



Our Hen House Podcast: Transcript for Episode 687, Interview with Sterling Davis

Mariann Sullivan: Welcome to Our Hen House, Sterling.

Sterling Davis: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Mariann: I'm thrilled to have you. You have such an interesting story. The work you're doing is so powerful. I can't wait to get into it, but let's start; well, not quite at the beginning, but at the beginning of Trap King, can you tell us how Trap King started?

And my understanding is that you went from being a rapper to being a cat rescuer, which is not the normal trajectory in most people's lives, so tell us about that.

Sterling: Yeah, you're right. *laughs* It's definitely not the norm, but I've been doing music my whole life. Rap, entertainment, acting; I've just been in a entertainment space my whole life, so I never even knew anything about rescue.

I was actually just in between tours looking for something to do, and because I had cats and I love cats, I had a cat at the time named Rick James. I saw an ad in Craigslist just looking for something to do in between tours, and I found a rescue, a shelter, looking for cat help. That's literally how I fell into it.

I was looking for something to do in between music tours and saw that there wasn't a lot of people like me involved, so they wanted me to stay. Like I said, I wasn't convinced at first because, again, it's not something that I was normally into or knew about as far as cat rescue. Again, I'm a music guy, but...

Mariann: So you got started with them, but now Trap King exists.

So continue the story. You're working for a cat rescue; it's kind of temporary, but they want you to stay, so apparently, you do. All right.

How did you end up founding your own organization? *laughs* You've left too much out of this story. *both laugh*

Sterling: Right? So really, when I came on board, I was like, "Okay, let me stay." Because I saw that there wasn't a lot of people like me, a lot of black men into cats, and they wanted me to stay for that; they felt like I would help spread that message.

So I was on board with that. I ended up staying, but eventually, I saw that was my niche. That was my focus, diversity, cats. And this was a huge organization. They dealt with dogs and everything. So eventually, I went on my own to focus more so on underserved communities and cats. Because, of course, like I said, the whole rescue, the shelter, there's dogs, birds, cats, everything.

So I wanted to focus more so on what I was doing, and I was starting to make a lot of noise doing what I was doing. So, I was like, maybe I should just do my thing.

Mariann: It's so cool, and I really want to get into what you said about there are too few people who look like you in this world, but I want a little bit more of the story of what Trap King does before we get into that. What do you do? Who hires you? Who engages your services? How do you know where to go? Who pays you? How do you survive?

Sterling: I'm glad you asked that. So, TNR. So what I do is, I say cat rescue, but it's trap, neuter, and return. It's called TNR. So this is the humane alternative for death or euthanasia for stray and feral cats. So a lot of people, apartment complexes, anywhere where there's cat overpopulation, or cat colonies at, people will call me to manage the population.

TNR is the process where I go out; I catch cats in humane traps, I get them spayed, neutered, vaccinated, and I return back to their colony. And this prevents overpopulation and spreading diseases.

In cases where the cats are friendly, and I can socialize them, then they're adopted out. And I work with a lot of fosters to socialize cats as well too. But for the ones that want to be outside, it's pretty much humane population control for them.

Mariann: So when you come in, is there...

I mean, this is what I've heard of other people who do TNR. There's generally already people in the area who are feeding the cats. There may be a colony that's kind of already existing; they're just not being spayed and neutered, so the population gets out of control. Is that the case for you, and do you leave that colony with those people to care for them?

Sterling: Yeah, and a lot of times it's education for those people because the thing is, you have a lot of people where, it's like you said, they just feed the cats. They come out, and they throw some food out, and they feed the cats in the neighborhood. They feel like they're helping the cats, but without a proper TNR program, without fixing those cats and feeding them the right way, it's kind of hurting them more than helping them. So a lot of times, it's educational. I'll go out, I'll show people how to use the traps, and how to feed properly because just throwing the food out can be dangerous for the cats.

Mariann: Yeah, it's dangerous, but people are trying to do right. They care about the cats, they want to help them. So yeah, I think it's amazing to be able to go out there and help them do a little better job at what they already want to do. Because sounds like the people you're working with mostly care about the cats; they're just not sure how to deal with it.

