



SoiDog – or how to make dogs and people happy



It all began on October 13st, 2017

We went to the vet with our beloved Kimba. The diagnosis of cancer and a malignant blood cancer pulled the ground out from under our feet. She was far too young and now we only had a few months left with her. On January 27, 2018, we had to let her go forever. It broke our hearts and even today it hurts to think that she is no longer here. Anyone who has ever lost a beloved animal knows how many tears are shed and the enormity of the grief. How do you continue when daily routines and the close companionship of 8 years have to be rearranged?



Kimba, 25.02.2010 - 27.01.2018

Our way lead us to Thailand. I have been following the activities of SoiDog, a non-profit animal welfare organization in Phuket, which cares for injured dogs and cats, carries out sterilizations and vaccinations but also rescues animals from the “Dog Meat Trade”.

Dogs in different Asian countries are still cruelly treated and afterwards eaten. The stress is supposed to make the meat tender by the adrenaline release. Gill Dalley and her husband John decided in 2003 to found SoiDog and help the animals. Volunteers from many different nations support this work and this seems to be the way we will go now. On March 18th my 4-week trip started, my husband Peter then joined me one week later for 2 weeks.

Our task was to look after an area with 25 dogs (of about 700 dogs at SoiDog in total). Our job was to take the dogs away from the pound area to a larger space where we could take them on a leash for a walk, play with them, and generally just spend some quality time with them. Our work started at 9 o'clock after having been picked up by the SoiDog crew. There was a short briefing and off we went. These were obviously not dogs that have had a “normal” life. For example, Eylem, Arrax and Prawler, go through life on only three legs, the fourth they lost in an accident.



Arrax



Saithong

While Eylem is the purest cheerful person and copes brilliantly with his disability, Prawler bemoans with life and is totally frightened. He hardly dares to take a step out of the shelter. Arrax also does not yet know how to find his way around and needs patient and loving guidance.

Then there is Vespa, he has only one eye and needs patient guidance. Saithong, a handsome, strong boy - a knife was rammed into his back. Despite this attack he is trustful towards people - lightly, enjoys every interaction and shows no signs of aggression. He is very happy about sharing time simply running around with you.

This list could be continued indefinitely. Puppies as well as adult dogs that have simply been abandoned, animals that have been badly treated or thrown away for easy 'mistakes' (such as mild ataxia) - they surrounded us with friendly tail wagging and almost everyone wanted to be the first to walk. Only the very shy animals waited until the end. Some have experienced such abuse and cruelty that they hardly dared to get out. Trained staff at SoiDog also worked with these dogs.

Lunch break was then from 12-13 o'clock. At the beginning and at the end there would sometimes be a little 'howl - concert' of the dogs. After the sweaty work at 33-35°C we looked forward to a cool drink, a small Thai meal and a breather.

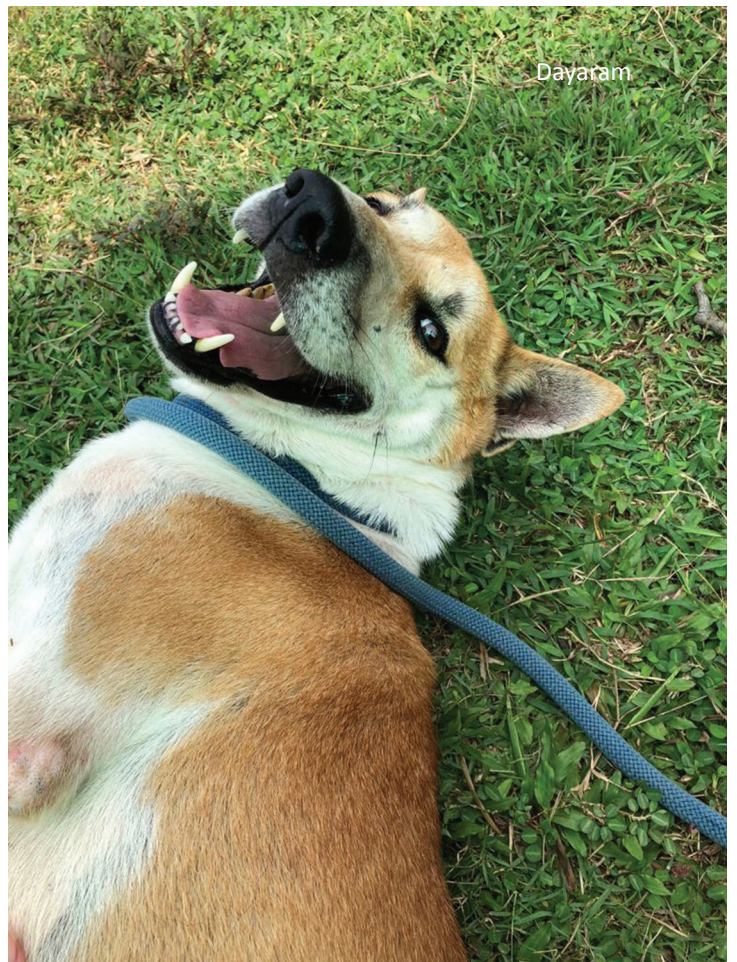
The permanent crew of SoiDog is very friendly, professional and helpful. It is also fun to talk to people from many different countries who are also committed to the dogs and cats while having lunch. Some even do the voluntary service on a regular basis and for many weeks of the year. New friendships routinely emerge because the well-being of animals is close to everyone's heart.

