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[Home](#) > 2015: Year in Review. 2 of 2

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(continued from [part 1](#) ⁽¹⁾)

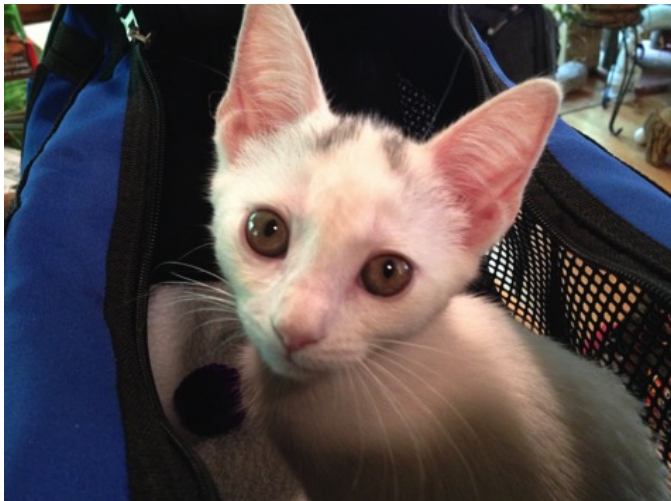
August

After a month of tests, I continued on, but this time weighing about 20 pounds less. The pain wasn't as severe and I was a pro at checking my blood glucose every day. I never saw it go beyond a normal reading, but I was also terrified to go out to eat (so I didn't). I cooked more than I cared to, but if I controlled what went into the food, I was "safe."

I was lost trying to sort out what to eat, what not to eat. I hadn't had sugar or much white flour. No more pasta, no more nuttin'. I had terrible cravings, but I knew that if worked very hard, it would go away and I'd make new routines eventually...yeah, right. **We're talking about me, a self-confessed "foodie" who felt like her whole life was over.**

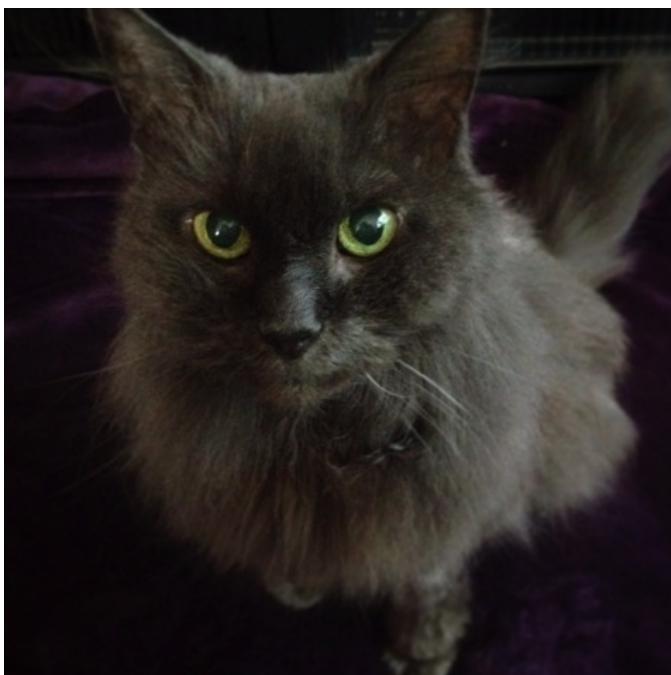
At least I got to rescue a kitten we named, Tink. She came flea-infested from Animal Care & Control in NYC. It was our first rescue-pull from them and it was a proud moment for me because if you're going to rescue a cat from a tough place, NYACC is it. They do a great job partnering with an organization called HOPE, to get the animals OUT of their facilities, but you can imagine they are overloaded day and night.

Tink went to foster care and her foster mom fell in love so Tink's adoption was sealed.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Think, a mini-Freya ⁽²⁾, bright light in an otherwise dreary world.

