

FROM UNSPEAKABLE EVIL CAME A SHINING STAR

IT WAS MAY 2002 at 5am: On the outskirts of Baguio, myself and four AKF staff sat in one unmarked car; in another unmarked car there were five armed police officers. The time was right, the police first with ourselves right behind them, the door of the illegal dog slaughterhouse was smashed open.

Nothing could have prepared us for what we were to find inside this filthy place, and for the hell that was to simultaneously break out. The four dog traders caught in the brutal act of killing and butchering innocent dogs, now they were all trying to escape. We joined in with the police shouting confusing orders: *“Don’t move - get up against the wall, put your hands up”*. It was sheer pandemonium, this was the biggest raid (and still is for me) we had ever done, the total count of dogs in this place was ninety eight, sixty two were already dead. Such was the filth and stench in this place, members of my staff were being physically sick.

Dead dogs were stacked up on top of cages that were still holding live dogs, then I looked at another nearly empty cage, the cage they must have been working out of. Standing there shaking was this puppy dog: it was of course “SWEET”, the shining star. I gently lifted him up out of the cage, thereby escaping death by a millisecond, attached a collar and lead on him, and led him out. Now Sweet is rapidly approaching his first decade of life.



Sweet in his cage at the time of his rescue

On that day we managed to re-home twelve of the live dogs, hopefully to good homes. You must remember that at this time we did not have a rescue centre, so the only thing we could do with the live dogs was to take them to the city pound. These were dreadful places, and after 5/7 days the dogs would be put down. Now of course, we have the rescue centre and things are very different. All the dogs are either re-homed, or live out their natural life in our centre, where they are well cared for.

Following the advice of our legal team, which includes Mr John Beveridge QC here in London, we learned how to conduct a raid against the dog traders, in such a way that would most likely give us a successful prosecution under the 9482 Anti Rabies Act. This called for months of extremely complicated and careful planning, and the plan was put into action in November 2010. This resulted in the arrest of five dog traders, one of whom was a juvenile and was later released; his punishment is still pending.

As this Anti Rabies Act still stands (and as you already know we are working on having the act amended), the onus is upon us to prove that the dogs we confiscate were intended to be sold for their meat, which is not easy under the usual course of events. However with careful planning on this occasion we were able to do so, due to the fact that the 30 dogs had been butchered in such a way that the evidence was conclusive in itself.

Further resulting from a strong (but friendly) meeting that I had with a Director of the Meat Marketing Board (MMB) (a government body), where we are always being told that as dog meat is not listed for human consumption, it has nothing to do with the MMB. This has in the past greatly annoyed me, so much so that I said aggressively: *"I said if it is not your responsibility, someone must be responsible"*. The reply came back "Try the Consumers Act". One of the AKF lawyers was with me, so we agreed we would try that.

Subsequently these four dog traders were charged with two acts of violating the Anti Rabies Act, and violating the Consumer Act, to which they were advised by their own lawyer to plead guilty, and enter "Plea Bargaining", which is allowed under Philippine law. Due to the fact that they were caught with 30 dogs, the fine could amount to 600,000 pesos, plus 4 years in prison. The court, the police and ourselves accepted a fine of 300,000 pesos, plus one year imprisonment on each count to run consecutively. This equates to each dog trader paying a 75,000 pesos fine = £1,071.42 and each serving two years in prison. This kind of sentence will send shivers throughout the dog-trading fraternity, and once we have the amendment to the law this will be the normal course of events. A far cry from the old Animal Welfare Act where the maximum penalty was £50.00.

Using the picture of "Happy" on our last donor form has caused some people to ask if "Happy" is in fact a happy dog. Truthfully it is difficult to say if he is happy, because he is totally blind, which makes him very inactive. He does get lots of special care and attention, although we

have had a special pen built for him, which he shares with an ex road traffic accident dog that now only has three legs. Sometimes he likes to lay outside of his pen, so I have bought two big mats for him to lay on. The best thing would be if we could find a family for him to live in with, but most people in the Philippines keep their dogs outside.

The chief vet at our rescue centre, Roland Arciga, has recently spent some time here in the UK, working at veterinary clinics to improve on his clinical skills. This has proved to be very successful, but the down side is that we now find ourselves having to buy more surgical instruments, which will cost around £1,200.00. Also we need to take on another person who is a postgraduate of a veterinary college, instead of relying on kennel mates. His/her duties will be to keep the clinic clean, ensuring dogs are bathed regularly and generally assist our two vets. the problem is, this will entail extra expense, so I am wondering would anyone be willing to sponsor his salary at £128.00 per month (or part of it)?

I am writing this final part of the newsletter whilst here in the Philippines, where we have had a very busy couple of weeks. To start with we had two of our loyal supporters from New Zealand, who had with them a TV crew, also from New Zealand. They were making a twenty-minute programme of our work, which will be shown on New Zealand national TV. It is always good to be able to spread the knowledge of our work far and wide, but it is also very demanding on us here. After four sleepless nights, and four failed attempts at being able to achieve a successful raid on dog traders, we were successful on night number five. Here we were able to arrest two dog traders and rescue 47 dogs. Sadly one of these dogs was already found to be dead, but the remaining 46 are all now safe and sound 'tails wagging' in our rescue centre. After five nights with very little sleep, my crew and I settled down for a well deserved good nights' sleep, but of course it was all well worth it. Success is sweet, and as I write this, the two dog traders are still being held in custody awaiting bail.

Some time ago I told you about a shockingly dreadful zoo in Manila, called Malabon Zoo, privately owned by a Chinese man. This zoo has to be the closest thing to Hell without actually being in Hell. It is filthy dirty and the animals without exception suffer twenty four hours every day. All are kept in very small, dirty cages with little or no water, and what water there is, is filthy. The cages have hardly enough room in which to turn around. The animals include birds, 12 tigers, 3 bears, 4 orang-utans, crocodiles etc. I went there with the crew from NZ, several of whom, as evidence, paid 50 pence to have their photo taken with the animals. I could not bring myself to watch, so I sat down and just looked a big Moon Bear swinging its head back and forth, and as I watched the tears rolled down my face...

Fortunately the NZ people are animal activists and have vowed to help make matters better - already they are in touch with other groups. Needless to say we will offer whatever help we can. Sadly all these things cost money, nevertheless we will help where we can. Just when things appear to be at their worst, we are now being told that the zoo is feeding the crocodiles

with large numbers of live cats. We will investigate this, and if this proves to be the case it will be a violation against the Philippine Animal Welfare Act, and we will prosecute the owner.

Our education programme in the Baguio area, 150 miles north of Manila, is going from strength to strength. It has attracted lots of media attention including live TV coverage. This proving to be another very useful way of attacking the dog traders; there is evidence that this is getting right under their skin. This being the case, with Baguio being the main place where dogs end up on the dinner plates, we are now going to turn our attention to where most of the dogs come from, which is south of Manila and is where we had our successful raid. Only yesterday Luis and I met with the Regional Director for the southern region of Luzon - Dr. Lorna Dig-Dino, from the Department of Education. Dr. Lorna is very much in favour of our education programme and has welcomed us with open arms. She has given us her assurance that all will be done to accommodate us. Dr Lorna will be making arrangements for us to meet with her heads of staff throughout her region, thereby paving the way to start our project at the beginning of next year's new school term. With the continuing support of Dogs Trust, we will be employing another two teachers and a co-ordinator. In the Philippines these things always need to meet with all the necessary protocol, and much advance programming.

Thanking you for your continued support and may I take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Yours truly



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