A Tribute To Susan Netboy, With Love

Soon after losing my whippet, Ralph, back in 1994, I started doing research on rescuing another whippet. I soon realized that they were few and far between and it would take a long time to adopt another one. I remembered seeing a Meet and Greet for greyhound adoption and started looking into this breed. It didn't take long for me to be horrified about what happened to these dogs when they retired from racing. If ever a breed needed rescue, it was the greyhound! I called the GFFL number and spoke with Barbara Eineichner, who was running the adoption kennel in Gilroy at that time. She had many greyhounds at that time (as I recall, about 50 dogs). She brought out a beautiful red brindle girl, Annie, and I took her home. A couple months later, I wanted to add a second dog and Barbara E. suggested that I speak with Susan about a dog she had recently rescued from Oregon. Susan was living in Woodside at that time, so I drove over there and met my beautiful black brindle girl, Gabby. This was my first introduction to Susan.

Susan had been a founding member of the Northern California Sighthound Rescue and became involved in greyhound rescue in 1986. Her first encounter with the greyhound racing industry evolved out of an effort to obtain the release of racing greyhounds from Letterman Army Institute of Research and eleven other research facilities in California and Arizona. The resulting revelations about the system of dog racing and the state of greyhound welfare left her with an indelible impression – silence was not an option. In 1991, she established the Greyhound Welfare Foundation, which had three arms: One was a referral service for greyhound adoption groups across the US; the second was the Greyhound Protection League, which investigated and reported on greyhound cruelty and abuse cases in the US; and the third was Greyhound Friends for Life, the adoption group for greyhounds in Northern California.

At the time, I was still working (at a paying job!) so I didn't have the time to get very involved with the group, but that changed over time and I started helping, as time allowed, with transports, interviews, and home visits. Although Susan's main area of concentration was the Greyhound Protection League, she remained involved with GFFL.

As I became more involved, Susan became an invaluable mentor and friend. Susan was one of most dedicated and fierce advocates for these dogs – not only the ex-racing greyhounds, but also the other sighthounds that were frequently found in shelters around California. Her ability to deal with the cruelty and abuse of these dogs and advocate for them always astounded me. I would read about or see photos of dead and abused dogs and fall apart. I never fully understood how Susan did it, but she knew that the best way of exposing the abuse and making changes was to meticulously research the abuse cases, then produce press releases and do interviews documenting the abuse.

She put herself at great risk by going undercover in various places to document abuse cases. Getting these press releases published was difficult at first, but there were a few newspapers, particularly in cities with tracks, that would publish them. As more people became aware of the fate of the racing greyhound, more TV stations and newspapers published Susan's press releases.

Susan's strength was to stay focused and not lose her temper. She stuck to facts and let them talk for themselves. She was involved in a lawsuit brought by the Tucson track because of negative comments posted by a Greyhound Protection League board member on social media. The lawsuit was dropped against her when the track probably realized that, with Susan's well-researched files on the track, the negative publicity that would result from her deposition would hurt them even more than social media posts.

One of Susan's happiest days was when the Tucson greyhound track closed down. She designed and arranged for a wrap to be placed on a truck that would circle the area around the track on the day it closed. The people in the photo are the Beading Divas, a Tucson group who made jewelry to sell and raise money for the greyhounds.

Another of Susan's accomplishments was to step in when, at the end of 2008, the greyhound racing track in Guam suddenly closed and dogs were just given away. Many were found loose and emaciated; others were found tied up and in poor condition. Susan put together a plan to bring as many of these dogs as possible to the US. She worked with a local group in Guam, set up a transport plan with one of the major airlines, and convinced Barbara Davenport and Bob Smith of Homestretch Greyhound and Adoption in Fillmore CA to be the intake group for the dogs and hold them until they could be transported to other adoption groups across the US. Susan brought 172 dogs over from Guam!

Susan gradually closed down the Greyhound Protection League, although she was available to talk with people about greyhound welfare issues. And she was always available to help with GFFL projects. Susan was a whiz with Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator and finalized designs for the Human Race and reunion t-shirts, posters, sandwich boards, and other GFFL items. We would talk every month or so and I would bring her up to date on the happenings in the group and we would have great discussions on issues facing the group and the dogs we were bringing in.

Susan faced down several health issues during her life, including an aggressive cancer 10+ years ago that required heavy-duty chemo and radiation. They told her at the time that she should expect to live another 18 months. She said that she still had too much to do. So despite horrible side effects of both treatments, she got through it and was in

remission for the rest of her life. She was an amazing survivor which makes it hard to accept that she is gone.

What a remarkable woman. Thousands of greyhounds lived after their racing career was over and found wonderful homes because of her advocacy. Greyhounds in our past and present owe their health and happiness to a woman who cared passionately about the plight of the greyhound and who was one of the earliest voices at the start of the rescue movement. From all of them and all of us, thank you Susan.

If you would like to make a donation to GFFL in honor of Susan and all she has done for the greyhounds, we and the dogs would be most appreciative!