

Greyhounds happy in their 'forever' homes

Lesley Wells

Since the 532 greyhounds were abandoned by (Yat Yuen) Canidrome Co. Ltd. on July 20 at the now defunct racetrack, 139 have been taken to adoption centres in the US or adopted by local residents and Hong Kong citizens, leaving a total of 333 for adoption as of yesterday.

Unfortunately, since the closure of the Canidrome in Fai Chi Kei 10 greyhounds have died from various health issues and 50 have not so far been considered for adoption due to their age or health problems, as Albano Martins, president of Anima – Society for the Protection of Animals (Macau), deems it too risky for them to make the long journey to the US or Europe.

At 7 a.m. yesterday morning the *MPD Weekender* was at the former racetrack to see 10 more of the abandoned dogs leave for their "forever" homes in the US.

The 10 greyhounds that were due to cross the Zhuhai-Hong Kong-Macau Bridge (HZMB) at about 8 a.m. were walked by their kennel boss, surnamed Lee, and this reporter as a volunteer in the grim light of dawn, before they were put into their flight cases for the long trips to Houston and New York – and canine freedom at last.

MPD Weekender has been in contact with many of the adopters in the US and locally to see how our greys have been getting on in their "forever" homes and what the adopters expected when they took the hounds into their homes, considering the stories of what the animals have been through at the race track and the photographs they have seen of the living conditions of the dogs since the Canidrome closed.

Stuart Bierkamp and Rich Oster of Michigan are fostering and are going to adopt a female greyhound from the now defunct Canidrome they have named Xena Warrior Princess as a companion for their other rescued greyhound, not from Macau, Conan the Barbarian.

They answered questions put to them by *MPD Weekender* in a message on social media.

What did you expect when you got a Canidrome grey?

"We had no idea what to expect, didn't have a lot of information about what was going on until we got her and started to do a bit of research." They said that she was very excited when they took her home and it took about 4 hours to get her to settle.

When asked how she was settling in, they said, "It's amazing how much she is changing, she is doing very good now, the first four nights were very hard, we understand that there was a time change and attributed it to that, now she is sleeping all night, I have never had a pet that when the alarm clock goes off in the



Greyhound Don't Care in flight crate waiting to leave for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge yesterday morning with Anima president Albano Martins (left) and driver. Photo: Lesley Wells

morning is so excited to know that it's time to get up, she is a very happy girl."

They went on to say that Xena is so different to the three-year-old Conan, she is more like a one-year-old. They added, "She is very beautiful, we're very thankful that she came into our life. She has so much energy I wish we could bottle that up".

Theresa Pearson from California, who gave *MPD Weekender* an email interview, is fostering Brooke Burns who is the third female greyhound living with the family as they needed to see if the ex Canidrome greyhound and the two resident greyhounds would get on. As Pearson's two other greyhounds are 10 and 12 years old, they are teaching 12-year-old Brooke to "adjust to California dog life and they have done just that. We plan to move forward in adopting Brooke (will also change her name maybe) assuming our Rescue group approves, which they do", said Pearson.

When asked how Brooke was doing in her new life, Pearson said, "Brooke has settled in ok. She is learning something new every day. This is a lot to expect from a tired/scared 10-year-old greyhound".

Pearson said, "We have been reading about the Macau track greyhounds for a long time and were amazed that they were all in pretty good shape, except for Brooke (of the five that arrived in California together). We also knew they all needed dentals and teeth extractions as soon as possible".

Pearson said, "Brooke will have a wonderful life here with us. We travel a lot with our other two greyhounds and plan on bringing Brooke too. This week she will get to play in the sand on a beach along the Pacific Ocean. Brooke will live out the rest of her life with us never in need of

anything here in Napa California USA".

Anne Brown from Michigan is currently fostering Matt's Mate, now called Mattie, and in an email interview with *MPD Weekender* said, "We are still just fostering him. He is the 1st foster we have ever had. We wanted to try and see what it would be like having two dogs. To be honest, it's just like having two boys playing! They get along, they wrestle, and they relax together! Oh, and they love to eat! We are still trying to decide whether to adopt or not. It's absolutely crazy what he has been through and how loving and gentle he truly is around everyone".

When asked if she knew what to expect when she got an ex-Canidrome greyhound, Brown said, "These guys are definitely smaller than the ones in the US. But the same lovable personalities! They are true troopers. After their long journey, all five greys that came in together were so friendly and happy.

"Mattie is truly resilient. He came to us emaciated and a horrible odour. The odour was coming from his mouth! I looked and was so upset to see how awful it was and how much pain he must be in. I took him to the vet and was not surprised at all having all of his teeth removed. He is settling in fabulously. So sweet and we did not find him apprehensive at all. He is totally interested in investigating everything in the home."

Local adopter Chong Meng, living in San Kio district, adopted Breaking Good in October this year after falling in love with her while she was volunteering with Anima.

Chong has since changed Breaking Good's name to NaNa.

In an interview on a social messenger, Chong told *MPD Weekender* that although she knew NaNa from volunteering, that when they got home, "[I was] expecting her to be a cute little baby and very calm but she [has] turned out to be a little bit naughty and enjoys playing with other dogs.

Now that Chong has had NaNa for a few months she said that they greyhound has settled in quite well but initially, "I prepared a bed, bowls for her to eat and drink and many toys for her, but NaNa doesn't like to play [with] those toys, she just like to play with people and sleep".

Chong said about NaNa's personality: "She loves to be a champion. [She] always wants to be the first one in a race".

Chong gave some advice on anyone locally thinking of adopting a greyhound: "Greyhounds are very lovely and easy to keep as a pet. To adopt them you need to be very patient and have a caring heart."



Macau adopted greyhound NaNa relaxing at home earlier this month. Photo: Chong Meng



Brooke now living in California relaxing in her foster/adoptive home earlier this month. Photo: Theresa Pearson



Mattie after he was desexed and had all his teeth taken out resting in his foster home in Michigan earlier this month. Photo: Anne Brown



Xena the Warrior Princess having trouble getting up on the bed in her adoptive home in Michigan earlier this month. Photo: Stuart Bierkamp and Rich Oster