



While I had seen "that horse", driving back and forth to work for many years, I never stopped to give her any treats, touch her or pet her. I never even knew her name. I just remember the many years of smiling when I was blessed to have seen her out in her yard. Life, for her, didn't appear to be ideal but she did appear to be happy. I stopped working for the company that I worked for a few years before I officially met her. Never in a million years did I expect to be rescuing a horse but that's just what happened a little over a year ago.

I saw a story that was on the front page in the Kalamazoo Gazette on July 5, 2011 and I remember thinking "I know this horse! She lives in Mattawan." I was at my Dr.'s office and when I pointed out this article, I was not alone in knowing who this horse was. After my appointment, I went home but could not stop thinking about her. I picked up the phone and made several inquiries about her welfare, given what the article said. I was put off, obviously because I was not the owner or a relative. I still felt that there must be some way to improve this horse's quality of life for as long as could be possible. I had even made contact with a vet who had had previous history with the mare and her owner, asking her if she could help to which I was promptly informed that she had tried on a few occasions to help her before. God bless you, Dr. A, for finally coming around to my way of thinking- "What if?" and doing something. We had never met before but I knew that Dr. A had a well respected practice as an Equine Veterinarian.

~continued~





I had become a Sugar fan on Facebook a few years ago. I never expected Facebook to blow up like it did. Whoa. . . . At one time there were at least three sites for Sugar, her original one, ultimately "ours" and another page. Things went very postal for quite some time but Sugar's real fans cut it down to being real and what it was all about.

The beginning of the "Sugar Shack Crew" started when I, for some insane reason, decided to go to the owner's house to see if there was anything that could be done to help make Sugar's life better, short of being court ordered to remove the horse and take her to a strange place to be put down. Yeah-you got it-things further blew up from there on Facebook and locally. I never felt threatened by the owner or his family at any time. In fact, Mr. A kept telling me that "they want to kill my horse" in the beginning. An animal abuse specialist stepped in to assist me in my quest to help Sugar. She even convinced Dr. A to come out and take another look but she refused to do so unless I was there as well.

I think that it was July 7th, 2011, when Dr. A agreed to meet me at Sugar's home to further examine her. I never knew that a vet had digital x-ray units that could be carried out to the "field" to see what a vet needs to see. X-rays were taken of Sugar's tumor. The tumor was not an abscess as so many of us had hoped. I felt the mass and knew that this was something much bigger. Dr. A determined that Sugar definitely had the will to live and that she was willing to help us give Sugar a better quality of life without removing her from the only real home that she knew as long as Mr. A agreed to not make Sugar endure another Michigan winter, and we were able to convince him to do so.

~continued~

Furthermore, Dr. A did everything that she did for Sugar and her fans, at her own expense, up to and including Sugar's euthanasia supplies and her time. I will never be able to express my admiration for this wonderful veterinarian. She did so much more than anyone can even imagine.

This is where Ms. Cindy stepped in to offer her help, if I needed it, to help care for Sugar on a daily basis. Keep in mind that neither Cindy nor I had ever taken care of a horse like we began to do before. Sure, I took horse riding lessons as a young person but it's just not the same. I used to foster big dogs, my personal dogs are and have always been big dogs. Cindy fosters special needs cats and



babysits for a friend who has guinea pigs. Cindy works at the same place that I used to so she knew of Sugar as well. I took Cindy up on her so generous offer to provide assistance assuming that we could work things out that would satisfy the Sherriff Department and Animal Control in Van Buren County, MO. This department had truly ignored Sugar's plight for way too long.

The Sugar Shack Crew began its construction from there. Cindy made Ms. Sugar's FB rescue page. A financial account was set up at a local bank and we both prayed that at least a few dollars would be donated to help us cover our initial set up costs. Our needs weren't much more than being the basics. I chose to approach Oak Ridge about offering us advice, help and support.