The people there want to give these animals love, care and attention. They want to show them that there are people in this world who have a heart and are willing to provide loving guidance for them, so that they can learn to trust again. The big goal for the dogs is to be adopted. Of course, this is only possible if they meet a number of conditions. This includes (re)building trust with people.

SoiDog has a very good adoption rate - last year 691 dogs and cats left SoiDog and have been brought to a great forever-home. Many go to Canada, the UK, the Netherlands, USA or Germany.

However, there are also animals that will stay with SoiDog forever. Sick animals or dogs that are too traumatized or simply have small illnesses, as was the case with Dayaram and Zadinin. Both are incontinent, so the chances of adoption are close to zero, even though they are wonderful dogs. They only have the hope for a sponsor, because the resources at SoiDog must indeed be secured financially.

In the 2nd half of the day the remaining dogs from the 'Run' are taken out. Some of their time is spent in the leash-off area, where the dogs can have fun with toys and bath or play ball. Some dogs just want to have some time together with the volunteers and enjoy being massaged or brushed. The gratitude of the dogs is indescribable. Only a few of them ever want to go back to their enclosure.



Zadinin

In the 2nd half of the day the remaining dogs from the 'Run' are taken out. Some of their time is spent in the leash-off area, where the dogs can have fun with toys and bath or play ball. Some dogs just want to have some time together with the volunteers and enjoy being massaged or brushed. The gratitude of the dogs is indescribable. Only a few of them ever want to go back to their enclosure.

The day at SoiDog ends at about 4 pm. The pick-up would then take us back to the accommodation. And if anyone still didn't have enough of the dogs, they could invite the beach dogs on your towel in the evening; they love to take a nap there

Voluntary service at SoiDog: a job that is fun and worthwhile. Worthwhile in the sense that you look into the eyes of the dogs, who look back at you both lovingly and gratefully. Worthwhile in the sense that anxious dogs build up trust and seek closeness again. Worthwhile in the sense that financial benefits are not in the foreground, but the happiness of those who are without an advocate, because they are just 'animals'.

Worthwhile to meet people in the sense that this is also a matter of the heart. Worthwhile in the sense that it rearranges the point of view as to things that are truly important.



The laser stays with SoiDog

As on every trip, I carried one of our lasers with me. The animal clinic in NaYang, completed in 2016, is the most modern in Thailand and was Gill Dalley's last major project before she died of cancer. Since many dogs and cats with injuries and wounds are treated in the clinic, the laser finds its right place there. After only a few days, the responsible therapist reports good progress in wound healing of injured or ill animals, which is what we also hope for.



Time went by way too fast. We experienced many touching moments during these weeks and there were also many tears shed about the fate of many dogs. We could have easily brought along 5 or 6 or more dogs - because their character is so unique. But only one has won the lottery - the jackpot, as a newly won friend from Canada said.

An approx. 4 or 5 year old female dog - she was simply abandoned, tied to a post. She was found and brought to SoiDog. As Pegas she lived there in a big pack, which was sometimes overwhelming her, as small and tender as she is. On March 23. I saw her for the first time. She wasn't in our 'Run' but we saw her every day and began to establish a connection.

On April 19th she traveled with me to her new home. Little Sarai, as she's now called, was adopted by us. She adds a new chapter to our lives. She won't replace Kimba and we will always have Kimba in our hearts. But Sarai is a new beginning.

And she enchants everyone with her sweet smile.

More information about SoiDog at:

www.SoiDog.org

