

Alley Animals

Editor's Note

The fact that we enjoyed a month and a half of moderate temperatures to begin the winter may not have been the best circumstance for animals on the streets. Until the middle of January, I don't believe we had more than a day or two that went below 40 degrees. Unfortunately, this meant that homeless animals did not develop winter coats—their bodies responded to the warm temperatures, and they had no thick, protective fur that takes time to grow in. One day in January we may have broken the record for the high temperature (close to 70 degrees); two days later the air temperature didn't reach past freezing. Animals trying to survive on the streets know what it is to struggle every day, but without adequate fur to protect their skin, suddenly they struggled every second to withstand the penetrating cold.

The sharp drop in temperatures coincided with the arrival of blustery, arctic winds sweeping through the region, bending even the sturdiest of trees. A fierce enemy of animals on the streets, the wind's frequent whipping gusts upwards of 30 mph can take your breath away. Between the biting cold, the wind, and the February ice storms, the second half of this winter pressed heavy hardship onto homeless animals.

The first ice storm created dangerous road condi-

tions, but treacherous conditions for any vehicle in the alleys—rarely if ever salted or plowed. The night after the storm, we couldn't risk traveling hundreds of iced-over alley pavements and the possibility of sliding into a utility pole or perhaps a parked car. And, getting out of the car over and over again to drop food at the feeding places would be asking for trouble. Walking on the ice was impossible.

The snow and ice took their time receding, and a week after the first storm, the second one hit. Meanwhile, getting food to the animals was no mean feat—even the sure-footed cats slipped and slid, sometimes falling face first onto the ice. We have no way of knowing the exact number, but I'm sure many innocent creatures succumbed to exposure during those deadly winter nights.

Winter's elements may make things difficult for people, but homeless animals know the true life-threatening and painful side of this season that robs them of any hope for finding food or water, and whatever slim shelter they seek under a board or piece of discarded furniture is no match for enveloping winds that whip through the tiniest crevice. They have no choice but to endure winter's beating without relief, and that means we will return each night to the streets and hundreds of alleys where deadly cold and frostbite hold innocent beings in their unforgiving grip.



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The Superior Species

by Lillian G. Leslie

In our area of animal work we see pain and suffering nightly, and the darker side of the human species stands out. Because, were it not for human neglect or outright cruelty, there would be no need for Alley Animals' workers to travel hundreds of alleys each night. The homeless population would shrink substantially if people stopped booting out the door the unaltered animal once welcomed into their homes. But this cruel practice happens over and over, perhaps daily, and generations of animals are born into a life of deprivation and misery on the streets.

Through our travels over the years we have met and befriended some wonderful human beings who not only care about animals, but who care enough to act on their compassion. Still, the members of the human species we come into contact with more often than not are those who either contribute to the suffering of other beings, or couldn't care less about it. In our work, human wickedness overshadows the potential for human kindness; through the animals we see human evil thriving unchecked.

A few weeks ago, when we were lucky if the air temperature reached 20 degrees during the day (never mind the wind chill, especially at night), Alice pulled into one of her alleys and saw a large carrier on its side in the middle of the driving path. People heave all manner of material into the alleys—appliances, furniture, car parts, and just plain garbage we've had to move out of the way at one time or another. A carrier in the middle of the alley, however, was not simply another piece of junk that needed to be moved; seeing it sent a chill through Alice as she got out of the car to investigate.

Walking toward the carrier, Alice hoped no animal was inside it. To lock an animal inside a carrier in single digit temperatures is unthinkable for you and me, but we have come to expect the worst from humans, because we have seen the worst. Alice shined a flashlight through the carrier's gate and saw the dog. He was dead. Alice did not want to leave the carrier or the body of an animal who had been tortured to death, so she made room in the back of the car before attempting to maneuver the large carrier. It was quite cumbersome and had partially frozen to the pavement—Alice could not manage to get it into the car. She called our good friend, John, who navigated his way through the frigid cold night to the alley and successfully yanked the carrier free from the ice.

Frozen air is dense and does not easily conduct odors or fragrances the way warm spring breezes carry the scent of a bed of daffodils or the irresistible sweetness of flowering plum tree blossoms for several city blocks. This made the experience all the more forceful when Alice and John lifted the carrier and dog into the truck

and they were nearly overcome by the wreaking, pungent stench of urine. While this innocent animal starved and froze to death, he did so in his own icy urine. His suffering bears undeniable witness to the depth of our human cruelty.

Regrettably, in the course of our work we have found many neutral, ordinary objects transformed by wickedness. In this case, what was once a carrier (an enclosure designed primarily for an animal's safety and comfort) had become a horrifying instrument of torture. The dog's body was barely more than a skeleton with skin stretched over it, and we'll never know if he died from starvation, thirst, or from exposure to the frigid cold as he lay in the locked carrier. The wounds on his body were, no doubt, already present when he was shoved into the carrier for the last time. I try to avoid making blanket statements because such words as "all", "always", or "never" rarely apply to the infinite variances of this world, but I vehemently insist that *no* animal deserves to suffer what that poor dog endured, *no matter what*.

Yes, our human species can be capable of goodness as well as evil, but why is it that innocent creatures benefit from our potential for good far, far less than they suffer incomprehensible pain from the wicked cruelty we commit? The dog's body in the carrier heaved into the middle of an alley is a prime example of evil's triumph in this world. Human evil triumphant over the innocent who are without recourse to defend themselves against our wicked ways. We call ourselves the higher species, superior to the rest, yet no other species on this planet commits the cruel atrocities we do against the wholly innocent.

