

Winning Literary Award entry:

FROM SHERYL FARRINGTON:

Ok Netta, you got me going. You want to hear about our Newfies. Well I also think I've got the best Newfies in the world!! Ha ha! Especially Keisha..

Every time I go into our spare room I see all the ribbons and certificates I've got on three walls.

Gee, it's been 25 years since I got my first Newf, Carley. She was great in Ribbon Parades and Carting, and had a mind of her own. We lost her at 13 ½ years. When she was seven we got Tyler, a lovely small boy, who ended up with skin problems. He had a lovely gentle nature. He was my million dollars dog (via the vet!) but we loved him just the same. He carted too and lived till 12 ¾ years.

Before we lost him we got Keisha and this time I wanted to have a go at the Kennel Club shows. So Kath at Miquelon helped us pick a show dog out of a litter in 2007, and we picked Keisha. She grew into a beautiful girl and at 2 years she was a Champion and by 4 she didn't want to run around the ring anymore, especially in the sun – too hot for her!.So then I met a lady with a Therapy Pets T-shirt on and asked her about that (not wanting to run in the sun –Ed.)I knew Keisha would love going to Rest Homes etc. So we checked out with St. John/SPCA, she passed and started at a Rest Home North of Auckland. We have been going there just over four years now. Keisha just loves it and they all love her. A typical Newf, she loves food and she won't leave the Dementia Ward until she gets a sandwich from Karen, the caregiver.

Then upstairs. We now go up in the lift (which she didn't like) because the stairs are a bit much for her now that she's nearly nine. She always sits, so that they can pat her back. One man said he'd never seen her face, only her back... She always sits ON their feet if she likes them. Then lies on the floor when she knows it's time to go: I'm not going home to-day. I'm staying

We are soul mates. But she also has me on. She talks to me with her eyes. She also knows she can walk all over me, until I realise what she's doing and say NO and she snuggles up





Brian now has dementia and is in the Rest Home, so sometimes I also take Shaela in, my now almost 5 year old from Riversong Kennels. She is also a Champion now, and she also likes going to the Rest Home.

She is totally different to Keisha in looks and still young at heart. So at the Rest Home they take a 2nd look to see if it is Keisha or Shaela because they look both the same to others.

Keisha is well-known at the Annual Hot Rod Show in Orewa, in January. My daughter and son-in-law have a Ford Cabover truck, they enter each year and Keisha and I are the biggest fans! She gets so many pats and some people say 'we saw you here last year, didn't we?'

As you have always said, we have a wonderful breed, you must meet so many people when you're out walking with them.

I love it, but I am biased of course.

Sheryl

Second equal:

WHEN GRACE GOT ILL.....BY Karen O'Connor

On 3RD October we celebrated Grace being part of our family for 10 years. On 17TH October we celebrated her 11TH birthday and on 14TH November we thought we were going to be grieving her passing.

Things all started about the beginning of November when Buddy, our border collie/lab came down with a tummy bug. We thought we had cleared it up but a couple of days later it came back so we treated him again. Just when he was nearly clear Grace got a dose and what a dose it turned out to be.

She ate her breakfast on Tuesday morning and happily went off to day care but by the evening she was unwell. She stayed home for the rest of the week and we started to dose her with Panacure. By Thursday we were nearly out of Panacure and we were growing concerned about her so she went for her first vet visit.

Things did not change at all and by Saturday we were back at the vet. Her poos were very loose and dark and when we hosed them off they were the colour of bile. By then I was most concerned for her as we had never seen her so lethargic and down. Between Thursday and Saturday she had lost a kilo and her gums were nearly white.

After examining her Erin said she wanted to try something different. She put 800mls of saline under Graces skin between her shoulder blades to help keep her hydrated. Her body would slowly absorb the liquid and it would keep her kidneys busy. She looked really odd and when the needle came out saline started to leak out the hole – we had put too much in. Erin gave her an appetite boost and anti-nausea medication which would take an hour or two to work and a dose of antibiotics.

Erin was concerned about Grace's lack of protein so on the way home we were to buy low fat cottage cheese, low fat plain yogurt and brown rice. While I was in the supermarket I saw quinoa (pronounced kenwar) mixed with rice and the packet said PROTEIN so we got some of that as well. When we got home I cooked up quinoa with brown rice but before I had a chance to feed her anything she did another poo, only this time it was full of blood.