Sterling: Oh yeah, they definitely. And that's the good part about it, I do deal with more people that care and probably just want to do it the right way versus people that's just like, "Oh, I don't like cats. Get 'em outta here."

Although I do deal with a lot of those too.

Mariann: Yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure there are a lot of them around.

So who does your spaying and neutering?

I should clarify, though I guess I said this in your bio. This is all in and around Atlanta?

Sterling: Well, that's where I started, in Atlanta. I've traveled some of everywhere now.

A part that I probably left out that maybe I should give you of this story of mine is that when I started my nonprofit because I couldn't afford rent and cat surgeries at the same time, I lived out of my vehicle.

So I've actually been living out of a conversion van, which recently upgraded to an RV. So, what started in Atlanta has ended up taking me all over the country.

Mariann: You've been doing this kind of work all over the country? I didn't realize that. That's very cool.

And you get in touch with local humane societies. Is that who helps you do the spaying and neutering?

Sterling: Yeah. Any local rescue, local vets. One of the things that I promote is "Same Team," a lot of people in animal rescue and welfare working together. So I try to work with any and everybody in different cities.

So I'll reach out to different vets, different clinics, let them know I'm in town, let them know that I'm gonna have some cats and use my platform to help highlight them and highlight other people that's doing it as well.

Mariann: This is, like, you have the coolest life I've ever heard of. It's unbelievable that you've managed to put this together.

Now, you live, to the extent that you live someplace when you're not traveling, you live in Atlanta, is that right? You actually don't live in a van anymore?

Sterling: Well, I actually live in my RV.

Mariann: Oh, you do?

Sterling: Yeah, I actually do. I've upgraded to an RV, so right now, I'm in Asheville, North Carolina. I do a lot of work in between North Carolina, Atlanta, and Florida. So I spend the majority of my time if I'm not on the go in Atlanta or Asheville.

Mariann: Wow. It's really crazy. I guess the RV was a huge upgrade.

Sterling: Oh yeah. I mean, with my conversion van when I first started, I literally had to keep a 24-hour gym membership to Planet Fitness and other places like that so that I could use the restroom, get up and shave. I was living out of my vehicle. *laughs*

And as crazy as it sounds because, everybody, when I tell them they like, "What? Why would you do that?!" *both laugh* But again, I come from being on music tours. I was in the military, so I'm used to living out of my sea bag.

For me, it wasn't as crazy as it sounds. Because a lot of people, including my mother, was like, "Oh my gosh, Sterling, you done lost your mind out here!"

Mariann: Yeah. This is probably not every mother's dream for her son. *both laugh*

It's true, but you're making it work. That's what's unbelievable about it. You're making it work. Now you're living in an RV!

Sterling: Yeah. Yeah. A big blue and purple RV with cats all over it, you won't miss it.

Mariann: And, and we should mention that you're not living, either in your van or in your RV, alone. You have several cats, right?

Sterling: Oh yeah. I have Damita Jo, Alanis Mewisette, *both laugh* and newly-rescued Nipsey Cuddle.

Mariann: AWWWW!!

Sterling: Damita Jo is the diva. Alanis is the biggest, she was just actually sitting on my lap.

Mariann: Oh yeah, I saw her. I can assure everybody out there that she's very beautiful.

Sterling: Yeah, thank you. That's my baby girl.

Mariann: So, you mentioned when that you first got started, you were kind of surprised that almost everybody you were dealing with was a white woman. Not that there's anything wrong with white women... *both laugh*

Sterling: No, not at all.

Mariann: I'm not gonna criticize them! *Sterling laughs* I know many, including myself. *both laugh*

And then you made it your mission to kind of change this. I'm gonna read a quote, "change the stereotypes of not only men in cat rescue but also bridge the gap in communication between black communities and predominantly white animal welfare organizations."

Let's take those two issues separately. I imagine there's a little overlap, but first, I know a lot of men who really love their cats. I'm not gonna deny it, but it is a real issue that men often seem to be programmed to think, "Well, cats are not for me. You know, I'm a dog person."

