

Feline Fragments 13 (2009)

(page checked March 2026)

Midge the Runner
Susan Boyle's cat Pebbles

Midge the Runner West Yorkshire

An unlikely one-eyed feline gained her moment of fame from the 2009 Cannes Film festival by taking the leading role in an 8-minute film from England that cost just £1000 to make and was selected for the Short Film Corner. **Midge** was a tortoiseshell cat from Wrose, a district of the city of Bradford in the county of West Yorkshire; at the time she was 12 years old and came originally from a local rescue centre.

Midge loved to follow her owner, parish councillor Martin Humphreys, wherever she could, and she started following him when he walked to the local shops. She would wait on a wall outside for him to finish his errands, then jump down and sometimes start the journey back to his cottage by running. One day Martin decided to run with her — but found he couldn't overtake her! If he ran faster, she accelerated too. 'She always wins our races,' said Martin. She was a familiar sight as she accompanied him when he went jogging.

When he won £1000 in a competition at work, he decided to use it to make a children's film called *The Great Race*, featuring himself and Midge running one of their races. The film was made by Motus TV of Oulton, near Leeds; Martin wrote the musical part of the soundtrack, sung by a children's choir.

Martin flew out to Cannes for the film's screening, while Midge was looked after by a friend at home in Wrose. His dream was that a major film company, perhaps even Disney, would see the potential for a full-length children's film starring Midge, and he was convinced it would be a success. He already had ideas for it, including having Midge run against Olympic 100-metre champion Usain Bolt. He was convinced Midge would win! There's a 'Look North' regional news item on [YouTube](#), but for a full version of *The Great Race* (8 minutes) and an account of Midge's life, see the [Telegraph & Argus](#) article from December 2019, which marked her death at the age of 19.





Unfortunately nothing came of Martin's plans, and Midge's fame was restricted to the one short film.

Susan Boyle's cat Pebbles

Millions of people around the world know the story of Scottish amateur singer [Susan Boyle](#) who, in middle age, totally stunned the audience, the judges and her critics when she appeared in 2009 in British TV talent show *Britain's Got Talent*, singing *I dreamed a dream* from *Les Misérables*. (If you haven't seen it, watch the performance that started it all at [YouTube](#).) Such was Susan's new-found fame that she even appeared, by satellite, on Oprah Winfrey's show in the United States. On 30 May 2009 she took part in the final of the British show and was placed second, after which she needed a break for rest and recuperation.

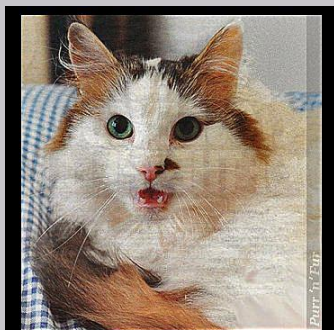
At the time she still lived in her parents' modest council house (both her parents had died), which she shared with her cat **Pebbles**. Pebbles was then 10 years old.

Update, March 2010

It seemed that after becoming a star with numerous commitments, Susan Boyle no longer lived with her cat and former constant companion, Pebbles. A spokesman confirmed that the two were living apart, and the singer had seen her cat only three times since July 2009.

Apparently a member of Boyle's management team asked one of his neighbours if she would take Pebbles in. She agreed, and so the cat went to live with 76-year-old retired accountant Pamela Eaton-Browne in Wanstead, East London. The lady was paid an allowance for Pebbles' needs. Pamela, who had two other cats, said, 'I thought it would just be for a couple of weeks, but that was last July. The last time Susan came round Pebbles shot under a wardrobe and didn't want to know.'

Irish singing group The Corrigan Brothers (famous for their song *There's no one as Irish as Barack Obama*) produced a YouTube video entitled [I'm Pebbles Boyle \(Spare A Thought for Me\)](#).



However, the claim that Susan had effectively abandoned Pebbles were refuted, according to an [article](#) from February 2010. Whether or not the pair were later reunited is unclear, but according to the [Mirror](#) of June 2016, the singer was devastated when Pebbles died, aged 16, at around that time. The article goes on to say that she then took on another cat, with no name or details given, but that one evening the new cat – which was an indoor one – escaped and Susan was 'screaming in the street at midnight', fearing she'd lost the cat and it would be run over. Apparently it was later recovered and returned.

