

There's a Scorpion in the Litter Box

Tails of a Crazy Pet Lady



**Lauren
Greenwood**

CUY

Forward

This book is dedicated to all my rescues, past, present, and future. And to Great Aunt Anne, who taught me to love and help animals in need.

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There's a Scorpion in the Litter Box

Since I was a child, I've loved animals. I was always stopping to pet animals, asking if I could give them treats, offering to "babysit" the pets (I didn't know the term pet sitting yet) – you get the picture. If there was a term "crazy pet kid" I no doubt would have been called that long before I became the "crazy pet lady"!

As an adult, in addition to my own rescue efforts, I've volunteered at animal shelters - municipal and private – for over two decades. I did whatever was needed: cleaning, helping the Vet Techs, fixing holes in the outdoor patio so the cats could go back out into it, cleaning kennels, walking, playing, loving the animals, fundraising, speaking at schools and civic fairs about humane treatment of pets, giving shelter tours.

Some of these shelters were lucky enough to have funding from their municipality to have updated buildings that truly met the 5 freedoms – or at least were in great condition with working heat and air. I've also volunteered at shelters with dilapidated buildings where the heat and air barely work, the linoleum floors are peeling, and animals are in cramped conditions because there's barely enough money for a skeleton staff, basic medical care and food. I hope someday we're willing to use tax dollars to properly and fully fund municipal animal shelters the way we fund sports stadiums, or sadly, more and more prisons.

I've seen staff with all the warmth of an IRS auditor, who clearly hate people and drive adopters, fosters, and volunteers away. I've also seen staff that nearly put

themselves in the hospital working many hours beyond what they're paid and spent their own money to ensure the animals are well cared for despite the shelter's lack of funding.

At one such shelter, I ran the volunteer program (as a Volunteer myself). Two Saturdays a month, I taught Volunteer Orientation and immediately following that, Training for new volunteers in animal care or front office assistance. Orientation was always interesting. There were always people there against their will (dragged by a spouse or date) that I had to work harder to convince it was worth their family's time to be there – and come back.

Something always happened, like the day a dog raced through the chairs where everyone was sitting, because a Volunteer had accidentally not latched the kennel shut properly. Or the day a snake went slithering through. It was just a garter snake, totally harmless, but it took me several minutes to restore order and some people just left!

But hands down, the biggest incident was the day a volunteer came screaming out of the cat building into the middle of our orientation group. She'd been scooping litter, to find herself face to face with a scorpion in one of the scoops! She had not been stung, and it took a few minutes of interpreting through the crying that some of the poor cats had been stung in the face and I needed to alert the medical staff so they could be treated. The volunteer was fine, as were the cats after treatment, but I think I lost more potential new Volunteers from the Orientation group than usual that day!

In this book, I have written about some of the dogs and cats I have personally rescued and fospiced. I have spent and

continue to spend most of my time and all of my money caring for unwanted, “unadoptable”, and special needs animals. I’ve been branded a “crazy pet lady” as a result; some say it with love, others are being derisive. I don’t really care; doing this makes me happy and when I look back on my life this is something I’ll have zero regrets about doing or spending most of my money on! To see these animals blossom in a home with love and care is all the reward I need.

I hope you enjoy reading about some of them as much as I enjoyed lingering in their light in the years, I was fortunate enough to know them.

Mr. Frisky

Mr. Frisky was my first rescue. He was a street cat who showed up around a week after the holidays. I suspect he was a “gift” to someone who didn’t want him, because no one in the neighborhood had ever seen him before. I was new to rescue (I’d never done it before!), so unlike now, I had no supplies for this hungry, crying cat hanging around my back door off the kitchen. He was so friendly and so hungry, I let him in and



opened a can of fancy albacore tuna I had in the pantry (for me). I put it on a plate and put some water into a small plastic bowl. He began to gobble the tuna so fast I was afraid he’d get sick.

But he didn’t. He finished eating and sat down to wash his face. It was clear he had no plans to leave. Personally, I think once he realized he would get albacore tuna here, he rightly pegged me as a sucker! My Veterinarian states it in a nicer way: “He hit the jackpot when he found you!”

Over the following weeks I continued to feed him and give him a place to sleep. I went door to door and put up flyers; I notified local shelters, rescues, and veterinary clinics. He had no microchip, no collar, and no one in the

neighborhood had ever seen him before that week he showed up at my house.

It became clear he was here to stay, so it was time for a good exam, vaccinations, neuter, microchip, the works! On the way to the appointment, he peed in the carrier (I had not yet learned to put a towel in there – my first lesson learned!) I lifted him out of the wet carrier in the exam room, and as I did, he proceeded to pee all over the front of my shirt. By the time the Veterinarian came in the room, we were both soaked in cat pee, and I learned a second lesson: don't wear a dry clean only shirt to take a pet to the clinic. When the Veterinarian examined him, he'd saved just enough in his bladder to pee on the Veterinarian too.

The Veterinarian declared him a Russian Blue mix of approximately 1.5 years of age, male (which had been obvious being un-neutered), and in good health. After his medical work and microchip, I made my first “official pet owner” trip to PetSmart. It was a whole new magical universe - like Diagon Alley but for pets - with wonderous toys and other creations. They really need to have their own credit card like Best Buy.... although for my financial sanity it's probably best they don't! I could have spent days and my entire savings in there. I came home with a collar and tag, piles of cat bowls, cat toys, a cat condo, litter supplies, and food.

I named him Frisky because he was very playful, and it was also the brand of food he liked best. Over the next several weeks, it became clear who was in charge - and it wasn't me. He shredded the rug at the front door when

he was displeased, I'd been gone all day at work. He refused to acknowledge me if I opened an unacceptable flavor of Fancy Feast. I filled his fancy new water bowl twice daily, but it was rarely used as he insisted on drinking out of my water glass instead. If I slept past morning treat time (I kept dry food out all the time for grazing), he would grab a mouthful of my hair and pull it to wake me up. We ate dinner together and had long conversations. As long as I talked, he mewled back. He would sit regally to survey his new domain in the evenings, and it wasn't long before he became *Mr. Frisky*, or *The Czar*.

At first, he was an indoor-outdoor cat. I lived at the end of a quiet dead-end street with a park behind it, so he went in and out the cat door I installed as he pleased. However, after 3 trips to the emergency veterinary clinic for a sprained leg, a punctured ear, and a terrifying 48 hours when he was too hurt to make it home and was trapped, he became an indoor only cat (like all my cats since). It wasn't exactly smooth sailing turning him into an indoor cat. He paid me back by shredding my speaker covers and howling from 2a to 4a every night for the next few weeks. It was a true battle of the wills, and I was up against *Royalty*. But I hung in there. I bought ear plugs, treats (for both of us – mine was Ben & Jerry's, his was Friskies Party Mix). I found the activity-type toys for him, a cat tree he could climb up high to watch birds and squirrels in the trees via the window and hung a couple bird and squirrel feeders to create his very own Animal Planet viewing area. I kept giving him lots of love and lots of special food and treats, and I kept those bird and

squirrel feeders filled! After a few weeks he decided to accept it.

It would have been easier with a catio. I hadn't yet discovered catios – I'm not sure they were a "thing" yet – but I did figure out how to DIY an enclosed cat "run" a few months later. Later in this book there is a picture of him enjoying it, accessible by a cat door inset into the sliding screen door. That really helped. I have always had a cat "run" or catio since. It is a great compromise – they get outdoor time, and yet are safe from predators, diseases from non-vaccinated cats, cars, mean people, and getting lost/too sick/too injured to make it home.

Less than a year after I rescued him, I had to move across the country. There was never any question of whether or not he would come with me. But how to get him there? Like most cats, he was not a fan of riding in the car. Plus, having him in a cat carrier with no access to water/food/litter for three 12 hour driving days was not going to work anyway. I asked the advice of my Uncle who had worked for the FAA for 25 years and flew all the time. He told me to never fly a pet – not in the hold of a passenger flight nor in Cargo - and proceeded to tell me about all the deaths, injuries, and lost pets running across tarmacs that the public doesn't find out about. I won't get into why the airline industry needs to fix this, as does the FAA with their authority, because that would take up the rest of this book!

Ok so flying was out. I asked my Veterinarian and my Pet Sitter, the latter of whom had a great suggestion. She had recently had a client that needed to move across country

with 2 cats and a dog and would not fly their pets, having had a pet die in the luggage hold because the pilot forgot to turn on air flow to that area for the flight (a frighteningly common occurrence, proving my Uncle right). They had rented an RV and made a great trip out of it. You can rent them 1-way. It's not any more expensive than flying two people and three pets, and bonus – everyone is still *alive* at the destination!

In this case it was just me and 1 cat, so I rented a large cargo style van (not a mini-van style van). I bought two extra-large wire (not plastic sided, open welded wire) dog kennels and placed them inside the back of the van, using bungee cords to secure them to one side of the van, and to each other. Since it was an open cargo van, he could see me in the driver's seat. In one of the kennels was a small cat condo, a bed, food and a high sided water bowl (I used double sided tape so they wouldn't slide around and would easily peel off the metal van floor). In the other at the far end was his litter pan. I had plenty of room left to put in a few boxes of things we'd need for the trip and immediately upon arriving. I found pet friendly hotels I could stop at each of the 2 nights, and when I got there, I unloaded the dog kennels into the hotel room so no worries about supplies or him escaping in an unknown area. In a future move when I had 5 animals, I rented a large RV and did the same thing! I don't leave my animals behind when I move; they are for life, not just until inconvenient.

Mr. Frisky trained me, and I learned a lot. He was my first pet as an adult. I learned that when you board a cat, they

tend to come home with what looks like rice stuck to their butt which is actually tapeworm. I learned what “fun” it is to pill a cat for tapeworm....that was before Pill Pockets – and frankly, I have to say it – ALL of my pets have always hated every flavor of those things; it was worse than pilling them without one.

I learned that not all flavors of Fancy Feast are created equal.

That serving the same flavor of treats every day is highly unacceptable. I guess it’s kind of like serving your husband chicken 15 days in a row. The only difference being the cat can’t pick up the plate and throw the whole thing in the trash can like he would, then go get a pizza.