That whole thing, dog person, cat person, kind of drives me a little crazy, but you know. So what do some men have against this idea of cats, and what's your approach to getting them over that nonsense?

Sterling: Well, the big thing, I think one of the main things is seeing me, seeing a man that's out doing it. And that it's fun. It's cool.

But I think the hyper-masculinity in it, I know in the black community, the way I grew up, my uncles were always like that. Certain things you couldn't do. It just wasn't...

You were supposed to be tough. You wasn't supposed to...

Mariann: Men have a lot of rules. Yeah.

Sterling: So it's a lot of unspoken rules. Yeah. And cats. Cats are just so cute and cuddly. I think they kind of fall in one of those rules.

So I mean, I deal with that a lot, and I think some of the issues with rescue and some issues that I face is that a lot of our ladies don't have help. You had a lot of ladies out here, like you were saying earlier, middle-aged white women. That's mainly who I hang with when I'm doing TNR. They don't have help from other demographics. There are so many other demographics that could be helping them out that they missing out on, and that's men, including the black community.

That's one of the things that I try to do is get more men into it. And I think one thing, the first thing is letting people see it because I never saw somebody like me growing up. When I was growing up, I liked cats, I felt like I had to keep it a secret. I was a guy, I should have a dog. So I would try to not publicly put that out. I'm not used to seeing somebody like me.

So I want to show, first and foremost, show that it's cool, you all right. Your masculinity isn't gonna fall off if you volunteer or cuddle some cats. It'll be okay.

So that's one of the first things I want to put out there.

Mariann: Yeah. And you know, like they are cute and cuddly, but they're also like totally full of themselves and very bold and sure of themselves.

Aspects that even somebody who's into classical masculinity might admire in an animal. Like if people got to know them better, they'd realize they're not just like stuffed animals.

Sterling: Yeah! I explained this to some young fellas in the neighborhood that I was trapping with. I saw that they didn't like the cats and trying to throw rocks at the cats and stuff like that.

And I explained...they saw the movie *Black Panther* had come out around the time, and I explained to them, "That cat, a lion is the king of the jungle. It gets no tougher than that. That's as tough as it gets." And it was almost...when they put two and two together with that little cat, with the lion and the black panther, it was like, "Aaah! Ohhh!" You know?

Yeah. So it changed their outlook a little bit on that, and I love doing stuff like that.

Mariann: Yeah. That is really great. Well, let's talk a little bit more about, which is the other issue that you mentioned, which kind of overlapping, but this gap in communication between black communities and the predominantly white animal welfare organizations.

When this first dawned on you, when you first got involved and looked around and saw nobody else who looked like you...what did you find out about what organizations were reaching out and doing that needed to be fixed?

Sterling: Well, the first thing I saw...First, it was a shock. I was like, "Wow!" I mean, I'm usually the oddball of all of my friends, anyway.

But it was shocking because it was like every night I'm going out, and it's just me and the ladies, me and the ladies. And I'm like, "This is crazy."

And I finally put it out there, asked the question and what I first had to realize is that there wasn't a wall of middle-aged white women stopping diversity from happening. It wasn't that like, so I didn't wanna look at it like that. I didn't wanna take it like that.

The issue is, the message wasn't being relayed a certain way, and I think I help with that message. And another thing, too, I think the situation with Michael

Vick just made it a little bit that much more difficult. Because it definitely changed things as far as the animal rescue community and what someone like myself, looking like me, is viewed. So I think that kind of made the gap a little wider in certain ways.

Mariann: That's really unfortunate to hear that the actions of one person, and you know, he is not with the only person, but there are people of various backgrounds involved in dog fighting.

And there are gazillion people of every color, every single color, who care about animals, and we all have so much more in common with each other in so many ways than we do with the rest of the world.

For you, why is it so important? It's important that there be inclusivity everywhere, for obvious reasons, maybe not so obvious to everyone...but why specifically in the animal welfare field? What is the huge gap here, and what is it costing the animals, in particular?

Sterling: I mean, like you said, it is costing the animals. That's the biggest thing. I love the animals, and you literally have demographics that's not aware at all. That's not participating or aware in this. So I think with more help, we have more ideas. That's going to ultimately help the animals.

