

A selfless saint of neglected animals

GRIT saw Sabrina Yeap (pic) through the many dire situations she encountered in her lifetime.

The lives of those furry friends she saved were found on the street, in chains or cages in abandonment, in drains and ditches and even in mangrove swamps.

Sabrina always had room for one more dog in her farm no matter what her detractors say. And her detractors were simply that.

Sabrina was born and dumped in an orphanage and she knew all too well what it was like being abandoned.

She never had a normal childhood, yet her love for dogs emanated from within that tiny frame that held her gentle soul, kept her close to the animals she devoted her life to raising, caring and protecting.

She spent 12 years working in SPCA as an animal inspector, then under the leadership of (Max) Ian Wheatley who founded the society in 1958. I met her a few years before Wheatley died when I volunteered at the society.

Sabrina investigated every case of cruelty reported and worked with the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) to prosecute perpetrators in court right up to 2005.

She always had the welfare of the animals first.

My task was to feed the difficult dogs their medication but seeing her return with a "casualty" was like watching CSI solve a case.

Our ties formed when I began travelling, and very often I had to leave my dog in her house where she boarded pets as a side income to supplement her low-income from the shelter.

She did odd jobs like bathing dogs kept by the affluent for RM10 each, which some might think was a little job, when in fact, she enjoyed every minute of the bonding sessions with them.

She got closer to the animals that she was entrusted with, and very soon, my dog too, started to listen to her commands.

She always spent her money on the dogs' welfare and never on herself.

After she left SPCA she started her own no-kill



policy shelter with 10 dogs in 2006, while giving tuition classes to earn a living.

She started an adoption programme where people could sponsor a dog for life at RM30 per month.

She rented an area to keep these dogs, driving to and from Kundang to prepare food and feed them.

When more people got to know her plight upon recognising her exemplary work in SPCA, they began to give her a helping hand.

She built Furry Friends Farm to what it is today by sheer dedication, hard work and determination to give dogs (and cats, goats, rabbits) a sanctuary of their own.

She gave talks at international schools on responsible dog ownership and had awareness campaigns at exhibitions and expos in the Klang Valley.

She ate very little but made sure her furkids

ate a lot.

By the time she rescued and helped 100 dogs, she knew she had the capacity to take in more.

She knew each dog by name and they knew her by her voice.

She could even tell me all their traits as I sat down at the centre of all her most laid-back snoozers.

Dr Jill Robinson of Animals Asia Foundation, appointed Sabrina as the executor of the Dr Dog Programme in 2007 and has since raised eight Dr Dog Ambassadors.

Sabrina had a quiet demeanour but with a kind of assertiveness that made her the matriarch of the troop, subduing even the most aggressive of males in the pack.

She would get herself dirty to rescue a stranded pup and risk her life to reach out to an injured dog. She ferried each dog to the vet and would collect the ones which were already treated, in her little Kancil.

Her relentless effort for animal welfare made her a champion for the causes she stood for, including the Pulau Ketam dog dumping incident in 2009 that garnered international attention. In that mission 29 stray dogs were rescued and now live in the farm.

Having spent years with her, we knew what she held close to her heart and what she wanted most for the animals.

We have lost a selfless saint of neglected dogs and cats on July 17.

May she be reunited with the lives of her furry friends who had gone on before her to the other side of the Rainbow Bridge.

Furry Friends Farm will be managed by her current pool of volunteers. If you wish to pay your last respects, the wake is at Nirvana Memorial Centre, No. 1, Jalan 1/116A off Jalan Sg. Besi, KL. Funeral Parlour No13 (Rose).

Funeral Service: 10am, Friday, July 20 at Shah Alam Crematorium (Nirvana)

**PAMELA LIM,
Kuala Lumpur**