~continued~



Oak Ridge gave us a very good deal when we first purchased the basics of basics and continued to give us a discount. Ms. Heather C. (from Canada) was a huge source of advise when it came to purchasing what would be necessary to begin and offering basic horse care advise. During this initial set up was when things went totally "viral" as to everyone, from all across the world, stepping up to help this amazing horse. Money, supplies and most importantly, prayers, were being offered to us all. It was agreed with the vet and the family that one of us would see Sugar every day, at least once.

Mary O. came on board quickly after that and she was also joined by Laura D. WOW-what a blessing to have these two "horse" people step up to the plate and join our cause. Mary O. took the majority of the special photos that are still on Sugar's FB page. I will always cherish each and every one of Sugar's photos.

Everyone on the Sugar Shack Crew knew that Sugar had endured a great deal during her life before we came to know her and after we began to know her. Mr. A bought her at an auction. If he had not have done so, Sugar was headed for the slaughter house for sure. Sugar was 34 years old when we met her. The love that the community had for her was very special. The A's truly loved her as well. The bond between Mr. A was very obvious.

~continued~

OK, so here we go-**LET THE SPOILING BEGIN!!** I still feel that we all had a right to give Ms. Sugar McClure the best of the best for as long as we could continue to do so and I believe that we all did that, near and far. I will never say that Mr. and Mrs. A abused or neglected Sugar as far as the basics. Yes, Sugar did have food. She also had water, such as it was, it was laden with fungi, algae, and God only knows what else. The A's could have done so much more. OK, so Cindy destroyed the bathtub crack seal in that awful tub. On purpose... hummmm. Best thing that was ever done in my opinion. We had purchased a very nice, large, red plastic tub for Sugar's water but there were many times when Ms. Sugar adamantly chose to continue to drink out of her bathtub. Take that all of you horsey people!! ;)

Sugar had several other needs that needed to be taken care of quickly. She had some pretty severe gouges on all of her legs. The flies literally stood on top of one another to get to the cuts and scabs. Dr. A advised us to dress them and wrap them every couple of days. She also recommended that we find a spray to try to keep the flies and such critters at bay. Dr. A had many specific instructions as to how Sugar's "paddock and stall" should be kept.

To be totally honest, the squalor that Sugar had endured for so long was beyond belief. It did not look like her stall had ever been cleaned. We dug out what we could and then we covered the entire area with some things that Oak Ridge gave us or recommended for Sugar. We dug and pitched as much shit as we could and then we laid down the comfy looking shavings that we had bought for Sugar's bed.
~continued~




I still remember seeing the shavings in Sugar's mane and all over her body, the next day. We knew that she had enjoyed the basic comfort that Cindy and I had given her. Her paddock was cleaned daily by us so that she would not have to walk all over her excrement everywhere she could go in her now tiny area. Mr. A had made it so Sugar could not go by the road because of all of the complaints about Sugar's condition.



Sugar was obviously way too skinny when we started with her. Every bone in her body stuck out and it was very hard to look at every day. Even her previous winter's coat had not been brushed out. You cannot really change an "old school" kind of owner but I believe that the Sugar Shack Crew changed Mr. A in many ways, whether he liked it or not. There was a lot of dissention in the family, especially towards the end, which was not fun at all for Sugar's supporters either. With the fancy food and treats that the Sugar Shack Crew found, Sugar gained at least 150#'s. She looked good but weight wise, she still had a long way to go and of course, the tumor wasn't going anywhere.

Thanks to the very generous donations we received from all of Sugar's fans, we were able to provide Sugar a new diet which consisted of soaked alfalfa, soaked sugar beet root and a little bit of the grain that Mr. A had been feeding her.

~continued~



Ms. Cindy was the one who made sure that Sugar ate her vegetables every day. I got to give her the delectable Sugar Bun treats. A few weeks later Equine Senior was added to her diet as well and Ms. Sugar flourished. Sugar absolutely knew when the "good" stuff was coming her way.