But then, too, animals, like comedy, like music, bring people together. I think with everything that we got going on, something like rescue and volunteering brings people together. I think it can help solve a lot of issues with the world, not just cats, because I'm a rescuer to my heart. Everything I do probably going back to somehow helping some cats, but as well, like I said, diversity and bringing people together. I think volunteering and going out, a lot of the people that I do rescue with, I probably would've never met had it not been for cats and rescue.

So I think it's a good way to bring people together in a lot of different ways, not just with that. And that's what I'm trying to do when I go out. I want to try to make it an experience more so than just educating, like, "Hey, do this, set the trap." I want people to understand what they doing, why they're doing it, why it's important, and then again, working together.

Mariann: Yeah. It really is a beautiful idea, and I totally agree with you, that animals bring people together. There's not much bringing people together these days.

To me, that's like the big vision of the world is the animals. Caring about the animals is really a hugely important thing in so many ways. It's caring about life on earth.

So you also do a lot of speaking engagements. So tell me about that. Who's your favorite audience, and what do you try to get across? Do you talk a lot to kids?

Sterling: I talked to everybody. I talked to kids. Before the pandemic, actually, I used to love doing this even though I don't have children of my own. At least no two-legged children. My babies have four legs.

But before the pandemic, I would visit different schools throughout the country. Boy Scouts and Girl Scout troops because I feel like they should have a TNR badge as well. A lot of what they do goes hand in hand with TNR and rescues. But I would go out and do presentations and show my cats are trained.

My cats are clicker trained, so they ring bells, and they would go in the trap and show kids how TNR works, how the trap works, and that was fun. I love speaking with kids like that. Like I said, I don't have any two-legged children of my own. So it's fun to hang around and talk with 'em.

So I've done speaking engagements there, probably at every Cat-con, cat event, whatever, Kitty-con, cat camp, whatever you could think of, I probably was there speaking about TNR, high-fiving and hugging people and trying to get people to get into cat rescue.

So I love speaking. I love showing people something that I never saw growing up. I never saw some cool guy that was hip and was compassionate at the same time like, "Man, that guy's cool. He probably do the same stuff that I do, but he's also very compassionate, and he go get his nails done with the cat ladies, and they rescue cats, and he can still be cool!"

I want everybody to see that.

Mariann: For those who are listening, since I am able to see, I wanna tell everybody that you just held up your two hands, and all of your fingernails are painted. Is it black?

Sterling: Yeah, this is matte black.

Mariann: They look fabulous. They look fabulous.

All right, so the thing that I'm super excited about, and for somewhat unfortunate reasons which we'll get into, is that you're not only a cat rescuer, you're vegan, and that just makes me so happy.

You early on caught on, from what I can tell, to the idea that maybe we shouldn't be eating them. Can you tell us that story?

Sterling: Yeah, it was crazy because it had nothing to do with actual dietary reasons. I know a lot of people do it for dietary reasons, for health reasons, not that that's bad.

But I was young, I was like 12 years old, and I won a writing contest that got me to work with a magazine called Unlimited Possibilities. I think it was something like that. And I interviewed; I won't say the name of the meat company, but it was a meat company that he owned. The story was actually about him surviving, and his family surviving, concentration camps and moving to America, and being successful.

So it was a positive story, but he owned a meat company, and I happened to while waiting to do the interview with him, I'm walking around this place, being a kid, seeing stuff I shouldn't have saw, and that did it. Even during the interview, I'm trying to, as a kid, I'm trying to focus on the interview cuz it had nothing to do with animals.

This was about a man surviving trauma and bringing his family to America, and being successful. It had nothing to do with animals, but I just saw all the stuff that I saw. And I'm trying to get through this interview with this man, as a 12-year-old kid, and it was a lot. But I went home that day and told my mom, "Mom, I don't want to eat animals no more."

And nobody in my family was vegetarian, vegan, or nothing. You know, my mom was like, "Boy, you going to eat what I feed you." And I was like, "No, mom, I can't eat animals anymore." And I think after two months, maybe she took me to the doctor because she was...nobody in my family understood that concept. Like, you don't eat meat, you gonna die. You won't get enough protein.

