dog—which I knew I wouldn't—I would want my dog to be just like her.

One day I found myself looking at dogs on Petfinder.com. No big deal, I was "just looking." I already had four cats; what would I do with a dog? But my sporadic browsing became a semi-regular habit. I was looking at Aussies. Wouldn't every Aussie be like my neighbor's dog? I was looking at young dogs, not puppies. I was looking at medium-sized dogs, not small and not large dogs. Before I knew it, browsing through Petfinder.com became almost a daily routine, yet still I had no serious intentions. But then one day it happened—I saw Mindy.

Mindy's picture struck a chord in me. What a precious face, and those pretty brown puppy-dog eyes! The words ****URGENT**** and ****SAVE A LIFE**** practically jumped out at me through the computer screen. A young Australian Shepherd-mix—just what I was looking for! I called my husband over to the computer and showed him Mindy. He asked if I wanted to go see her at the shelter, which was about 30 miles from our house, and I quickly said, "Oh no, I was just looking... She is so cute though... Well, it can't hurt to just go look... What if we drive all the way down there, and she is gone?"

Once we arrived at the shelter, we set out to find Mindy. I thought she would be easy to spot since we had her picture in hand, but we didn't see her. Looking past the other dogs, who were barking at us and trying so hard to get our attention, was heart-wrenching, but our mission was to find Mindy. Finally, mixed between all the dogs excitedly jumping up and down, we saw this meek-looking dog standing still and staring at us without an iota of excitement. I looked at the print out, and I looked at her. The markings were the same, but it wasn't quite the cherubic face as was in the picture. Instead, staring at us was a face full of sadness and fear attached to a body that was too thin with scraggly fur. There she stood—we had found Mindy.

Mindy moved very slowly and appeared timid and nervous. She looked young, still very much like a puppy. We did not get much of a background story on her, other than that she was owner surrendered and pregnant when she was arrived at a different shelter. Once she had her puppies, she was transferred to this particular shelter because it could accommodate her and the pups better. We were informed that she exhibited nervous behavior, especially around men, so it

was pretty certain that she had been mistreated in some fashion. I asked if she was good around cats and was told they didn't know for sure, but she seemed fine when she walked by them in the vet's office. She didn't act aggressively toward them.

I wish I could say that I felt an instantaneous love for her, but it was hard when she was so withdrawn. Still, I saw something deep in her eyes that started to overwhelm me, and I had an emotional breakthrough. This dog has been through so much in her short life. She was sent away from her home for whatever reason (which was for the best if she had been mistreated). She had babies, and they were taken away from her, one by one, while she stood by and watched, and now she was all alone. She had every right to be scared and sad. With so many emotions tugging at my heartstrings, I muttered to my husband, "I think I want her."

What did I just say? My head was whirling, and my brain was on information overload. I mean, I didn't want a dog, right? I didn't even know what to do with a dog! I already had four cats. Cats are easy. What was I going to do with a dog?

Adapting to her new home was a huge adjustment for Mindy. Her nervous tendencies were almost crippling, but we continued to be patient with her, hoping that she would come around. I will never forget the first time she dropped her guard around me. I took her into the back yard, called her name, and playfully ran towards her. She perked up and actually pounced a little with excitement before quickly returning to her submissive stance. For me, it was a monumental occasion. I felt a warm sensation come over me; my eyes welled up with happiness. Why did it affect me this way? Because I knew that it had happened. I was completely in love with my dog.

Dawn Starek

Silver Paws for Golden People



Amelia came into my life 2½ years ago through the Silver Paws program of Atlanta Animal Rescue Friends (AARF). I had recently gone through a divorce, and my life was very empty. I have always loved dogs and had hoped to have one again someday. I saw an article in the paper about AARF, which mentioned the Silver Paws program. What a great idea: rescuing senior dogs and placing them with senior people. "Mature" dog lovers could become Silver Paws foster parents, which meant becoming a permanent caretaker for an elderly

dog without the financial burden of veterinary bills and the like. I thought, "Count me in!"

After my application was reviewed and a volunteer completed a home visit, I was approved as a foster home. When I was notified about Amelia, an 11-year-old German Shepherd who needed a home, I was very excited! She had been living at a vet clinic for a couple of months after her owners had to give her up. The clinic staff thought one reason she hadn't been adopted was because of her age. In reality it was probably several factors: her age, breed, size, and the fact that she is almost all black.