I learned to either keep all closet doors firmly shut or check inside before I shut it, after accidentally locking him in the coat closet one whole day when I was at work. Poor guy! I felt so horrible I baked him a chicken breast for his dinner that night and didn’t stop kissing him all over his head until he got annoyed and whacked me.

I learned 1 litter box is not enough even though you scoop it daily. Some days are “busier” than others. I always keep 2 boxes per cat now.

I learned that suddenly switching dry food can cause a horrible UTI.

I learned to trim little needle daggers otherwise known as cat claws. Sorry, I don’t believe in declawing.

I learned tinfoil is a deterrent to scratching and cat posts are for playing and sleeping, and cardboard scratchers

filled or sprayed with catnip DO work especially when you place them near sofas or other places that might want to scratch instead.

I learned that spraying Dog No Go works to prevent scratching better than cat sprays for that same purpose.

I started my tradition of buying a new collar for a sick or injured pet. New shoes always make *me* feel better; I figure it's the same principle.

As he aged, he still remained very Royal, and not big on being held but always wanting to be near me and in the same room. In the bed, he did still like to lay on the pillow just above my head while I slept. Up until he was almost 15, he continued to race around the house with his toys, gaining speed as he ran across the living room and skidding across the kitchen tile. When he was very young, he liked to attack my shoelaces – when I had my shoes on! If I had people over, he would sit on a chair just like one of the guests, and chirp to people as they talked. Even people who weren't fans of cats liked him. One night he threw up a hairball on a woman's shoe. They say animals are good judges of character, and sure enough he was right to have done so! As he got very old, he played less, preferring to sit in the sunshine on the pillows near every window, or at his inside perch to bird watch.

The one epic fail was deciding to buy a harness and leash for him. He threw himself onto the ground and refused to get up. It wasn't a walk; it was a drag – literally. I gave the harness and leash away and never tried that with a cat again!

When Mr. Frisky got to halfway past age 19, I started planning an epic 20th birthday party. He was still going strong. Oh, he had a few problems, like his kidney's starting to go, causing a lot of peeing. He also was having osteoarthritis in his hips, causing an inability to balance in the litter pan. This caused him to pee where he was laying or standing instead. (I hadn't yet figured out the solution to this but did later: see the chapter on Raja).

Sadly, he passed away a few weeks before his 20th birthday, of just plain old age. He'd been a part of my life for 18 years. I was completely devastated. Twenty-three rescues and fospices later, I can tell you that while it doesn't get easier, you do learn to deal with it without falling apart and without giving up having pets.



The
Czar



Mr. Frisky's first Xmas. It took a while to get that picture!
It went out in my Holiday cards that year.



Mr. Frisky on the infamous "Sheepy Blankey" that all new arrivals get swaddled in ever since. A \$19.99 Target purchase still in use decades later!



Splendor in
the grass!
Before he
became an
indoor only
cat



Hey – how come I
can't go outside
anymore?!



I still have the stone cat statue; it's survived 4 moves and always makes me think of him.



Asleep on the heating pad in the window, a favorite spot for bird and squirrel watching and sun puddles.

Fiona a.k.a. “Mrs. Frisky”



Fiona was 12 weeks old when I adopted her. She had huge bat ears attached to a tiny head that bobbed. Underneath was mounted 4 spindly legs that wobbled and tended to try to go in different directions. She stumbled more than walked, frequently tipped

over, as if those giant ears were too big to allow her to balance properly. My neighbor’s daughters thought I should name her *Mrs. Frisky* and immediately began planning the wedding.

She had been rescued from a home where the man had taken out a shotgun and was shooting all the animals on the property because “the food bill was too high” (he was OK with the beer and whiskey bill though apparently). He had missed Fiona twice (he’d already killed Fiona’s mother and the other kittens) and was reloading when a good Samaritan arrived, saw what was going on and thankfully grabbed Fiona and ran to the car with her. I was looking for a female companion for Mr. Frisky due to his separation anxiety while

I was at work all day. Our Veterinarian had recommended a young female since he hated other cats (Royalty doesn't tend to like common folk around; I was tolerated because I could use a can opener).

I knew this tiny, skinny, wobbly kitten had no vaccinations, was not spayed, and could have everything from worms to FIV, but the good Samaritan could not wait for all that to be handled, so my first quarantine room was borne. I named her Fiona (I'd just read *The Thornbirds*) much to the disappointment of those voting for Mrs. Frisky. Over the next 2 weeks, while I waited for the "all clear" from the Veterinarian, Mr. Frisky stationed himself at the quarantine. He would sniff underneath it, and upon seeing Fiona's kitten paw trying to reach out under it would lay his ears flat, hiss and run away. He'd be back in a while, and he'd often stay there all night.

When the Veterinarian pronounced a clean bill of health and she'd healed from being spayed, I opened the quarantine door. She came wobbling out the door with barely a glance at Mr. Frisky, who proceeded to follow her, whiskers forward, ears slightly back. I was so concerned he'd hurt her, at bedtime I put her back in the quarantine room. I shouldn't have worried as it turns out- she wasn't the one who got hurt!

The next few weeks, wherever Mr. Frisky went, Fiona wobbled and bobbed along behind him like a toy duck on a string. Every few feet, he'd stop, turn, and hiss at her. She'd immediately sit down and give him kitten eyes. He'd turn back around and start walking, and she'd immediately start wobbling along behind him again. Sometimes he'd turn,

reach out, and use one paw to knock her over. She'd wait till he turned around, then get right up and continue to wobble along behind him. After a few weeks of this, one day he simply walked over to her, tipped her over, held her down with one paw, and cleaned her from head to toe. After that she was his baby. He cleaned her daily, let her eat the food first, and patiently put up with her leaping on him, biting on him, kicking on him, and trying to get him to play even when he was tired. Being a kitten, which all have needle claws and razor teeth, she sent Mr. Frisky to the ER twice with a scratched eyelid, and then a bitten ear from her trying to rough house and not understanding her little claws and teeth could do damage.

He no longer howled when I had to go to work, and no longer shredded the rug at the door while I was gone. I now had 8 legs that ran to see me whenever I came home, and there were nightly "stair races" and "hallway races" that were hilarious to watch. I didn't bother to turn on the TV – watching the activity was way more fun and interesting!

Fiona was a quiet soul, almost never making a sound. She liked to nestle down under the covers on the bed and was frightened of any human that wasn't me. If I had guests over, she not only hid, but stayed hidden for 2-3 hours after they left. She never got over that. I was her person, and I guess after her start in life, she didn't trust anyone else. She did like my house call Veterinarian and Pet Sitter. Like Mr. Frisky, she wasn't a cuddly cat, but always wanted to be where I was in the house.

When Fiona came along, I had the idea to build what is now called a catio. At that time, I called it an outdoor cat run.

Having little money, I took a few 2x4's, a drill, wood screws, sturdy chicken wire (netting does NOT work), zip ties, and a staple gun and put together an unsophisticated looking but highly functional rectangle. I didn't need to worry about a bottom, because that was the deck it sat on, and I put bricks all around the bottom to ensure it could not move (it was fairly substantial in weight from the 2x4's but I wasn't taking any chances especially if "sumo wrestling" began when they were out there. I put it against the sliding screen door in the master bedroom and bought one of those pet doors you can insert into a screen door – it's like a frame that connects through the screen, then you cut out the screen and the door flap part swings. I had to leave that propped open all the time at first, because they couldn't figure out they needed to push it open to enter. Then they couldn't figure out they needed to push it open to come back in! I added a water bowl and a soft beach towel, and some toys and they could go in and out as they pleased, and I had no worries about escape. The squirrels and blue jays soon figured out the cats were out there but couldn't actually get at them, and on more than one occasion they came in with bird poop on them!

Fiona developed cancer at age 9, and the rounds of chemo were unsuccessful in stopping the fast and furious progress of it through her body. Mr. Frisky remained beside her – literally. The last few weeks were palliative care. I made a place for her in the living room, with a soft fluffy bed and a heater on low as that made her feel better; for some reason the cancer made her very cold. I put a litter pan there in the corner just a few steps away, and a water and soft food bowl even though at this point she rarely ate and drank. Mr. Frisky stayed right beside her, only occasionally getting up to eat

and drink himself. I spent all my time there next to her and slept on the couch by her at night.

The day she died, a pure white dove – not a morning dove nor a Spanish dove - suddenly appeared on the windowsill by where she lay, stared intently at her, and continued to do so until she passed about 45 minutes later. Then it flew away. I'd never seen it before, and I never saw it again despite the dozens of grey and grey/white doves that came every day to feed.

Her life was far too short, especially considering how it started. And I nearly lost Mr. Frisky due to his extreme grief. He literally almost died from a broken heart.





We're STILL waiting for dinner to be served.... why is the service here so SLOW??"



Dinner with your best friend.



The first Catio I built. You can see the pet door on the right in the sliding screen.



Indoor sun puddles are good too



Fiona was not a morning person. That's her favorite toy next to her.



Snuggle buddies. You can see Mr. Frisky between the alligator and the lizard

Sabrina



Sabrina had been at the shelter for over 2 years when I adopted her. People said they didn't like her because she

“looked funny”. Her ears had been mutilated and one ear wasn't much more than a small piece of hard scar tissue; it didn't look like an ear. The other ear was there but scarred and a bit misshapen.

I had gone to the shelter only to get another female cat for Mr. Frisky three weeks after Fiona died. I wasn't ready to adopt again. However, Mr. Frisky had stopped eating and drinking when Fiona died. He'd now been to the Veterinarian to force fluids and food several times over the last 3 weeks, and the Veterinarian finally said to me, “I know you are not ready to adopt another cat, but if you don't, he will die.”

“If I adopt another cat, Mr. Frisky will be angry!”

And the Veterinarian looked at me intently and said, “Anger is an *active* emotion.”

Point taken.

I always told people that I got Sabrina from the boneless cat ranch (for those of you who are familiar with the Far Side) because she was all fur. When you reached into that mass of luxurious long fur to pick her up there was just a toothpick

of a cat inside. When you picked her up, she stretched out like a long slinky as if she had no bones. She loved being carried around the house, hanging upside down over my shoulder.

