

DOGGIE RESCUE JOURNAL, February 2009, The Islands

DAY ONE

Paul and I are creature-a-tarians with Volunteers Without Boundaries, a non-profit charity focusing on caring, sharing and learning while helping others (human and animal) abroad. On February 5th 2009 we packed our Cessna 337 Skymaster full with several boxes of veterinary supplies from Piedmont Animal Hospital in Lake Apopka, FL. We also included animal carriers borrowed from anyone who would loan us one and lots of newspapers donated by the Hometown News plus some we had saved and collected from friends. Once all the animal supplies were in place Paul and I noticed that we had little room left for our own personal belongings so we packed just a couple of light bags.



We departed from New Smyrna Beach Municipal Airport (KEVB) at 0945 Friday, February 6, 2009 and flew direct to Providenciales (Provo) in the western Caribbean. Provo is an airport of entry where fuel was available, so we decided to clear customs there and take on fuel to save time on the return trip. At first the customs officials did not want to inspect our cargo and told us to either drag all our boxes, cages and luggage inside their office or do it in Grand Turk but I convinced them that it would be much easier for them to have look in plane and inspect things there...so they did.



Approximately thirty minutes later we called our tiny but tough lady friend, Marcella, from a cool and windy Providenciales to inform her of our expected ETA. We landed in good time at 1550 making our total travel time that day was a bit shorter than we had expected. Paul taxied over and shut down both engines next to a smaller plane and we began unloading when we were greeted by the some of the ground crew. Paul arranged for security to let Marcella drive her rickety,

windowless van to the Skymaster so we could load more easily, and I had a few words with the chief of security so we could take some photos of our adventure.

Paul, Marcella and I finally made it to the Osprey Beach Hotel in time to watch the sunset from our vantage point on the pool deck overlooking the beach. It was too cool to swim but still felt like the tropical get-a-way we rememberer. Together we made plans to meet the following day and bid good night to



Marcella who still had lots of work to do at the shelter.

DAY TWO

Breakfast was not offered in many places on the island since the hurricanes, but we managed to find a place called Michaels only a few steps from the hotel and ate an hearty meal prior to meeting up with Marcella and her furry family.

On our way to the compound where many of the island strays are cared for by Marcella we took a tour of hurricane Ike's wrath. Ike hit the Turks and Caicos Islands five months prior and we were surprised to see so many damaged buildings and telephone poles snapped in half. The island's largest grocery store was still out of operation. We found folks living in tents next to their roofless homes and much other structural damage like this hangar with three mangled airplanes trapped inside.



Marcella settled here many years ago as a business owner and learned that there was no veterinarian anywhere on the island. Because she was an animal lover Marcella slowly began to heal injured animals of all types from cats to horses as the need arose. She also took in hungry, emaciated and wounded strays. Shortly thereafter the local government gave Marcella an old derelict house to use as a shelter. Once her animal home was established she began recruiting veterinarians from Canada and the USA to begin a yearly spay/neuter campaign on several nearby islands

as well as Grand Turk itself.

We arrived at Marcella's shelter around 1000 hrs. and were instantly engulfed in a sea of furry creatures with affectionate tails wagging and tongues licking, all vying for attention. There were also more inside waiting anxiously for someone to love them. One little chocolate female perched on a gate anxious for a little caress. Marcella informed us that this little dog could stay in that position for hours until someone petted her. The two dogs and two cats slated for us to transport back to the states were Domino, the two-year-old chestnut male you see at my knees in the photo on the right, and a very shy female named Baba-Yaga pictured below. Baba-Yaga is the name of a benevolent Russian witch.





Most of the island has been without electricity since hurricane Ike, and has only recently been restored. Marcella was still bringing water to her animal home by hand in gallon containers and had no laundry facilities so life for her was not only rough; it was exhausting. Marcella has no one to help her with her day to day chores. and works alone tirelessly day and night. Everyone

seemed to take Marcella for granted: while we were there she was called out to visit sick and injured pups several times. No one offered to make a donation but they did say thanks.



Marcella turned to Volunteers Without Boundaries to help transport animals because she will be closing this shelter due to lack of funds and insufficient local support. For more about how we met see The *Island Princess* story on this site. It was clear that she could not only run a shelter efficiently on little money but also that she really needed help to find homes for dogs and cats, many of which she had cared for since they were babies. Domino had been severely burned with hot oil as a pup, when he wandered into the yard of an islander who had no time for dogs. He still bears several scars on his back. Some of her dogs have only three legs from accidents and injuries. Two of her dogs only had three feet. None of them knew he or she was "crippled" but prospective adoptive families knew and those lovely affectionate creatures are still waiting for new homes. If we could have carried more back with us we would have, but our winged transport could only hold so many.



DAY THREE

From the Islands to USA

The alarm was set for six-thirty but I was up sooner with an upset stomach. Luckily Paul and I never travel without a first aid kit which includes pink bismuth! We were up, dressed and ready to go by 0700. Didn't need breakfast because we had sandwiches made the night before at a local restaurant to eat en-route.

Marcella arrived right on time with all four animals loaded. Domino was the only one not in a

carrier. This was his first time to ride in a vehicle so Marcella had to reassure him that all would be well. This van was so in need of repair I had to climb in the back through the missing window.

“Remember you have to speak to the dogs in French, because they don't know English.” Marcella reminded me. “And you have to pronounce Baba-Yaga like this Baba-Ya-GA, with an accent on the last syllable.” I could see tears in her eyes as she drove her best pets to the airfield along with us. She was going to miss each and every one of them. They were going to miss her too but she knew that she had to find good homes for her furry family.



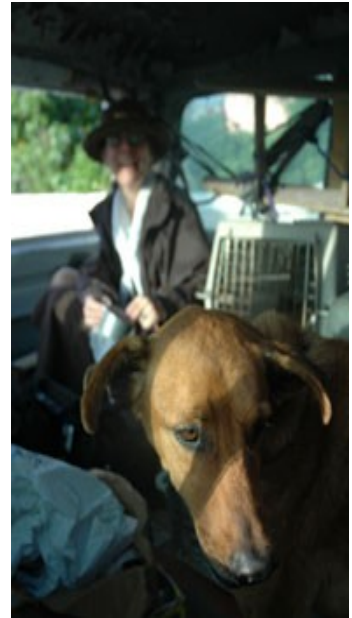
We departed at 0831. Both dogs and cats slept the entire trip and appeared comfortable. Customs in Ft Pierce, FL was a breeze so we grabbed a bite to eat at the Tiki Hut right on the field.

Our second stop was Jacksonville where two families were waiting. Tracy, a veterinary assistant would take the cats. The Cohen's would take Baba-Yaga.

It was 1600 hrs when we finally made it to Jacksonville's Herlong field and deplaned our precious cargo.

It took some coaxing to get Baba-Yaga to come out of her carrier but finally she did. Domino came out to stretch his legs too.

We had to transfer the cats to new carriers in the flight planning office with the door closed so they could not escape. Then we handed out the health certificates and rabies tags to the new owners, loaded Domino into the Skymaster and took off.



Back in New Smyrna around 1730 we were able to unload the plane and head for home.

It was nearly sunset when we pulled up to the gates of our house. I got out and tied up our two dogs Kate and Jack, so that Domino would not have any added stress for the day. Once that was done, Paul drove into our fenced yard and we made Domino feel welcome with a nice walk, some food and water. It was cooling off pretty quickly and we knew that an Island dog probably wasn't used to forty-five degree temperatures so we moved his crate inside and bedded him down safe and sound for the night.

To find out how Domino got along with out dogs...check out *Domino's Journal* on this site.