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Two Survival Tales from Hurricane Katrina (2009)

The Two Bobbies; Junior

The Two Bobbies

from New Orleans
to Oregon,
via Utah



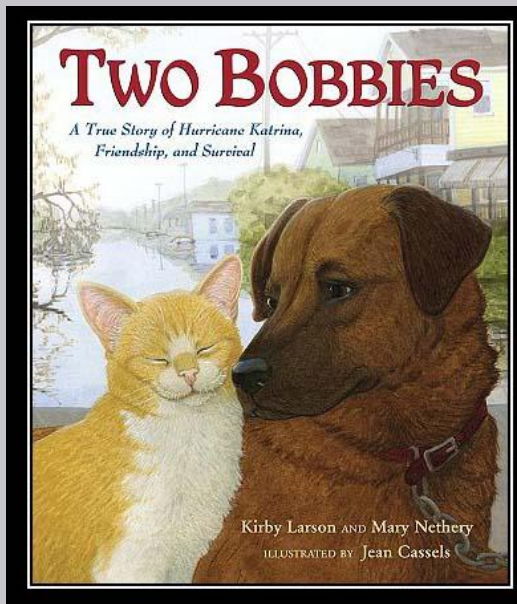
In 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the southern American city of New Orleans on 29 August and left an incredible trail of havoc and destruction. It caused heartbreak as people lost loved ones and large numbers lost property and possessions — and of course there were also thousands of animal casualties, with many left homeless. Alongside the human-rescue organisations, a huge effort was made on behalf of these animals by numerous organisations, caring for them, making fostering arrangements and doing their best to reunite pets with their owners.

One particular story of hope and perseverance in adversity to emerge from the devastation caused by Katrina was that of a young dog, later named **Bobbi**, and a cat, named **Bob Cat**, who was found to be blind. Both animals were bob-tailed. Their tale has been told in a children's book by established children's authors Mary Nethery and Kirby Larson: *Two Bobbies: A True Story of Hurricane Katrina, Friendship and Survival* (image below left).

The animals had managed to survive on the ravaged streets of New Orleans for four months after the hurricane by sticking together, no matter what, with the dog — probably only about 3–4 months old at the time of Katrina — acting as protector for her blind friend. What they actually went through is unknown, of course, so the book has to improvise a little, but the two friends were missed by rescue

teams and must have endured tremendous hardship. It's also unknown whether they came originally from the same home, as seems likely, or teamed up when they found themselves abandoned.

It seems that in January 2006, four months after Katrina, the hungry dog and cat wandered onto a New Orleans construction site. A chain hung from the dog's collar, and the cat stayed close to its companion, instinctively following the rattling chain as it dragged across the ground. Bobbi growled protectively at anyone who came too close to Bob Cat. A construction worker noticed their plight and started feeding them, which he continued doing for a week or so, but then was told he couldn't keep them. Determined not to abandon them again, he took them to a New Orleans staging area known as Celebration Station, where the Best Friends Animal Society from Utah had set up a temporary animal shelter. For their first night there Bobbi and Bob Cat were separated, but the two made such a commotion that next day they were placed in the same cage, where they snuggled together. It was clear they were inseparable.



It was at the shelter that volunteers first realised that Bob Cat, who walked rather tentatively, was blind. They surmised that the feline was guided by, and had been following, the sound from Bobbi's chain — but he was adept and super-smart at figuring out the entire landscape around him, they said. One commented, 'She [Bobbi] definitely has herding dog in her ... you have a dog who knows how to manage movement. She uses her hind quarters to manage the cat's movements, she crouches, she talks to the cat. The cat is her herd, her responsibility. ... The cat cocks his head and listens to the dog.'

Towards the end of February 2006 many animals taken in by the various rescue organisations remained unplaced, but the hard work over the previous five months to find and recover displaced and abandoned pets had paid off, and numbers of sightings and instances of new ones being brought in had dwindled considerably. Operations at Celebration Station were winding down and it was due to close, but Bobbi and Bob Cat still didn't have a home. The irony in their case was that amongst the thousands of reports of lost pets received by animal rescue coordinators in the aftermath of Katrina, several volunteers seemed to recall there had been one with details of a cat and dog, both with bobbed tails, who, if they survived, would likely be travelling together. Unfortunately, in the fairly lengthy period before the pair eventually came under the care of the shelter, the email with potential contact information had gone missing, and despite intensive efforts couldn't be traced.

