

## A Rescue Volunteer, What Does That Sometimes Mean?



I wish I could ask you to close your eyes and listen to my voice, but alas you must read this story, eyes wide open.

Imagine if you will, you are a volunteer for Mastiff rescue. You get a call from a friend who is the humane society President. There is going to be a puppy mill raid. Can you come to identify Mastiffs if there are any? Yes of course.

You've never been on a puppy mill raid, but are told to be at a certain location at 9:00 PM on a designated evening. You drive up in your spotless SUV to the staging area. There are police cars, three animal control vehicles, and probably thirty or so folks milling around. It is a beautiful evening, the moon is high, and the wind is light, what is going on? You get your instructions; the police will go in first to make sure there is no one who will be shooting at you. This comes as a surprise. Shooting at us? Yes, people will protect their investment. The dogs are the investment.

Oh God, what am I doing here?

And then, you hear them. They have heard us, the dogs. They set up a chorus of barking and barking and wailing. Are you here to feed us? That is their question. We haven't been fed in a week, come on, hurry up we are hungry.

They know we are here.

The police go in, they clear the area and send the word, come on in. We drive toward the howling, and then the stench hits. Oh lord, how is this stench possible?

We begin to see in negatives. Black and white and blue with the lights from the cop cars, pulsing across a landscape of horror. There appear to be hundreds of dogs all

breeds. They are tied to trees, to the bumpers of cars, to a trailer, they are hungry, they are excited; they are horrible to behold.

You exit your car and immediately sink into three inches of fecal material and urine. You look down and wonder why you didn't wear your boots. It is too late. You begin to run, to look, to hope and then you are told by the animal control people who have done this before, don't step, be careful, there will be puppies under your feet. Don't kill them- be careful. It is a nightmare, it is the worse, it is something you have never imagined.

It is real.

Being a clever Mastiff rescue person you look around. There is a man with a clipboard standing next to the animal control cars. You cannot walk about for fear of killing puppies. You go over and ask, is there anything I can do, I am Mastiff rescue? He is delighted. Can you help me identify the dogs? Yes I can. So you stand next to the man and as they bring the dogs you say, German Shephard, Mastiff, Poodle and on it goes throughout the night. You can't say what color the Mastiffs are all of them look like Brindles as they are dirty, they are starved, but you know them and know they will be cared for. At the end of the night you have counted fourteen mastiffs. Four adults and ten puppies. You have no clue where they have gone. These animals are being sent all over Atlanta. At the end of the night there are one hundred dogs rescued from this puppy mill. No one, even the man with the clipboard knows where the dogs have gone.

They leave, into the night.

You can't save them, you can't even know where they are, only that wherever they are must be better than where they have been.

Along about 3:00 AM the Judge of the county shows up, in his robes. He is pissed. He makes a decision that will impact every dog confiscated in the raid. He is tough and he is fair. The dogs benefit.

About 4:00 AM the police declare the Ford Bronco that several dogs were tied to a health hazard and set it on fire so amongst the howling and confusion and chaos there is also Bronco Flambé' It seemed to make everyone happy that the owner at least did not have their car. There were people cheering, the dogs howling and all was well with the world.

My Sara was tied to the trailer. She had been beaten somewhere along the way and had a scar on her forehead that remained until the day she died. We didn't find her for thirty days; she was in the Cobb County animal shelter with eight other dogs.

I was asked to go down and identify any Mastiffs, they thought they had seven. Well the other six were Neapolitans, but there was Sara. She stood upon the crate and begged with her eyes. I couldn't leave her there so off we went to our home. Sara lived with us for eight years to a ripe old age of at least twelve and maybe thirteen. She loved us, she loved every animal she encountered, she had a couch all her own. She survived the worst and we tried to give her the best. She died in 2005 of extreme old age but she died happy and safe.

Please think of your volunteers. Those who go into sometimes dangerous and always unknown situations. Mostly it isn't just a case of someone just wants to give up a dog. Sometimes it is treacherous and sometimes it is dangerous.

Think of those dogs who survive despite the worst. Please don't forget those who work for our breed. It is easy to forget, to put off, but please do something now, something for the Mastiffs, something for the volunteers.

Give what you can when you can, it is all they ask. If you cannot volunteer at least send ten dollars or fifteen for the cause. Do it now, don't put it off.

Remember. Remember Sara, she who always forgave we who abused her.