

Texas Oilman Honored for Rescuing Animals

T. Boone and Madeleine Pickens chartered six airplanes to save more than 800 dogs stranded in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina.

Oil and gas executive T. Boone Pickens and his wife Madeleine were honored by the Texas Federation of Humane Societies on April 24 for their efforts to save hundreds of dogs stranded in Hurricane Katrina's aftermath.

After the disaster, the Pickenses chartered six Boeing 737s from Continental Airlines, at a cost of \$50,000 each, to rescue more than 800 dogs. The animals were placed in carriers in the planes.

In appreciation of their efforts, Michael Arms, president of the Helen Woodward Animal Center in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., where the first planeload of refugee pets arrived on Sept. 11, 2005, presented the couple with a statuette during the ceremony, held at a Holiday Inn in Corpus Christi.

Representatives from 18 Texas animal welfare organizations participated in the luncheon event honoring the Pickenses.

During his remarks, Pickens told the 126 attendees how the rescue operation came about. He and his wife had been at their Texas Panhandle ranch watching the hurricane tragedy unfold on CNN, he said, when they watched a dog hop into the co-pilot's seat of a military rescue helicopter hovering above a rooftop.

Pickens said his wife then asked him what he would do if he were on the rooftop and rescuers refused to take his favorite dog Murdock, an 8-year-old Papillon -- a toy dog with large butterfly ears. And that's when they decided to do something.

So, after scouring the shelves at Wal-Mart for supplies, the couple left the next morning for Baton Rouge with five ranch workers and some volunteer flight attendants.

Today, over 70 percent of the pets have found homes or been reunited with their families, according to Madeleine Pickens, but the couples work continues.

She has purchased three trucks that are still transporting dozens of the puppies who are the offspring of animals placed together in kennels or running loose in the streets.

Thirty-seven puppies were moved Monday.

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