So my mom took me to the hospital, thought something was wrong, but I stayed a vegetarian from 12 until 18 when I went to the military. And the military was a different experience because you pretty much eat what they give you. But when I got out of the military, I went back vegetarian and then straight vegan.

Mariann: I love that story so much. I mean, it's a horrible story like what you were exposed to, but I love how incredibly stubborn you were. Your mother must have put up with a lot; just saying.

Sterling: Oh yeah. I was definitely one.

I was, uh...I've always been strong-minded and going my own way, kind of.

Mariann: Well, you found the right way to go. I have to say.

So you are in the rescue world, and I think there are probably more people in the rescue world who are vegan than used to be or who get it on the farm animal issue, but there's still a big gap.

So you being so familiar with that world and how passionately these people care about cats or other animals and how they devote their lives to them. How do you account for the fact that they don't get it when it comes to eating animals?

Sterling: That's still amazing to me. I have to compartmentalize and put it somewhere separate when I'm dealing with people, but it still amazes me.

Especially now because I, when I started, there was like Boca and Morningstar, and that was it. Like those were the only things you had. Now, they have crazy stuff! It's so easy to do it. So I'm a little baffled by it when I see someone in rescue, but still not vegan, or at least attempting or thinking about it.

But like I said, in order to do what I do, I have to keep the peace. I can't look at people crazy.

Mariann: No, we all know that vegan advocacy has to be done carefully, and you can't just constantly be spouting it at people, or you won't ever be talking to them again. So I totally understand.

It's, yeah, I totally understand. But it just always perplexes me so much. These people who are so much better than me in every way, they're like devoting their lives to animals. They'll get up in the middle of the night to go save some cat.

Sterling: I had a guy stop me the other day and ask me about birds because if you look at my RV, you see that I'm TNR-ing cats.

And he asked me about that, and he was telling me that cats are bad for birds and everything. And I told him I was vegan. You know what I do, it's good for

the birds, it's good for the cats, it's humane population control. I wanna help all animals.

And I asked him was he vegan. And he told me no. And I was like, “Wow!”

I couldn't believe we were having that discussion.

Mariann: Yeah. Especially bird people. It's like they think chickens aren't even birds. Like you just get to write them out of the biology or something. *Sterling laughs*

Sterling: Like, how did that happen? It's wild!

Mariann: Now, we have talked about how you've always loved cats, but we haven't really talked about how that started. I mean, you mentioned that it was as a child, so why did this start? Why were you the person who found friends in cats instead of in dogs or not in animals at all? How did it come about?

Sterling: I think I've always been the oddball, the weird one. So that was one thing. If everybody's doing this, I'll probably do that. But when I was younger, the neighborhoods I lived in and grew up in were rough, like crazy. It was the hood, the ghetto, whatever you wanna call it, as tough as you can think of, it was that.

And even in my house, you know, I grew up with abuse and drugs. I didn't want to go inside. You try to stay outside as late as you can cuz you don't wanna go to the mess that's inside the house. So that had me outside with stray cats a lot. Like I would feed them. And it's crazy when you're little or you by yourself and something like cats, or just feeding the cats around or playing with them around, you bond with them.

It's crazy; I remember the song, *Ben*, by Michael Jackson. He wrote a song, and it was about his rat friend.

Mariann: Right, it was from a movie. Yeah.

Sterling: Yeah. And now I'm like, that was probably my relationships with stray cats because when I didn't wanna go in the house when my mom was doing this and doing that, and the family's doing every type of drug, and I don't want to go deal with that abuse in there. I'm outside as late as I can with those cats. Like that was my little safe haven.

Mariann: So, you save cats, but before you saved cats, they saved you.

Sterling: I'm repaying the favor. I'm in debt.

I'm in debt.

Mariann: Yeah. That's beautiful. Really beautiful.

I saw that you started a Facebook group, I think, called Rescuing the Rescuers. I was very intrigued by it because I think people just don't realize what cat rescuers sometimes go through, and not just that they love these creatures who are being so mistreated, but like they don't get a lot of respect. That's for sure.

