

FOCS'L STORY

By Carol Drummond

Fos'l was 20 pounds when he had lost weight and I took him to the vet, so a good weight for him was clearly 22 or 23 pounds with no fat. I never measured him, but when he sat on my lap, and he often did, he would only fit if my legs were stretched out in front of me. His rear would be on my lap and his feet on my ankles (I am 5'9"). His paw would completely cover my palm, and I have large hands. Lying down in front of a door (3' wide), he completely blocked it.

I lived in a small apartment in Seattle, and so to give him exercise, I bought a dog harness and leash for him, and we would walk for hours around the residential neighborhood. He was so natural with it, it never occurred to me that other cats would not heel.

I would never let a cat outside now, but in the late 60's I was young and it was a different world. So, Fos'l and I camped from Seattle to Nova Scotia and back again. Like a well-trained dog, he never went out of sight, and at night he would catch mice and bring them into my tent and line them up next to my sleeping bag. When I awoke, he would be sound asleep and ready for breakfast. I was always amazed the number of mice he could find within 20' of me when I saw nothing. He loved the outside, but never thought of it as his kitty box--I had to bring one with me and put it in the tent. There were no kitty boxes that fit him, and I found a cement mixer worked wonderfully.

When I decided to be crew on an Alaskan salmon gillnet boat, I took him with me--he was my family. This was in 1973, before shipping cats by plane was safe. So, I had my vet prescribe a tranquilizer and put him in a small gym bag and carried him onboard with the top unzipped. I sat next to the window and put Fos'l and the bag on the floor so no one would ask questions. Sitting in the seat next to me was an elderly man. The tranquilizer took hours to take effect, and during the flight, Fos'l raised his huge, red head to look around. The tranquilizer made him cross his eyes, and the elderly man next to me took one look at Fos'l and started to jump out of his seat. I had to beg and beg him to keep quiet, and when we finally landed, he was the first off the plane. The tranquilizer finally took hold after we arrived, and Fos'l spent his first day in Alaska calmly napping.

He was such a calm cat--nothing ruffled him, so when I brought him onboard the gillnet boat, it never crossed my mind that he might jump off, and he never did. A fos'l is the foremost sail on a clipper ship, the first sail to catch the wind, and he was true to his name. He loved sitting near the bow with the wind in his fur, eyes slightly closed, as he looked straight ahead. We were based in Juneau, and spent days out of port fishing along the inlets. Fos'l was never bored, never irritable, always magnificent. After we caught the salmon, we would gut them before putting them in the hold. Fos'l's favorite thing was to play with the hearts, especially when they were still beating. He never liked cat toys, but he certainly loved beating salmon hearts.

Fos'l was very much as he looks in his picture. He always looked directly and calmly toward me. He communicated through his eyes, and when he wanted me to understand something, he looked into my eyes with his until I understood. Later in life he developed cystitis. When he did not feel well, he would go potty in my dog's food dish and then sit next to it looking calmly toward me until I looked at him.

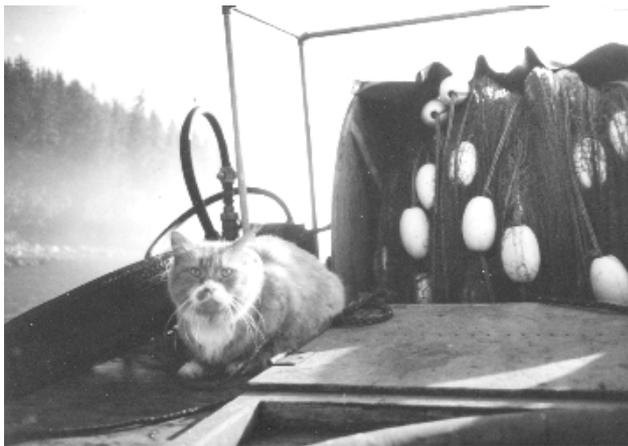
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Fos'l was my friend.

Fos'l was registered with the ACFA, born 3/6/69, bred by the Emin-DaleCattery, father Emin-Dale's Frosty, mother Whittemore's Cali of Emin-Dale (CCA registration, not (ACFA), registration # MC89-F70-495-1, registered to me on 2/20/70 as Emin-Dale's Fos'l.

I talked to Dr. Eminhizer, but I didn't really know how important he was at the time. I didn't even know the name of the big cats I fell in love with while going to the University of Maine. After graduating I moved to Seattle, WA, and I just happened to buy Cats magazine the month and year they had the article about Mrs. Whittemore. I found his name listed as a breeder and called him. He was so nice and so patient, I decided to buy a kitten from him.

We talked several times after that, but it was more about the upcoming litter. I didn't know if Maine Coons were what I wanted until Fos'l arrived! Fos'l died in the early 1980's, and later I called him again to see if he still bred Maine Coons, but he didn't. I later bought 2 others, but both were small and neither very healthy. I thought the original Maine Coon was so wonderful, it never occurred to me that someone might want to change it and was devastated, thinking the Maine Coon had disappeared. I am so appreciative of your interest in preserving the original Maine Coon as a magnificent creature. When you write your article, don't forget to add a plug for polydactyls--Fos'l had an extra toe on each front paw, so he had thumbs. He'd catch mice so easily and actually hold them in one 'hand'.



*I may be moving and
this was the last
film of had.
EEC
28 June 1977*



Emin-Dale's Fos'l
Photos courtesy of Carol Drummond