







with keys on Yulie keyrings. There are just so many people to thank among pupils, staff and parents for their support over the years – I hope they won't stop when I'm gone.

Finally I want to say this – and I know that 'him on the end of my lead' agrees with me. You've got a wonderful school, a staff that care for you and want you to achieve much. You have great opportunities ahead if you get to grips with your education. I've given pretty well all my life to being in BODA – he's only done 33 years. You couldn't be in a better place – I've seen it with my own eyes. Make the most of your opportunities. Don't let difficulties put you off or disable you. Make the most of what you've got. Don't look at what you've not got. And set about making a difference. Have faith and overcome. Have the courage to follow your beliefs. If we can do it, so can you!

Goodbye.

Love, Yulie



## Yulie's Farewell

Hullo, it's a sad day, and a happy one too, which brings me to write this little note to you. I'm almost 100 years old now (doggie years of course) . I was born in 1996 and have spent nearly the last 84 years working here in Bridge of Don Academy - quite a record, isn't it. I just can't wait to see what kind of pension I'll get! (Loads of chewsticks and a gold plated, centrally heated kennel, I hope) Him on the other end of my lead says I'll get to spend my retirement with him - I think I can live with that. Runs, runs and more runs - I'll be the fastest 100 year old in the field!

Just a word about my past. I was born, one of eight puppies to Lewis and Whitney. We were all given a name that starts with 'Y' - each new Guide Dog litter, you see, goes up a letter in the alphabet. My brothers and sisters are called Yuma, Yeoman, Yahtzee, Yvette, Yassie, Yates and Yardley. I was called Yulie - don't know why, but him on the other end of my lead says he could have changed it, but I'm glad he didn't. I've got used to it in the past 100 years. I was brought up for the first year of my life in Strathmiglo, Fife, with Mrs Hutton who has raised at least 25 Guide Dog pups, and an older dog called Baker. I used to love lying on the shelf under the TV with my head on the floor. I still do that in class sometimes. I was then trained for a number of months at Forfar by many people including Nancy and Andrina. I got a reputation for being fast and decisive - they used to have to run to keep up with me. I was ill for a while and was desperate to get out of the kennels - imagine my anticipation and relief when I heard that I was going to be partnered with a blind person from Aberdeen. I could escape the kennels at last and live in an actual house! Oh no, then I heard he was a teacher! I knew what teachers were like, having just spent a year being trained by them. However I'd go with anyone, even a teacher, to get out into real life.

Wow, Aberdeen was great, Bridge of Don Academy too - loads of new smells and sights! I remember my first day finding the Academy. I'd rather have crossed the grass to get to it, but I was made to walk politely over the back car park. No trouble to me, a newly qualified Guide Dog, but my new partner seemed to have a bit more difficulty, especially when I spotted the rabbits and the birds!

Well I should say something about him on the other end of my lead – he's bribed me to do so – hang on till I get my teeth through this chew stick. He came to the Academy last century in 1977, (he says) as a bright young handsome teacher – something's gone terribly wrong then, hasn't it! He'd just finished his University degrees in Edinburgh, got married, and when interviewed for a job in Grampian by the Assistant Director of Education, having given away the only jobs available that day, found him setting about trying to make a new City school post available for him. The man spoke to the R.E. Advisor



got a video camera going all the time as a kind of security record of events in class. I was fairly sure it would be used a lot to catch out pupils who were misbehaving, but I've been wrong. The camera has only been checked 15 times or so in twelve years –most pupils seem to want to come into class and behave. Over that long period they have indeed been a wonderful credit to themselves and to the school. At the end of his career, now he's retiring, I know he's grateful and amazed at just what the pupils have managed to achieve. I myself am fairly sure that apart from anything else it's due to 'the power of the fur', of course!

I can't believe that I'm about to leave the school with all my wonderful memories – I've been to Staff Meetings, the Headmaster's office, just about in every room including the men's toilets – what lady gets to do that! I've been on school events, at the Exhibition Centre and the Beach Ballroom Award Ceremonies, out on Activities Week trips including Tubing at Alford Ski Centre, staff nights out at Jimmy Chung's. (My favourite there was the bowl of ice cream which Mrs Anderson slipped me under the table – all against the rules, but 'cool' anyway! Although I've been retired for over a year I've still come into school, and even although I've had cancer and so far got over it, I'm still as accepted as a furry member of staff, just as much as the day I arrived. What other canine could ever have had such a wonderful time! And what about pupils', parents' and staffs' generosity – everyone's thrown themselves at times into raising money so that more blind people can have 'furs' like me. It costs about £40000 to train and keep a Guide Dog for all of its life, and, guess what, there are almost 5000 of us working in the UK today. The commitment everyone's made in the school has raised well over £3000. Who can forget Mr Willox being gunged, and Mr Thomson having shaved off his 'large', 'bushy' beard in the Dining Hall? And what about the documentary film people bought about me? Many people in this area, and in various parts of the world, are drinking out of Yulie mugs, writing with Yulie pens, mousing on Yulie mouse mats or opening their doors