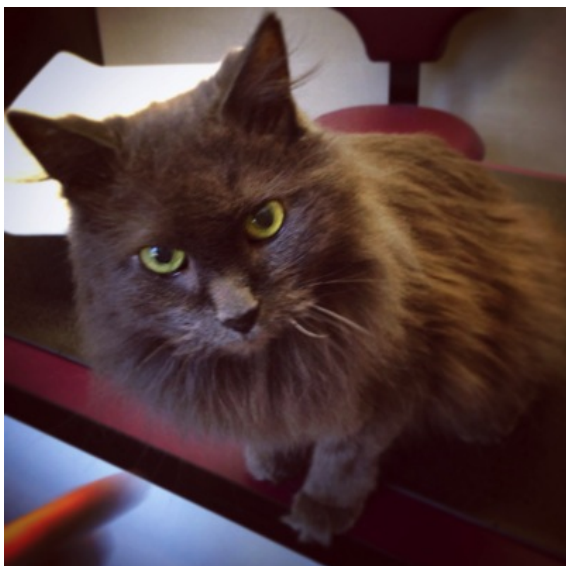
Meanwhile, I wasn't too sick to notice that my cat, Gracie wasn't eating well. No matter what we did or tried to feed her she was clearly off her food. I took her to the vet and they said she needed a dental cleaning right away. Other than the fact I hadn't been working and was low on funds, there was nothing to be particularly concerned about as it was a routine procedure.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Minus most of her teeth after a dental, now Gracie was facing something much more dire.

September

Something was wrong with Gracie after her dental. She wouldn't eat, was depressed and after going back to the vet a half dozen times in two weeks, they noticed she had a very enlarged liver. I might as well have let her go the second I saw the look on Dr. Larry's face as he examined her. He shook his head. "I don't like this. I don't like this at all." he said.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. At one of a million vet visits, each one giving us hope that we'd find the answer of what was ailing our girl.

And so began a torturous two months of trying to save Gracie's life. It was so hard on me that I couldn't eat or sleep. I had such bad anxiety because we couldn't find what was going on, but could only guess it was neoplasia (cancer), somewhere. **If we didn't know what was slowly killing my sweet cat, we couldn't TREAT it.** The clock was ticking. I'm not a loser when it comes to my cats. I will fight and fight for them but nothing I did helped Gracie get any better.

I cared for her around-the-clock. Sam and I took turns medicating and feeding her. Every morning I wondered if I would come down the stairs and see Gracie had passed away over night. Every morning I hated myself for partly wishing it would be the case and it would be

over, but I also had to work hard to find joy in our last days together because this was all we were going to get.



2015 used with permission. Woody on his mom's lap. He's where he was supposed to be all along.

There **was** a moment of joy. **Woody, the last of Mia's kittens, finally got adopted after a 18 months.** Woody's siblings, Greta and Lil' Snickers had been in their forever home for 6 months, but their mom, Nicole and been aching over the fact that Woody was left behind. She and her family agreed that Woody needed to join them. I couldn't believe it when she called, but indeed that's what she really wanted all along.

It was a shaky two weeks because Woody had to leave his mother, Mia. I hated separating them, but truth be told, Mia is not friendly enough to be adopted and this was Woody's best chance.



2015 used with permission. Wood (on recliner) reunited with Lil Snickers (front) and sister, Greta (sofa).

Woody is doing great and his siblings remembered him after a few days. Mia is showing signs of coming around, too, so maybe one day she'll find her family, too.

October

Lex & Lucy got adopted even though I was pretty much checked out of running Kitten Associates. I was glad for them because the couple was great and I've heard the kitties are doing well, but it also meant the remaining foster cats were well beyond being cute kittens. They were all over 8 pounds and too big for their prime adoptable time.



Used with permission. Lex & Lucy together always, in their forever home.

I began taking an online class with the Humane Society of the United States. It was 10-weeks long plus 5 hours of course week, at least, every week. At the end of it I'd be certified as a Cat Behavior Counselor. The question was, could I do it when my heart was breaking and my mind was numb from stress?

