

Georgia bear cub found in New Mexico

By: Scott M. Anna

Little did I know when I was returning to a part of the country that I love, I would be touched by a story that would remind me of how small this world really is.

It has been about 20 years since I visited the Southwestern United States, specifically New Mexico. I had always planned on making a trip back to Carlsbad Caverns to view the beautiful caves, and see the flight of the bats as they exit the cavern at dusk to go feed on moths and other flying insects. And I had always wanted to return to The Living Desert State Park, north of Carlsbad, now called the Living Desert Zoo and Botanical Gardens.

Recently I was able to make this journey, to see why New Mexico is called the Land of Enchantment. While driving along the absolutely breathtaking road to The Living Desert State Park, I had been reminiscing about all that I had seen there 20 years ago. All of the native wildlife and plants of the Southwestern U.S. were still vividly in my memory.

While signing into the visitors log the lady behind the counter told me to make sure that I stop by to see "Maggie", the American Black Bear Cub. She continued to tell me the story of where Maggie came from, and this is what lead to the writing of this article.

I was told of the story of a very young black bear cub that was rescued from a home in the North Georgia mountains earlier this year. Maggie's mother and siblings had been mistreated, starved and, in turn, died from the mistreatment. At the time Maggie was rescued she was near death but, due to the rescue, Maggie was able to be relocated to her new home in New Mexico. As it turned out, Maggie was rescued by a woman by the name of Charlie Smithkamp, a Wildlife Rehabilitator from Missouri. At the time that Maggie was rescued, her weight was about 30#, and now weighs in at 76# (according to Linda Frank-Coordinator of Volunteer Services-Living Desert Zoo).

While talking with the ladies at the zoo, it was very obvious that Maggie is very loved and treasured. Maggie was given a beautiful playground filled with New Mexico native plants, along with a pond she can frolic in. The Zoo sells Tee shirts with her image on them to help provide care for her.

And I was delighted to discover that Maggie is also, something that is very close to



my heart, an artist. I was shown beautiful abstract paintings that she has done. The technique used I am sure is a little different

from the way I paint, but nonetheless, the outcome is amazing. One of the paintings clearly shows her little footprint, in vivid colors, surrounded by abstract designs. Also, I was shown one of Maggie's paintings that captured, somehow, the beautiful landscapes in the area. With an imaginary eye, I was able to see

a beautiful rock formation surrounded by brightly colored native plants.

The story of Maggie touched me so that I felt I needed to share it with others from the part of the country in which I live, since the story of Maggie actually began here. Aside from the heart wrenching story of how Maggie was found, I am glad to know there are such people in this world as Charlie Strothkamp, and locations such as the Living Desert Park.

If you would like to know more about Maggie, her new life's journey, and the people responsible for her rescue, please visit my website, at www.cabincriusersart.com, and follow the link to the Living Desert Zoo. And, if you are ever in southern New Mexico, make sure you visit Maggie and this wonderful zoo. I will be in contact with the staff of the Living Desert Zoo and will keep you posted on Maggie's progress.