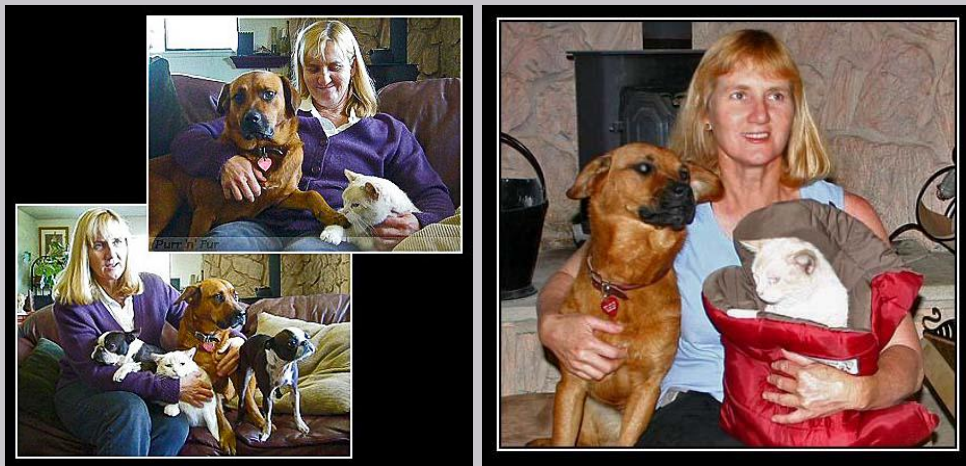
Best Friends had decided they should remain together, and among other initiatives to either trace the family of the unlikely couple or rehome them, they had also contacted the media, and at the end of February the two Bobbies were featured in a segment of the CNN television show *Anderson Cooper 360°*, which had revisited New Orleans to cover the relief effort for animals still left homeless by the hurricane.

Meanwhile the Bobs were driven back to the group's main shelter in Utah, where until they were adopted the two friends were fostered at the home of Barbara Williamson of Best Friends, who'd been in New Orleans with them. After the TV report there had been hundreds of calls from potential new owners — but just one person, Melinda Golis, later travelled from Medford, Oregon to Utah to meet Bobbi and Bob Cat personally.

She bonded straight away with the dog and cat and soon adopted the pair, taking them home to her ranch in southern Oregon, which she shared with another cat, a foster kitten, two Boston terriers and several other dogs, horses and other animals. She reported that they settled in really well: Bob Cat loved playing with the vacuum cleaner and taught himself how to turn it on, and he enjoyed rough and tumble with the kitten; when Bobbi came in at night after a busy day, she groomed the cats.



The Bobbies at the Utah shelter



The Bobs with Melinda Golis

Nethery and Larson's research for their book included a trip to Oregon to meet Melinda, Bobbi and Bob Cat. It was a memorable experience for both writers. 'Bob Cat greeted us at that door,' Nethery recalled. 'He was just like a little host: so cute.'

The *Two Bobbies* book, which is beautifully illustrated by New Orleans resident Jean Cassels, received numerous accolades, recommendations and awards (see our review in [Feline Folios](#)) — but unfortunately there was a sad epilogue. Shortly before it was published in early August 2008, word was received that Bob Cat had died, aged 14, apparently from an adverse reaction to medication. 'We cried our eyes out,' Nethery said. 'He was an inspiration to all who knew him.' The authors donated 10 per cent of the proceeds from the book sales to the Best Friends Animal Society.

A short time after losing Bob Cat, Melinda decided to take in another cat in need of a home, and turned to the web. A search led her to a page with a photo and video of a cat at a shelter in Illinois who looked a lot like him. Unbelievably, his name was Bob Cat! She adopted him in October 2008, and Best Friends had a lovely photo of them, which also included a dog, but it's no longer available. There wasn't a caption with a name so it's not certain, but it looked like Bobbi — who incidentally had been renamed Bobbi Ann to make her sound a little more feminine! Bob Cat (the second) and Bobbi Ann apparently got on famously.

