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Bobette's Surgery & Post Op Life. Part 1 of 3

Wed, 2012-01-18 11:51 — Robin Olson

WARNING: THERE ARE GRAPHIC PHOTOS OF BOBETTE'S SURGERY IN PART TWO OF THIS POST. WHILE THEY ARE NOT CLOSE UP OR VERY GORY, PLEASE VIEW WITH DISCRETION.

THIS IS PART ONE SO YOU'RE SAFE.

It's rather ironic that there's so much going on in my life to write about, yet I don't have time to write any of it down. Meanwhile the days slip by and the details become a bit fuzzy around the edges.

Last week marked the first time I'd ever witnessed anything more than a spay surgery. It was time for Bobette to have surgery to (hopefully) correct her luxated patella. The poor girl couldn't walk without limping. **Her kneecap was so far out of place it was a wonder she could run or jump at all. She mostly used her other legs for jumping and if she got really inspired to go after a toy, her back end would slip out from under her when she ran.** Clearly, she needed help, but there was no guarantee she would ever walk normally again. Getting a kneecap back in place is one thing, but to get it to STAY in place is another.

©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Bobette's future home while she recovers with commentary from her boys, Jakey & Mikey.

There was much to do to prep for Bobette's life after surgery. Dr. Mixon, her Vet, wanted her to have cage rest for three weeks, so I got out my biggest dog crate and set it up, not realizing I was making a big mistake. I'd never had a cat with an invasive surgery on a limb to recover from-of course I'd cared for Bob after 1/2 of his liver was removed just a year ago, but all I had to do for him was make sure he was eating and staying quiet on his heated bed. With Bobette, I'd have to keep her from moving at all costs. I hated to lock her up in a cage, and force her to wear the "cone of shame," but she had to rest.

In the first week, should Bobette be able to bend her leg at all, she would ruin the surgery and her kneecap would pop back out. We had to give it time to set in it's new position and that meant a lot of sitting around. For a year old cat, who wants to play, that was a lot to ask for.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *The welcome committee at Dr. Mixon's practice. Look familiar?* (1)

The morning of the surgery I was feeling hopeful, but scared. I thought I'd be sitting in the waiting room until they finished up, **but Dr. Mixon came out and asked me, or was it told me?, I should come back and see the surgery. My heart dropped into my pants.** ME? Watch? Even though I watch all those ER "reality" shows on TV, I ALWAYS look away when they get into the gory surgery scenes. There was no looking away from this, but could I handle it without throwing up or fainting?

I didn't realize I'd have to help out, which is not a problem at all, especially considering Dr. Mixon was doing the surgery for about \$2000.00 less than an Orthopedic surgeon would have charged. Dr. Mixon is a General Practitioner, not a specialist, but he admittedly enjoys doing orthopedic procedures and another friend said her dog did well after Dr. M. did a similar surgery on him.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Last pets before surgery.*

Bobette was sitting in her cat carrier, her pupils dilated. She hadn't had breakfast-of course-because anesthesia can cause the cat to vomit and you don't want her to aspirate anything into her lungs and get pneumonia. It's better not to have a full tummy (*but you tell that to the cat!*). Two days before we'd been in this same waiting room together, but only to get Bobette's pre-operative blood work done so we could make sure she'd be healthy enough for surgery. **With three people holding her down, there was no way to get her blood, so we had to hope that being so young she'd be fine under anesthesia-this is not something I'm happy to report.** I'm sure as we sat together, Bobette was getting very tense, probably reliving what happened those few days prior and I wondered if she'd become so fractious that we'd be able to do the surgery at all.

©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. After being given something to relax her a bit, Bobette and I share a few moments before her surgery prep begins.

I brought her into the back of the Practice and sat her on an exam table. The Vet tech was getting supplies ready and I asked her to walk me through what was going to happen next and what she'd want me to do. Mostly I had to just hold Bobette down and not lose any fingers in the process **but I kept thinking' "I'm a Graphic Designer [2]! I'm a Graphic Designer. I'm NOT A VET TECH! WHAT AM I DOING HERE?!"**.