When I went to the shelter that day, I actually went to see another cat that was on the website. When I got there, I found out that one had been adopted. I walked around the cattery, and when Sabrina saw me, she came right over to the door to see me. I went inside to see her (they had this amazing floor to ceiling space for each cat or group of cats) and she kept trying to get me to sit with her while she ate her food. This was something Fiona had always done. Needless to say, the decision to adopt her was made right there and then. She came home with me. I could have cared less that she “looked funny”. Her coat was not yet the luxurious mane she grew once in a home, and she was skinny, but she had personality and was a total love bug - I couldn’t get her off me the 2 hours I was there!

When I brought her home (along with Charmin dog – see the next chapter), my Veterinarian was proven right. Mr. Frisky, who’d barely moved in 3 weeks, immediately got up - eyes dilated, whiskers forward - to see who this peasant was that dared to intrude into his Royal space! Much to his consternation, she took no notice of the infuriated Czar. She strolled past him, ignoring his glares and hisses, and went right for the bowls of dry and wet food. Mr. Frisky, who hadn’t eaten in 3 weeks, immediately ran over and started gobbling from the other food bowl as fast as he could. Problem solved. I called her Queen Sabrina after that day.

She settled right in, as if she'd always lived there. Mr. Frisky acted the same way. There were never any fights or territory issues. Sabrina flourished in her new environment, and her dank coat grew long and magnificent. The fur around her throat stood out like a Lion's mane. When the Shelter Director came to visit us three months later, she literally did not recognize Sabrina at first, as The Queen entered the room and regally strolled to a spot on the hearth and posed for all to admire.

Besides being boneless, Sabrina was like a ferret. She was always looking for - and finding - new hiding places where she would wait for you to discover her. When I cooked dinner - or was in the kitchen for any length of time - she liked to sit in one of the towel drawers and watch me.

Despite all the food, she remained very slender her whole life – about 8lbs. She was pettily built, but you couldn't tell that due to that vast mane of fur that stood out from her body about 2 inches – she looked like a huge cat. With her I had to learn about brushing and keeping matts out of fur, something for which Mr. Frisky and Fiona's short hair was never an issue. Even with dedicated nightly brushing – which she loved and gave me enough hair to make a new cat – she still got matts occasionally on her tummy and underarms due to her grooming herself and tangling it. I was afraid to cut them out because even with tiny scissors the skin is right there and if you nick it, the skin will bleed, and bleed and it can then get infected. I would always have the Veterinarian do it as they had special tools. Since I brushed her regularly, it only had to be done at the Veterinarian's occasionally.

She loved her people time, but she also loved being a cat. Chasing her toys, wrestling with Mr. Frisky, watching the birds and squirrels, racing from room to room for no apparent reason, and having the occasional spaz attack. She slept next to me in the bed every night, stretching out like a long slinky by my side. She is the only cat I've ever had besides Alex that loved her belly rubbed, and definitely the only cat that loved hanging upside down from my shoulder as we walked around the house! If I tried that with Mr. Frisky I'd be eviscerated!



The boneless cat ranch.



Sabrina and Alex



I'm trying to read the paper!

You didn't need these drawers for anything else, right?



HRH Queen Sabrina

Charmin



Charmin ended up coming home with me the same day I took Sabrina home. I needed to make Mr. Frisky mad, per Doctor's instructions, and a *stinky dog* (Mr. Frisky's words not mine) would definitely do the trick. I'd been wanting to get a dog, but then Fiona got sick, and I needed to focus on her care.

No one had any idea how Charmin would be around cats, so we did a test with her and Sabrina in one of the visitation rooms at the shelter. Charmin had no interest in the cat other than trying to get away from it and hide behind me when Sabrina tried to approach. It was clear who'd be the boss once home.

Charmin had been tied to the doorknob of the shelter sometime in the dead of night. She'd also been beaten within an inch of her life. Turned out she had congenitally deformed kidneys. As a result, she peed all the time; she couldn't help it.

She was a "Fospice" (foster + hospice). My Veterinarian and the Specialty Hospital estimated 6 months to a year. With good medical care and lots of love, she had 11 really good months. Only her last 2 weeks were diminished.

She required regular flushing out of her kidneys at the Veterinary hospital to keep them going, so every few weeks she had to go stay a couple of days. This was also the first time I had to deal with a pet of mine being in hospital and it was very upsetting at first. I went to the hospital before work every day, and again after work to visit her, and when I could I'd take a longer lunch and go then too, so she knew I had not abandoned her.

Charmin was a happy girl, content to lie in the sun on the deck and chase the squirrels which was hilarious because if one stopped running – even right there on the deck – she'd stop and wait until it ran again. She had no interest in trying to catch it – she just wanted to have fun. She loved to walk, and we went on frequent walks, sometimes up to four times a day. The shelter had named her Charmin, and at the time there was that commercial, “Charmin, cha, cha, cha”, and she and I would get up and dance to it every time it came on, with her doing the cha-cha step right alongside me – although she didn't sing and probably would have preferred if I didn't either!

She was starved for love, and she found it. Not only did I adore her, but Mr. Frisky adored her and snuggled with her daily.

I spoiled her with toys and love, but I couldn't spoil her with treats because she also had IBD. I ended up cooking for her after trying IBD foods and it not going well. Per the Veterinarian's instructions, weekly I boiled up a batch of boneless, skinless chicken breasts and plain white rice which she ate with a little of the broth. I fed her multiple small meals a day and that worked great. If she wanted a treat, I

gave her a little piece of chicken. When she had to stay in the hospital, I brought them little Tupperware containers filled with her chicken and rice twice a day. I think the staff was both amused and impressed.

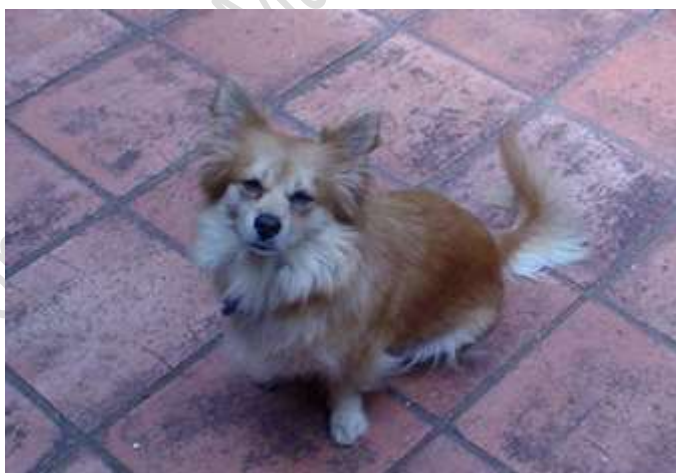
Due to her kidney situation, she was the first dog I became very educated on potty pads and doggy diapers. I had never realized potty pads had all different kinds. I quickly discovered certain brands (and not necessarily the cheap ones) would tear from the dog nails when they walked on them to pee, or when I tried to unfold them! And they would also slide underfoot sometimes, causing the dog to lose its balance and the result being pee and poop that did not end up on the pad. I liked the kind with the adhesive on the corners, but since they were a lot more expensive when not on sale, I used masking tape on the corners of the pads.

At that time I still had carpet in some areas because I had not seen the pictures of what a carpet pad really looks like even if you have the carpet shampooed monthly. After I saw that, I was done ever having carpet in my house again. Since then it's been all tile and/or Pergo. Cleanup is a spray bottle of 50% rubbing alcohol and water, and a roll of paper towels. No mold, mildew and allergens growing in the pad. My allergies went away when I got rid of carpet – not surprising; carpet is just one big dust catcher, and one big mold grower underneath. If you need carpet, buy cheap throw rugs with non-skid backing, and when they can't be washed weekly anymore throw them out and buy new ones.

Charmin was a happy, loving companion for 11 months. The third time she had to go into hospital to flush out her kidneys, it did not work, and she went into kidney failure. I did not

want her to die in the hospital, so I took her home, and arranged for my Veterinarian to come to the house the following day. This way, she could have some time at home, snuggling with me in the bed, and getting lots of love before she passed. I started my tradition of grilling a steak for her and let her eat as much as she wanted to because at this point, IBD no longer mattered.

It was very hard having her only such a short time, especially when she was only 3, and had been so mistreated due to a medical condition that was in no way her fault. But my Veterinarian always points out that she had more months than expected; his theory on that being she was so happy in her home she did not want to have to leave it. I hope he's right.





Snuggle buddies: Mr. Frisky with Charmin. This was a nightly occurrence.



Basking in the sunshine, waiting for squirrels to chase (but never catch).



“Who is this person holding me? Why is my Mama doing this to me?”
(All of my pets always act like they’re hostages when I take them for Santa pics!)



Queen Sabrina took my bed so I’ll lay here.

Alex



Alex is my \$10,000 shelter cat.

I adopted him for a fee of \$95 when he was 12 weeks old. It seemed like he was feverish and the shelter

said he was fine, that he was just getting over being neutered recently. In actual fact, he was developing pneumonia from an untreated respiratory infection. I took him home, and by Midnight that night it was clear he was running a high fever. He was weak, he would not drink water, and he was dehydrated (I did the pinch test). I gathered him up and off to the 24 hours ER Veterinarian Hospital we went at 12:35am, where he ended spending his very first night “home”. That bill, with the overnight hospitalization, fluids, exams, and medications for the next 2 weeks was \$800, bringing the adoption fee to \$895!

Over the next several nights, he would get up at 2am, crawl onto my chest, and rub his infected green snot all over my face, then press as hard as he could under my chin and cling to me with his tiny paws and claws while he purred a purr full of rattling phlegm in his chest. Between the smell of the snot, and the crackling purring I couldn't sleep. Instead I held him tight and talked to him, rubbing his head and kissing him, and he got well.

Upon follow up with my regular Veterinarian, which included a full blood workup along with chest x-rays, it became clear he had immune system issues – it was not fully developed. He had been found in a trash can and brought to the shelter by a good Samaritan. He was so tiny I could easily hold him in 1 hand, and when he lay on the floor he fit inside a single floor tile. Sometimes when I look at this 17lb cat now, I can hardly believe he was that small – now it takes two hands and using leg strength to lift him!

Alex, maybe due to the malnutrition as an infant, is extremely loving but not the “brightest bulb in the box”. It was 8 years before he stopped getting “lost” within the house.

