

# Dogs from Korea fly to safety in Idaho

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The call came from Dee Dee Bowring, Director of the Idaho Humane Society. Humane Society International (HSI) was in Korea and were shutting down a dog meat farm. IHS had agreed to take the dogs after they arrived in the U.S., but there was no way to transport them from San Francisco to Boise.

Dog Is My CoPilot (DIMC) has worked for years with IHS, among other receiving organizations, and we always tried to accommodate the needs of Dee Dee. Our problem was that we already had a rescue flight scheduled that conflicted with the dogs arrival in the Bay Area.

I quick telephone meeting with Kara Pollard, our Executive Director at Dog Is My CoPilot, and our schedule was rearranged. We would fly the Korean dogs.

I visited the Facebook postings of the HSI and saw the terrible conditions in which the dogs were being kept. The rescuers were holding a few of the smaller dogs, and they were cute enough. I had no doubt that DeeDee would have no problem placing these guys once they arrived in Boise.

I flew to Oakland, and the following morning met Marti Watts, the director of the San Francisco Humane Society. She had fostered the dogs for the night, and delivered them to me the next morning. At first glance, I noticed that the crates were significantly oversized and I started working out the Tetris game I play in my head every time I load the aircraft. But, as I got closer, my olfactory sense was overwhelmed. These were not the typical dogs that I fly. These dogs had never been bathed. Whew!

We quickly loaded the aircraft, and for the next three hours, the dogs and I were all breathing the same air. And that was a challenge. Whew! What a smell!

I was born and raised on the east coast and I grew up in a New York City suburb in northern New Jersey. I was always interested in flying and soloed when I was 16 and got my license when I was 17. I always thought I'd have a career in aviation, but when I went to college, a fire was lit under me and I was turned on by the sciences. I ultimately had an opportunity to go to medical school, so I chose that instead. I was accepted to medical school in a number of places; the University of Maryland was what ultimately caught my eye. I worked my way through medical school by doing sightseeing tours, charter tours, flight instructing, you name it. The people I worked for understood what my workload was in medical school and they were very accommodating so I could fly in the evening and all weekend long and my students would change their schedule at the last minute if necessary. They wanted to fly with me, and I wanted to fly with them. It's

an interesting way of working your way through medical school. After my internship and residency in Albuquerque, NM, I ended up doing a hand surgery fellowship in Phoenix and a knee surgery fellowship Tahoe and my plane kept tagging along like a stray dog. I ultimately ended up in Jackson Hole where I spent most of my career as a knee surgeon and a hand surgeon; I was also known there as "the knee guy."

At the end of my professional career, I had a lot of contacts and a lot of patients and received the occasional request to fly a dog from here to there. There's an organization called Pilots and Paws and they have a website that enables pilots to fly an animal from A to B or in a chain of flights, but it's not efficient if you want to transport large numbers of animals and save a lot of lives. When I decided to retire from medicine in 2012, I contacted Judy Zimet, a friend of mine, and an attorney, and told her I wanted to start a non-profit and try to transport large numbers of animals at a time. Judy specializes in 501 (c)(3) and we put it together fairly quickly.

At that time, I was flying a Cessna 206. I pulled out all of the seats and we could fly eighty-four cats or lots of small dogs so that we could move a large number of animals. Now, I'm a big-dog kind of guy; I have three rescues of my own, and I wanted to figure out how we could start moving more big dogs too. I knew I needed a bigger aircraft to fly the bigger dogs and it was my oldest daughter Taylor, an attorney in the Seattle area, and she said "Dad, do it, just do it. You'll be able to save so many more animals" and that pushed me to move forward. We located a Cessna Grand Caravan 208 in Canada that was for sale from a collapsed oil company, and it seems as if it was designed to do this.

Now you have to remember that I had no idea what non-profit meant until I started one, but it's something I committed myself to and I'm going to do it for ten years. I felt that if I can't figure it out by then, I'll never figure it out. but you know, I think I'm a pretty bright guy and I feel that we're now reaching a critical mass to make this a very successful, ongoing venture for the future. Dogs don't have a voice, and I'm here for the dogs and cats.

I'm the chief cook and bottle washer and pilot for Dog is MyCopilot. Crazy things happen on some of the flights. One time, I had a load of cats and dogs and one of the dogs had chewed its way out of the crate and it was loose in the cabin. I landed in Kanab, Utah on a trip for Best Friends and in unloading the cats, the dog escaped. It was about 110 degrees outside and the dogs still in the cabin were baking and I was chasing this dog around on the tarmac and thought, I've got to get the rest of these dogs to their destination. But I couldn't just leave the dog loose, so I kept chasing. Ultimately, the dog stepped on a cactus and it was like a running tripod. Now, advantage Rork, and I finally caught him. We moved on and all of the animals were ok. I was rather hot and sweaty however.

We are having our 5 year anniversary fund-raising campaign in August and we've moved more than 7,000 dogs and cats to safety. We have generous supporters and also dozens and dozens of very fine donors; some of them have to struggle to send us \$5 a month. We are very grateful to all of our donors and supporters. We put our money

where our mouth is and our overhead is very low. All of the donations go directly to help the animals. We are literally taking these dogs and cats off of death row; if they don't make it onto the flight, they aren't going to make it. We only fly healthy, adoptable animals that are going to be euthanized simply because there is no room in the shelters for them.

The flight to Boise with the dogs from Korea was uneventful, although I was grateful that I hadn't eaten anything that morning. We were greeted by Dee Dee and her dedicated crew at the Jackson Jet Center, our fixed base operator and generous host for all of our rescue flights into Boise. Many, many of our rescues go to Boise; Boise is a very welcoming and dog and cat friendly community. The dogs were quickly unloaded, the aircraft fueled, and I was on my way. The aircraft interior received a vigorous cleaning that evening. I can't imagine how many baths it took to get the smell off of those dogs and what it must have been like to give a dog a bath that has never had any bathing or handling!

The rescue flights always draw attention, and many people feel that I am the hero for the thousands of dogs and cats that DIMC has transported from certain death to the organizations that will never put down a healthy animal. But the real heroes are the Dee Dee Bowrings and Marti Watts of this world, and their countless number of volunteers who show up every day and work with these animals, feeding, bathing, socializing, and addressing whatever behavioral issues they may have, and finding for them their furever homes.

So, swing by your local shelter and adopt a dog or cat, or both. Remember, every animal that you save saves two; the one that you save, and the one that takes its place. If you cannot adopt, then foster. If you cannot foster, then volunteer. If you cannot volunteer, then donate...donate to your shelter, donate to Dog Is My CoPilot, <http://dogcopilot.org> . Your contributions are tax deductible, but the feeling you get by helping is priceless.