It only took one weekend to bond with Amelia, and now it's like we've been together for years. Amelia has brought so much joy into my life. She has the gentlest soul. She follows me around and seems to be so happy just to be close. She likes to cozy up with me on the sofa and watch TV with me. She loves to go on rides in the car.

I broke a bone in my leg shortly after receiving Amelia, and she instinctively knew I couldn't walk fast anymore. She adjusted her gait to mine and constantly looked up at me to

make sure I was all right. Being a German Shepherd, she takes her role of protector very seriously, yet is very gentle and affectionate.

As Amelia has aged, she has developed some nerve degeneration in her hindquarters. Through the generosity of AARF supporters, she is currently receiving physical therapy including acupuncture treatments and exercise on an underwater treadmill. She is very alert, her spirit is strong, and her level of mobility still allows her to enjoy life.

The first thing I see every morning is her sweet face looking into mine. I can't help but start the day off with a smile. Amelia came into my life when I needed her, and she needed me. Some things are meant to be.

Joyce Durdin

More than a Mascot



People associate Dalmatians with fire trucks, often thinking of them as a mascot, but Sparkles, my Dalmatian who was rescued from a home with 62 other dogs before coming to live with me, is so much more. She is an active role model and a fire safety teacher for young children. Sparkles is never happier than when she wears her red vest and shiny red badge. She loves sharing the fire safety message with children.

My focus of helping save young children from fire came soon after I became a volunteer firefighter. I found out that children under the age of five account for the largest number of fatalities from fire: 11%, and I wanted to do something to reduce this unfortunate statistic. I could not have asked for a more amazing partner to help me on this mission.

When Sparkles was younger, we'd practice fire safety. She would jump into her bed, and I would cover her with a blanket. She would pretend to be asleep. As the smoke alarm sounded, she would jump out of bed, crawl low, and go to her meeting place. The above became a very effective way of reinforcing the fire safety behaviors taught by firefighters.

I'll never forget a visit two years ago to Celia Clinton Elementary School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to read our book, *Sparkles the Fire Safety Dog*, and make a fire safety presentation to approximately 450 students. Each child that day received a free copy of our book, compliments of Tulsa Rotary Club.

The following January I received a telephone call from the Celia Clinton Elementary School principal. She told me that two of her students were involved in separate fire situations

over the holidays, but they knew what to do to get their families out of their homes safely because of the lessons Sparkles taught them.

I sat there quietly, soaking in the principal's words; I was totally speechless. Tears streamed down my face; I could not believe what I was hearing. It became clear to me this was a teachable moment and that Sparkles and I needed to go back to Celia Clinton to visit the children and reinforce fire safety. I could not wait to meet those who had helped save their families. The event was an emotional one for me, and I try to hold back the tears each time I share the story.

During the return visit to Celia Clinton, five-year-old Angelica shared the following with me: "Firefighter Dayna, I was in bed under the covers and the smoke came. I crawled out of bed and crawled low, just like Sparkles showed me to. I said, 'C'mon daddy, you have to get on the floor and crawl low like Sparkles.'"

By this time, Angelica's dad had become disoriented because he had been standing in the smoke-filled room. Thankfully, he was able to follow Angelica out of the house. The

firefighters later shared with me that as soon as Angelica's father reached the door, they scooped him up and took him to the hospital, where he spent seven days, four of which were in intensive care. The firefighters also mentioned that the home flashed over just as they got Angelica's dad to the threshold of the door. (A "flashover" occurs when the home becomes totally engulfed in flames.)

A day does not go by when I do not think of Angelica and her story. I am so thankful that she and her dad are safe, and I am humbled knowing that the fire safety presentation Sparkles and I made helped save their lives.

Sparkles has helped firefighters reach millions of children and their caregivers with the fire safety message since I adopted her seven years ago. Now that she is older and does not travel as much anymore, we offer Skype visits with schools throughout the United States and abroad. Especially because of budget cuts, Skype visits have become a perfect way to share the fire safety message. They also allow us to reach children all over the world.