For a month or two, Sugar enjoyed all of the pampering, spoiling and good eats. She was combed, her mane was braided, and she was even given a tiara for one of her photo shoots. The summer progressed and became considerably hotter. By this time we were only allowed to come by once a day so as not to disrupt or interfere with the family's daily life. Yes, I guess we should have shouted out when we were going to use the water to fill Ms. Sugar's good water bucket, but... Mrs. A constantly complained but in the next breath told me horror stories such as having to go out to the bathtub and pour in hot water so Sugar could get a drink of water, in the winter when the tub was completely frozen. I never did see this picture but Mrs. A told me about one where icicles were hanging off of Sugar's face in the dead of winter. I will not say what I was thinking when I heard that story except to say that Mrs. A was just as culpable in regards to Sugar's neglect.

I do know that Sugar truly loved Mr. A. She demonstrated that love every time she heard him walk up, call out her name or whistle for her. Sugar also had a dog friend named Buddy who also captured all of our hearts as well. Buddy did intimidate me when I first met him but I won him over by always having dog treats for him in my car and in my pocket. I miss that dog a lot and pray that he is doing well these days.

~continued!

The Sugar Shack Crew endured a very hot summer and when fall arrived it came quickly. I knew that our time was running out with Ms. Sugar very soon and I became very worried about Mr. A complying with the agreement he made with us and Dr. A. I knew that he really loved Sugar in his own way. Mr. A began doing things that he should have done years ago like increasing the height of the lean-to Sugar used for shelter. She had a permanent scar on her back where she had constantly s truck it on the beams that held up the tin roof up. I am 5'8" and even I hit my head constantly while cleaning her stall and I know the other ladies had the same problem. Mr. A even began bringing in loads of dirt to fill in her area so it wouldn't be as muddy when it rained. The dirt came from the hole he had dug for Sugar's grave.



It got colder and colder as time went on and eventually Sugar's soaked food began to ice up in the morning. When this started happening, I knew that it would soon be time to let Sugar go. All of the Sugar Shack Crew had to keep reminding Mr. A of his agreement to not make her endure another Michigan winter. She was doing so much better with her weight and appearance but the tumor on her face was only getting bigger every day. Sugar also started to become very obstinate about what she ate and how we could touch or pet her. She only wanted to eat the Equine Senior as long as it wasn't wet and she would only allow us to stroke her forehead.



It was very hard, for me, to realize that we would have to put Sugar down very soon. She was such a trooper. It was finally decided that Sugar would be put down on October 29, 2011 which was a Saturday when all of the Sugar Shack Crew could be there for Sugar and her family.

~continued~

It was very brisk on the day that we had agreed upon. It was so cold that Mr. A had on his Carharts. You could see Sugar's breath in the air. I kind of think that Sugar was aware of what was going on. She stood in her shelter with her head just outside and just looked around at her surroundings. She was so beautiful that day. Dr. A came and we all knew that the time had come. I have been with my dogs when they were put down but I never expected to hear the thud when Sugar went down. I will never forget that moment. Cindy and I were right there with Sugar and we both wept as things transpired. I remember stroking her forehead and muzzle before the injection was given and I remember her letting me do that. The rest of the Sugar Shack Crew was there and Mr. A and his oldest daughter was there as well. Gee, lady, where have you been for the last 17 years? How could you and your family do nothing when the tumor began? The daughter was very mean to us verbally. Again, where you lady when Sugar needed help the most?

Sugar left us all very peacefully. I had brought six red roses for each of us to give Sugar when she left us one last time. All I could think of was the run for the roses tune and that's why I got Sugar the red roses. Mary took some very moving pictures that day that I will never forget.



I don't know... did we prolong Sugar's suffering or did we give Sugar the best few months of her life? I do believe that we all did the best that we possibly could for Sugar and we all had a very amazing experience.

~continued~

I, for one, will never forget Sugar. I will also never forget all of the amazing people who cared so much about that horse from all over the world. Sugar crossed over the Rainbow Bridge with the love and support of so many. I really believe that she is running free, pain free and tumor free. I know that she will be there waiting for each and every one of her fans.

So OK, run free Ms. Sugar McClure and know that you were loved by so many. Your legacy will live on through all of the other rescued horses you helped with what remained of your funds.

Nancy

