

The Gift of Compassion: From Tragedy, a New Life for Bonnie

Dec 6, 2024 • By Joseph Hayden



Bonnie (L) and her new pal, Snoopy (R). photo: Joseph Hayden

Last winter on January 18, my Vallejo home burned in a fire that claimed the lives of five of my seven beloved rescue dogs. I was away when the fire started because I was helping a neighbor take her two dogs to the vet.

Two of the dogs who died were blind. Most were seniors. Not getting to say goodbye to these souls who were taken before their time made the loss all the more devastating.

I could not imagine what the future would bring after this tragedy, particularly as a 10-year personal relationship had ended just over a week before the fire. Yet I tried hard to find a silver lining. During a Zoom board meeting for the Humane Society of the North Bay (HSNB), I heard there was a difficult-to-place blind dog who had been at the shelter for over a year with no adoption interest. I was immediately intrigued. It seemed like a sign.

As it turned out, the dog, a seven-year-old Maltese mix named Bonnie, was even the same size and

blindness. She was also human-selective, meaning she growled at every stranger unless introduced in a very specific way.

Despite these obstacles, I brought Bonnie home to foster, where she immediately bonded with my one remaining dog Snoopy, who surely was missing his many lost companions (the other dog who'd survived the fire was also a foster and had since gone back to her original family). Of course, I wound up adopting Bonnie.

But just a few months later, Bonnie's recurring ophthalmologist appointments took a daunting turn. Her already extremely limited eyesight was suddenly completely gone. Her glaucoma was so bad that she was in constant pain, which could no longer be managed by her eye drops, even with an increased dosage of 22 drops three times a day together with an oral medication. The vet advised me that the only humane way to proceed was to do a bilateral enucleation, meaning both eyes would be removed completely.

I had experienced this procedure with a dog I'd had years prior so I was familiar with the process. While the cost of the surgery was many thousands of dollars, the expense of the customized eye drops and other medications over time was also substantial. I decided to go ahead with the operation.

Bonnie had her sutures removed a month after the surgery and is now pain-free and medicine-free. She navigates amazingly well, even up and down the stairs in my rental house. She happily jumps on furniture, and she has a higher quality of life without having to sit for eye drop after eye drop several times a day. Now she gets to go on all the fun walks and car rides while using her other senses. Fortunately, dogs "smell in color" so she's living her best life and loving her home with Snoopy and me.

On that terrible day last January, it was hard to believe I'd ever smile again. But today Bonnie and I have found joy in the love and comfort we've shared with each other after so much heartache.

shelters around the world - who give of themselves to change animals' lives one day at a time.

dec2024 • animal shelter • animal rescue • dog rescue • adopt • adoption • Humane Society of the North Bay • HSNB

Joseph Hayden

Joseph Hayden is the treasurer of the Board of Directors of the Humane Society of the North Bay (HSNB), a private, nonprofit shelter located in Vallejo. HSNB has served lost and abandoned dogs and cats for almost 40 years.

<https://www.hsnb.org/>

Thank you to these local service organizations who are helping people and pets.



Here for pets—and their people.

marin humane.org



Help Families Feed
Their Pets