I don't have a big house.

I discovered this one day when I heard a horrible wail from downstairs. I ran down the stairs thinking something awful had happened, like the refrigerator fell on him (based on the frantic wailing). As soon as he saw me, he ran over and head butted me. After that, “Marco, Polo” became a regular thing. He would wail if he wasn't sure where I was in the house, I'd reply “Alex!”. Rinse and repeat until he found me.

Sabrina immediately took to him, cleaning him, snuggling him, and hitting him when he pestered her too much. She looked after him and he worshipped her. When she died, he got so stressed he got pneumonia again due to his poor immune system which was further impacted by any stress.

Due to this, he has been sickly most of his life. The first couple of years were filled with respiratory issues and recurring pneumonia. Then it was recurring urinary tract

infections, followed by years of eye ulcerations, followed by stomatitis, pancreatitis, 2 surgeries, and finally in the last 2 years, Diabetes. Which fortunately I had experience with from my dog Kenny who you will read about later.

Alex has kept my Veterinarian in business and has seen practically every specialist in town. He was a regular at the 24 hour ER Hospital where they got to know me and him well – as they had with Charmin. More than one time I was told he would not make it. And they were wrong. In 2016, a Specialty Hospital and their premier specialist in cases like Alex gave him only a few weeks to live. My response?

“We’ll see.”

Well it’s 2018 now and he’s doing great. Diabetes under control, happy, playful, loving. No one is surprised except that Specialty Veterinarian who’d never seen Alex before. My Veterinarian says Alex is “special”, meaning that whatever textbooks say about what should or should not happen, what medication should or should not work, and what side effects should or should not occur, Alex’s reactions will defy that 9.5 times out of 10.

The running joke is that the Texas A&M School of Veterinary Medicine (who my Veterinarian consulted many times on Alex’s case) will someday add a course on unique medical diagnostic and treatments called Alex 101.

This tiny shelter cat who fit in my hand is now 17lbs and has cost me over \$10,000. Plus \$95 adoption fee.

And I don't regret a single penny.

Unconditional love and the gift of life is priceless.

He's a happy loving boy who welcomes all the Fospice cases and new arrivals with headbutts and nuzzles, soft meows and company.

He'll probably live to be 25!



The teeny, tiny kitten I brought home!



And now: “King Cat”: 17lbs!





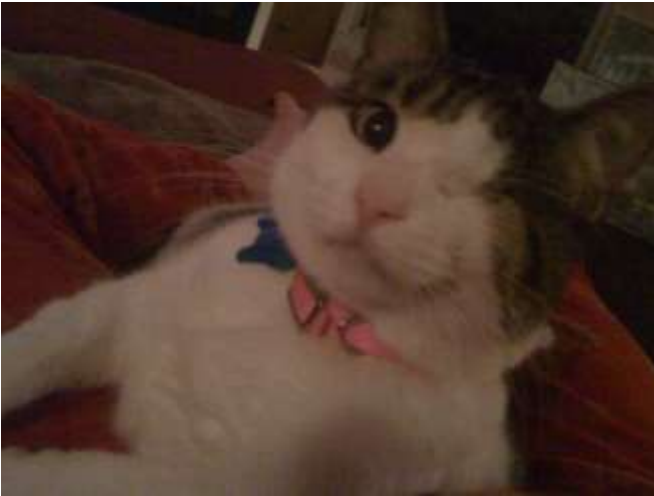
Someone likes
their New Xmas
toy

All worn out after a
long day's play



Auditioning for the
Wizard of Oz

Raja



Raja had only 1 eye when she came to the shelter, because she'd been thrown off a balcony by her "owners." They were a couple of

drunks who lived on the 3rd floor of an apartment building, and "wanted to see if cats really land on their feet."

She didn't.

She survived the fall but one eye was knocked out from impact and could not be saved despite the efforts of a good Samaritan who grabbed her, the eye, and rushed her to an Emergency Veterinary hospital.

When I adopted her, I was very concerned about how she'd do with my other 2 cats and 2 dogs, being not only partially blind but also having no front claws (the drunks had declawed her). As it turned out, it was more me that was the problem! I had to learn not to approach her from her blind side which startled her, nor try to hand her food on that side. I learned to walk around to her sighted side to offer her treats, or pet her, or show her a new bowl of food.

She gave me a scare at her initial Veterinarian exam when she came up FIV positive. Fortunately like all new arrivals, she'd gone into a "quarantine" room while I waited for the all clear. It was finally determined via another extremely extensive test that is used in these cases, that the false positive came from her having been given an FIV vaccine previously. Word to the wise. It was worth the money to do that more extensive test and find out she was fine.

Sabrina was not happy another female was in the house. The Veterinarian had warned me that while multiple male dogs and male cats can get along with no problem, 2 female dogs or 2 female cats in the same house often results in constant fighting...as is often the case with 2 human females! Fortunately, Raja was willing to defer to Queen Sabrina, and would back away into another room when Sabrina hissed at her or gave her the "Leave or Die" look.

As with all new introductions, if there were issues I kept spray bottles filled with 50% rubbing alcohol and 50% water. Spraying it at them (in a mist, not a stream) stopped the fights since they hate the smell of the rubbing alcohol and hate water. It effectively breaks up the fight and since they both smell like a Veterinary office for a while, retreat off to their own spaces and groom. Note: do NOT spray it in their face!

After Sabrina passed away, Raja came out of her shell, and her personality was definitely a reflection of the meaning of her name (Princess).

She immediately took up the role of ruling the house, much to Alex's dismay – he thought he'd be King Cat now. Fat

chance with a lady boss around! Raja took the best spots to lay on, ate the wet food first – or someone got pounded with a front paw - and broke up rumbles between the other animals by running into the tussle and slamming both with her front paws until they both ran off in different directions.

Every night she slept on my right arm, all night long. I ended up with an overextended tendon, but I didn't care. Whatever room I needed to be in, she took up a command post near me, talking and gazing at me. She was the best companion. One of her favorite things was to “go on patrol”. This consisted of her riding on my shoulder like that bird on Allison Janney's shoulder in *I, Tonya*. We went all around the house, up and down the stairs, so she could ensure all was well.

She developed breast cancer at age 9. I had noticed a nipple that had suddenly increased in size, like a lump behind it. Before then I didn't even realize cats could get breast cancer. The growth was removed, they got it all, and for almost 2 years she was healthy and cancer free. Sometime around the 2 year mark, it came back and by the time the lump showed itself – the first and only sign she was sick again - the subsequent ultrasound showed it had spread throughout her body including her lungs. Towards the end she was weak and tired, and had no interest in trying to run off, so I sat on the porch with her in my lap every evening for hours, and most of the day on the weekends, letting her enjoy the fresh air and sunshine. She was happy to just drape in my lap and purr.

Like Fiona, she was taken far too young. She left a lasting impression; even the boy cats and dogs felt the silence and emptiness that followed. She was such a personality that even with 4 pets remaining, and Mr. Fish, the house seemed very empty and silent. It was another case of disproving people who say animals don't grieve.



The Princess Royal, Raja



This bed is far too small for a Princess Royal.
I'm taking the dog bed!





This is MINE! And these presents are too!



Paxton



Paxton was only 6lbs but his self-esteem was 160lbs. This tiny, senior dog had swagger!

When he met a large dog, he would throw out his chest, tilt back his

head, and bark ferociously – which due to his age and heart condition sounded more like a hoarse cough, the effort of which often cause him to tip over. At this point the owner of the big dog would usually have a mini-stroke, assuming their dog had killed Paxton from sheer fright. Meanwhile the large dog would be looking around to see what that faint noise was it heard.

Paxton was the first dog I bought “clothes” for. I’d always been horrified by people who dressed their dogs. But I discovered in winter, he would shake – literally – from cold even in the house. Because he was so old and had a heart condition, his pulse and blood flow was not very good. At first I covered him with blankets, but that didn’t help when

he was up running around, or out back or on a walk (he was very zippy for an old dog).

So I bought him a sweater and discovered he stopped shaking and his arthritis seemed to be a little better. And he seemed to like it, preening once it was on. Since he was so old and on diuretics for his heart, he sometimes peed in his sleep, so I bought extra sweaters because sometimes in the morning his sweater was urine soaked.

It was with Paxton I learned (via my Veterinarian's advice) to place a potty pad with a plastic backing underneath his dog beds, so when that happened it didn't get soak into the couch nor the mattress. I also put a plastic mattress cover on the bed and over the 3 couch cushions (I used a twin sized one for the couch, then put a blanket on top for sitting on).

Originally, I tried having him gated at the foot of the bed but he was so used to sleeping with me he cried all night and I didn't want his last time on earth being a memory of being "punished" and alone for something he could not help.

Paxton taught me a lot of life lessons. He had a lame leg, diseased teeth, a systemic infection and congestive heart failure when I adopted him. And he was the happiest dog you ever met in your life. Lesson #1: Enjoy life. Because.

When I took him home he had a front leg that dangled. The shelter had a sign on his kennel not to walk him and told me he could never be taken on walks. He'd been at the shelter 3 months with his leg dangling like that and had never been let out of his kennel.

He was on the kill list for that evening, due to his age (approximately 11 they said), medical conditions, and being returned.

I called my boss and said “I won’t be back to work this afternoon; I need to use an emergency vacation half-day”. Fortunately he was a dog person and didn’t fire me. I wasn’t always so lucky, and many times was reprimanded for missing work to help an animal even though I used all my vacation time to cover such occurrences and regularly did other’s work when they took off to see a kid’s school play or Kindergarten graduation. But I could write a whole other book on discrimination and bullying of pet owners by workplaces and non-pet parents.

When I took him in for his post adoption exam, my Veterinarian vehemently disagreed with the Shelter instructions. He said, “You WILL walk him. That’s how we heal his leg, which is dangling due to severe osteoarthritis of the ball joint in his shoulder. Walking him will build up the muscles around the joint, allowing it to move as it should. First walk him just to the mailbox and back for a couple weeks. Then walk him a few houses up and back for a couple weeks. Then up the whole street. Keep increasing little by little, based on how he’s doing.” We also put him on MetaCam, antibiotics, and scheduled his dental surgery for a few weeks out, to give him time to gain some weight, and get rid of the dental infection. My Veterinarian also estimated him closer to 15 years old, but he acted like he was 5 despite all his problems! (Another life lesson).

