

THE STORY OF BOB HARVEY AND HIS LITTLE DOG DARCIE

The story of Bob Harvey and his little dog Darcie must be one of the saddest. After his wife of over 50 years developed dementia Bob, his wife Margaret and their beloved dog Darcie moved into a pet friendly care home in the South of Scotland. They were promised a home where they could all stay together for the rest of their days. Bob reluctantly sold their home, closing the door to their previous life, in order that they could fund the care home costs - comforted by the prospect that they would at least all be together. Although it was Margaret's condition that had necessitated the move, Bob was not a well man either. When he had suffered an aortic aneurysm 20 years ago, he was not expected to survive. He was given up for dead twice on the operating table. He miraculously pulled through, but without kidney function. Since his near death event, Bob has been a dialysis patient, undergoing treatment three times weekly.

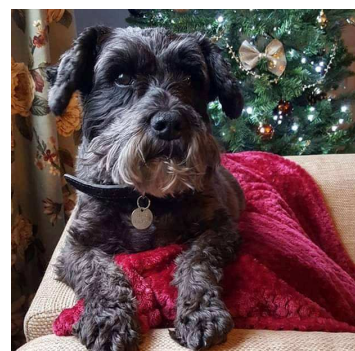
Sadly, not long after enduring the difficult transition of moving from their marital home to the care home, Bob's beloved Margaret passed away. Bob was utterly heartbroken with only his little dog Darcie, his faithful companion and final connection to the love of his life, by his side.

Then, following a change in management, Bob was given the devastating news that Darcie was no longer allowed to stay in the home with him. While still deep in grief and incredibly fragile Bob was ordered to get rid of Darcie or face eviction. How the stress of this unbearable dilemma didn't kill this frail and heartbroken octogenarian, is almost beyond comprehension.



Despite a hard-fought campaign, initiated by his friend Tracey Graham Streit, which achieved some 300,000 signatures on a Change.org Petition, the care home owner refused to change his position. Bob was faced with one of the worst decisions of his life – relinquish Darcie or be evicted from the last place he'd known and lived with his beloved wife Margaret. Inevitably, the strain meant his health deteriorated further. Humanity was truly lost in a heart-breaking situation.

Bob could not bear to be parted from his faithful companion - for him, there is no doubt that option would have been a death sentence. So at the age of 87, he endured yet another traumatic upheaval as he and his little dog moved out of the care home and into a modest bungalow in the North of England.





When the Scottish charity Fostering Compassion became aware of Bob's plight, they took him under their wing. They have arranged amazing 'Dream come True' days for him, determined to create some wonderful happy memories for this frail gentleman who had endured so much, and resolute in their desire to offer him the compassion he was so sadly denied during his greatest time of need.

Over the last three years Bob has been surrounded by the love and kindness he deserves. His spirit has been lifted by the three hundred thousand people who fought his corner, dismayed by the inhumane treatment he was receiving. They stood beside him and behind him letting him know what was happening to him was not acceptable and he was not alone in his fight.



Bob's 'Dream come True' days have included a visit to Concorde at the Museum of Flight, East Lothian, a trip to see the donkeys at the Scottish Borders Donkey Sanctuary, a visit to the Five Sisters Zoo, West Lothian to meet the rescued bears and the best of all his dreams - a visit to Celtic Football Ground to mark his 90th birthday. A true highlight for a lifelong fan.

As part of his 90th celebrations, he was also gifted the most beautiful group painting of him, with Darcie and his beloved Margaret. As there had never been a photo taken of all of them together - an incredibly talented artist used photographs of Bob, and Margaret and little Darcie to paint a most remarkable portrait of all three of them.

Whilst the worst elements of human behaviour almost tore this vulnerable bond apart, the best of human behaviour kept them together.

What Bob endured should never have happened. However, he was fortunate in having friends to support him through this ordeal and who campaigned to prevent his bond with Darcie being ruptured. SCAS members were amongst those who rallied to his support and with Bob's blessing raised awareness of the issue at national and international meetings, in the Scottish Parliament, at rallies, and through the media. An interview with Bob was featured on BBC TV news. SCAS also filmed an interview with Bob, available here <https://www.facebook.com/helpbobsdog/videos/761686413997019/>

Several other charities have now joined with SCAS in advocating for improved access for pet ownership across housing types. This is a very serious issue. A survey by Anchor Housing Trust found that annually some 140,000 pets owned by older people are surrendered when they move to supported living.

Bob survived the move but at great cost to his health. However, he and little Darcie remain firmly at each other's side.



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Photo credit: Lesley Winton and Tracey Graham-Streit