

## Shared Living: Gloria, Gert and Harry



Gloria is a One Sky Home Provider...she's shared her home with Gert for fourteen years. Harry lived with them for nine of those years. Gloria, Gert and Harry spent their winters with two beloved cats to keep them warm. Gloria's granddaughter and a friend lived with them, helping to run the household and provide respite care when Gloria needed time on her own.

As soon as warm weather arrived, Gloria, Gert and Harry packed up and moved to a seasonal campsite, where they lived in a large tagalong camper with a deck. “It’s in the woods; it’s beautiful,” says Gloria. “Gert and Harry made friends with folks who come there every summer. Harry swam in the pool, while Gert enjoyed the kids at poolside. It’s right in Exeter, so One Sky’s Service Coordinators can visit, and it’s easy to get to doctor appointments.”

Harry’s brother Jim described Gloria’s home care as “Phenomenal! Gloria does everything 150 per cent! Harry came out of the Laconia State School, where he lived for years. Residents there weren’t taken care of as they should have been.” Gert, who also spent years at the state school, became Harry’s best friend when they lived together at Gloria’s, according to Jim.



Gloria paid close attention to Gert and Harry's likes and dislikes, and invented their day program in the local community—visits to the library, trips to the beach to watch birds, lunch dates with friends. “Everywhere we went,” says Gloria, “Gert and Harry attracted new friends.”

According to Jim, “Gloria was just like a mother to Harry; when he or Gert needed surgery, she fought for the best care; if she wasn't satisfied, she'd go over someone's head to get it.”



Gloria's had lots of parenting experience. She raised eight children and has eighteen grandchildren. “Providing a home for Gert and Harry was never a job, we were a family unit. To my kids, she's ‘Auntie Gert’ and he was ‘Uncle Harry.’ If something happened to me, my children would be here in a heartbeat for them. When my husband died a few years ago, Gert and Harry were my reason to get up every morning. It's so wonderful that they are truly part of our community now.”

---

All good things must pass, and Harry's time came in early spring. Suddenly, on the morning of March 21, 2009, Gloria and Gert lost him, when he died unexpectedly in his sleep. Words are inadequate to express the depth of his loss to Gloria and Gert. At Harry's funeral, the church was packed with mourners and well-wishers, a poignant sign of how he

had touched his community. While Gloria and Gert take up the task of learning to spend their days without Harry's company, the lasting bonds they formed are testimony to how satisfying shared living can be.

~