

86 DPAWYS

The Tragic True Story
of Puppy Doe



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Chapter 1

At approximately 10:30 a.m. on August 31, 2013, Quincy, Massachusetts Animal Control Officer, Bruce DiBella, received a call from a resident on Carrolls Lane, in the city's "Hospital Hill" area. There was a bloodied, disfigured and motionless dog in the middle of the road. Upon arriving at the scene, Officer DiBella was greeted by the caller; a woman named Joanne O'Brien.

Ms. O'Brien stated that she had been waiting for her friend, Stephen Felkel, to pick her up for an outing. When Mr. Felkel arrived at Ms. O'Brien's home, he told her that he had to drive around the dog, about two car lengths away from the dwelling, in order to get there. He believed that the dog had been struck by a car and left for dead.

Ms. O'Brien exited her home and she and Mr. Felkel approached the dog. Upon realizing that the dog was unable to stand up and walk, Mr. Felkel carried the dog inside Ms. O'Brien's home. They offered food and water to the female Pit Bull mix, which she eagerly accepted. Ms. O'Brien did not recognize the dog as one who lived in her neighborhood. A neighbor of Ms. O'Brien's was out walking his dog at 9:00 a.m. when the Pit Bull mix was not yet present.

Ms. O'Brien opined to police that, in addition to being severely injured, the dog appeared very thin, undernourished and not well kept. She pointed out to police fresh spots of blood on the dog's face and head, and she remarked about the dog's overgrown, curled nails. This, Ms. O'Brien suggested, was a sure sign of neglect.

Officer DiBella made the decision to take possession of the dog who was in obvious great need of veterinary attention. Before he left, Ms. O'Brien informed Officer DiBella that she would like to adopt the dog, and she was willing to absorb all costs for treatment to restore the dog's health. Ms. O'Brien, scheduled to leave for a vacation in England on the following day, provided the officer with her itinerary. In England, she would anxiously await good news about the dog for whom, she had already chosen the name "Sweet Pea".

Officer DiBella transported Sweet Pea to the Quincy Animal Shelter, just blocks away. The Shelter, unable to provide the level of urgent care Sweet Pea needed, then transported her to a facility in the neighboring town of Weymouth known as the VCA South Shore Animal Hospital. There, Dr. Amanda Duffy and her colleagues found Sweet Pea to have a very kind disposition. In spite of her significant injuries, she attempted to wag her tail.

Based on Sweet Pea's size, Dr. Duffy believed she was of the approximate age of eighteen weeks. They confirmed that she was unable to stand or walk on her own due to her many severe wounds and obvious broken bones, so she immediately administered fluids and pain medication. This, Dr. Duffy said, provided the dog with the great and rapid relief, which was necessary to perform an in-depth examination.

Further examination revealed to Dr. Duffy, the true nature of Sweet Pea's injuries. She had not been struck by a motor vehicle. Instead, she was the victim of the most horrendous case of animal cruelty that Dr. Duffy had ever seen.

According to Dr. Duffy, the cruelest of acts were inflicted upon Sweet Pea. Her joints were separated from being repeatedly pulled apart, like something that was done during medieval times. She was beaten, stabbed in both eyes, and severely burned on various parts of her body. Several of Sweet Pea's vertebrae were smashed with an instrument similar to a baseball bat or a board, and her tongue was cut in half to reveal a serpent-like pattern. At just eighteen pounds, she was half the weight of what a dog her age, realized during the examination to be approximately two years, should weigh. While Dr. Duffy claimed it was not uncommon in abuse cases, there was no evidence of sexual interference.

The level of torture inflicted upon Sweet Pea shocked even the most seasoned veterinarians, assistants, and rescuers. In realizing the extremity and duration of Sweet Pea's suffering, many at VCA South Shore Animal Hospital admitted to having to walk away and break from examining the dog. It was reported that one rescuer collapsed, overcome by emotion.

At the end of the examination, Dr. Duffy and her staff concluded that Sweet Pea's injuries were far beyond any healing ability and that she would suffer constant, severe pain. At that time, the unfortunate decision was made, to humanely end Sweet Pea's life. Before her euthanization, Sweet Pea enjoyed the attention and admiration of the clinic's staff members. Her thirst was quenched and her belly was full of kibble. Her pain was diminished, and all she was said to want at that point was to be held. In the last moments of her short life, Sweet Pea experienced comfort, warmth, safety, and love. Enveloped in all these things which she should have experienced throughout her life, Sweet Pea went to sleep.

As is standard practice in animal cruelty cases in Massachusetts, veterinarians immediately notified State Police Lieutenant, Alan Borgal, who serves as the Animal Rescue League of Boston's Director of Law Enforcement. Lieutenant Borgal then notified the Quincy, Massachusetts Police Department about the horrendous outcome of the situation.

Quincy police detectives began to canvass the neighborhood where the dog was found searching for information that might shed some light on what was now a criminal investigation.

Under the direction of Lieutenant Borgal, the Animal Rescue League of Boston took possession of Sweet Pea's remains. Her injuries would be further explored, post-mortem, at their facility.

Ms. O'Brien was just three days into her vacation in England when she received the heart-breaking news about Sweet Pea, for whom she had planned a wonderful future.