Our sole remaining feral cat, Bronte showed up looking frail and sickly. We put out a trap so we could get her to the vet, but instead of trapping Bronte, we got this big tom cat who had been hanging around our house for months. I was able to learn he was being fed down the street, but the person at that home said he wasn't her cat. Since we had the cat and to get back at him for ripping my screen window open a few days before, I took him to be neutered (*okay I wasn't getting revenge, but...*).



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Barry sat outside my office window (before he ripped it open) and cried. Meanwhile DOOD and Blitzen egg him on.

I named the cat, **Barry**.

I figured I'd let him go back outside after he recovered from surgery. What I didn't expect was that Barry was friendly, so then I was faced with what to do with him.



©2008 Robin AF Olson. Bronte, the last time we were able to trap her and get her vetted.

Sadly, we never saw Bronte again. She'd been with us for seven years. We had heated cabins for her in our screen porch and heated water dishes. We fed her every single day and now she was gone. We couldn't even say goodbye. I still find

myself looking for her when I go outside.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Cricket with frankenbutt.

One night I looked over at our cat Cricket. **I saw blood all over his rear end. It was bad enough we were doing vet runs and fussing over Gracie, but now Cricket was in big trouble. It was clear he blew out one of his anal glands and needed surgery to repair the wound.** We had him stitched up the next morning. **He needed 17 stitches and was just in time for Halloween.**

And two days later, as October became November, Gracie died in Sam's arms as I was driving us to the vet to have them release her from this life.



©2006 Robin AF Olson. The most beautiful, sweet-natured cat I've ever known. I miss you, Gracie, so much.

November

I suppose the best news of the year was that after repeating my blood work it was determined I didn't have diabetes after all. I didn't even know I could hope for that outcome. I'd lost about 45 pounds and still need to lose more, but the change in my body was starting to be pretty clear since none of my clothes fit me any more.

I knew I still had to be very careful because I can become diabetic due to my family history, so I can't go back to eating things I used to like, but at least I can have a cookie or some such thing once in awhile.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. *Is this my future?*

On the flip side, the bad news is there is trouble with my heart, a lack of blood flow that is either a small or moderate in area in the lower part of the muscle. My cardiologist wanted me to take a fist full of medications, but after careful consideration I decided not to take his advice. As of this writing, I'm still on this journey trying to find out what this pain is from. It's mostly gone these days, but not entirely. I'm getting out for walks more, but not enough. I'm still eating well, too, but I don't know what is really going on. Hopefully some day I will. I'm getting a second opinion.

Poor Petunia was getting picked on too often, even after the surgery. I decided to create a penned off space for her near the living room. She has her own litter pan, water, cat tree, scratcher, heated bed, cozy hut to hide in. Pretty much the second she realized the other cats couldn't bother her, she calmed down and never missed the litter pan once. Though it's not a perfect solution, it stopped the insanity. I don't feel stressed out because seeing the cats go after Petunia upset me a lot. Now I can relate to Petunia differently, too. She's not soiling anything and I'm not unfairly vilifying her. **I learned I can start over and re-introduce her to the other cats. It's going to take a long time, but in the meantime she's calm and content and that's what matters.**



©2015 Robin AF Olson. *Petunia watches DOOD from a safe distance. After I took this photo, I covered the pen with towels to give her more separation from the other cats. As for the other cats, I had to suck it up and take my beloved boy Spencer in for a dental. I had put it off after the disaster following Gracie's final cleaning. Spencer HATES to go to the vet and is very tough to handle. They got the job done, but I have to say I was very upset until he came back home.* Even then I noticed he's showing his age. He's 14 going on 15 and I just can't "go there" when I think about how we lost Gracie and she was younger. Spencer has the early signs of kidney issues so he'll be going back to the vet for blood work again soon.

December

I got the flu for Thanksgiving. Not a surprise, really. After all the stress with caring for Gracie, no wonder I got sick. I lucked out and was just well enough a week later to meet Mike Bridavsky and see Lil Bub again. I'd designed [Bub's BUBblehead box](#) ^[3] and was really proud to be part of her world, even in some small way.

