

Starving and Abandoned Dogs Saved from Canyon de Chelly, AZ Navajo Indian Reservation
By Maggi Hall, Founder/President ARK Animal Rescue 2007-2017, DeLand FL

As told by Addie:

I had no idea my life would be transformed when Maggi Hall spotted me. I later learned she'd always been for the "underdog" – no pun intended. Guess that's why she was a special education teacher for 30 years. Those who know her and the organization she started in 2007, Animal Rescue Konsortium, Inc, ARK for short, won't be surprised with the following story about ARK volunteers' lifesaving dedication.

When Maggi and her husband, Ron, arrived at a motel in Canyon de Chelly Arizona she spotted a red dog (rez dogs in Arizona are called that because they're mostly red like the desert). Friskie (Maggi's name for her) was rude when Maggi tried petting her but obviously hungry and thirsty. All Maggi had were cans of tuna. She offered them to Friskie who refused to eat until Maggi walked away. Once the cans were empty Maggi filled them with water. Right away Maggi, 1,500 miles from home in DeLand FL and heading back to Sedona AZ four hours away, knew she wasn't about to leave that gorgeous furry dog. A motel employee told her two dogs and a cat were abandoned there weeks earlier.

Maggi figured Friskie, who weighed around 35 pounds, would easily fit into their rented two-seater convertible to make the drive back to Sedona. She was excited to learn Sedona had a "no kill" shelter. Friskie was beautiful and would be adopted quickly. At supper Maggi saved half her meal for ravenous Friskie. As Friskie ate Maggi promised, "If you're here tomorrow morning you're heading west to Sedona with Ron and me." Friskie ignored her.

The following morning Friskie was nowhere to be found. Maggi's heart dropped. She searched and called – no red dog; then suddenly across the desert bounded a dog three times the size of Friskie, a 100 lb. light red Husky mix. "Oh my god," Maggi gasped, "Friskie's pal. What am I going to do with that big thing?"

As if on cue Friskie sauntered from around the back of the motel when she saw her buddy approach. Both devoured the food and water Maggi brought while she got rope from the car. After looping the rope around their necks she pulled and cajoled them up two flights of stairs and into her room. (Forget that a gigantic sign on the side of the motel read: NO PETS ALLOWED). Ron, was showering. When he came from the bathroom, towel around his waist, he exclaimed, "What the heck??!" Maggi answered, "Meet Friskie and Addie." (We were named after two pets she'd recently lost.)

As told by Friskie:

We were afraid to get into that weird car and had to be dragged and pushed, wondering what those strangers were going to do with us. Ron, shaking his head in disbelief, kept saying, "They're not going to fit with our two huge suitcases!" But shove and push Maggi did and finally Addie was in the back. I stayed in Maggi's lap. Addie was more curious than I and sat erect the entire 4-hour trip, head over Ron's shoulder watching the road, curious and alert. I fell asleep after giving Maggi lots of kisses. I finally decided to trust her; what choice did I have? Even Addie joined in. We knew we were saved and about to embark on an adventure.

When we arrived at the Sedona shelter the employee refused to accept us, stating with a hateful sneer, "They're just reservation dogs" - like we didn't deserve to be saved. They had the gall to tell Maggi, even though they advertised themselves as "no kill" that if they took in the "rez dogs" then two of theirs would be "euthanized," a soft term shelter employees use for "execution." Another employee joined in with "There's no such thing as a "No Kill Shelter" even though their donation boxes around town proclaimed they were! Maggi shot back, "You're dead wrong - you're looking at a person who started one." They called her a liar as she stormed out the door!!

Since we arrived in Sedona on Sunday before Memorial Day everything was closed. Maggi sat in the car with us while she called other shelters and vets and left messages. No calls were returned and Maggi was getting hysterical by the minute. They'd flown to Phoenix, rented a car and driven three hours north to Sedona. If they had their car the answer would be simple: Drive them back to Florida. But now what? What would they do with these dogs she wondered and prayed. To Ron's credit he never said "I told you so."

As told by Maggi:

Serendipitously – or not?? – I had the most bizarre encounter a week earlier in Sedona with a sales clerk after hunting in a dozen shops for the "perfect gift, something unique" for my daughter and her husband. I found a red rock "Serenity" stone enmeshed in silver, appropriate because Sedona is known for spiritual encounters atop its red mountains. While

filling out a mailing label to send the gift to Florida the clerk saw what I wrote, asking in surprise, “You’re sending that to Dr. Erin Holder, owner of FloridaWild Veterinary Hospital in DeLand FL?”

“Yes, my daughter,” I answered.

