



Georgia Equine Rescue League, Ltd.

With *Your* Help...We *Will* Make a Difference!

Pal-O-Mine

By Anne Ensminger

This sad, but at the same time, wonderful story started a couple of months ago when GERL received a call from Walton County Animal Control Officer, Shawn Morris. He had been contacted by officers from another law enforcement agency who were flying over Walton County in a helicopter looking for marijuana plants. They could hardly believe their eyes when they spotted a lone horse which appeared to be a walking skeleton. He was standing in the hot sun, in the middle of a "pasture" which was mostly bare ground and bitter weeds.

Shawn immediately went to investigate and what he found touched his heart so deeply that over the next few days, which included multiple trips to the scene and making himself almost a "pest" to the GERL Board of Directors, Shawn was finally able to get help for the poor horse. Although, in the end, it was GERL which actually rescued this horse, we give all of the credit to the caring and persistence of Officer Morris.

The story goes like this. The horse, a gelding in his mid twenties, had belonged to an older gentleman who, by all reports, loved him dearly. After the man died, "Peanut" was all but forgotten in his pasture where he lived alone for the next ten or so years. The man's widow and his adult son, who lived across the road, did see that the horse had water most of the time but there his care ended. They didn't seem to notice that the animal was getting thinner and thinner or that his long feet were getting badly cracked and broken, or that his sheath was swollen from total neglect. They paid little attention to the insect bites all over his once beautiful, golden palomino coat. Heaven knows, they had no idea that he might have benefitted from an occasional worming, minimal dental care, or a sheath cleaning. When told by Officer Morris that they needed to start Peanut on a diet of hay and grain, they were shocked at the suggestion. After all, he had the entire pasture to himself, and horses eat grass, right? The officer's suggestion that they call a veterinarian to examine the gelding was ridiculous to them; after all, he was not sick!

That is when Officer Morris began to realize that the only hope for this horse was to get him out of there. He called GERL many times during the next couple of days. He placed the horse's body score at a one and felt that Peanut only had days to live if nothing was done for him. I remember being involved in the phone and email discussions with my fellow Board members. We knew that we had no legal right to inter-

vene and asked Officer Morris to call the GDA. He felt that we did not have time to go through the usual "channels" so he asked if we would take the horse if he could convince the owner to sign Peanut over to GERL. That seemed like the best solution for all involved.

After having to threaten (very gently, of course), the 86 year old woman who owned the horse with the prospect of a large fine and/or going to jail for animal abuse, it was finally decided that GERL could come and get Peanut. Whew!



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Diana DeMoss and I hooked up her trailer and off we went to the address Officer Morris had provided. When we got there, we were naturally anxious to see the horse and get him to safety but we were also totally disarmed by meeting his owner. She was very frail and seemed to be genuinely concerned for the horse. She pointed the way to the tiny path to Peanut's pasture and we soon learned that everything Officer Morris had told us was true. Peanut stood in his ram shackled shelter (at least he HAD shelter) beside his water tub which was half full of green water and mosquito larvae. The look in his sad eyes broke my heart. His body score was indeed, a one. He stood for us to halter him and then followed us willingly to the backyard for his owner to give him one last pat on the forehead. There was a tear in her eye as she watched Peanut get onto the trailer. I am certain she was remembering days gone by when her dear husband had been so proud to be seen riding that beautiful palomino horse. Diana and I found comfort in knowing that she was confident that GERL would now take the best care of the old horse.

As we left the property, Diana and I looked at one another and we both knew that the "e" word had been in the back of our minds as the kindest solution for this horse but we now knew that was no longer even a consideration. I told Diana that, ignoring the old adage that it is bad luck to change a horse's name, I wanted this gentle, long suffering soul to have a more appropriate name. The name, Peanut, sounded "hokey". We changed his name to Pal-O-Mine and we will call him "Pal".

After a stop at New South Equine in Watkinsville, and a thorough going over by Dr. Rhonda Veit, Pal reached his final destination of the day when we arrived at the lovely farm of GERL supreme intensive foster caregiver, Susan McCullar. If there has ever been a heaven for horses on earth, that is where Pal would now be a temporary resident. He would enjoy Susan's loving care and have the company of other horses for the first time in many years.

Patty Livingston and I visited Pal and Susan a short while ago and found him to be thriving. He has been wormed several



times, had his feet trimmed, and is gaining weight daily. Pal is now strong enough to have anesthesia for dental work and to be given needed vaccinations.

I was so in love with, and concerned for this old horse that I decided to send pictures and ask Andee Rogers to post his story on the GERL Facebook page. I wanted other GERL members to know about Pal. Not only did Andee post the story on Facebook but she sent it out to her extensive email list of friends and acquaintances.

The response was not only surprising but overwhelmingly heartwarming. We began to receive donations earmarked for "the care of Pal" from all over Georgia! Some folks even pledged to send weekly or monthly donations for him! As a result of this wonderful outpouring of love, Pal now has his own account and will not be denied any means GERL can provide, to insure his complete recovery.

The next hurdle for Pal and for GERL will be finding the perfect forever home where he will not only find continuing care but the kind of love every horse deserves. We have no idea how he will be under saddle but we have seen no indication of lameness and thus far, he has displayed a very kind disposition and a willingness to cooperate. I can't imagine that he would not enjoy a good easy trail ride with a gentle, considerate rider. Many now share our dream that Pal will not only be restored to a normal body condition, but that his beautiful golden coat and his great big brown eyes will once again shine!



GERL received an amazing outpouring of love for Pal-O-Mine. At this printing, GERL has received \$1,140.00 for his care. Thank you, from Pal, to all who have donated!