

Katrina Survivor Reunited with Rescued Cat in Mississippi Hospital Room

Volunteers reunited 59-year-old Katrina survivor with his beloved "Miss Kitty"

September 13, 2005 Volunteers from the animal rescue group Noahs Wish and Slidell animal control officers reunited a 59-year-old Katrina survivor with his beloved cat "Miss Kitty" in a Mississippi hospital room yesterday.

Slidell resident Bill Harris was trapped in his home by rising floodwaters for three days. Harris stood on a chair in 5 feet of water with his beloved cat in one arm and a two-way radio in the other. For three days, Harris desperately called for help on the radio. When rescuers finally arrived, a distraught Harris, who suffers from chronic kidney failure and needed to be taken immediately to a hospital, was forced to leave the cat behind. An MSNBC crew covering the Katrina disaster learned of Harris ordeal and went to the animal rescue group Noahs Wish for help. Noahs Wish is working with Slidell Animal Control to rescue pets in the aftermath of Katrina. After several days of searching, a cat wearing a black collar and matching the description Harris gave was humanely trapped eight days after her owner had been evacuated.

Slidell animal control officer Horace Troullier and Donna Wackerbauer, a Noah's Wish volunteer from Canada drove over 70 miles from Slidell to Hattiesburg, Mississippi where Harris was admitted to Forest General Hospital on Monday. "I was holding Miss Kitty in my arms when I walked into Mr. Harris hospital room," said Wackerbauer. "When she saw her owner, Miss Kitty jumped out of my arms, onto her owner and burrowed her head into him. It was like she was saying, 'Yeah! I got my daddy back!'"

During the three-day ordeal, Harris said that Miss Kitty meowed to keep him awake as he began to drift in and out of consciousness.

"It was the most exciting rescue I have ever been a part of," said Troullier "This is what its all about." A 15-year veteran of Slidell Animal Control, Troulliers house was completely flooded and he does not have insurance. The animal control officer has been working around the clock for two weeks straight.

Joe Brunczk, a video producer from Washington DC, videotaped the reunion. Brunczk traveled to Slidell mobile veterinary clinic that is working with Slidell Animal Control and Noahs Wish. The videotape may be viewed on MSNBC.