

Sunday, December 11, 2016

Dear Wynne and Barb,

The words I share I share not often. It brings pain but in the end a much greater meaning to life and purpose. My three short stories...

On the eve of one of our eldest kitties' passing (19 generous years), a small delicate orange kitty showed up in our yard. It was as if she dropped from the clouds. We knew all the strays who roamed the neighborhood and she didn't belong. At first it was thought that she was young, but her tiny frame held secrets of her hard life and extreme age. As I approached, I realized that she was partially blind and had a swollen face. We made the quick decision to take her inside as the temperature was dropping. I brought her upstairs and placed her into one of our spare crate cages. She was matted and in terrible health, and we couldn't take the chance of her passing an illness onto others. The next day our beloved old gentleman, Sam, of 19 years passed away and crossed into peacefulness from a tired and failing body. The sadness was deep. That night I returned to our little kitty upstairs who was hungry and affectionate. I let her out into a closed room, fed her, and started to brush out the mats that held her aged body captive. She rolled around and purred such a loud song. I placed her back into her protected home for another evening. She was scheduled for a doctor's visit the next day. I awoke in the morning only to find her silent. She was curled into her blanket and had passed in the night. For a second day, we buried a precious soul. We gave her the name **Pumpkin**.

Hercules came to us a few years ago but only for a few short months. He was grizzled and a battled tom cat and had no wish to be near the two-legged kind. I would spot him outside our bathroom window under yard tools and would try talking to him. He was not very impressed. Little by little, he would not run away as often and would stand off in the distance. Then one day, I was in the garden and I caught sight of him watching me. I began my usual conversation hoping to win him over. Slowly, he came out of hiding and approached me as I worked in the soil. To my happiness, he fell down and starting rolling around. At that point, I fell in love and he became my "boyfriend". He was scarred but yet one of the most beautiful cats I had ever seen with baby blue eyes. Right before Christmas, we decided to get his teeth cleaned and to start him on his first set of shots. In dismay, we found out that he was very ill and could pass on disease to other cats. We could not bring him into our home because we could not risk the health of our other kitties. We could not find him a home and leaving him outside threatened other animals. We made the excruciating decision to put him to rest for the sake of others. My anger was inconsolable. I felt that I had failed and I continued to question my decision for a very long time.

Tommy joined our family of felines several years ago and was another timid, frightened soul, who took months to even get within a few feet of us. One brutally cold November day, Thanksgiving eve, I coaxed him into our home by opening the front door at minus 3 degrees and placing food in the hallway. I stood behind the door just waiting to get him in far enough so that

I could close the door behind him. I wanted to place him in our utility room where he could at least be warm on the frigid nights. Once inside, he hid for a while until I bravely pulled him out from a shelf. I had no idea what to expect. I started to pet him and he unleashed the deepest purr I had ever heard. I fell in love instantly and he never went out again. He was my boy. This year at the young age of 7, he was taken from us in a vicious and fast moving asthmatic attack. The vet desperately tried to save him and even tried breathing for him but it was not a battle anyone would win. I remember holding him in my arms telling him that I was so sorry. I felt an internal scream of uncontrollable pain and anger. I could not save him. It seared my heart.

I share these stories for one purpose. We give our hearts, our time, and our resources to save those creatures that have no one. We suffer deeply when we can't save them and fill our pillows with so many tears. The humanity that surrounds us doesn't always understand or care and many cause pain and anguish for the unfortunate souls who just come looking for shelter, food and love. We are their refuge.

What you have accomplished at the Hacienda and with Circle of One can never be taken away. Your dedication and sacrifice is humbling. Without your inspiration, I do not believe that I could have ever opened my home to so many homeless furry companions. Our whiskers include 8 cats, 3 bunnies and 1 dog. We feed stray cats, birds and squirrels and even the deer come into our yard. I have always loved animals but until I met you both, I would have never thought it possible to dedicate my life so much. By giving of your lives to your companions you have opened the minds of all of us to extend our compassion beyond what we ever thought we could. In doing so, you have helped save countless animals. No...we cannot save every creature and humanity...well...many of them will be damned for their heartless treatment of animals and lack of empathy. But with our last breath, last morsel of food, last penny, we will fight on and grant the compassion and kindness to our four-legged companions in their life and dignity in their passing. The true sanctuary is in our heart because no one can ever close that door.

Blessings to you both for all you have done. Your spirit is perpetual.

Love,
Heidi