Within 3 weeks the leg stopped dangling. Within 6 weeks he could go around the block, and by the time he’d had his

surgery and was stable, he was doing a 30 minute walk at the park and breaking into runs to chase a squirrel, and dances and leaps when it was cookie time.

With him I learned dogs can get ulcers. The MetaCam caused ulcers; after a few weeks he suddenly woke up in the night and threw up what looked like coffee grounds. I had no idea what was going on and got him to the Veterinarian first thing in the morning. As soon as I described that, he knew exactly what was going on. Of interest, it turned out the same medicine used for people to heal ulcers, Carafate, is used for dogs! Plus no more MetaCam! For a couple weeks, just Carafate, his heart meds, and boiled chicken and rice. Then he went on Rimadyl which was much easier on the tummy. With his improving health, he grew a nice silky coat and the tail that was always down at the shelter and when I first brought him home, was now always up and wagging.

He was a real character. When I first brought him home, he would not settle down to sleep. Over the next 2 weeks I tried everything. One night in frustration I threw the blanket over him in the bed. He immediately stopped crying and lay right down and slept through the night. He was like a little bird where you had to cover the cage at night!

Paxton loved going shopping for new sweaters at the pet store with me, and people always went nuts over him between his sweaters and his hilarious personality. Children would say “Look at the puppy!”. He loved the attention.

He loved not only going to the park, but also the car ride to the park. He was so short, he couldn't see out the windows, so I got one of this car seats where he sat high and could see

out. He loved that too and people got a kick out of seeing him in the passenger seat like that.

I still miss him. As my Aunt Anne said, "You never get over losing a pet; you just learn to live with it." On days my attitude needs some help, I remember Paxton and adjust my outlook back to positive just like he would have been.



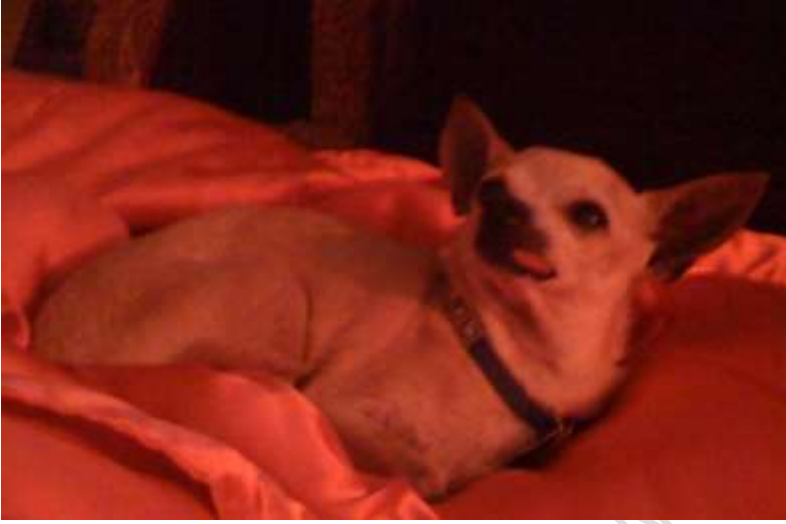
First night home after being saved from death row earlier that day.



I get
cookies
here?!
More
please!



Blanket wrapped bliss.



His tongue hung out since we'd had to remove some of the rotted teeth. I loved the demented look it gave him.



Paxton and Mimi (who you'll read about next



Paxton didn't like the heat, shady spots were best.



This bed is just the right size for me!

Mimi



Mimi came home with Paxton.

She was also on the kill list that night, due to multiple returns “unable to potty train”, age and being heartworm positive. She

and Paxton had never met before and weren’t even in nearby kennels at the shelter. I hadn’t intended to take home 2 dogs, but when it was clear Paxton was going home they asked me to take a look at Mimi.

Mimi was so sweet and scared, and the Shelter was going to give me a voucher to cover the \$850 cost for Heartworm treatment if I adopted her. I put the 2 of them in a meet and greet room and there were no issues, so I came home with 2 dogs!

She was more timid than Paxton, who settled right in. The first few weeks, her tail stayed between her legs all the time. I got her heartworm treated, and the dental surgery she needed for 2 loose front teeth and a cracked molar causing her terrible pain when she ate. Plus lots of love, attention, and

food. Neither she nor Paxton were any problem with the cats. She liked Paxton, and he liked her. They enjoyed walking together and exploring the backyard. He was so playful it helped her come out of her shell faster, and soon she was playing and romping and asking for love.

As for the “unable to potty train”, I think that was just an excuse to return her because I had her potty trained in less than 2 weeks, and within 4 weeks trained to use the potty pads inside I always kept near the door they went out through to potty, if needed while I was gone.

Mimi was the first dog I had that suffered from spontaneous deafness. She couldn't hear me calling her when she was out back, but she could hear a Tupperware open from the 2nd floor. Unlike Paxton, she was a Houdini with the sweaters I bought her (pink of course) and worked her way out of them within a few minutes.

Mimi was a bit of a slow learner. She continued to put her face up a skunk's butt 4 times, still not understanding why each time she was blinded by spray! And why I then kept her up all night bathing her and gated her in the laundry room overnight, to dry and sleep so she wouldn't rub the baking soda all over my bed! Mimi is why I built a half-height, fenced-in area off the kitchen door, with a gate that stayed open during daylight hours, but closed at dusk. FYI: tomato juice and those fancy chemicals at the pet store are a waste of money! Use a garden hose, Johnson's baby shampoo, wash multiple times in a row, sprinkle baking soda on being careful not to get it into the eyes or nose, let it dry, then repeat if needed. The baking soda should stay on overnight,

then brush it out. You'll need to temporarily gate them off so they don't get it all over the furniture.

Mimi was a sweet and gentle soul, only wanting to please. She loved rolling onto her back to have her tummy rubbed and be carried around like a baby. She had a very expressive face, and I often cracked up at her face when they cats did something strange (in her opinion, that was constantly). One eyebrow would raise, while they eyes would be saying, "Why do you keep feeding these odd creatures? That's why they stay!"

Even though Mimi and Paxton had never met before I took them home, they became a bonded pair. When Paxton passed away, Mimi grieved and no longer enjoyed her walks or going out back. She just mostly laid quietly and her tail didn't wag much anymore. Fortunately, Kenny came along to move her back to active emotions.



First night home – are you going to be nice to me?

I'm not sure because people weren't nice to me before.



I'd like a belly
rub again
please!



This is a good spot to nap
when I'm not hogging the
bed!



I do love going to PetSmart –
everyone says I'm so cute!



The usual “hostage” look all my pets have when I take them for pictures with Santa!



Can we snuggle on the couch now?

Kenny



When I went to see Kenny in his Foster home, his name was Keanu. I said, “So how’s that name working out?”

“Not well; he doesn’t respond to it.”

And so Keanu became Kenny.

When I walked in to see

Kenny, he immediately picked up his leash in his mouth and brought it over to me to be walked. I took him for a nice walk and by the time it was over there was no question I was going to take him home. He was 10 years old, and was in a Foster based rescue, because he’d been put on the kill list at the shelter due to being returned twice (another supposed “unable to potty train”). His Foster mother had no trouble with him and having dealt with that bum rap with Mimi and Paxton, I wasn’t worried. There was no information on if he’d lived with cats before so that was a concern, but part of the process was a home visit where they brought him over

and scoped me and my home out to ensure I was a good pet parent.

When his Foster Mom brought him over, he immediately walked into the kitchen area, sprawled out on the tile and proceeded to lay there while Mimi checked him out and the cats cautiously sniffed around him. His Foster Mom couldn't believe it: "He acts like he's always lived here!" I just smiled, and the adoption was finalized.

Even though he was 10 years old he had no health problems. His potty training was a non-issue. Since his Foster Mom had a dog door, and I could not due to indoor only cats, I just had to teach him to go to the kitchen door when he needed to go outside to pee. That took all of a couple days. He never had an accident in the house in the 7 years he was with me.

Kenny was a happy, peppy dog like Paxton He even looked like he was smiling all the time. Everyone who met him commented on how happy and peppy he was and could hardly believe he was 10.

He had never lived with cats before, so it was my first experience with de-sensitization training. He liked to chase anything that wandered into the backyard that ran, and so when he started towards my indoor cats – and they ran – it was something to chase! I setup an exercise pen inside in the dining area, from which he could see all the comings and goings and see into the kitchen, hallway, and living room. The cats could come up and sniff him or put a paw through, and he would get very agitated, wanting to break out and chase. I would talk to him from the "cat side", stroking the

cat, because my Veterinarian said that dogs take their queue from us – if he saw from me the cats had to be treated with respect, as a good “pack member” he would do the same. It took less than a week for him to start totally ignoring the cats racing around on the other side of the exercise pen. In 2 weeks, he was done with them and could care less what they did. The only time he gave them a bad time was if they tried to eat his food, and he’d growl at them which they well deserved!

Kenny was also my first experience with the vicious circle called Cushing’s Disease, a syndrome I hope I never have to deal with again. One of the most frustrating things was I could not get the Specialty Veterinarian I had to be referred to, to run a Cushing’s test for 3 months. I finally insisted and sure enough it came back positive. They kept telling me it was just the Diabetes was hard to regulate – a primary sign of Cushing’s disease. Kenny was put on an experimental new medicine for Cushing’s, Trilostane, which worked well for some time before causing an Addisonian crisis which sent him back into hospital for a week. The second time this happened, he never really recovered.

The first crash was what kicked off the Cushing’s. This dog who had been perfectly healthy for 6 years, woke up one morning vomiting and could not stop. He had to be hospitalized 24 hours a day for a week. I was back to being a regular at the ER/Overnight Veterinary Hospital, hanging out after work to visit him, bringing little Tupperware containers of plain chicken breast, and picking him up at 5am to take him to the Day Veterinary Hospital before I had to get to work. By the end of the week, I was exhausted, and

so was savings: \$6,400. He had to be on IV's 24 hours a day in addition to the other treatments. This was not something that could be done at home. And there was no question I was going to get him the help he needed.