“Oh my gosh, Erin was my veterinarian; I moved here from DeLand two months ago!” We had a good laugh, traded animal stories, I took her phone number to give Erin, and left, shaking my head in disbelief at what a small world it was while thinking what a coincidence. Or was it?

Now Ron and I were back in Sedona sweating, sitting in a tiny car with two reservation dogs we didn’t know what to do with and a reservation at a historic hotel that refused pets. Suddenly I remembered the clerk I’d encountered a week earlier and called her. Unbelievably she had a friend who groomed dogs and lived two blocks from the animal shelter. Two blocks. I couldn’t believe it. It could have been dozens of miles away. I called and she answered, “Bring them over, would love to foster while we figure out what to do after the holiday.”

Down the hill the four of us headed, two blocks from the shelter. Out bounded two well behaved dogs, glad to stretch from a four-hour cramped trip. She promised to bathe them, I gave her \$200 and swore I had friends in Florida who’d help find a safe haven. The dogs were protected – finally – so with relief and gratitude Ron and I headed for a late lunch.

An hour later the sitter left a phone message informing me she was driving to a kill shelter in Flagstaff 40 miles north because the dogs were covered in ticks and she refused to have them in her apartment.

I was panic-stricken, got the shelter’s number, leaving multiple messages. An employee finally returned my calls to say the dogs had arrived and the woman paid \$60 to relinquish them. The derelict foster left me another message stating she was keeping the remainder of the money as she’d earned it transporting those “filthy dogs” on a three-hour round trip.

Two hours later the shelter called again to report Friskie had distemper and would be transferred after Memorial Day to another facility for euthanasia. I fell apart. Here we were across the country with no car and no way to save those precious dogs. I believed Friskie didn’t have distemper, that she had either been in heat or coming out of it. I called my veterinary daughter who described distemper symptoms and confirmed I was right. Those idiots didn’t know what they were talking about at the shelter! I called back to I was coming to get them after Memorial Day though I had no idea what the heck I’d do after that. I just knew I wasn’t going to let Friskie die.

Ron and I were staying two nights in Jerome, an 1800’s mining town 20 miles south of Sedona, at an historic hotel initially built as a hospital and asylum for the mentally ill (appropriate after what we’d been through). The hotel refused pets. At supper I became violently ill, barely making it to our room, the expression “sick as a dog” striking home.

I initially thought I my illness was emotional, but soon symptoms of food poisoning developed. Now what else could happen? I was determined to save those dogs and between bouts of nausea around the clock, the following day I called two faithful ARK Animal Rescue volunteers in Deltona, FL, Linda and her daughter Kara, who jumped at the chance to assist. They researched shelters in Arizona and plane tickets to Florida for dogs. Sunday and Memorial Day I spent in bed or the bathroom while Ron enjoyed sightseeing. ARK’s amazing volunteers frantically kept up the research across Arizona trying to find anyone who’d help save Addie and Friskie.

On Tuesday I reached the Flagstaff shelter director who was, like a gift from God, familiar with ARK! He promised Addie and Friskie would NOT BE TRANSFERRED. More great news: A veterinarian examined Friskie and confirmed, as my daughter indicated, Friskie DID NOT have distemper. The dogs were vaccinated, bathed, and placed on hold while ARK’s volunteers mapped a strategy. I told the Flagstaff director no matter what it took or how much it would cost Addie and Friskie were moving to Florida. Two hours later after dozens of phone calls, hours of internet research, and learning no flights went from Flagstaff for dog transport, Linda’s husband called. “Maggi, relax. I’ve gassed up the car. Linda and Kara are enroute westward. The dogs will be in Florida in six days.”

ARK’s Angels’ trip to Flagstaff took three days while ours took five hours by flight from Phoenix to Orlando. We beat them home by two days. However, problems continued for Linda and Kara. A day into their return trip Linda reported Kara had trouble breathing, evidently an allergic reaction to the dogs, and was in the emergency in Oklahoma. She was treated, spent the night at a motel, then headed east again. Addie and Friskie enjoyed their motel room experiences and were well behaved.

Four hours into the trip Kara, now in Dallas, was in the emergency room again. Because Addie had such a thick coat we concluded Kara was allergic to his dander. It was decided he’d fly to Orlando and Friskie would continue the trip. Linda purchased a huge kennel, a \$500 plane ticket, and deposited Addie at the airport.

