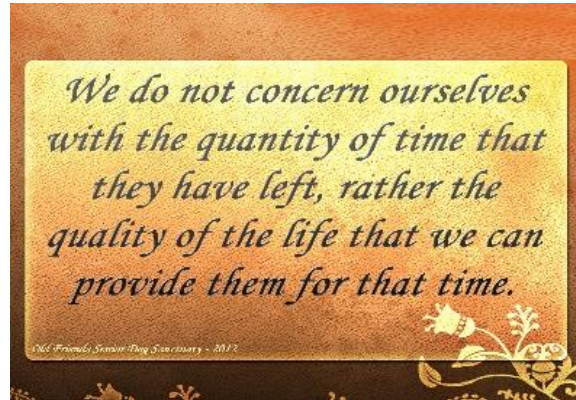


For the Love of Dogs

Introduction



I remember it like it was yesterday. What was supposed to be a simple conversation turned out to be the starting point of the journey that would lead to the establishment of the Old Friends Senior Dog Sanctuary. And what a ride it has been.

Let me first give you some introduction. My name is Michael and, together with my wife Zina, I run the Old Friends Senior Dog Sanctuary in Connecticut. We met at the University of Arizona. I was studying for a degree in Psychology while Zina was in Architecture. Somehow we both ended up in the Engineering stream and that is where we first came across one another. We hit it off immediately due to our love for animals.

I had a fish tank at the time while Zina had a rabbit and some turtles. We married in 1978 and have been together now for 41 years. Our love for animals brought us together and that is what has sustained our relationship all these years and decades. Of course, that is not to say that our love for animals is the only reason why we are still together. We love each other to bits and cannot imagine living any other way.

So, with that out of the way, let me tell you now about how this wonderful project that we call the Old Friends Senior Dog Sanctuary came about. My wife deserves much of the credit for its establishment. Her vision and steely determination to make it happen was the driving force behind this whole endeavor.

As ardent animal lovers, we had quite a few of them in and around our home. Dogs, peacocks, chickens, goats, guanaco, different types of birds, you name it and we had it with us. However, it had never exactly crossed our minds to establish a whole animal shelter. Well, at least it never crossed my mind.

So, you can imagine my surprise when Zina discussed the idea of setting up a dog sanctuary with me. My first response was a big NO. There was simply no practical way of doing this. For those of you who do not know Zina, this was exactly what I should not have said. Whenever I tend to gently disagree about something with my wife of over four decades, it makes her basically do the opposite.

You may think that this is obstinate and rude. But Zina is actually the exact opposite. Tell her that something cannot be done and she will set out on the path to accomplish it. She is just incredibly determined and optimistic and she never ceases to inspire me.

My refrain during that first discussion was that we already had 14 dogs of our own. That pretty much qualifies as a sanctuary. But Zina has always been a big thinker and promptly got the paperwork started for our 501-C3.

Once that came into the picture, my doubtful thinking was at it again. I figured that she has encountered the first big hurdle and will be able to see the futility of the whole idea before long. The 501-C3 is a must whenever you plan to start any sort of non-profit for the enrichment of animals or otherwise. It lends your work some much needed legitimacy while also giving back to the wonderful people who are willing to donate their time, energy, and funds to the cause.

For me, the most concerning aspect was the fundraising. As animal lovers, helping any creature have a better life has always been a priority. I just wasn't very keen on the fundraising part. But Zina is made of much sterner stuff. In a way, my pessimism and her optimism helped form the YIN and YANG of Old Friends Senior Dog Sanctuary.

It goes without saying that animal rescue and welfare can be an emotional rollercoaster. But it is all worth it in the end when it is done successfully. When you see such a project through to completion, you receive the most enriching and fabulous treasures that anyone could wish for.

These gems are revealed to you on a daily basis. And the best part of it all is that you don't even have to go looking for them after a while. They'll find you themselves.

So, Zina had the 501-C3 started. My doubts had almost taken over my mind in a way. I was telling Zina all sorts of things; it takes really long to attain "non-profit" status, some even say up to 5 years, we will lose so much time, so many excuses. It is not like I wasn't on board with the plan. The idea was a great one. I just had my lingering doubts on the two of us being able to accomplish it. But, honestly, thank God for Zina and the strength of her convictions.

Also, you can't really blame me for making these excuses. After all, the whole process has a reputation for being tedious and time-consuming. So much so that many such rescue and shelter projects succumb to the daily pressures of the fight to save and rescue animals which causes them to give up on completing the process. This is quite unfortunate because the process can be completed efficiently. We got our approval letter in the mail less than 2 months later. It took 7 weeks to be precise.

Zina was off and running again. She ran the idea of starting a Facebook page by me. The premise being that we will put up pictures of our dogs in a home environment. My negative thoughts crept in again. I was saying stuff like no one would be interested in our old dogs. They'll have their own sweet creatures with plenty of photos of them.

Another refrain was the cost that supporting all these dogs would incur. To my absolute amazement, she simply handed me a spreadsheet outlining everything. Talk about meticulous planning.

Allow me to say that this whole journey has been filled with so much wonder, surprise, and love. I was the most pessimistic person on this journey or should I say rollercoaster ride. However, it has made me a true believer in the power of all things DOG and, of course, my beloved wife.

As most animal lovers are aware, the list of good qualities in all animals is endless. For the first time in our lives, Zina and I have not only felt true value in saving dogs but have come to realize how much they can teach us to become better people in all aspects of life.

Many of you fellow rescuers know how the day-to-day grind in this crazy world of rescue can sometimes overwhelm even the strongest of people. It is our hope that, in some small part, this book will help you deal with those challenges.

Of course, the main purpose of this book is to share the incredible stories of our senior dogs. Their path through life is not unlike our own, filled with trials and tribulations that life brings us all. Yet, here we are and if you take the time to listen to our best friends, they will tell you a story of just how amazing life is and will remain so until the end.

I would like to dedicate this book to my wife Zina and, of course, all our senior dogs past and present. Thank you, my love, for having the inspiration, courage, and vision to make this dream of yours and now ours come true. What more can one ask for during our brief time here on this planet? So, the journey begins....



Written by your lifelong friend, soul mate, partner-in-crime, co-founder Old Friends Senior Dogs Sanctuary, and husband Michael.