When Kenny developed the Diabetes as a secondary medical issue from the Cushing's disease, I had to get over my fear of needles stat. I was a person who threw up or passed out or just became a crying, hysterical mess when I had to face a needle at the Doctor's office (that's a whole other book!). Now I was faced with having to give my dog a shot twice a day. And it would be best if I didn't pass out twice a day!

The Veterinarian and Vet Tech worked with me at their office to teach me how to draw the insulin properly and ensure I didn't give what's known as a "fur shot", meaning not getting the needle properly under the skin, so the insulin ends up squirting above the surface. With his situation, where Cushing's made it very hard to keep under control, it was imperative I gave the shot exactly every 12 hours and gave it properly.

Of course at the Veterinarian's office, he sat perfectly on the table while they did it. At home, it was a chase to get hold of him, then he would not sit still. I called the Veterinarian in frustration the next day, and he suggested I place Kenny on the kitchen counter to give the shot (the insulin has to be kept refrigerated). It worked – it fooled him into thinking he was on the examination table and he sat quietly every time.

The first couple weeks I had to give the shot I nearly vomited every time and had shaking wet hands and a pounding heart. Over time, the "desensitization" training I

was going through worked, and now needles don't phase me, nor does giving a pet a shot.

Kenny passed away at home in his own bed. I'd checked him out of the hospital. We had spent overnight watching a Gilligan's Island marathon. Neither of us slept because we both knew it was the end. The cats kept coming in to check on Kenny then sit by the bed and watch him. Once the Cushing's happened, he was never as happy. He spent so much time in the hospital, every few weeks, which he absolutely hated. The last time I had to take him to the hospital, he bucked and reared which he'd never done. I'd given him all possible care the best medicines and care money could buy, but it just wasn't fixable anymore; that's the awful thing about Cushing's.



I got a surprise in the mail a few week's later. I'd just bought more of the Cushing's med which was very expensive, and another Insulin (\$278), and needles just a couple weeks before he died. I gave it all to my Veterinarian who had senior fixed income clients that needed it that could not afford it. So I donated about \$600 worth of stuff for their pets. Well my Veterinarians pooled their money and made a sizeable donation to the Texas A&M Veterinary School of Medicine in Kenny's honor. I had no idea until I got this wonderful letter. It's good to know how many people will remember him.

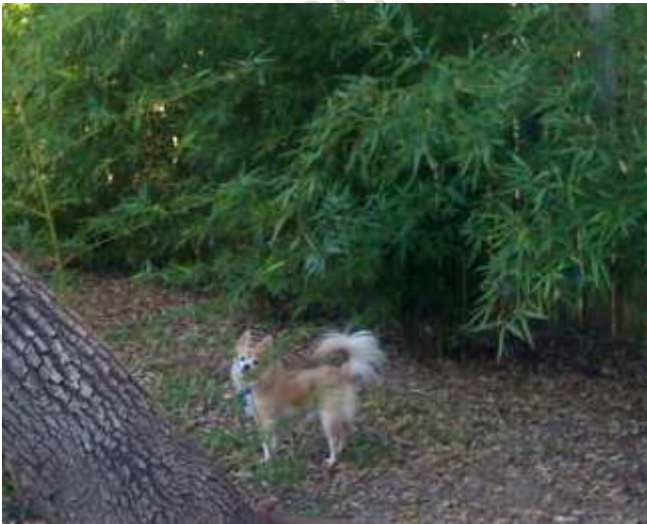


Kenny as “Keanu” when I first met him at his Foster Mom’s house.





On the now infamous “Sheepy Blankey” with Mimi



Where did that squirrel go?



Snoozing with Mimi!



I'm not sharing this bed!

Milo



Milo was the dog, when you walked by the kennels, was unseen. All the other dogs would run and bark at the front of their kennels saying, “Look at MEEEEEE!”. Milo was the dog wedged underneath the raised bed in the back corner of the kennel. When you went into see him he’d press himself as hard as he could back into the corner, and when you reached in to pick him up he’d tremble and urinate.

He had kennel cough and heartworm, and even though he was only 5, his teeth were rotted at the root. My Veterinarian said this was likely due to malnutrition prior to arriving at the shelter. He was a mess and languishing at the shelter due to his inability to “show well”. As my Veterinarian said, “most people walk by a dog that acts like this, but Lauren goes and takes that one!” He speaks great truth!

Milo spent most of his first 3 months at home hiding upstairs in the master closet. He was terrified of anyone who came over and would remain in hiding in the closet for hours after they left. I could carry him downstairs, and then a cat would act insane (most of the time), or I’d drop something, and he’d dash back upstairs.

I also discovered he was afraid of the harness and the leash, and the car. If I tried to walk him, he would stand there and not move. If I tried to get him to go forward, he would try to drag me back towards the house. In the car, he would go absolutely insane, wedging himself under the brake and gas pedals.

Despite trying all the usual techniques I had learned from working with frightened dogs at the shelter, none of it helped. He remained terrified of the car, harness, and leash. Walks were more like a drag. Literally. Trying to drive him just around the neighborhood to get him used to the car only made it worse.

As always, I consulted my Veterinarian. Milo was not food motivated but he was motivated by pleasing me. He wanted love more than anything in the world (and protection from those insane cats). My Veterinarian said I was going too fast with Milo and I needed to break it down into tiny steps in the right direction. I got him over the car anxiety by just taking him and sitting in the car with the engine off. Then coming inside after a few minutes and praising him and giving him a cookie even if he didn't eat it. Eventually I turned the car on and backed into the driveway, again sitting and listening to the radio with him before pulling the car back in. You get the idea. And it worked. After a couple weeks of this we could drive to the park for a walk. In the meantime, when we weren't doing this in the car, he was modeling his harness and leash in the house and being praised for how handsome he looked. I had him wear it just a few minutes at a time at first, and over the next couple weeks as we

also “car trained” had him wear it to the point he forgot it was on, and ignored the leash dragging behind him. Now he goes hysterical if he thinks he gets to go for a car ride because he LOVES it, and leaps and barks and wriggles when the leash comes out because he loves his walks.

Once I got his heartworm treated, and his dental surgery, he grew a nice glossy coat from good care and diet. He’s been healthy since, unless I give him too many cookies that day!

It’s always wonderful to take an animal home and watch them blossom and Milo is no exception. Milo has gone from hiding in the closet to an epic bed and pillow hog. He has no compunction about taking up most of a Queen size bed and getting quite put out if I try to shove him over to make room for me. He refuses to eat the same flavor of food served more than 1 night in a row and will go on a hunger strike to force the opening of a different flavor. If a flavor is deemed unacceptable he will turn his back to me and the dinner and refuse to look at me until it’s replaced. Like Mimi, he refuses to keep a sweater on but is always cold so I often wrap him in a blanket and put him in my lap or carry him that way which he loves. In the bed, he likes to be completely covered like Paxton did, and isn’t happy unless you do that. He still isn’t interested in dog toys – at least he’s no longer afraid of them, instead preferring to have “races” outside in the backyard, running after squirrels or running back and forth with me (he usually wins). He loves to trot behind me as I move around the house, especially first thing in the morning, leaping around and licking the back

of my leg. When I stop to turn, he wriggles happily because he knows he gets a kiss back! The first time he did it I was pouring my coffee and I was startled because I didn't know what was going on. He jumped away thinking he would be punished. I called him back and gave him lots of kisses. Since then being a "kissy bug" is a standard part of his behavior, instead of shaking and peeing.

And every time we get in the car, before he takes his place at his window, he gives me a kiss.

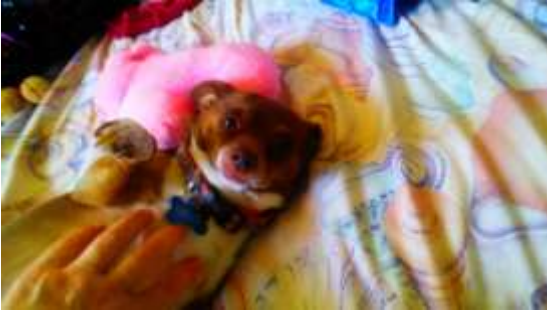




It's too cold to get up. I'll just stay here all day. Can you bring me my breakfast?



Ok, I know I said it was cold, but please don't make me wear this – the cats will make fun of me!



Tummy rubs are
always good



Milo's first Xmas.
He's not thrilled
about the sweater but
he sure liked his
stocking!



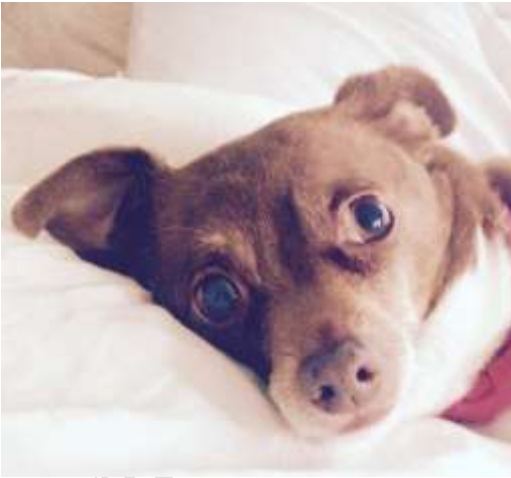


You aren't going to eat all that ice cream yourself are you?

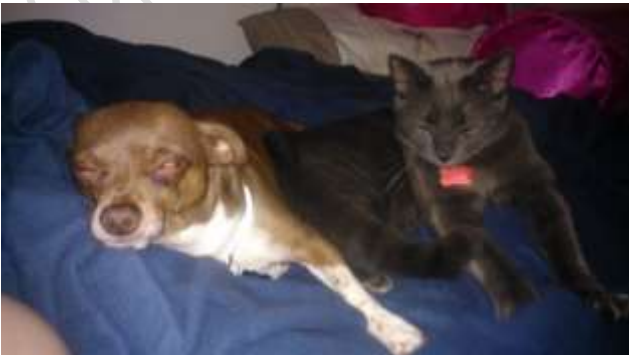




Must be
bedtime!



Tell me a story.



Why is this cat
always on me?
I'm too tired to
worry about it!