Every day Sparkles is in my life she is a blessing. When I think about all the lives she has touched throughout the years, I realize just how lucky I am. Not only is she an amazing fire safety dog and a true credit to the fire service, she is a wonderful friend and companion.

Dayna Hilton

With Love and Luck



"With a little love and luck, you will get by." -Jimmy Buffet

"No promises. We are just looking today," David said as we drove to the adoption event. Funny he should say that because David was the one who wanted a puppy. But I was the one who knew she was my dog in less than five minutes. When

she sat in my lap, looked up, and flicked her long, wet, pink tongue under my chin, I knew. I stroked her soft puppy-fur and felt the long strands between my fingers. I fiddled with the tiny blue collar that looked like it could be a newborn's bracelet: It said she was puppy number 777.

"She's lucky!" I exclaimed, her puppy breath spreading over my fingers, which she mindlessly gnawed. Tears welled up in my eyes as I felt the inexplicable joy of finding my new companion. David, who saw how happy I was, agreed to adopt her, and we proceeded to wander around the store hosting the adoption event like new parents, imagining what our new addition would need.

We drove home, with the puppy's warm body curled up in a little ball on my lap. I thought nothing in my life could go wrong with the world's cutest and sweetest puppy warming my legs and a wonderful and loving boyfriend by my side. We named her Layla (my choice). David told people it was after the Eric Clapton song, but I loved the story: an ancient Arabic poem about being driven mad by the love of Layla, a princess and "beauty of the night." That's how I felt—this puppy became my life as I became more and more enamored with her beauty.

Layla was rescued from Raton, New Mexico. She was the runt of the litter at about seven pounds. A beautiful Lab/Border Collie mix, her litter was found on the side of the road in a duffel bag. Everyone who meets Layla asks, "Who could do such a thing?" It's something I, too, wonder and will never understand.

Months later David proposed, and I was elated to grow our own little family. The three of us settled in to a happy routine. David and I spent days walking Layla to the dog park just to let her play. We took her when we went skiing in Vail at Christmas. We had to ring the bottom of the Christmas tree with bells because Layla was a chewer, and we were worried about her eating the tree or ornaments. She would hit the bells on the tree, so we could hear when she got too close. David had a remote control car Layla chased around the house; I remember one time when Layla was chasing the car, and she ran into a table that was covered in wedding magazines. They fell all over and around her, freaking her out. It was so cute...

Everything seemed perfect. But then David changed his mind. He decided he didn't love me. He didn't want to marry me. He broke our engagement, and in the ensuing "splitting up

of possessions," David got the house, and I got Layla. I suspect he didn't want responsibility, and that was how he viewed us both. I felt like my life was over, like I was falling apart. At first, I had nowhere to stay, and thus couldn't take Layla with me, so she stayed with David. My body and heart hurt; I felt alone and had no reason to get out of bed.

A friend offered to let Layla and me stay at her house, and I was overjoyed to have my companion back. Layla offered me something that no one else could—a reason to get out of bed in the morning. I had to get up, if only to take Layla out and get her some food. Having Layla forced me to be outside, to walk and exercise, and to get fresh air. I changed the rules of the house, allowing her to cuddle with me on the bed. I loved the feeling of her warm, soft body against me. I cried into her fur: first, every day; then, every other day; then, every couple of days; until I was just crying every once in a while. She was there every step of the way.

Slowly, with Layla's help, I started living again. Layla and I moved into our own apartment. Layla loved running up and down the new stairs, and found a new fun game of dropping her toys off the loft, seemingly aiming at my head. She

and I started going to the dog park again, where we both made new friends. We started running together and hiking in the beautiful open space around Colorado. We climbed our first 14,000-foot mountain (Layla was ready to do another, but after one *I* had had enough) and explored breweries. I've realized Layla is the love of my life (at least right now), and she saved me. I wonder, what would I have done without a reason for getting up—a reason for eating, sleeping, and being?

Layla is my best friend. I consider her my own lucky puppy. Perhaps I saved her life by rescuing her, although I doubt that such a cute and sweet dog wouldn't have been rescued quickly. In the end, I know that she saved my life and continues to be my reason. I know that I have to be okay because no one in the world would love that dog as much as I do. When I adopted Layla, I thought the 777 would mean luck for her. Now I know that all the luck was mine.