Blow the rules – I just threw the first of her antibiotics down her throat and prayed that we weren't too late. I knew Grace was hungry as she kept coming to me for food but something was stopping her from eating. I rang the emergency vet clinic and spoke to a man who was just amazing. I was in such a state that I could hardly speak but he waited patiently for me to finish. He told me to blend some of the cottage cheese, yogurt and rice with some water – but make sure it still has some stiffness to it. Using a big syringe gently squirt it into the side of her mouth – she will have to swallow. We did that twice in a reasonably short period of time and noticed her gums had gone a wee bit pink.

Ian cut down all the long grass around the section in case she was eating that and it was aggravating her tummy.

I offered her food in her bowl again just before I had my dinner but she would not eat it. When I finished I had some minted peas left – I put half in Grace's bowl and half in Buddy's bowl and she gobbled everything I gave her. Oh my stars – what a relief. We spent Sunday feeding her little and often and cooking minted peas. Who would have thought minted peas would do the trick.

We drove to the local reserve on Sunday afternoon so she could have a change of scenery and she caught me completely off guard. She sprinted after another dog into the middle of the park – I couldn't get anywhere close to her. She still had her sense of humour.

Next trick was to wait until she pooped again which took until very late Monday night. We had spent the last 3 weeks sleeping with the back door open so what harm would a few more nights do? By Wednesday she seemed to be pretty much back to normal but we have no idea how long that will last so we will treasure whatever time is left. They are both loving kibble and cottage cheese which might just become their new staple diet.

We will never know how close we came to saying our final goodbyes to our girl but I am left with a sense that she wasn't far from wandering across the rainbow bridge.



And:

Never a dull moment...

Back in September we noticed that Floyd was turning one back foot out at quite an angle when he walked. An x-ray revealed arthritis on the inner toe joint preventing it from flexing, so he was walking on the inside of that foot to compensate.

We were still consulting and deciding what, if anything, should be done about that when the cruciate ligament in that leg gave out – no doubt hastened by the additional stress of walking awkwardly.

So he had cruciate surgery on 1 October. The surgery went well, although his heart didn't react well to the drugs so he needed some extra help to get through that safely. After 8 weeks of strict house (ar)rest he was finally allowed to start short daily leash walks, and after three weeks of slowly building up the distance his knee was really progressing well.

The question of what to do about that toe was still floating around, and amputating the arthritic offender seemed the only option. During one of our follow-up visits we asked about his eyes, which were still not 100% despite two previous surgeries for entropion. So a referral to an eye specialist followed, and it was decided to coordinate with him to do a further eye surgery and the toe amputation at the same time, so he only needed one anaesthetic. The advantage of such a big dog is two vets can work on his eyes and his back foot simultaneously without tripping over each other!

So that was all scheduled for 8 December. Once again it went well, and he just had to wear a cone for two weeks to protect his eyes.

Back we went after a week to get his wounds checked, and as the foot was looking good it was decided to leave it uncovered, so it would dry out and heal faster.

Unfortunately a certain little ratbag discovered that he could still reach to lick his back foot even with the cone on, and a few days later we noticed that the wound wasn't looking so good, and it appeared a stitch or two was coming loose, so back to the vet we went!

It turned out he had quite an infection going, so was put on antibiotics and we were back for daily dressing changes for the first few days, as it was quite wet and weepy. Also we up-scaled to an even bigger cone of shame, which barely fits through the doorways and requires his water and food dishes to be raised up on a bucket so he can reach them. A few days later it was decided that the little piece of skin that was covering the wound wasn't viable, and that was removed and the wound cleaned up, leaving a very large hole in his poor wee paw.

In the three weeks since then we've been back for dressing changes every 2-3 days, right through Christmas and New Year. Our brave boy has tolerated most of it without needing to be sedated at all, only having a local anaesthetic the first time when the dead skin was cleaned up and the wound thoroughly cleaned out.

The antibiotics are doing their job well, and his wound is slowly filling in. In another week or two he will be back for some punch skin grafts, to seed some skin cells on the wound and help it to grow over faster. With his anaesthetic issues, and because he's so placid, the punch biopsy is ideal because it can be done with local anaesthetic. It also means we won't have two large wounds to worry about, just some small holes in addition to the foot itself.

So right now we're looking at another month of frequent dressing changes, and the Giant Cone of Crashing.

You don't realise how close your dog likes to follow you around, until he's bashing his cone into the backs of your legs constantly! I have bruises on my bruises, and the paintwork and wallpaper is looking even more scruffy and scratched than ever.

The staff at the vet's office all adore our sweet boy (how could they not?!), so he gets thoroughly fussed over every time he's in for his dressing change. Today when we picked him up one of his fans had even given him a monogrammed bandage, much to our amusement!

The weary, wounded and bruised Rachel, Antony and Floyd.