Duchess



Duchess was a 13 year old cat surrendered at the shelter by her owner. The owner was moving to

another rental that didn't take pets. Don't even get me started on why she didn't try to find a place with her pet, when there are plenty in this town.

Personally I think it's because she was old and needed treatment for her Thyroid, which had been left untreated, leaving Duchess in a precarious health situation. Duchess, after having been in a home her whole life, did not take to the shelter well - as many don't. She was unhappy, grumpy, and with hyperthyroid that had gone unaddressed until she was fur and bones. She had refused to eat for two weeks and wasn't drinking water. They were now forcing fluids down her throat to keep her alive.

I helped the Vet Tech give her the liquids and this cat I'd been told would be hostile, instead got up, looked right at me, climbed on my shoulder and wouldn't let go. The shelter staff of course immediately offered to let me Medical Foster – I could take her home right then! They were not sure she would make it through the weekend if she stayed there since she was refusing to even drink water and was dehydrated,

thin, and weak. Needless to say, I took her home and placed her in the “Kitty Hilton” foster room, along with Fancy Feast broths which I’d discovered with other sick kitties. It is literally human grade food; if you don’t believe me look at the label – then taste it. It’s delicious. I’ve had restaurant bisque not as good as this stuff. I also set out regular wet and dry food, a water bowl, window sill beds, soft rugs, kitty tower, toys, and litter (you can see why it’s called the Kitty Hilton).

The rest of that Saturday evening, she just lay on the cat post like a flat dishcloth, not wanting to get up nor have any broths. I was beginning to get concerned she might not make it like the Shelter had been concerned about. Before bed, I set my alarm to get up during the night to try and offer her food and discovered at 2am that she’d eaten the entire Fancy Feast broth and some of the wet and dry food. I opened another packet of broths and set the alarm for 5am. When I checked, she’d eaten that too. This got her hydrated, which got her up. By Sunday afternoon, she was also eating the wet and dry food, and sitting on the windowsill pillow, grooming and purring, talking endlessly to me as I brushed her.

Over the next two weeks she regained her strength and started to fill out and get very fluffy. The Shelter said to bring her back anytime since she was doing better. I decided to become a Foster Failure instead (I adopted her). It was so nice to not be the only girl in the house full of boys! She was extremely bossy – hence the name (her Shelter name was Floppy). She didn’t merely meow, she issued orders.. She was a great conversationalist, always talking to me. I learned not to get into an argument with her – I always lost! She also

liked to “help” me work, laying across my keyboard, or mouse, or standing in front of the webcam when I am trying to have an online meeting. Fortunately, the people I worked with at the time were animal oriented people who didn’t mind the screen was suddenly filled by a cat butt!

My Veterinarian got her thyroid under control, and she gained weight and became very lively. She would have bursts of energy, suddenly going wild over a toy mouse, or a bag of catnip. My favorite thing to watch was when she’d play with shadows on the floor, from the sun shining through the tree branches which would wave in the wind. I have a great video of her with 2 of her favorite toys: a block of “cheese” that had 2 mice that popped in and out (battery operated). She would literally spend hours next to it until she fell asleep. Her other favorite was a battery operated mouse on a wand, that went in circles underneath a round tablecloth-like cover. She would get ahold of the cover and drag that thing all over the house as her prey. It was hilarious.

Duchess liked to drink from the sink, so I bought her two pet fountains which she completely ignored other than to wash her feet in them, making it useless for any other pet to drink out of due to the litter residue. When I would get ready in the morning she’d jump on the counter and I’d turn the faucet to make a little stream of water which she’d bat at – I guess to ensure the correct temperature, then drink.

She loved being held, carried, petted and was very social and chatty. She loved finding a very high spot, like the top of the stairs on the ledge there and surveying the Duchy. If any of the other animals got out of line, she ran over and hit them with her paw – just like Raja had. Maybe it’s a girl cat thing. I

just know that all the boys do better when there's a girl around to keep them behaving well! Like Mr. Frisky, she preferred to be served out of coffee cups and in Duchess' case, the fine china bowls (my Aunt Anne's wedding china, who being an animal rescuer, approved heartily of this use). Duchess would wait on the dishtowel by the sink in the kitchen when she wished to be served her meals by the kitchen maid (me).

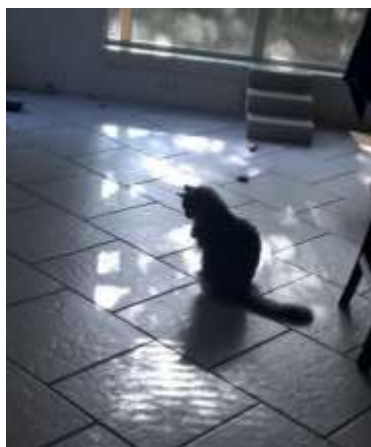
Her Thyroid was very easy to control once I switched her from the chewable tablets which she didn't consistently eat to a compounded ear gel I rubbed in her ear flap twice a day. In the end it was her heart that gave out, not anything caused by the Thyroid, just old age. I greatly miss her at the sink when I get ready in the morning.

I always told her if I was as gorgeous as her, I wouldn't need any makeup!





Fuzzy
bliss
(that's a
self-
warming
pad)



Shadow dancing



My Royal Assistant
“helping” me work



Duchess loved a good hiding place to escape from the “peasants” (the other cats and dogs and I think me as well!)





She also loved spending time in the Royal Catio



This pet fountain ended up being only used for washing litter feet in; the sink was preferred by HRH



We are displeased; this bathtub is far too small.



Now this tub is just right, especially with my Royal ribbon and mouse. You didn't need to use it did you?

Jewel



Jewel was another Fospice. She was approximately 18, and her kidneys weren't in great shape. She peed her own bed every day in the

shelter. Turns out the kidneys weren't causing that. Her osteoarthritis was so bad she couldn't balance in the litter pan which had that rolled paper litter which is tough even for a younger cat to get good footing. I set her up with a walk in flat pan (a slightly raised lip of only an inch and with a "pass-through" cut out so no stepping over an edge. In it I taped potty pads so they wouldn't move.

She never had an accident after that.

She also had hyperthyroid which I'd been through with Duchess and so I was able to re-use Duchess's leftover meds on Jewel (I just had to measure a different amount to rub in her ears).

She loved to head nuzzle me and wanted to just be held over my shoulder for hours on end, which I was happy to do. She was so desperate for love. It's terrible she was given to a shelter at that age, basically because her owner didn't want to deal with accidents (so easily fixed) and the hyperthyroid (very cheap medicine, very easy to rub on ear). It's terrible so

many old pets are treated so badly; I see it all the time when Volunteering. But then old people are often treated equally badly so I guess it's not surprising; it's what children learned to do from their parents.

Jewel was happy to sit on her cat post in the window, and soak in the afternoon sun every day. She spent all her time in the master bedroom, which had an attached bathroom, so I ended up putting her special "litter" pan in there next to the toilet, and her bed next to my bed. Her cat post was already in the window by the head of the bed because that's the window that got the afternoon sun. I think like many old pets, the warmth of the sun made her joints feel better. I also put the self-warming pads in her post and bed.

She only used her bed when I wasn't in the big bed. As soon as I got in bed every night – from the very first night I brought her home – she crawled onto my chest and pushed her face into mine over and over again, getting kisses and strokes, and then finally pressing her head hard against my cheek or under my chin and going to sleep. She was such a beautiful, gentle soul. I was happy to give her a comfortable, safe, loving retirement home in her golden years.

Once in a while she had enough energy to bat a toy around but she mostly enjoyed napping in sun puddles and giving and getting love.

She actually went from looking very dank, to growing a beautiful Tortie coat and ended up living almost 18 months instead of the expected few months.

Once again I hope my Veterinarian was right – she was so happy she did not want to leave.





Like Duchess,
Jewel preferred
sink water, or
my water glass!



Night 1: Kitty Hilton with Fancy Feast Broths room service!



Although sometimes taking the dog bed was preferred. Despite her age, she could still let them know who's boss!





Her favorite bed. I still have it.

Copyright

Silver



Silver is my one and only polydactyl cat. I didn't even know that was a word until I rescued him. My Veterinarian was so excited to finally have a polydactyl patient – he'd only heard about it in veterinary school despite his 15 years as an ER Hospital

Veterinarian - and he proceeded to tell me all about how Ernest Hemingway was obsessed with polydactyl cats.

He was a stray that showed up one day, and just stayed. No microchip, no collar. A year and a half later I was still feeding him and giving him shelter in the garage. At first he would not come in there, so I used a domed litter pan wrapped in a blanket then wrapped in a tarp for when it was raining or cold to give him shelter and put his food in so it didn't get wet. Eventually he trusted the garage. I could not get him in the house; he would go buck wild if I even shut the garage door all the way (I left it up a few inches for him to go in and out). However outside, anytime I went out to see him he

would immediately come sit on my lap to be petted. So he wasn't technically feral. And he never roamed. He had a notched ear when he showed up, and empty sacks so I knew he'd been neutered. Twice I tried to catch him for vaccinations and he went wild, and then would not come back for 3 days in one case. It was essential I was able to care for him, so I bided my time.

One day he showed up with an eye swollen almost shut and the visible part looked black. He crawled into the garage and went under my car which was not normal; his "spot" was in the plush fleece bed on the warm hood of my car. I hit the garage door button so he was trapped, and this time he did not go wild trying to get out. He just stayed under the car. I called my Veterinarian, who sent a Vet Tech over to help me get him into a carrier. This end up involving oven mitts, a pillow case, and a broom (to lead him with not hit him with) as he did start to fight when we tried to put him into the carrier.

And so off he went, for a \$500 eye surgery plus vaccinations, deworming (he had Giardia), microchip, and Feluk/FIV tests. After a couple days he could come home, but he had to stay in the quarantine room while the eye healed and the Giardia medicine finished and all contaminated poop was checked, and the room and everything in it bleached to sanitize it (due to the Giardia). I had to throw away the cat posts. The toys and bedding and litter pans were all washable with bleach. While he was at the Veterinarian, they gave him a penicillin shot that lasted 30 days so I did not have to try to pill him with post-surgery antibiotics for the eye.

