



Marvin was twice homeless, lonely and unwanted. At three years of age, his first owners who had him from a pup no longer had time for him and relinquished him to the RISPCA. His second family no longer wanted him because of his limp. For months Marvin lived in cage 15 at the RISPCA, a cinder block kennel, waiting for his second chance for doing nothing wrong until our eyes met one morning. I knew that moment by the look, he was going to become my dog forever.

Had I not adopted Marvin he may never have had a second chance having been rejected twice in his life and burdened with a disability. Little did I know what would lie ahead for the both of us. My only hope at the time was for Marvin to become a good family dog for my wife and me. My wife had been attacked by a large dog as a child and naturally had a hidden fear of dogs. At first, my wife was reluctant for good reason not to have a 94-pound big black dog live with us. With my son Tim's persistence, we decided to give it a try and on Thanksgiving Day 2002, Marvin came home for dinner as our 14th invited guest and never left. In most scenarios, taking a dog home from a shelter environment to a household of unfamiliar people on a festive holiday is not the most sensible thing to do. In Marvin's case, it was the only thing to do. I learned that Thanksgiving Day how very special he was. What he accomplished in the seven years we shared together is astounding.

Marvin had a private meeting with Gov. Donald Carcieri, met with two sitting mayors, David Cicilline and Stephen Laffey and was an invited guest to Presidential Candidate Hillary Clinton's fundraiser in Rhode Island. At the event, Marvin 'paw'sented one of his paintings to Mrs. Clinton. He was the Nations Top Therapy Dog in 2009, acknowledged by the state legislature for his benevolent service to those less fortunate and has received dozens of awards for his community service. He was honored by Serve Rhode Island as Volunteer of the Year in 2009, the only dog to receive this recognition. PARI, an organization aiding disabled people to live independent lives presented Marvin with their Community Service Award at Rhodes on the Pawtuxet, another first for a dog. He was featured in Women's World Magazine, The National Enquirer, and in two books, To The Rescue written by Elise Lufkin and Angel Dogs With a Mission, written by Allen & Linda Anderson and graced the cover of The Animal Print Magazine. Marvin appeared on many TV and radio programs and was a special guest at Paul Newman's Hole in the Wall Camp in Connecticut.

Marvin had many personal requests to visit sick people at their homes or in the hospital and fulfilled every request. Several children with special needs visited him weekly at the RISPCA and would take him for walks, rub his belly and in return Marvin would entertain them with his bag of tricks. You would often find Marvin hiding under the huge circular table in the auditorium as the children prepared treats for the pets at the shelter hoping a few would reach him which they often did with a little help from his friends. In seven years Marvin visited over 110 different school, hospitals, nursing homes, day care centers, libraries, summer camps and after-school programs, hoping to put a smile on a forgotten face... hope in the eyes of an inner city child or inspire a sick child at



Hasbro Children's Hospital to never give up the fight. His Stranger Is Danger Program taught children to be aware of strangers.

He assisted over 2500 elderly and disabled pet owners to keep their pets through the Marvin Fund established in 2003. Had it not been for Marvin, many of these unfortunate people would not have been able to keep their pets. His fund helped save hundreds of shelter pets just like he get a second chance who otherwise would never have had a chance.

Marvin raised over \$165,000.00 from the proceeds of his book *Marvelous Marvin* and the paintings he created, *MarvArt*, with his marvelous tail that never ceased to stop wagging even at the very end. One of Marvin's dear friends, Maxwell Mays, Rhode Island's consummate artist, personally invited Marvin to be part of an art exhibit entitled *Fins, Feathers, and Fur*, a first for a dog. The prestigious Rhode Island Water Color Society made Marvin an honorary member, the first dog ever to receive that distinction. Marvin's works were displayed every fall at the Scituate Art Festival where he "paw"sonally greeted many of his friends with his tail brush.

During our six years as Delta Society Pet Partners, Marvin brought me to the other side of the tracks and introduced me to the world of loneliness, sickness, disability, hopelessness, and deprivation. He taught me that doing the little things meant the most to those who had the least. To the world, he was just someone, a shelter dog, but to the many unfortunate people, he helped in some special way when no one else would he was the world to them. He taught me that people complicate their lives and fail to cherish how fortunate they are at day's end. I never once forgot about how fortunate I was once Marvin entered my life. It soon became quite apparent that Marvin wasn't just our dog and that I was just the one chosen to watch over him for the thousands of people whose lives he touched. Marvin was diagnosed with splenic cancer in March of 2009 and underwent successful surgery. Unfortunately, the growth was malignant and over the course of 10 months, cancer had spread to his liver and lungs.

