

"BECAUSE OF YELLOW DOG"

Yellow Dog was dumped one hot summer day at a shelter in Florida. His name on the owner release was mutt. His reason for surrender – “don’t need him anymore”.

He was a boney, dull-coated fellow, his feet were deformed because his toenails had grown in circles, and he walked with a funny limp as his front leg had been broken. He was heartworm-positive, was blind in one eye, and he was terrified of humans. He was named Yellow Dog. His breed was Lab/Pitbull X. He was put into a kennel, from which he promptly escaped.

And so the story of Yellow Dog begins...

Yellow dog lived at this rural shelter for months – with no improvement – escaping regularly, never running away, but having to be trapped repeatedly and brought back inside. Kind workers tried every way they knew to make him come around but to no avail.

Those in charge began to question whether it was in his best interest to keep this poor fellow or to humanely euthanize him. I know these things because I was Director of this small shelter in rural Florida and I was being pressured – told that it was cruel to keep this Yellow Dog and that he would never be adoptable.

I believed differently and I moved Yellow dog into a crate in the main office where he was forced to deal with the comings and goings of people, animals, music, and noise. My heart broke a little bit each day in the beginning. He would lay so still, terrified – but I noticed that his eyes watched everything. Everyone greeted him – he lay like a stone with no response. Multiple times each day he was taken out to go potty – he was slowly learning to walk on a leash.

One quiet day I opened the door to his crate to see what would happen and Yellow dog walked very calmly, just like he had been doing this his whole life, to the employee lunch room and waited quietly for leftovers. He had turned a corner.

Yellow Dog lived in the office, loved the staff and volunteers and greeted every animal who came in with a wagging tail and a smile – helping them to be at ease. He never met a doggie or kitty he didn’t love. He was super clean and never had an accident, began to gain weight, and to act a little bit like a regular doggie. He knew everyone’s lunch schedule and workers always saved part of their lunch for him. He was creeping into the hearts of those who knew him and served as an example of how time and love can save even the most terrified dog.

Those in charge would tour the facility 2 or 3 times a year, and on one visit after Yellow Dog decided that he didn’t care for the big scary group of strangers and wouldn’t let them pet him, these same decided that Yellow Dog was not a fit dog to be

in the office. Sadly, a home was quickly sought for Yellow dog – a desperate attempt to once again save his life.

Yellow dog was adopted by a kind family of a volunteer and as in the past – that night he escaped from inside a crate, inside their house, and from a fenced-in yard. He broke out of the crate, out of a pool room door, and scaled the fence. He was gone.

Search teams scoured the small city. A \$500 reward was offered. No sightings were reported. I was totally devastated and would drive for hours each day at dawn and dusk – before and after work. A week went by and I hadn't had any luck. Two weeks went by and I was driving my regular search route when I noticed a little dirt driveway that I had not been down before. I pulled in, rounded the corner and saw a beautiful pasture and in it a big yellow dog lying flat. I began crying and I stopped my car. He had died and I was devastated.....

Yellow Dog sat up and looked at me and my heart melted. He was alive! It took a lot of coaxing, but he eventually came to me and we hugged in the field – me and this big yellow dog – and I sobbed like a 2-year-old.

Yellow Dog and I both left that shelter shortly after. I had been there for 15 years and on that day I put him in my car and we drove away together – both terrified of our futures, but confident we had each other and we were going to make a difference in the lives of dogs like him.

Yellow Dog came into my home as if he had always been there. He got along perfectly with my other dogs and cats. He never had an accident. He never needed a crate. He never tried to escape. It was as if it was meant to be and he was there to teach me and move me forward. I did lots of soul searching and soon after began SAFE Pet Rescue in honor of this big, wonderful, yellow dog, who so very badly needed someone to be there for him and stand up for him. I vowed to make a difference in the lives of animals just like him. I promised him that we would take those who are scheduled for euthanasia simply because they are scared or dirty or the shelter is out of room. WE would take the ones with no hope – the stinky, unloved, sick ones that no one else wants to touch or deal with.

That was in September, 2008, and since then, SAFE has grown to a rescue with 2 adoption centers and a team of 100 volunteers. SAFE has rescued over 11,000 animals that were scheduled for euthanasia.....

All because of Yellow Dog.