

Three Real Life Stories Within Little Truff's Story

The Original Little Truff:



The story of Little Truff is based on fact. The original dog was a four year old, tricolour Cavalier King Charles Spaniel who came into my life through the Humane Society in Auckland,. She'd been beaten, had four infections, no basic training and was totally decentralised as she was always trying to run away from home.

She was so unmanageable in the early stages, I rang the Humane Society twice to give her back. It took two years of hard work, three courses at the North Shore Dog Training Club and three weeks with Mark Vette, an animal psychologist, to turn her life around.

Eventually she became a wonderful little dog, everything a Cavalier had the potential to be. Unfortunately, we had to part. My work moved in another direction and demanded long hours away from home. Thanks to the late Graham Fitzpatrick and his team at the Dog Protection Society, as well as Dianne Livingstone, a nurse at the East Coast Bays Veterinary Hospital, Little Truff spent the remaining six years of her life in the home of her dreams. She was 14 when she passed away.

Amy, the Newfoundland:



The plight of Amy, the Newfoundland, is factual. She was brought in during a committee meeting of the Auckland Branch of the Newfoundland Club. The details of her condition are exact. What happened to her, and why, is mere conjecture, but she'd been dumped and been surviving on her own for a long time.

The club's rehousing group was responsible for her rehabilitation. Her story had a happy ending as she was adopted into a wonderful family with two other Newfs. The dogs accepted her as their companion but unfortunately her previous abuse took its toll. She died of cancer three years later.

Welby, the Blenheim Cavalier:



This is an amazing story of coincidence—several coincidences—associated with this novel, which we found out about after my editor, Adrienne Morris, surprised me with the cover illustration. Her friend, Kyra Perwick, had a little Blenheim Cavalier called Welby so she photographed the little dog while dog-sitting for them. I actually delivered my manuscript that week to Adrienne at the Perwick's house and met Welby, although I didn't have any inkling "who" the dog was at that stage. Adrienne also asked if Kyra would read my manuscript to add a critique from a Cavalier owner's point of view.

A couple of months later, when the editing was finished, I finally met Kyra. After our introductions, she said the little dog was bought for her son, Aslan, who was very ill at that time. Welby earned his name because it (Well-be) encapsulated a positive message for the sick boy.

At this point in the conversation, I felt my senses heighten and decided to follow my intuition. 'Did your son learn ballet?' I asked Kyra -an unusual question considering the average Kiwi boy plays rugby or soccer.

'Yes.'

'Did your son have cancer?' - a question I'd normally never ask a stranger.

'Yes.'

'Was there an article and photograph of him in *North and South* magazine, holding his dog, about ten years ago?'

'Ye-e-s ...'

I was visibly overcome, much to the surprise of the two ladies present. Finally, I managed to say, 'I based the character of David on the picture of your son cuddling Welby!'

Kyra was also deeply moved and we could only do what two emotional women can do at a time like this—we hugged each other. Adrienne sat there looking stunned.

Aslan Perwick survived his two years of cancer treatment when he was twelve, and he's now a very handsome young man, a university graduate and recently married. Naturally it's completely fitting that his little dog Welby should appear on the cover of *Little Truff*.