when he got back to Aberdeen, and by the following morning my partner had a job in Bridge of Don Academy and apparently was asked if he wanted a 5 bedroomed school house at Foveran too. He wasn't slow in taking up the offer, I can tell you!

He'd always had poor eyesight, having survived many operations just after birth and again in his teens – apparently his eyesight was lost when he was 16 and his parents were told he would never see again, but after having had some religious experience or other making him a Christian, within 10 days he could see a bit and after further operations his surgeon declared that his eyesight was good enough to drive a bus – I don't think I'd have been a passenger in it! Because there was a possibility of him losing his eyesight in the future, he was sent at the age of 17 to the Royal Blind School in Edinburgh (far away from home) in order to finish his education, having missed so much by being in hospital. He met his future wife there – she's got a great Guide Dog called Helen, just as pretty as me! At 20 he left school with qualifications good enough for University, and because of his earlier religious experience he trained to be a minister. Somehow or other he got hijacked into a teacher training course, and although the College were a bit reticent because of his eyesight, he enjoyed and completed the course, and the rest was history. He says he'll never know how he was offered that job. When he met the Assistant Director in a dim corridor that day, he actually sat on the guy's briefcase when attempting to sign the papers!

At first, for 5 years, he was the only R.E. teacher in BODA, but then things expanded, and continued to go fairly well for the next 15 years or so. Then his eyesight began to fail again. He covered up as much as possible, even getting about the school by following the path the ceiling lights made. Things were really getting quite bad and he contemplated retiring due to all the fearsome thoughts about being a blind teacher in classes filled with sighted pupils. (He could just imagine

what might happen.) One night he felt as if he had come to a cross-roads, - a way through seemed to reveal itself to him. He shouldn't retire but rather, tell everyone what was happening instead of covering up, and then just wait and see how good things would turn out. He wasn't too convinced – however he told the Head Teacher and all the pupils at the change of timetable in June 1998, that he was going blind and that he would be getting a Guide Dog. (ME!) He says that by the end of that week the response had been so amazing from pupils and staff, that a massive weight was lifted from him – he no longer felt he had to cover up any more. He could be himself again. It changed his whole view on the situation so much so that he began to believe that it might work after all. Twelve years on and the promise seems to have come true!

I remember our first day together at the Academy – he seemed a bit scared as to how people might react to the new situation. I didn't bother at all. After showing people how quietly I could lie down, how I could refuse food even when stuck right under my very nose, how I wouldn't bite, lick or sniff ankles or other body parts., I became instantly accepted as a member of the 'Guidance' department, only guiding one person of course. (I have great confidence in the 'power of the fur' – people can't resist stroking it if it's smooth, cuddly and beautiful.) Even him on the end of my lead began to settle after a few quips about Stevie Wonder. What a great job I've had since then, bringing him to school every day, dumping him in his classroom then I get on with the real business of the day – sleeping for at least 5 hours in my basket! And what a basket! He began to feel sorry for me lying down so much that he filled my basket with a thick duvet – it's just heaven. At home both Helen and I have memory foam beds – he's obviously got more money than sense, but you don't hear us complaining – just snoring!

I've seen loads and loads of pupils over the years, and do you know –

I'm going to say this – not one of them has tried to annoy me or do anything bad to me. They were told the rules about not distracting or feeding guide dogs, and, just my luck, they've always obeyed them, even to the letter of the law. It's a shame about the food however – I wouldn't have said 'no'! (I'm not telling him, but some members of staff have taken pity on me on occasions and slipped me the odd biscuit or bit of apple – it's sad that I'm not good at eating quietly – I always seem to get caught out!)



I've been watching his classes – he thinks I'm sleeping but I'm not. (How can I sleep anyway through all the bangs and crashes that come out of his video machine!) They installed special flooring with bumps for his feet - I'd have preferred a carpet for my delicate paws; a talking computer – it goes on far too fast, far too loud and far too much; and a video projector – it's continually flashing in my eyes! He's even