- ❖ NBC News clip: [The Two Bobbies](#) - interview with adoptive mom Melinda Golis and footage of Bobbi and Bob Cat.
- ❖ [Book trailer for The Two Bobbies](#).
- ❖ Interview with the book's co-author [Mary Nethery](#).
- ❖ [The Two Bobbies](#) book website ([archived copy](#)), with some more photos and information. The co-authors and illustrator all have pages about the Bobbies: [Kirby Larson](#), [Mary Nethery](#) ([archived copy](#)), and [Jean Cassels](#) ([archived copy](#)).

Another Katrina survivor was Junior



Very many thanks to Bob Gordon, Canadian journalist and Junior's owner, of Guelph, Ontario, for sharing Junior's story below, and supplying the photos, in 2009.

Michael Alexander Billiot, Jr, or **Junior** for short, was another survivor of the disastrous hurricane Katrina of August 2005, and in 2009 was living 1500 miles north of the bayou where he was born. I first met Junior in Golden Meadow, a small town on Bayou Lafourche, south-west of New Orleans, when he was, literally, dropped in my lap. I had travelled to Louisiana after Katrina to volunteer in the relief effort with the organisation Veterans for Peace. A friend in Baton Rouge suggested that rural areas were being sorely neglected, particularly francophone areas, and recommended that I continue to Lafourche and search out some friends of his who were already there volunteering.

Arriving in Golden Meadow I discovered that the accommodation consisted of tents surrounding a school bus that served as kitchen/dining room etc. It also served as the feeding station for a pack of dogs that had been left behind when their owners evacuated. One day a local volunteer called Michael Alexander Billiot Jr told me that I must really like dogs to be feeding so many. I replied that no, I had never owned a dog — but had owned cats all my life and was definitely a 'cat person'.

The next morning Michael arrived at work with a beautiful marmalade tabby kitten that was only weeks old. It had obviously lost its mother and siblings during the flooding and evacuation and had been hanging around his trailer doing the best it could. Now the four-legged Junior was mine. With so many dogs around, his life was initially quite restricted; he spent his days in the bus and his nights in my sleeping bag in the tent. Gradually he began expanding his boundaries and learned that he could escape the dogs by leaping in through the emergency exit door on the side of the bus.



The Cajun people have a strange attitude towards cats, akin only to what I encountered in Palestine. Nobody owns a cat and they are never let indoors, but the entire community names them and cares for

them. So Junior became 'Bob the Canadian's cat' and ate better there than I did. People would show up with the excuse that they were driving home and happened to have an 'extra' pound of shrimp and ask if they could give it to Junior. Needless to say, he became something of a local celebrity and decidedly a 'lie-in-the-sun' housecat. When it was time for me to leave New Orleans after about four months, to return to Canada, it was impossible for me to leave without him, so Junior got all the shots necessary to cross the Canadian border in Monroe, Michigan, and we proceeded to his new home in Guelph, Ontario, just days before Christmas 2005. He became *le patois*.



Interestingly, my apartment is beside the entrance to our condo complex, and Junior has adopted the habit of sitting in the front window and chuffing and yowling as the students from the local university come home. Inevitably they stop to greet him. Once, I think in 2007, I explained to one of them that he was a francophone and a Cajun; the story has persisted through word of mouth ever since. Consequently, I will be sitting in my office working and will hear a student explain to her friend that he is 'Junior, the Louisiana Wonder Cat'.

He is definitely happy, but unfortunately I cannot say he is entirely healthy. He has severe gum disease as a result of nutritional deficiencies in his first weeks, and will prematurely lose teeth. He also has, I am convinced, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Periodically, he grooms and scratches one area obsessively until it is hairless, even bleeding. When the normal treatment, such as steroids, and other treatments were having no effect his veterinarian agreed with a diagnosis of PTSD. Regardless, at the vet's and in our neighbourhood he is popular, in part because he is beautiful — but also because everyone knows he's 'Junior, the Louisiana Wonder Cat'.

Update

In 2018 Junior was still going strong, aged about 15; his compulsive grooming faded as he grew up. He was living with Bob's former wife in Nova Scotia, and in fact Bob hadn't seen him for several years.

For a further story of a Katrina survivor, Russian Blue cat Wrinkles, see <https://bestfriends.org/stories/features/russian-blue-cat-hurricane-katrina-survivor>

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