A Rescuer’s Journey to Spain to assist Scooby Protectra de Animales

By Barbara A. Kucharczyk

Tens of thousands of Galgos (the Spanish cousin of the racing greyhound, a sighthound) are bred annually in Spain in the hope of producing the national coursing champion. Medina del Campo is the focal point for those with a coursing interest in Spain. Many galgueros (breeders and owners of Galgos) live in Medina del Campo and its environs. For the galgueros it is an annual tradition to kill their Galgos by hanging them en masse in the pine forests in and around Medina del Campo at the end of the coursing season (January/February). Other times they discard “their” dogs in abandoned wells or kill them through some other inhumane method. It is estimated that over 30,000 Galgos are killed each year.

In 1987, Fermin Pérez started Scooby Protectra de Animales (Scooby Animal Refuge). Although the original shelter was poor in condition, it provided a safe refuge for the stray cat and dog population and the numerous Galgos discarded mainly by the local coursing fraternity in the area of Medina del Campo, Valladolid. Scooby continues to be led by President Fermin Pérez, who in daily life is a science teacher at the main senior school in Medina del Campo.

After Fermin made the world aware of the situation, the association has grown through out the years. What began in an old ruin with bed frames as fencing, an old warehouse without electricity, heat or water, has moved into a new refuge facility, with the help of international supporters dedicated to Scooby and its important work.

In recent history the galgueros started to bring their unwanted Galgos to the Scooby shelter with the result that on average Scooby houses about 450 dogs, mainly Galgos. Scooby re-homes a limited number of Galgos and some of the mixed breed dogs via small partner organizations in Europe.

A work in progress, the new facility has become a centre everyone is extremely proud of. The Scooby shelter has expanded in terms of size, (volunteer) workers from several nationalities come in a steady stream to the refuge. In turn, Scooby has gradually been able to start tackling another problem, that of factory farming and the environment. To combat this issue Scooby has constructed an education center at its property. On a very small scale, Scooby has taken in ducks, geese, battery hens, sheep, goats, pigs, ponies, and more. In addition, the Donkey Sanctuary (Sidmouth, UK) has established an agreement whereby Scooby is used as a holding station for donkeys on route to the Donkey Sanctuary’s shelter, El Refugio del Burrito, in Fuente de Piedra in Spain.

Scooby is a privately-owned refuge, the largest safe haven in Spain for all sorts of animals, which means that without the help of supporters from Spain and everywhere around the world, it would not be able to exist.

About ten years ago I read an article about Fermin rescuing three Galgos from an abandoned well. After that, I made it a goal in life to adopt a galgo. I never in my wildest dreams expected to be a Scooby volunteer helping hundreds of animals nor did I think that my rescue network would expand to another continent. I have many people to thank for that, most importantly Peppertree who bought into my crazy idea of bringing Spanish dogs to the US!

In February, a group of us (Paula and Martin from Forever Home Greyhound Rescue) jumped on a plane and travelled to Madrid, Spain for a most unusual “vacation.” Armed with rubber boots, gloves and cleaning supplies, we set out on our adventure. We had no clue what to expect, only that the experience would change our lives, somehow.

Although the method of this article may be unorthodox, I would like to share with you my thoughts and impressions during my Scooby experience in a diary format.

Saturday, February 7, 2009

Well the first day is almost over and it was a lot of work. But after several hours of cleaning up poop and diarrhea (hey did you know that it actually freezes?) we got to socialize with the dogs. Let me tell you about that...I have never seen dogs in worse condition than those from Sevilla. If it had been in the States, they would be prosecuting this hoarder under numerous cruelty violations. The Galgos are skin and bones with almost no hair. There is one at only 10 pounds - yes a full grown male that skin and bones! They have nicknamed him Rabo-dog (meaning “tail dog” because of the injury to his tail). You see starvation on Animal Cops, but in these dogs, it’s not only on the hips and ribs; their skin hangs from them and their butts are nothing but ball joints. We are working on socializing them with humans. There are two kennels of Sevilla...
people from the Netherlands (Remi – she is a visiting compassion towards animals. Tonight I had dinner with Anyway, it’s really remarkable. Scooby is like the United mushroom pizza tonight and the pizza smelled like dirt to eat another mushroom again, at least not mushroom Just got back from dinner, I don’t think I will ever be able are FAT!!!!
mushrooms.  There are er’s.

We also had a drop off today, a puppy. The woman asked if she could drop off this dog, went to her TRUNK, and then pulled the puppy out by his back leg and threw him on the ground. Needless to say, he is in the puppy room enjoying the company and heat lamps with the two others.

But today wasn’t all sad – I made friends with two gorgeous German Shepherds (GSD) – Carla and Tania and found a German Short-haired Pointer (GSP) that was the most fat GSP I’ve ever seen. His name is Luis. There are our hundred pounds of fat in every single dog – not like the states in which each would have a number. Also, food is no issue and as a result, there are a lot dogs that are FAT!!!

Saturday night, February 7, 2009
Just got back from dinner, I don’t think I will ever be able to eat another mushroom again, at least not mushroom pizza! Being at Scooby you smell like dirt (amongst other things) and then you are soaked from getting hit by a popp – but I miss the states in which each would have a number. Also, food is no issue and as a result, there are a lot dogs that are FAT!!!

Anyway, it’s really remarkable. Scooby is like the United States of America in miniature – they all speak Spanish dog talk (like come here, move, etc…).

