

Little Texas Lady



I was one week away from embarking on my third transcontinental cycling adventure across the United States, which would start in La Jolla, California, and end in Savannah, Georgia. In a meeting with my business partner, Pete, he said, “Jared, will you do me a favor while you are on this trip?”

With some consternation, I responded, “Sure Pete!”

Pete sternly asked, “Would you please go with an open mind and open heart?”

Without thinking much of his request, I casually answered, “Sure Pete....absolutely!”

Pete departed with, “Well, then, have a great journey, my friend!”

The trip began, and early on the morning of May 11th, I found myself standing outside a Best Western in Sweetwater, Texas, waiting for “Frenchy,” my riding partner from Paris. The conditions were miserable that day—rain for 12 straight hours and temperatures in the low 50’s—so I considered pulling the plug on riding for that day. But when Frenchy arrived, we decided, “Let’s just go for it!”

Within a few minutes, we were not only thoroughly drenched but we were also battling a strong headwind from the northeast. The wind chill made it so cold that if I had stopped for even a few minutes, my body would have frozen in place. To keep my body temperature from dropping, I increased my cadence while maintaining a moderate speed (basically spinning my legs with faster revolutions but in a lower gear).

While riding east on the frontage road of I-20, we took a shortcut just a few hundred yards down the road from the remote town of Trent. That's when a small, black and white, twenty-pound dog came darting out at us from behind a shed across the street. My first thought to thwart the dog from biting me was to give it a "Gatorade flush" to the eyes, but a few intense seconds later I noticed the ears of the dog were up, and it was running sideways in a playful, goofy way—this was a puppy! I pulled over to the side of the road, and we had thorough "love fest." Not only was I completely soaked from the rain, but I received an additional shower of kisses from my new friend. I tried to keep up with her Tasmanian-devilish tongue, but I just couldn't compete with her level of affection. The whole time while I was kissing, patting, and cuddling her closely, I kept referring to her as the "dirt dog," for she was absolutely covered in mud!

In those few minutes, I almost froze, so I had to get my legs moving. I started sadly riding away from my new four-legged friend but was slowed by my Parisian biking companion's hysterical laughter as the dirt dog jumped up and down trying to grab the orange flag on the back of

my “bob” trailer. The puppy would not stop following and running beside my bike, and I became increasingly concerned that this dog was running away from its home. I pulled over a couple of times to “shoo her away” to no avail—the dirt dog would have nothing of it. In fact, my temporary pullovers were viewed by the dirt dog as a great opportunity to lather me up with more kisses!

Eventually we pulled into Trent, and I entered an insurance company to ask if an employee could hold the dog until I could make my escape. The gentleman I spoke with told me he knew every person and dog within the city limits and had never seen this dog before. The dog had no tags, and the gentleman was convinced that she was truly a stray. I requested for the gentleman to take the dog to an animal shelter, and to make sure he did, I wrote down his name and the number of the shelter where he promised to take the dog.

By now my body temperature had plummeted enough to trigger uncontrollable shivers. This is the first sign of hypothermia—I truly was freezing, so it was time to get the heart rate back up. Frenchy and I got moving, and we both came to the conclusion that we should

probably call it a rest day. It was pointless to subject ourselves to these unbearable riding conditions. As we continued east towards Merkel, sure enough the insurance guy in his white pick-up truck waved as he passed us on the road. I saw the dirt dog trying to free herself from her cage in the back of the truck, so she could join us on our cross-country journey. I turned to Frenchy and said, "If nobody claims that dog, I am going to adopt her!"

He couldn't believe it. "Are you kidding me? That is the most amazing thing I have ever heard!" was his response.

The truth is I couldn't believe it myself. As we silently continued forward on our iron horses, I contemplated whether or not I, of all people, could possibly become a dog owner. I thought to myself, "Can I do this? I am pretty independent, and I have two cats already. What would they think? How could this possibly work?"

We pulled into Merkel and stayed at the only place in town—the Scottish Motel. After hot showers we walked at least a mile-and-a-half to the animal shelter to

visit the dirt dog. The shelter was located behind a personal residence, and the conditions were unconscionable—the worst I have ever seen. All the cages were horribly rusted and from being exposed to the outdoor elements, and the stench was unbearable! The dozen-or-so dogs I saw were emaciated and in terrible condition, and after playing with the dirt dog in the backyard for a little while, I was convinced I had to adopt her.

The tough part was convincing the shelter's vet and his two assistants that I was going to come back for the little rascal in a few weeks after I reached Savannah, Georgia. They thought I was full of it, and so not only did I offer them a substantial retainer to hold the dog, but I also offered to pay for an operation to have a German Shepherd's leg fixed. Suddenly and quite miraculously, they believed in me!

Saying goodbye to the little Texas lady was so difficult that it took me several times to pull away from her cage. The bond between us was truly solidified at that moment. When I left the animal shelter, I had a new reason, a purpose, and thankfully the impetus to dance on

my pedals with expedience over to Savannah, so I could return to rescue my little girl from these miserable conditions.

I made it over to Savannah, Georgia, in 16 days without Frenchy, who wanted to try to do it more quickly and ended up burning out. I then flew to Dallas, Texas, where I reacquainted myself with my friend, Shella, whereby we ended up falling in love. I then drove east to pick up the dirt dog, and she instantly remembered me. She went bonkers! Our reunion was indescribable, and once she was released from captivity, she covered me with those familiar warm kisses.

Together we drove northwest, and the dirt dog sat patiently looking through the windshield. I am sure she was wondering what was in store for her next. It was simple really: The dirt dog, now named Lilly, was headed to her new home in Boulder, Colorado.

Although Shella and I didn't stay together, my business partner Pete's request turned out to be so prophetic. I had opened my mind and my heart just enough to rescue a stray dog and fall in love, and I am happy to say that both have since remained wide open,

though Lily is definitely occupying a big space in my heart.

Jared Minor