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'When you have a happy ending like this you have no idea of the feeling it gives you.'

Animal-rescue activist Carole Ellis on the adoption of Max the Doberman by attorneys Robert and Tina, left

## Mistreated 'Attack Dog' Beats Odds With Love

By BOB BAKER, Times Staff Writer

To the people who saved him, Max the Doberman pinscher was a victim of a cruel system in which guard-dog companies try to taunt and beat animals into becoming mean dogs they can sell to businesses or construction sites.

In Max's case it didn't work. He was too nice. By the time state humane officers took him away he was cowering, starving and scarred.

It took nine months of rehabilitation in the kennel of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals before Max was fit enough to be "rescued" by two dog lovers, who put him in a private kennel and then started trying to find him a new family.

### Loving the Unwanted

And then along came Robert and Tina, two young attorneys looking for a pet, who quickly fell in love with a frightened dog that nobody else wanted.

The happy ending will occur in a few days, when escrow closes on the couple's newly built house, allowing them to finally take Max home after six weeks of periodic courtship at a Hollywood kennel.

For professionals and volunteers who work tirelessly to place lost or abused animals, Max's story has a special warmth, not so much because of its infrequency but because the odds were so high.

"When you have a happy ending like this you have no idea of the feeling it gives you," said Carole Ellis, an animal-rescue activist and

real estate broker who, along with a friend, has paid for Max's upkeep since he left the SPCA.

There was, for one thing, the ugly milieu that Max survived.

According to police and the SPCA, he was one of hundreds of dogs that are crudely trained by several Los Angeles guard-dog companies with no regard to the animals' breeding.

### 'They Stink,' Said Deputy

"They stink. They're not worth being in business," said Sheriff's Department Detective Mike Bornman of the Firestone station, who has investigated a number of the companies. "They don't have state licenses, they lack the basic training in humanity, they all treat the dogs the same. They'll go to a pound, buy up five street mutts and try to sell them as trained dogs."

When Max and five other dogs from the Gardena kennel of C & C Sentry Dogs International were impounded by the state last March in response to a complaint of mistreatment, Max was emaciated. He had lost hair, his skin was inflamed and he'd been beaten with chains, according to state humane officer Tiana Turner.

C & C owner Samuel Payne and his brother, Torrey Payne, were subsequently charged by the district attorney's office with 34 counts of cruelty to animals. Upon conviction they were placed on three years' probation and ordered to

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# DOG: Dobie Max Finds Love After Cruel Abuse

Los Angeles Times

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pay \$5,000 in restitution to the Los Angeles chapter of the SPCA for the cost of caring for 11 animals impounded between December, 1986, and last March. Two of the dogs had been so badly treated that they had to be destroyed.

Payne, who said he is no longer doing business beyond answering his phone and hopes to start another guard-dog business, denied in an interview that he had mistreated dogs.

"I have never knowingly been cruel to my animals," he said. "And the idea about getting them from the pound is nonsense. The only time I go into a pound is when I lose one of my dogs. There are people who do it that way, but they don't stay in business that long."

Max recovered physically after the SPCA took him, but when anyone approached him at the agency's kennel he cowered, trembling and fearful, hovering in the back of his cage. Gradually, though, as SPCA workers got to know him, they saw a different side.

"He was such a special guy," Turner said, "so passive and so sweet."

## A Call for Assistance

Not to strangers, though, and that was the problem. Even for experts in dog placement, this was going to be a tough sell. Barbara Sand, the SPCA's director of volunteer services, called Ellis and Genora Hall, who are part of an informal network of animal lovers who devote their time and money to boarding strays until owners can be found.

Ellis and Hall took out a newspaper ad. Robert and Tina, living in a downtown-area apartment and thinking about getting a dog to go

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along with their new house, saw it. They had planned on adopting an animal, rather than buying one, so out of curiosity they came to meet Max at the Hollywood kennel.

Max was still spooked, particularly by the sight of a strange man. He retreated. He would not look them in the eye. He put his head on the floor and trembled.

The couple heard Max's story from Ellis. "It kind of broke my heart a little bit," Robert said. "We just felt so sorry for him. My feeling was that if I didn't take this dog, he would either end up in a pound or be put to sleep."

So they asked for the canine equivalent of a test drive. They wanted to take Max out for a few hours. All three had a ball.

## Frequent Visits

The deal was made: As soon as the house was finished, Max would move in. In the meantime, they came to visit him two and three times a week. They went to the park, the mountains, jogging. They kept him overnight several times at Tina's parents' home. "Almost like taking an orphan out for a few hours of entertainment," Ellis marveled.

Ellis began to call Max "the Christmas dog" because escrow on Robert and Tina's house was scheduled to close on Christmas Eve. Then construction was delayed a bit, making it likely that the move-in will be delayed a few days.

Nobody is complaining. If there is any anxiety, it comes from state humane officer Turner, who strongly suggested that Robert and Tina's last name and the location of their new house be deleted from this story because some unscrupulous guard-dog trainer might try to steal Max.

"The competitors in this business shoot at each other, they kill each other's dogs, they've burned them in trucks," Turner said, a reference to a September, 1986, incident in which nearly two-dozen attack-trained dogs owned by C&C broke loose when a company truck was stolen and set ablaze in South Los Angeles. Charges of arson and grand theft were subsequently filed against a member of a competing guard-dog company.

These are distant concerns to Robert. He sounds like a proud father when he talks about the changes he has seen in Max.

Robert knows he's gushing but he can't help it. There is a sense of triumph here, a sense of the good guys winning one that is usually lost.