

Resilience, Perseverance and Love through the Fire

By Nancy Kvorka & Allison Kozak, pictures courtesy of Rich S.

This is the story of Scout, Abbi and Rich. Rich lives in the foothills around Vacaville, on a gorgeous large plot of land with lots of room for dogs to roam and run in a fenced area. Unfortunately, it's also fire country.

First a little back story. Rich was a double foster failure in 2020, first with Scout and then Abbi. Check out the before and after pictures of Scout! He was skinny, afraid of everything and small, coming in at 41 pounds; now he is a 70-pound healthy and happy German Shepherd. As we often learn, some rescue dogs have to be taught to play. That was the case for Scout, and Abbi was a big help. And Abbi, Abbi points! The two are best buddies and all was good.

Then came August 19, 2020. Rich smelled smoke early that day. He knew that 3 days earlier, fires had started to the north and west in Napa & Sonoma counties. Unusual thunderstorms had rolled through much of northern California, generating more than 10,000 lightning strikes, causing hundreds of fires.

Rich kept looking north and finally saw fire in the far distance. He kept checking, and it crept closer. When it was about 400 yards away, he knew he couldn't wait any longer – he got the dogs in the truck and took off to town.

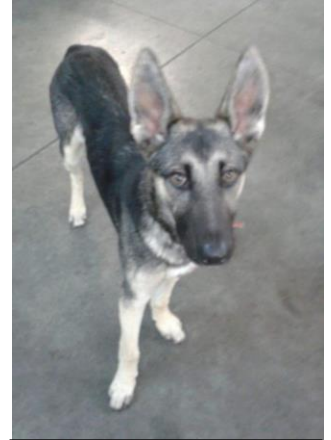
After dropping off the dogs, he went back to the house to try to hose down what he could. He went back to town, and back to the property, several times, and each time things got more dire. He ran out of water. The power went out. A wood fence caught fire and in desperation Rich got his tractor out to knock it over and keep the fire from spreading. It didn't work – he watched his barn burn. Eventually, firefighters required him to evacuate.

For almost 5 months, Rich, Scout and Abbi were taken in by friends and family and, thankfully, were able to stay together throughout.

After many weeks, Rich got access to his property. Amazingly, the house remained but he had to start the cleanup work. Power

came back on about 6 weeks ago and they were finally able to move back in early January.

He brought Scout and Abbi with him each time he went to work at the property. Scout and Abbi got to run around and be dogs. They became so used to going back and forth to the house and property from where they were staying and the fun of being in the truck that once they were all able to stay home, they had to settle in again. Rich had provided Scout with the first stable home he'd known, and this major disruption had been a real challenge for him. But dogs are resilient, and they are adapting quickly.



Scout in December of 2019



And look at Scout now!



Abbi pointing

Rich, Scout & Abbi had lived through the Hennessey Fire, part of a web of fires collectively known as the LNU Lightening Complex fire - the fourth-largest wildfire in the recorded history of California. It burned more than 363,220 acres and was not fully extinguished until October 2.

Rich says it will be several months to get all of the needed work done. But the land is coming back – green on the hills, wild turkeys and ducks on the pond.



More fun in the grass