In October his appetite dropped off and he became very finicky about eating. My wife began to cook special meals for him and we gave him whatever he wanted. Our hands became his food bowl because he would no longer eat out of a bowl. We were told in November after an ultrasound examination that we would only have him for 3-6 months. He was always very comfortable and never suffered any pain even at the very end. Despite the loss of his appetite, he lost only two pounds over the course of 3 months because of the special people like Mona and Lisa who actually prepared epicurean meals for him. With a little urging he ate them to please us, I believe. These meals kept him alive. Over the course of a few months, his blood results were showing signs of problems as a result of the growths that had doubled in size. He was still interested in chasing his tennis ball, but I didn't throw it that far anymore because I felt it would be too strenuous for him. The distance didn't seem to matter him. Rolling in the snow was always one of his favorite activities and I hoped he would see the snow one more time which he did. We continued to take our walks, especially the ones at the farm on weekends following deer tracks and chasing the Canadian Geese off of the pastures.



He even waded into the river that runs by the farm as the frigid waters cascaded over a small waterfall we would sit by in the summer waiting for a frog to appear.

As the month of December passed it was evident he was slowing down. He was our alarm clock at home. Around 6:30 every morning we would hear him climbing the stairs to enter our bedroom and lick my wife awake. The last two mornings of his life he heard me go downstairs to wake him. The time had come when he no longer could protect us, but we had to protect him. On his last day of work at the shelter, I noticed he had minor difficulty getting into my car when we left to go home. He came to work with me for seven years and made the ride to and from work enjoyable. It was quality time spent even though he fell asleep most of the time with his head resting on my lap when he sat in the front seat with me. We were once stopped by a state trooper for having too much snow on the roof of the truck. When the officer came up to the truck, Marvin greeted him and the officer noticing the RISPCA on the truck asked if that was Marvin. He then asked me for identification and said if it wasn't for my passenger he would have given me a citation. It seemed that everyone knew Marvin.

When we arrived home on the night of Jan. 15, he appeared to be a tiny bit unsteady. As was his routine he laid down in the kitchen on his LL Bean orthopedic bed surrounded by his menagerie of stuffed animals and watched as we ate dinner. After dinner, we went into the living room to watch TV and he moved us off the couch which he did on occasion. I sat on the floor and just stroked his ears and talked to him. He was more interested in taking a snooze so I let him be. Around 9:45 PM he woke up and asked to go out which was perfectly normal. He went to get one of his stuffed animals which were his ritual and would never leave the house without one even if for personal matters. On this venture outside he brought along Mr. Duck, one of his favorites. I followed him outside and he wandered off to take care of business with Mr. Duck in his mouth and as he was returning he stumbled a few times but made it to the front yard where he decided to roll in the snow. After a roll or two, he just laid there and was unable to raise his body. I went to his aid and tried to get him up but couldn't. My wife came out and together we carried him into the house and placed him on his bed in the foyer. He was alert and even wagged his tail when I told him he was a good boy. He showed no signs of distress but I knew he was weak. He remained very comfortable but the sparkle had left those eyes that brought me to him. He told me it was time to let go and I listened not that I wanted to. Our time together at the end will be with my wife and me forever.

On the night I brought Marvin to the middle of Rainbow Bridge and just before I helped him over to the other side, I caught his last breath in my hand and it took mine away and as I felt the last beat of his heart it broke mine. I have memories of a lifetime but even the memories hurt when recalling them. I will miss throwing his tennis ball, our walks in the woods following deer tracks, sitting down by the river on a summer day and watching him chase geese from the fields and roll in the snow. I will miss caressing his soft velvety ears and sit with him near the fire on a cold winter night and the fun days we spent at Beaver Tail and Colt State Park but most of all I will miss him not being there.



They say time heals all things but I have my doubts. There are so many people to thank who were apart of his life. The doctors who cared for him, the thousands of children he became friends with, his close family at the RISPCA, especially Lisa, Megan, Kayla, Jeff, Mona, Bill, Julie and Deb, the thousands of donors who make the Marvin Fund possible and the throngs of visitors who came to the shelter to meet him. There is so much more about Marvin that words cannot explain but can only be felt. I was so very fortunate to have him in my life. There is a saying, “the only thing that loves you more than themselves is a dog,” I know my dog did.

Thank you all,
Dr. Finocchio, Marie & Tim