DAILYGOOD
News that Inspires

A 15-yr-old Dog's Gift to a Grieving Man
by Laura Simpson

As founder of The Great Animal Rescue Chase, I have the pleasure of meeting hundreds of incredible heroes, but this one caught me off guard. Your hair will stand on end as you read the story of this man and this dog who picked one another up time and time again. Be sure to look for the link at the end of the story to see more photos. May we all one day have the chance to love this deeply….

By Don Hill of Georgia
I was in Augusta, Georgia where I had been for several weeks cleaning out my mother's home following her recent death as a result of numerous health issues and complications. On this Sunday, my final day there, as I was just about an hour from leaving to return to the foothills of the northeast Georgia mountains and my five rescue dogs almost four hours away, I walked out into the front yard to take one last look at the home of my parents and I saw in the front yard what appeared to be a very old dog that was in obvious distress. He would walk in a semi-circle, then fall to the ground, then struggle back to his feet and do it again. I saw him do this same thing at least three times as I walked over to him.
This was to be by far my easiest rescue because this poor old boy was in no shape to run from me, but also the most heartbreaking. This sad, unneutered male was in just the worst shape of any dog I had ever seen in my many years in animal rescue. He was emaciated, dehydrated, his right eye was swollen shut and draining puss, both ears were severely infected and draining as well, his body was covered with open sores, he was infested with fleas and his front nails were almost four inches long. All his teeth were worn down level with his gums, I assume from years of chewing at a cable or chain used to confine him and the pads on his feet were extremely worn and cut.
When he saw my shadow he flinched and fell to the ground as if he were about to be beaten
As I got close to him, he didn't appear to hear me approaching but when he saw my shadow, he flinched and fell to the ground as if he were about to be beaten and he cowered. I sat on the grass with him and stroked him and talked softly to him until he stopped cowering, trying to assure him that no one was ever going to hurt him again and that his suffering was going to end. I wanted to show him that he had nothing to fear from me.
I estimated his age at 10 plus; the vet that treated him later determined he was close to 15. I picked him up in my arms and carried him into the carport where I had a small utility trailer packed with things from my mother's house I was taking with me. There was some dry dog food and some stainless steel dog bowls in one of the boxes as well as some old blankets and towels so I made him a bed then put him on it as I mixed some of the dry food with water to soften it, knowing he would have a hard time eating it otherwise with his teeth in the condition they were in. For several hours I gave him food and water in small quantities due to his condition, not wanting him to eat or drink too

much too fast but trying to build his strength some and get him home where the following morning I could take him to my vet and end his suffering humanely.

Bringing Roadie home – he laid his head across my thigh

Leaving him was never an option once I had found him. I made him a bed on the front seat of my Jeep, picked him up and laid him on it. I hitched up the utility trailer and began the drive home wondering if this now soundly sleeping old boy would make it back to the farm. Just a few miles down the road, he lifted his head and looked at me with the one big brown eye he could open as if to say thank you, then laid that head across my right thigh where it stayed the entire ride home and he went back to sleep.

He made it back to the farm with me where I bedded him down comfortably in an empty stall in the barn, wanting to keep him isolated from the other dogs there until I could take him to the vet's office first thing the next morning. I carried him into the vet's office and laid him on the examination room table, fully expecting to allow the vet to send this poor sweet old man on to a better place. He opened his one good eye and reached out and touched me with his paw and I knew right then and there that this poor old boy was going to break my heart.

The veterinary exam. What would they find?

My vet examined him and when he was done he told me that the ear infections were the worst he had ever seen and he was almost positive this old guy was totally deaf as a result. We discussed all the heath issues and he asked me what I wanted to do. He told me that right now he couldn't see anything wrong that couldn't be treated and that he felt the dog could fully recover without too much stress or pain and have a good quality of life but he warned me that because of his advanced age, even if we decided to treat all his issues, this old boy may only have six months or maybe a year left and it was up to me.

He saw me hesitate as I looked down on this poor old man I had found and then he said "Let's test him for heartworm. He's way too old to go through treatment. Let's see if he's positive or not and then you can decide." I said okay. I had named him "Roadie" because that day I found him it was obvious he had been on the road a while.

As I waited for the results of the heartworm test, I was trying to figure out where I was going to get the money to treat all his other problems should he be heartworm negative. I picked up my cell phone and called a close friend of mine who wishes to remain anonymous. He had founded a disaster response animal rescue group in the wake of Hurricane Katrina called Kat 5 Animal Rescue. I told him everything about Roadie and he said he would help me with the expenses to treat Roadie if the vet and I determined he could be restored to a good quality of life.

Free of heartworm, Roadie wants to live

My vet came back in and said "Roadie has a lot of problems right now but heartworm isn't one of them." He obviously knew I was concerned about the costs involved and he told me if I wanted to treat this sweet old man he would give me every possible discount. I asked him to leave me alone with Roadie for a few minutes so I could try to make the right decision. As I stood there stroking Roadie's matted dirty coat, I realized that he had been put in my path for a reason and be it only six months or maybe a year, I was going to do everything in my power to show this old man who had suffered a lifetime of neglect and abuse that somebody loved him and cared about him before he left this world — full well knowing that when that time came, I would be crushed with grief.

So Roadie was going to be treated. He stayed at the vet's office for five days where he was put on IV fluids and antibiotics, his flea infestation was dealt with, his draining infected ears were cleaned, and he was given a medicated bath. All of his issues were addressed and it took almost two months, but he recovered fully.

The best months of his life…even playing ball at his old age

Roadie lived on the farm with me and my other dogs and the horses for seven months happy and full of life . He played with his favorite ball and slept in my bed every night until that morning I had been dreading came. I awoke that Friday to take Roadie and the

other kids out but he couldn’t get up and stand on his feet and I thought well he is just having a bad day, so I helped to his feet and outside to do his business and continued to do so over the weekend. By Monday, his legs couldn’t support his weight even with my assistance, so just as I had seven months earlier, I carried him into my vet’s office and my vet told me it was time. I held him in my arms and cried as Roadie left this world, but as he looked at me just before the lights went out behind those big beautiful brown eyes, I knew in my heart that Roadie knew I loved him as I knew he loved me.

I took Roadie back to the farm and my friend who had helped with the vet bills for Roadie then helped me bury him on the farm with his favorite ball. I went to the house and sat with my other dogs for comfort and cried for days just as I am now, telling his story. I can honestly say knowing everything I know now that I would do it all over again. You see, just weeks before I found Roadie, I had lost my mother, and Roadie, without me even knowing it at the time, had helped me through some of the darkest days of my life focusing on him and not the recent loss of my mom. I will never forget him or the special gift he gave me and rarely a day goes by that I don’t think of him playing with his ball or my other dogs and walking as fast as he could to try to keep up with them that I don’t smile or sometimes still shed a tear. I have a magnet on my Jeep that looks like a dog’s paw print and it says “Who Rescued Who?” I’ll let you decide.

More PHOTOS of Roadie