If only he had barked or even whimpered, if he had let us know he was suffering a terrible death in the black shadows, we could have helped him. We would have helped him. I realize the "if onlys" are counter-productive; better that we focus on the good we can do and have done rather than the good we are prevented from doing. But his pain and suffering weighs on us, and the anger at our own human species, like a gasoline fire, can scarcely be contained.

Acts of mercy and kindness should be among the marks made on this world by the superior species, for those who are good do not torture the innocent. If mercy is to be found at all for this animal, it is in his death—the only possible exit from continued horror. No one will ever again torture the dog who probably knew pain of one kind or another most of his days on earth.

So, for the one who fell at the hands of the evil in my own kind. I offer this prayer:

May your innocent soul be in a far better place, may you be whole in spirit, comforted and loved, free from fear and pain, now and forever.

Alley Animals

Memorials

In Loving Memory:

My beloved sister, who was an animal lover. She died at age 95. *Sophia Sleezer*

Our beloved **Reckless**, forever in our hearts. *Todd Cunningham & Jean Razulis*

Jessie Batch. *John and Shirley Rice*

In loving memory of "Our Little Girl, **Daisy**", age 16. *Ann B. Collins*

Doris Lowner, a long time friend of Alley Animals. *Alva Blakemore*

Habeeb, Nina, Moo Moo and Daisy. *Marcia Shipley*

"**Moses**" **Lucia**, a rescued Siamese gentleman. Loved, respected and now much missed by all his friends and neighbors. *"Callie" Blasbalg & Natalie Pawlow*

Doris Lowner. *M. Patricia Ovelgone*

My granddog, **Leonard**, a lovable greyhound who died with his head in my daughter's lap. We miss him as does his companion, **Jingles.** *Doris T. Hendricks*

My beautiful smooth collie, **Jasper.** *Diana Watson*

Cleocatra and Tiffany, much loved cats and never forgotten. *Ana A. Garcia*

G.G., Ditto, and Kiwi. *Rosemary Chavez*

Doris Lowner. *Joan M. Goeringer*

Nicholas, who gave unquestioning love, sadly missed. *Marybelle Page*

Our daughter, **Lydia**, who always had a good reason for bringing home strays. *Norma & John Norman*

"**B.C.**" - **Big Cat.** We had you 12 years even with your severe asthma. You will always remain "sweet in our memory." *Dick & Linda Gooding*

Gretchen and Ginger. *Dawn Griest*

Stella Wilson. *Charles Nolte*

My Mother, **Lydia Riley**, on her birthday. *Norma J. Norman*

Mary and Chupi, our world travelers who graced our lives for too short a time. *Colleen & Michael Rogal*

Mrs. Barbara Kelly, who passed away November 2006. *Donna Gavin*

Albert Cyford who loved animals and was always picking up strays to take to his home. *Charles and Marlene Goode*

Stripers. *Megan Del Baglivo*

Bam Bam, Debbie Perry's happy dog whom she loved with all her heart. *Lillian G. Leslie*

Albert Cyford, a friend of mine who rescued many abandoned cats and gave them happy homes. He cared for them in the best and happiest of ways. He loved all animals, but particularly the ones others had neglected or abandoned. *Donna L. Seibly*

My Lab, **Gussie**. When I lost him last April, I lost a precious, intricate part of my life. *Trish Manning*

Mrs. Myrtle Bagley, the mother of my friend, Carol Hutton. *Mrs. Pauline J. Cohen*

All of the guinea pigs that were my companions in the past and have since passed away. *David Larson*

Toby Merrill, loving dog of our friends, J.D. Merrill and his family. *Kathy, Roger, Ned & Alex Novak.*

Blizzard, whom we adopted from Alley Animals in 1990. He was put down due to kidney failure at age 21. During his lifetime he was a favorite of our son, and later, the constant companion of my bedridden mother. We miss him. *Mrs. Susan Weigel*

Natrone J. Green, the best cat ever, who passed away (natural causes) last year. He was adopted from a shelter so we never knew how old he really was, but he lived with us for twelve years and fully deserved his nickname of "Mr. Perfect". We loved him. *Mary O'Connor*

In Honor Of:

My parents, **John & Norma Norman.** *Linda Babette Powder*

My aunt, **Louise T. Keelty** *Michael T. Wyatt*

Deborah Lyons. *Jane I. Lyons*

My Mother, Elinore Gordon. *Stefanie Nair*

Donald Rogers *Suzanne White*

Tami Metz. *Ms. Cunningham*

Carol Stover, who celebrated her birthday this year by throwing a party and asking her guests to bring (instead of presents for her) donations benefitting Alley Animals. We offer Carol our thankfulness for thinking of the animals rather than herself. *Everyone at Alley Animals*

My wonderful Dad, **James F. Leslie**, on his birthday, March 30th. *Lillian G. Leslie*

Bitsy, Boo, JJ and Sonny. *Ann B. Collins*

Florence Mulhern's cat "**Good Time Charlie**". *Ann B. Collins*

My birthday on February 3rd. *Marilyn Sellers*

In Honor of my co-workers. *Juanita Crispens*

Alley Animals

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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.

Wish List

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

We gratefully appreciate donations in response to our Wish List.

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

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