Addie spent 13 hours in a crate – I repeat - 13 hours without food or water or the ability to relieve himself. On arrival at the Orlando airport June 5, 2012, that stalwart and confused dog had not had an accident in his kennel. He was a remarkable creature, excited to be free, and able to stand by a tree for so long I couldn’t believe it! Ron drove while the

100-pounder sat in my lap 50 miles back to DeLand. At 7pm we arrived at our daughter's hospital where her staff anxiously waited. Friskie and her saviors arrived home in the wee hours of the morning, 3 am, June 6th. Their trip cost them over \$800 but they refused reimbursement. ARK paid the plane ride for Addie.

The next day Friskie was reunited with Addie at FloridaWild then both went through extensive physicals. They were diagnosed with a rare cancer - TVT, Transmissible Venereal Tumors – never seen in Florida. I repeat – never detected in Florida as substantiated by the University of Florida School of Veterinary Medicine. The disease was isolated to Mexico, Arizona, and New Mexico. UF requested and received from my daughter the microscopic slides verifying the disease. Addie and Friskie, saved from painful death within months had they remained in Arizona, made medical history in Florida. All involved in the rescue, including FloridaWild's staff, were devastated. After six chemotherapy treatments prognosis was good though cautious, their bill over \$2,500. No charges were made to ARK thanks to my daughter.

A few weeks after chemo Friskie became ill; an examination revealed she was pregnant but her pups were deceased. She had emergency surgery to remove the six puppies. A month later a cactus thorn lodged in Friskie's eye from the desert caused an infection and her eye had to be removed. Six months later she fell into a deep hole she had dug and severely injured her hip. Another extensive and expensive operation as medical bills mounted, between both surgeries well over \$3,500. Again, my generous daughter refused to submit a bill to ARK.

Since I had eight dogs, several in hospice care, I couldn't have them with me. I realized that with the possibility of the cancer returning no one would spend what it would cost to save them again; thus, they were unadoptable. My plans changed for them so from the beginning of their adventure in Florida, what became a seventeen-month period, I paid three separate families to foster them at \$200/month. I determined that when two of my beloved elderly dogs passed on to the Rainbow Bridge I would bring our Arizona rescues home. Periodically I'd visit, always having a good cry when I got back in the car. Each time I appeared they'd bound forward, literally attempting to see which one could knock me over first or give me the most wet kisses. Linda and Kara often would visit and received the same appreciative welcome.

October 2013 Addie and Friskie came to live with me; our journey coming full circle. Addie was a spiritual dog and could have been a service dog or emotional support animal. Friskie was independent, chasing small creatures, constantly on the go, digging up the yard, needing only sustenance and occasional recognition. Addie needed me, seeking me out, jumping on the sofa to rest his huge head in my lap, or have me stroke his back. He was a companion like my first Addie - my soul mate aptly named after my beloved Addie, another red dog rescue from Jacksonville's ghetto and who'd died a few years earlier. Fosters came and went while Addie stoically endured and Friskie tumbled and romped with them.

November 2016, three years and a month after Addie and Friskie came to live with me Addie crossed the Rainbow Bridge and a part of me died forever. The chemo treatment that cured their cancer triggered a devastatingly aggressive incurable cancer. Symptoms were noticeable in October, Erin treated him with chemo, and two weeks later after a visit to UF Veterinary Hospital for further tests, I brought him home, kissed him goodnight and promised we'd have a relaxing tomorrow. He passed away during the night – alone.

I found him the next morning in the hall by our kitchen where so many of my rescues waited on a soft bed to meet Erin to help relieve their pain as they were transported to Heaven. It was as if Addie knew where he needed to be for that final trip. I believe Addie and all my rescues met him on arrival just as my dogs met Addie when we arrived home from Gainesville, literally surrounding him while giving him affectionate kisses.

My daughter continues to remind me when I question why I didn't notice earlier that he was sick or asking "could we have saved him" or just needing to have a good cry - that Addie was given five and a half years of life thanks to Linda, Kara, and me; that he and Friskie would have died within months had they stayed in Arizona.

Forever my heart will grieve. Addie was a spirit dog, an Indian creature connected to the earth who'd howl like a coyote when sirens passed – my loving soul mate and now my Angel Dog. The day after his death I walked down the drive and in the same spot where he last walked and my dogs greeted him I asked for a sign he'd made it to Heaven and forgave me. In the briefest moment I felt a warm touch on my right hand. He was home.

God spelled backwards is Dog. A coincidence? I no longer believe in coincidences. I pose this question to our readers: If you find an abandoned animal what would you do? I pray you'd follow what Christ taught in Matthew 25:40: "...verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."



Addie with Ron in the convertible



Addie and Friskie with their first foster



Friskie after eye removal



Finally with me



Addie greeted after arriving home from Gainesville - taken at the location where I felt his reassurance