And I love this quote from you, "I like to teach kids that the crazy cat lady down the street who is feeding all the strays isn't actually so crazy. She's doing what she can to help, and anyone can do the same."

And that's so true. Whenever I'm asked who my heroes are, I always say the cat ladies. Because they're out there saving... I mean, there's an occasional hoarder. We're not talking about them; we're talking about the gazillions of legit cat ladies who're just going out there saving animals and getting nothing but crap for it. Like, just being mistreated for it. And they are heroes because they do it anyway.

All right. That was a long intro to this question. Tell me about Rescuing the Rescuers and why it's so needed.

Sterling: Yeah. Like you said, the women that taught me, going out late and being with them, they're the heroes. I've watched so many of them extend themselves further than they need to go, like further than they can. Doing stuff that, like I said, I'm thinking I'm tough.

I come from rap, which is a pretty tough industry. They ain't got nothing on some of these cat ladies that I've done seen at three in the morning take off her shoes and climb a tree to scruff a cat that she gotta rescue. I mean, she tough. And that's something that I want people to see. That's who I represent. That's who taught me, and I wanna make sure I highlight that cuz it's big.

But Rescuing the Rescuers is for them. So all of those ladies that I've been outside with late at night, that's paying out their own pocket to feed multiple colonies. I'm talking about 10 different colonies, one person could go to at night.

Rescuing the Rescuers is for all of those people that's taught me, that hit that wall because compassion fatigue and burnout is a real thing. A lot of people don't notice how big it is. And we go in understanding that we're gonna see the cats... We go in knowing that we'll see the cats with the eyes popping out, or they too skinny, or they need help.

We know we are gonna see that. We know we gonna deal with that. But what we don't prepare or plan for is the things that we face coming from people that's unaware or uneducated. The stuff that we do or don't say to one another, at times.

Like the things that we don't plan for, cuz we know we gonna be hurt and see the animals; we know we going deal with that. But some of the compassion fatigue and burnout that we run into along the way that we didn't have any idea was coming. That's what Rescuing the Rescuers is for. Because us, as humans, don't have nine lives. That's our slogan that we use.

But it's just a group. It's no fees or nothing like that. Anybody could join, and it's just a place for people to come and talk, like share good positive energy. We have counselors there for people that are stressed, like professional counselors. I'm not a professional counselor, but we do wanna provide any information as far as suicide hotlines, and, like I said, counseling, professional counselors for people that need help.

And we're getting started with some, a couple Zoom meetings where we'll be doing different exercises for people that's about to hit that wall or just want to help people that's hitting that wall.

That's something that I saw a lot when I first got started. As much as I was loving it coming in, a lot of the women that were teaching me, they were on the edge. They were on their way out. I didn't understand that then, but I understand it now.

Mariann: Yeah, I mean, it's such brutally hard work, and you do get so few rewards for it. That sounds like an incredibly useful tool for people to turn to.

In spite of how hard this work is and in spite of, you know, as you said, you see the cats who are really suffering, and I'm sure you see a lot of them, you seem like a really happy person. I don't know you well, so it could be just an act for all I know, but a lot of animal people get really down. I mean, whether they're cat rescuers or farm animal activists or whatever. It's a bad world out there, in so

many ways. And you know, as you said, burnout is a real thing, and compassion fatigue is a real thing.

And aside from that, I mean, even if people don't burn out, they can be miserable a lot of the time, which is not a good thing. So not to get too personal, but am I right? Do you basically have, like, is it just your nature to have relatively good spirits, or what are your secrets that you can share with us to keep your mood up?

Or is it all a lie, and you're actually gonna get off this interview and cry?

Sterling: I'm totally getting off this interview and boo-hooing right after this. No, it's a combination of stuff, I wouldn't say it's just one thing. I honestly feel like I was lucky, in a way, to be around and see something that I love to do, and be able to do it.