Jessica Morris

A New Breed of Best Friend



Born in a thunderstorm, he died gently in a snowstorm.

His downturn was fast and brief, a mere 24 hours. His vision was still as sharp as the red-tailed hawks' nesting high in the ancient cottonwood tree—the tree beneath which he would snuffle, carefully and slowly seeking out carrion fallen from the nest above. His ashes now circle that giant tree.

Almost deaf at the end, Rufus' fur was still thick, shining, and soft. At 73 pounds, he was down from his peak of 96

pounds and his fighting weight of 83 pounds. His massive chest and forequarters carried him forward through life with strength, power, and determination, although not through water. Several unplanned deep water experiences on the Negro Bill Trail in Moab, Utah, and in a lake at City Park in Denver, taught him never to venture deeper than he could stand or preferably lie down. He loved to lie in a stream flowing so swiftly he was almost swept away. Here, his massive chest was the dam upon which the white water would break, forming eddies back by his rump, his tail floating away downstream.

He had an illustrious career with skunk encounters; the last of five was on his 10th birthday in a culvert at Mary's Loop, Fruita, in western Colorado. He was blasted full force in the face by the sheltering skunk and spent the next half hour rubbing his face raw in the dirt. Finally, he succumbed to a decontamination treatment, and following a mountain bike ride with us, he was allowed in the car. His leather collar was another story. It spent the rest of the road trip slung around the passenger side mirror, and despite massive treatments, it soon met its fate in the dumpster.

Rufus had three run-ins with the law, all of which were misunderstandings. The worst was when he was heavily maced in Leadville, Colorado, protecting his "sister" Chutney and her cousin Leoncita when they were very young pups. A neighboring child had opened the garden gate, so the three dogs were on the front lawn where Rufus was watching over his young, playful charges. A postman was under the impression that he could walk onto the front lawn and not get deterred from fulfilling his duty. By all accounts, none of the dogs ever advanced toward the postman, yet he felt the need to call the dog catcher, who then maced Rufus to the state where he was completely incapacitated, lying in the gutter under my car—which is where we found him; the puppies were cowering under the car, hiding behind the fallen Rufus. My friend's intervention prevented my getting a felony charge for assaulting an officer, and all the government officials scattered quickly, sheepishly embarrassed at their overzealousness. The pups were none the worse for wear, but Rufus suffered massive eye rinses and face washings until the pepper spray was finally gone. Once again, he rubbed and rubbed his head in torment.

We discovered very early on that Rufus had a fetish: clean or dirty, but only socks. We left him in a hotel room during a quick dinner and returned to find all our socks strewn about the room, nary another item moved. There are many half-pairs of socks in our home and in the homes and wardrobes of forgetful friends. Rufus would steal them off chairs, out of drawers—anything was fair game, not just the floor. As he got bigger, he would swallow the sock, only for it to reappear a few days later, intact, out the other end. Sadly, they were never deemed ready for laundry after that...

Rufus was a road warrior, crisscrossing the country many times with us, but drive over a cattle grid or hit the rumble strips on the road and he completely fell apart, frantically trying to climb into my lap. (Did I mention his size?)

Our Boxer/Golden Retriever/Chow mix had traits and body parts from each breed. The funny thing was people insisted Rufus was a new breed they'd seen, which we discovered was usually a Belgian Malinois, even though he was twice their size. We became so fed up with people arguing with us about his pedigree that we decided he was actually a Polish Short-Haired Sable Hound. We told people about how this

ancient breed hunted sable for its luxurious fur in the forests of Eastern Europe at the side of nobility...but that's a story unto itself.

Thriving for over 14½ years, Rufus' dignity, grace, courage, tenacity, mischievousness, loyalty, and stubbornness live on in us all.

Lowrey Mumford

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Lost Souls: Found! Inspiring Stories About Dogs
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Happy Tails Books™ was created to help support animal rescue efforts by showcasing the love, happiness, and joy adopted dogs have to offer. With the help of animal rescue groups, stories are submitted by people who have adopted dogs, and then Happy Tails Books™ compiles them into breed-specific books. These books serve not only to entertain, but also to educate readers about dog adoption and the characteristics of each specific type of dog. Happy Tails Books™ donates a significant portion of proceeds back to the rescue groups who help gather stories for the books.



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