

The Cat Came Back

In early April, a little shop in New York City's West Village lost its mascot and chief protector. Molly, a young cat who lived in Myers of Keswick and kept the British specialty shop mouse-free, did not show up for her morning duties. What happened after that made the papers across the United States and internationally as people tuned in to see what would happen to Molly. Here, with details culled from our own interviews and other stories from the *New York Times*, the *Daily News*, and the *New York Post*, we present some highlights of the rescue saga. —Carrie Allan



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Molly disappeared from her usual basket in the shop on Friday, March 31. She was not seen over the weekend. On Monday, store employees could hear her meowing from somewhere.

2 The building, old and full of nooks and crannies in the walls and the basement, is very close to the adjacent building; all that separates them is an alley too small for a human to slip into. The local fire department, working on the theory that Molly had worked her way into that tiny, trash-filled crevice, sprayed water into the alley, but Molly did not come out.

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Word spread in the neighborhood that the cat was missing. "You have to see it from where we are," Elena Salvana, a longtime employee of Myers of Keswick, told *Animal Sheltering*. "This is the West Village and people just love their animals ... So someone called one of the channels to say there was a cat trapped and no one was doing anything, and it all started from there."



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Over the course of the next two weeks, would-be rescuers from New York City's animal care and control department, police emergency service unit, and fire departments—along with local contractors—donated their time and energy to locating Molly within the building walls, coping with media inquiries, keeping the crowd under control, monitoring demolition efforts for safety, and trying to assure the owner and the Landmark Preservation Commission that they would pay for the repairs to the property.

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The local Fox News crew covered the story, reporting on what citizens were allowed to do to save an animal trapped in a National Landmark building. Suddenly, the little shop was surrounded by media and onlookers round the clock, reports Schermer. In his online account of the rescue, he wrote that he "knew things were getting big when newspapers from London, India, and Japan wanted to interview me, along with CNN and the *New York Times* too."

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Nancy Gambert, an animal rescuer and representative of the Renaissance Project, a nonprofit spay/neuter group in the city, got word of the cat's plight and enlisted Josh Schermer of Downtown Pets to help. Schermer and others began spending most every day in the basement of the shop, trying to figure out where in the walls the cat might have gotten to.

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Crowds gathered to watch the scene. The building was cordoned off with police tape—not exactly good for business, reports Salvana. People turned up with kittens who mewed for Molly to come out. Someone suggested sending a ferret in after her. A cat therapist played whale and seagull sounds. Someone else brought catnip. A psychic tried to "feel" where Molly was within the building. Humane traps baited with cat food were set, and some turned up with fancier French cat food, suggesting that it might be more of a temptation. The *New York Post* oh-so-helpfully sent a person dressed as a mouse to help lure the cat out from her nook. Oddly, the giant gyrating rodent did not persuade Molly to emerge.

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News stories about the cat appeared in papers from France to Australia to South Africa.

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9 The major break in the rescue came just in time, Schermer says. After nearly two weeks in a hot and dusty basement, the owner was getting annoyed and everyone was getting discouraged. But a sound expert named Al Fierstein turned up on the scene and used special acoustic equipment to determine Molly's location. Rescue crews made a hole in the wall behind the shop's main counter.



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At 10:30 p.m. on April 14, Kevin Clifford, foreman of a nearby construction project who'd stopped by regularly to help, reached into the last hole and carefully pulled Molly out of the wall. She was a little dehydrated, but otherwise "not very dirty for a cat that's been in the wall for two weeks," Mike Pastore of New York City Animal Care and Control told the *New York Times*.

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While a few naysayers had gathered to mock the rescue, most people were excited and happy about Molly's safe return, says Schermer. "It shouldn't be such a surprise that there was international attention," he says. "It shows a growing appreciation for animals."