With all the different languages here I decid...
Mother Nature must have felt guilty about the cold weather she sent our way for the First Annual Fun Run, because she blessed us with warm weather and sunshine for the second. The Run was a lot of fun for two legged and four legged participants alike and it was a booming success. This year we were able to raise $9695 from registrations and sponsorships and more was raised from the donation jar and t-shirt sales. Our grand total was a little over $10,000.00!

The first five runners to cross the finish line were:
1. Paul Koski – Clifton Park, 18:40 min
2. Kristina Depeau – Albany, 19:30 min
3. Patrick Spooner – Slingerlands, 20:37 min
4. Nicole Mallory – Albany, 22:03
5. Melissa Patrick – Delmar, 23:24 min

The first five dogs to cross the finish line were:
1. Hope with Patrick Spooner – Albany, 19:30 min
2. Quinn with Melissa Patrick, Delmar, 23:24 min
3. Winter with CJ Chartrand, Castleton, 24:08 min
4. Sketcher with Liz Lubkowski, Albany, 24:20
5. Sam with Joelle Ingram, Albany, 24:30 min

A shout out of thanks and praise to our sponsors - Golds Gym, Sports Authority, Fleet Feet, Albany Running Exchange, Hudson Mohawk Road Runners Club, SUNY Albany, Price Chopper, The Wine Bar, Cudney Cleaners and DePaula Chevrolet.

See you next year!
Meet Carol McNally
Occupation? Full-time foster Mom!
Volunteer Location? West Lafayette, Indiana
How long have you been volunteering with Peppertree? Four and a half years!

What is/are your Volunteer Role(s) within Peppertree? When needed, I assist the organization in finding short-term foster homes for southern dogs (typically from Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina) coming into our program, as they must be quarantined in the South for two weeks prior to being sent to Peppertree. I also schedule the dog’s vetting (including a complete physical, any necessary vaccines and a health certificate) to ensure they have a clean bill of health prior to traveling, and then oversee their transport East.

What is your favorite activity to do with your dogs? When I visit New York, I like to hike, canoe (my dogs do not like to use life preservers!) and camp with them in the Adirondacks. My dogs even get their own tent! At home, I take them for walks at our Celery Bog wetlands, play Frisbee and let them splash around in our kiddie pool in the backyard.

What is your favorite thing about Peppertree Rescue? I love the fact that Peppertree takes many senior dogs into the program. Our group is very compassionate, and our volunteers see that these older dogs have so much unconditional love left to give. They too deserve a second chance at life, and I’m proud to be part of an organization that cherishes dogs in their golden years.

Do you have a favorite breed? Pit bulls are undoubtedly my favorite! They are extremely loyal, very responsive to training and have a great sense of humor. They are true clowns at heart and will make you laugh every chance they get.

What surprised you the most about rescue once you became more involved? I am surprised that pet ownership is treated so lightly sometimes. Owning a pet is not only a privilege, but a lifetime commitment.

Name and Breed of dogs in your family? Any other animals in the home? We have two rescue dogs; Suzy, my 11 yr. old black and white Pit Bull (a Peppertree alumni) who looks a lot like Petyy from the Little Rascals; and Spirit, my 5 yr. old Blue Pit Bull who is currently on a diet with her Mom! We also have three rambunctious cats; Allie, my 8 yr. old gray domestic long hair who always makes me laugh and just can’t find the right box; Becki, my 5 yr. old white and grey Turkish Angora who rules the roost.

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What is your favorite activity to do with your dogs(s)? When I visit New York, I like to hike, canoe (my dogs do not like life preservers!), and camp with them in the Adirondacks. My dogs even get their own tent! At home, I take them for walks at our Celery Bog wetlands, play Frisbee and let them splash around in our kiddie pool in the backyard.

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Our thanks to Price Chopper & Del Monte Foods! By Donna Burdick

On March 1st of this year Price Chopper Supermarkets ran a promotion in conjunction with Del Monte Foods. Price Chopper designated Peppertree Rescue to be the recipients of the funds so generously offered by Del Monte Foods. At the completion of this promotion Del Monte donated $4000 to Peppertree Rescue, a truly wonderful sum that will go a long way toward helping us defray the costs of re-homing and paying the medical expenses incurred by dogs in our care. Thank you to Price Chopper and Del Monte for your generosity toward Peppertree Rescue.

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We collected our things and went to the office to say goodbye. Fermin asked us to come back and Sandra asked repeatedly. Fermin gave us a Scooby photo with a handwritten thank you from him on the back. I am going to have this framed, and photocopy the back so you can look at both at once. I was so touched by this. Fermin is very happy with the progress of the Sevilla dogs and that makes me happy.

These dogs changed my life. In the middle of 30 dogs, I was content, happy. I have made a difference in these fragile lives, maybe only for a few days. That is all I really wanted to do here.

Post script – We are very proud to announce Peppertree’s first shipment of Scooby dogs. The four will be arriving in mid-June. Let me introduce Luis (GSP), Becky (Pointer), Jara (GSP) and Elvira (Mestizo – aka a mutt!). Malacara is also on his way – but already spoken for!

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Foster Homes Needed

Please consider opening up your heart and home to one of our dogs or puppies for a few days or weeks to give them a chance at a new life.

We have to turn away many animals in need because of a shortage of foster homes.

Most of our dogs are fostered before being placed, so if you own a Peppertree dog, your pet probably benefited from the kindness of one or multiple foster home volunteers.

Won’t you show another dog or pup the same kindness?

Peppertree Rescue, Inc.
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A Rescue For Dogs Of Good Temperament