

On Becoming a Cat Person

I write this with a touch of embarrassment and in an act of repentance. You see, I used to snicker at the efforts of my cat-loving relatives and friends when they'd start yammering on with stories of their darling's antics or displaying recent photographs of the little furballs.

Where we grew up, we always had at least one cat around the house. They were good mousers and we didn't dote over them. They knew their place and duty and that was that. If they dared go on the dining table or kitchen counter, it was out the door for them.

Last fall, I used the option of adopting a cat as one of the choices for my daughter's 17th birthday. It was either that or the dreaded snow boarding lessons she was hoping for that coming winter. She readily and surprisingly agreed to the cat adoption. So one Friday afternoon in November, a cat-loving friend from work drove us to the Humane Society. After a bit of browsing around, "ooing" and "ahhing", my daughter finally chose the quietest kitten of all the bunch. She was a cute brown tabby named Geneva. Within the next 30 minutes, I as the adult had to sign for responsibility in the adoption and of course, pay the fee.

The next few days and nights in our home were very lively - and tiring. The boys were interested in this cutest new member of our family. She was interested in digging in my plants, climbing the curtains and chasing our feet under our blankets as we tried to sleep.

After I joined the OIW in January, I noticed there were also members who were cat loving people and had even written books about them. I chose to be quiet. The cat had my tongue. I was also surprised to hear about a Cat Writers Association! I still snickered a bit.

Over the next few months, Geneva grew on us. We made sure her needs were taken care of every day. I seemed to become her chief caregiver. We let her climb the cabinets, mantle and shelves to perch and sleep in the highest vantage point in our common living area. We took her for follow-up appointments at the veterinarian and even did the responsible thing to have her spayed. It seemed though that she started putting on some weight the next few months after that. She wasn't as spry as she used to be. She seemed bored. She was gaining some girth. Instead of "Small Kat", her nickname was becoming "Fat Tabby".

As luck would have it and without any superstitions, we were given the opportunity to take in a black cat in July. We were happy with the opportunity to introduce a companion and playmate for Geneva. "Snuggles" was a three-year old male who was neutered, declawed and partially shaved. Poor thing. The former family's mother was hoping less cat fur would contribute to her youngest's allergies but it did not help. He looked like a timid, miniature black lion!

The introduction did not go well with all the growling, hissing and spitting. Snuggles hid for most of the first week and only ventured out to feed and make deposits in the litter box. He was very affectionate with the human members of the family but kept his distance from that moody she-cat with teeth and claws. After two weeks, they started warming up to

each other with chasing around the house in the wee hours of the morning.

As I started sharing our little progress stories with family and friends, the realization was coming to me. I had photos of my two darlings in my bag so I could show my bus buddies. I had photographs posted at my desk at work and even emailed some to family and friends. I had even started a "cat happy" theme in my blog. Ahh! Oh no! What had I become? Was I becoming a "cat person"? I was assured by a coworker though that it takes three or more cats before one becomes labelled as such. My oh-so-smart teenage daughter was teasing that I may become like the "Crazy Cat Lady", making incoherent outbursts while tossing cats at people. Not yet anyway.

On a scientific note, a recent on-line article states that owning a cat can be beneficial to your health and cats provided companionship and stress relief for their owners. I agree with the benefits of their companionship but not to the reference of "owning". You can't own a cat. You can't "own" another living thing. You can nurture and enjoy their presence and their positive effects as you deal with your life challenges and your daily doldrums.

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