A lot of people don't get to do what they love. As stressful as this can be, I love it. And that's something that a lot of people don't get to do. So, I mean, that helps. But it's been a process cuz I didn't know...if you would've asked me before, I thought I was supposed to do music, and then when I was in the military, I would've told you, "I'm supposed to live a life of service, and maybe I might be a politician. I don't know."

But when it all came together, I realized that I was performing and doing music, and I went to the military, a lot of that stuff was all to bring me here to where I was supposed to be. To do this. So it is been a process, but one of the things that helped is that I love what I'm doing.

I'm still performing in a way. I'm reaching people. That was why I wanted to go to the military. I wanted to live a life of service. I wanted to bring people together. I wanted to have a positive impact on the world. I'm doing the stuff that I love.

I think a lot of times in rescue, people don't get to pat themselves on the back, or they don't see the fun part about it. Some people are running from drama, and a traumatic situation of their own, and TNR, or cat rescue, is therapy. So a lot of people don't know that this can be what it is. As fun as it is or as rewarding as it is because it is tough. And that's why we got the Rescuing the Rescuers group.

There is a lot to this that is fun, rewarding, therapeutic. I like to tell people the reason why I say Trap King; it's not...I'm not saying, "Hey, I'm the king of all TNR. I trap more and better than everybody else." *laughs* I'm not saying that

at all because, like I said, the women that trained me, I'm nothing. I'm like, I'd have been out crying, and they'd be like, "Tough up, dude. Get it together."
both laugh

But, I'm saying King, I'm taking pride in what I do, and everybody should do that. Everybody that's in cat rescue or animal welfare in any way like that, if you doing something selfless, you a queen, you a king. So I'm taking pride in what I do, and that's what we gotta get more into.

And I think in rescue, we hit that wall cuz we don't pat ourself on the back. We don't pat each other on the back. This is so funny, but one of the way...it's the rescuer's greeting. The woman that trained me, Mickey Blair, who's amazing, but she would greet some of her other rescue friends, and it would sound so sad.

It would be like, 'Hey, what's going on? Living the dream, living the dream. Got this guy over here. We got a ringworm situation I gotta run to. I got anal glands on my hand from last night, but I gotta run over here and do this.'

And it's like, they would talk and compare negative stories and negative days, and that was how they greet one another! *Mariann laughs*

Mariann: I totally hear you. I totally hear. *Sterling laughs*

Sterling: I'm purposely coming in like, "High five! I trapped like 30 cats last night. Oh my God. Yes! Let's go!"

I wanna make it rockstar-type fun. So even if I am down sometimes, I still try to keep that energy, and I'm lucky! Like I said, I'm lucky. A lot of the ladies that trained me, they don't feel like dancing around on social media trying to get a lot of attention. They just on the ground doing the work. So, I'm lucky to be able to do it in this way, but I think giving yourself a little love, and your peers around some love go a long way.

Mariann: Wow. That is really so powerful. I do want you to go into politics. I want you to be President! *both laugh*

Sterling: I'm scared. It's crazy, now.

They might not like me. I might just be like, "Let's all just hug it out!" *laughs*

Mariann: Sounds good to me.

Wow. All right. That was very powerful and a great place to end.

But I can't end because I have one more question to ask you before we go to bonus. I saw a video on your social media recently cuz I was looking at your social media to prepare for this interview, and it indicated that you were now also the Squirrel King.

And I love squirrels. I really do. I love squirrels. And I assume you do as well. So can you tell me what it means to be the Squirrel King?

Sterling: So the Squirrel King, I would have to say because, for one, I've managed to catch a squirrel miraculously. I have a cat that I rescued named Squirrel because she was in a tree and because recently, I don't know why...Is it everywhere squirrels are more friendly?

It's like I could just feed them now. I've been doing that a lot lately. Like they getting more friendly. I don't know if it's because I'm out and around animals more, and they just more trusting. Or is it squirrels are just more brave now? I don't know what that is. I thought I was just the cat guy. *laughs*

Mariann: No, you're apparently branching out, so I'm excited to hear that.

I think you should also be, like I said, the human guy and the President, because the world would be a better place. Thank you so much for joining us today. I really enjoyed the conversation.

Sterling: Always. Thank you so much.