I got home and went back to bed. Sam joined me. He had just been hit by the flu, too.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. *The bright spot to an otherwise sad year-seeing Mike & Bub ^[4] again.*

Somehow I managed to graduate my class! I got a 98! I'm a Certified Cat Behavior Counselor. Now I can help people keep their cats instead of giving them up when times get tough.

The results of not working much and a lot of sick cats hit my bank account really hard. Christmas ended up being mostly just another day. I was grateful that at least I could keep things going with Kitten Associates. I had some folks interested in wanting one or two of the cats. I'm hoping it will pan out in the new year.

Laney and family had been here so long they needed their vaccinations boosted. I had Dr. Larry and Super-Deb do a house call. I figured it would be a routine visit. No big deal.

I was wrong.

Laney needed a dental. Winnie and Piglet had severe stomatitis and needed not only dental cleanings ASAP, but they both were going to lose teeth. Just how many teeth would be taken was to be determined. **There went \$2200.00 in vet care I hadn't figured on.**

Barry sounds "bad." He's getting x-rays of his lungs done in a few days.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. *Barry, no longer the "feral" cat, is making his home in my bathroom until we complete his vet care (and he quits biting me!).*

The "good" news I found out today is that Winnie has raging bartonella. It's good because it means she probably does NOT have an immune disorder that will effect the rest of her life. We're going to re-test Piglet

because she was a +1, when Winnie was a +4 (+4 is the highest level of infection) . Since the protocol is to not treat for a +1 and it's been 9 months since we tested Piglet, it's possible Piglet had it, but we caught it early and that now she, too may be a +4 (which would explain her bad mouth) .

If it means neither cat will have to lose all their teeth one day, I'm all for it.

Moving Onward

It was a really tough year. I miss having kittens so much, but I needed a break without being able to really take one. I helped about 45 cats, mostly behind-the-scenes. I was going to end the year by rescuing this super cute ginger boy in South Carolina but happily for him he got adopted before they found out we'd take him.

I faced my mortality in a way I never did before. I made many difficult choices and ended up deciding to give myself the respect I never could before. I'm trying to treasure this body I have, faults, extra padding and all. It's been the toughest thing I've ever done and I have a long way to go, but for the first time I think that maybe, just maybe I'll get there and end up being the girl who really liked herself instead of loathing the face in the mirror.

My dreams for 2016 are a mixed bag. Firstly, I want to get as healthy as I can and get to the bottom of the chest pain. Second, I hope 2016 will be a re-birth of sorts. This humble blog has been far overdue for a re-design and [Kitten Associates](#) ^[5] web site needs a facelift, too. I'd also like to take my writing to the next level-which means a book project. *Will you read a book if I write it? I've got to do this.* If I can't make this one dream come true I never will.

And I'm still dedicated to making lives better for cats, for rescuing them and giving them safe harbor, for helping their humans understand them better so they can be happier and so those cats don't lose their home. I may not run the biggest rescue with the highest number of adoptions, but as the story of the starfish goes...

...The old man replied, "But there must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I'm afraid you won't really be able to make much of a difference." The boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned, smiled and said, "It made a difference to that one!"

adapted from [The Star Thrower](#) ^[6]



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Necklace from my friend, Adria.

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[Adopted](#) ^[7]

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[Covered in Cat Hair](#) ^[11]

[Crazy](#) ^[12]

[Cricket](#) ^[13]

[Cute Photo](#) ^[14]

[Dr. Larry](#) ^[15]

[Gracie](#) ^[16]

[Kitten](#) ^[17]

[Kitten Associates](#) ^[18]
[Memorials](#) ^[19]
[Needs a Home](#) ^[20]
[Rainbow Bridge](#) ^[21]
[Rest in Peace](#) ^[22]
[Super Deb](#) ^[23]
[Vets](#) ^[24]
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