

Life in a Laboratory? Not for these Beagles!

If you have ever known a beagle (as I have in many cases), you are aware of their sweet, docile, cheerful, friendly, accommodating, gentle personalities and their desire to do nothing more than love you and receive your approval. Last April, I lost my glorious Beagle/Foxhound, Chloe, who was the most loving, affectionate, gentle and demonstrative being one could ever wish to know. Chloe was an angel who had been abandoned roadside with her littermates and saved by a rescue organization called HART in Dallas from whom we adopted our Chloe.

Chloe loved everyone- animals & humans – and especially children with whom she shared a special bond and loyalty and devotion. She understood somehow that they were precious and vulnerable and to be respected and appreciated in a way different from adults and other creatures. She took them very seriously and loved them.

Before Chloe, I had known many other beagles cherished for their gentle and generous natures and spirits. I have never met a beagle I didn't love...

Last week I read an article that just about broke my heart – except that it did have a VERY happy ending. It was featured in USA TODAY and addressed the “Independence Day for 118 Beagles Used in Lab Tests” and written by Sharon L. Peters. It spoke of the life and ultimate liberation of beagles that had been used in laboratory research – dogs that lived in isolation confined in plexiglass crates fed and watered on precise daily schedule with no opportunity for any spontaneity or to socialize or experience life outside a cage.

Ironically, with the aid of various animal rescue groups and organizations, these loving little guys were “liberated” from their lives of confinement July 4 weekend after several animal loving groups came to their aid and had them released after the Anticline Research Facility in New Jersey had gone bankrupt and locked its doors. Many of these beagles went to Pets Alive Animal Sanctuary in Middletown, New York. Some of them went to t. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center in Madison, New Jersey. They were assisted by Best Friends Animal Society in Kanab, Utah.

The animals underwent an enormous transition and transformation. Most had never experienced sunlight or had walked upon the grass. They had lived in an air-conditioned or climate controlled and sterile environment year round. They were not socialized – and did not have human or other canine friends.

They learned to adjust – one step at a time, each at his or her own pace. Experiencing the hugs and embrace of humans, the licks and nips of and playful interaction with other dogs – learning to communicate with human beings and other animals, they adjusted to their new lives. And then, they were the recipients of the ultimate joy for a dog that has been lonely, alone and isolated – being adopted by caring, compassionate and warm-hearted people that care deeply for these animals and their welfare. Would that all laboratory

animals could be liberated from lives of misery, loneliness and despair. However, one step at a time. We have an example of what CAN be – the hope that can become reality - dogs that are free at last – and loved, appreciated and respected for all they have to offer – for the joy, beauty and richness they contribute to our lives!