To my shock and surprise, he did not go wild in the Kitty Hilton. In fact, he showed no desire whatsoever to get out of the room. As always, when I came to see him he crawled in my lap to be held and petted. Once he was past the deworming and his eye was fully healed, which was about a month, I opened the door. He did not try to leave the room. He would sit in the room, or in his kitty teepee, watching the other cats come in and out, and interacting with them. He would not even go near the door to the room.

It took 3 months before he'd go to the doorway and sit there to watch the world go by. It was 6 months before he ventured into the big cat room next door – a guest bedroom repurposed where all the litter pans were, food and water bowls, cat trees, etc. for all the other cats. It was over a year before he'd go downstairs. If I opened the front or back door, he'd run all the way upstairs and get in his kitty teepee. My Veterinarian laughed and said he must have had a home once upon a time and had no intention of losing this one!

It was November when he'd shown up hurt, so his first Thanksgiving and first Xmas with me were fun. For Xmas, I bought him one of those big stockings at the pet supplies store that has all the toys and catnip filled mice, and feathers etc. I dumped it all out and he just went crazy playing with all the toys, then laid down in my lap to just purr and be petted until he fell asleep. It was the best Xmas! He's grown fuzzy and plump and lets me trim his nails although the "special toes" have thick nails that tend to want to grow into his pad so those have to be trimmed every 3 months by the Veterinarian with his special tool.

He ended up bonding with Alex, worshipping Alex in the way Fiona had worshipped Mr. Frisky, following Alex everywhere.

To find Silver in the house all you have to do is find Alex. And there will be Silver, stuck as close to him as he can get. Like Mr. Frisky, Alex was at first annoyed by this, then decided to take Silver under his “wing” and clean him. They have been inseparable since.







Silver in a rare moment not velcroed to Alex



Silver's first Xmas – he was still quarantined in the Kitty Hilton due to the Giardia.

Biscuit



Biscuit was like Paxton 2.0. A tiny, very old dog with a big dog personality.

Biscuit's friend at the shelter had been diagnosed with bone cancer and was now in

Fospice with a

Veterinarian Tech. Biscuit was very thin, with bald patches, dental problems, heartworm positive, and in a lot of pain from arthritis.

Another “fixer-upper” that I took on happily. Biscuit was a new learning experience because when I took him home he still had his sight, albeit cloudy, but he became almost completely blind (just plain old age). I had to learn to figure out how to setup the house for him, ensure he didn't get lost in the backyard, fall down the stairs, or fall off the bed and get hurt (the bed was on a high platform). For the 2 or 3 steps into the living room, or down off the porch to the yard, I used a thick shag rubber backed bathroom rug so that gave him a scent to find, and if he did miss a step he fell on something soft. For the staircase, I bought a small wooden baby gate for \$5 at Goodwill that I put up when I was not home, so he could not climb up the stairs, then fall down them! At night the gate moved to the top of the stairs. The cats could easily jump it as it was only 18 inches high, and he

was too small and too old to jump it. Later for larger dogs I discovered high gates that have a “cat pass thru” at the bottom. For the bed, I bought these long cylinder shaped pillows and put them all around the perimeter of the mattress, so he would run into these soft “bumpers” and not fall off. If he needed to get down to get his water or pee he’d bark and wake me up so I could lift him down then back up.

Biscuit was a character, blossoming after his treatments into a peppy, zippy dog that I was amazed was so lively considering how old he was (17). He loved his sweaters, and a pink pig stuffed toy I bought him that was almost as big as he was. He spent many a happy hour chewing the ears off the pig, and trying to throw it in the air, then leap on it and wrestle it. As I’ve often said, who needs cable when you have pets?



That was
good!
Seconds
please!!



This is OK, but I prefer my pink pig (it's behind him in the picture).



Safety bumpers on the bed and a guard cat.

Sleepy time with a nice soft, warm blanket.



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Garth



Garth is another animal that came to live with me because he didn't show well at the shelter and had languished there for almost a year. He is a Russian Blue so I often refer to him as Mr. Frisky's heir to the Czar throne. He certainly has the imperious attitude of

his great-grandpa!

He's a silly goofball, who kicks if you try to hold him but wants attention and love and will go off by himself if he feels the other animals are getting more attention. When you seek him out to give him some extra 1:1 loving, he will roll onto his back and grab your hands with his paws and try to clean them, purring until he begins drooling.

Like Mr. Frisky, he wants his meals served on the table, and like the dogs he prefers table scraps over pet food!

One of his favorite things is to sit on the cat post behind my chair when I'm trying to work and grab handfuls of my hair with his teeth and pull to get attention. He loves to sit tight against me on the couch, burrowing under a blanket next to me, and purring away as he gets petted. At bedtime, he likes to climb on the pillows and sleep against the top of my head.

Much to the consternation of the other cats in the house, he likes to hide behind things and corners, and leap onto them as they go by. He can never understand why this doesn't go well!

He's a total embarrassment at the Veterinarian for vaccinations and nail trims, peeing on everyone and requiring 2 vet techs to hold him down for the shots and nail trim like he's an insane wild cat. That's my Russian Blue baby! He's 7 now and I hope he never changes!



You don't mind if I eat this do you? I thought you were done.



Discussions with the Buddha



The baby Czar wishes
to be served a treat
now.

Bird
Gazing.



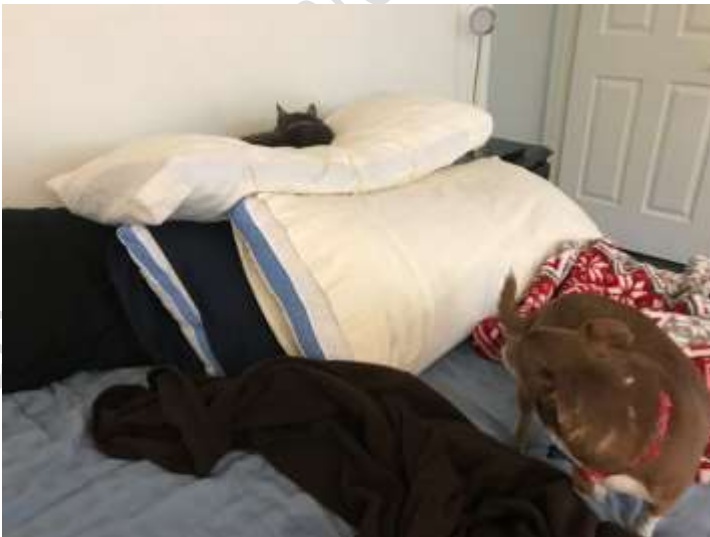
I don't eat sunflower seeds but I'm claiming



this as mine anyway!



Biscuit's old pink pig became a treasured friend.



The Pillow King

Ferals and Strays

Snoopy



Snoopy was my first Fospice. He was FIV positive and had leukemia. He came to the Shelter from an owner who'd killed her other cats, one by not looking in the dryer before she threw in the load of clothes and turned it on (she apparently had been too busy on her phone to hear the screams and wails from the dryer as it roasted to death – literally) and had poisoned her other 2 cats by putting down fish fertilizer on the lawn which smelled good to them, they ate it, and died. At this point, Snoopy was her only cat still left alive, and she decided she didn't want any more pets – the first responsible decision she'd made.

I was more than happy to take in Snoopy, who was so incredibly sweet and loving. I worked with the Veterinarian to give him palliative care. He lived about 4 months. He had his favorite stuffed bear he snuggled with, and was very happy to be in a safe, warm, comfortable place with lots of food and love. He wasn't used to love, but he warmed up to that concept fast, and enjoyed just being with me while I read books to him in the fospice room.

Angel



Angel was “older than Moses”, said my Veterinarian. He was another fospice case from the shelter. He was actually over 20! And had been taken to the shelter at that age – unconscionable. Parents are teaching their children to dump them

in nursing homes when they get old by doing this.

The shelter was happy someone could give him a home for his remaining time, after he’d been in a home 20 years then ended up in a cage at a shelter. His heart and kidneys weren’t in good shape, simply due to old age, and he was somewhat senile; his vision and hearing were also not great. But he was happy and loving.

The fospice room had 2 almost floor-to-ceiling windows where he loved watching the birds, lizards and squirrels, chattering to them when they appeared. He loved his cozy soft beds, and since he often didn’t know he had peed, I had a stack of them from Big Lots and Goodwill, and simply took the peed on bed and threw it in the washer while I put out a clean one. He couldn’t eat dry food, but he ate lots of wet food which helped keep him hydrated. He didn’t exactly play with the toys, but he liked to hold them close and purr.

With Angel, I discovered two valuable tools: Snuggle Safe and self-warming pads. These kept him warm and weren't a fire hazard like leaving a heating pad plugged in all the time.

He was very sweet, and like with Snoopy, I spent many hours sitting next to him reading while he purred and purred and purred. My Veterinarian remarked I was becoming the best hospice in town. I was happy to do so!

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Baby, Blessy, and PK

All three of these fabulous felines were strays I cared for and worked with the shelters to get adopted. Sadly Baby and Blackie were very shy and had no inquiries. I fostered them until they passed away. PK (I'd given him that nickname for Pretty Kitty) was a clingy, chatty love bug who loved other cats and had definitely been a house cat before. But as usual, no microchip, no collar, and no results from FOUND ads and posters. Once the Shelter posted him as available, PK got adopted within 4 days!

Baby



Blessy



PK

Afterword

I wrote this book because 9,000 pets die in the USA every day due to no fault of their own; simply for being born, but not cared for, over their lifetime. Increase that number exponentially when you take it worldwide.

“Save Them All” can start to seem more like a fantasy than a reality. To help make it a reality, I started AskMrFrisky.org. Visit www.AskMrFrisky.Org to learn more about our work, our current sanctuary residents, and how you can help Save Them All.

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About the Author

Lauren Greenwood, founder of AskMrFrisky.org, has volunteered for animal shelters and rescues for many years, cleaning, walking, loving, Vet Tech'ing, creating and running volunteer programs, speaking at schools, civic fairs, radio and TV programs on humane treatment of pets and wildlife.

Lauren also runs her own rescue, focused on senior special needs animals. At any given time, has an assortment of cats and dogs and thankfully, a team of very supportive Veterinarians!