I took the lead and spoke very calmly to Bobette. I didn't restrain her very tightly. We were very quiet as we worked on her. It wasn't difficult at all to give Bobette a few shots. One was to relax her so we could insert the IV, which would be in place during surgery and provide her with fluids. **The other was the dreaded Metacam [3], which I challenged Dr. M. on giving her because it's known to cause renal failure. He quickly pushed back and said it was safe if she was kept hydrated. I was really tweaked that he gave it to her after all I'd heard about it killing cats more than helping them, but what could I do? Now I'm thinking we'll have to do a post op-blood test to see if she's ok.**

I held Bobette down so the Tech could insert an IV into her leg. I was really feeling like a traitor. Here is this sweet cat. I don't know her very well, but I still care about her. She's scared, drugged up and only at the beginning of what is going to be a very awful day. **I couldn't blame Bobette as she pitched a fit and shrieked as the Tech tried to shave her front leg. Try as we might, we couldn't get her to settle down so it was decided she needed to be gassed so she would just konk out.**



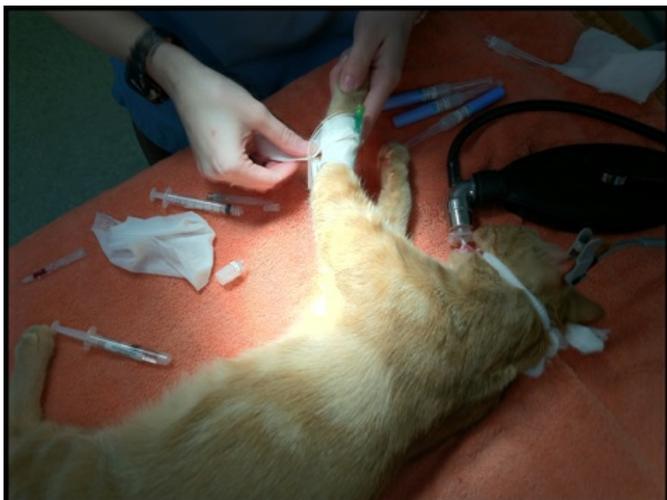
©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. I will never look at another storage tub the same way again, ever. I was not a happy camper seeing this.

The Tech grabbed a plastic storage tub with holes cut into either end. One end was taped up and the other was open. She attached a hose to the open end, then had me place Bobette inside the bin. She barely fit. **I started to realize maybe this is what they do to kill cats at shelters? I wanted to grab the box, get Bobette out and RUN for it.** This just seemed inhumane, but what do I know about this---nothing other than it really bothered me to see this happening.

The Tech snapped down the lid and turned a dial allowing the gas to enter the box. Bobette didn't fuss at all and in a few minutes was slumped down, oblivious to the world around her. **It's VERY UNNERVING to see an unconscious cat. They might as well be dead, because it's not much different. I kept wondering how anyone could do this to animals every day and not have nightmares each night.**The Tech told me she was going to remove the lid FAST. I had to get Bobette out of the box, then run with the box into a back room and **NOT BREATHE ANYTHING IN OR I WOULD PASS OUT, TOO.**

YIKES!

I told her to do a countdown and on...“1” we jumped into action. I couldn't be distracted by Bobette being so limp. I put her down, grabbed the box and ran off, making sure the lid didn't come back off. **I was weirdly tempted to open the lid and take a big sniff so I had a reason not to see the surgery, but I figured I would hit my head when I passed out, too. Probably not the best idea.**



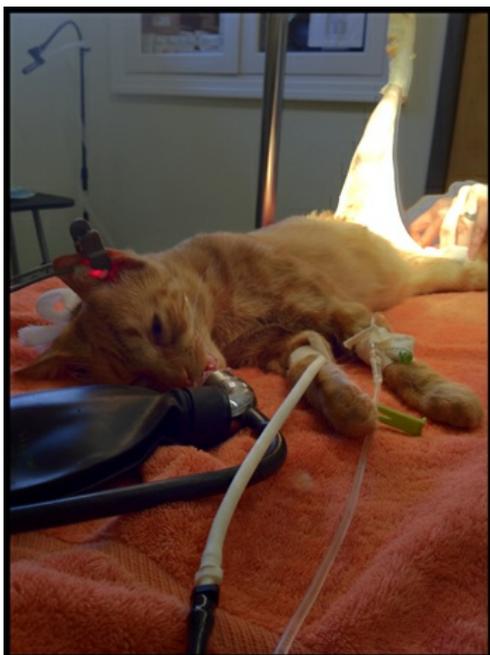
©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. After being intubated, the IV is set. Bobette is completely out of it, thankfully.

Then began a very long process of preparing Bobette's leg for surgery. I kept wondering how long she could be unconscious without it doing her harm. The Tech asked me to adjust a light or hold something or get this or that. **She began to shave Bobette and we discovered she has very odd fur. It grows in different directions and was difficult to trim down close to her skin. I noticed that Bobette has a tuft of fur on her neck that reminds me of Alfalfa from the Our Gang show (It's probably before your time, so here's a [link](#) ^[4])**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Bobette gets a furcut.

Poor Bobette. I just wanted to take her home, but the surgery hadn't even begun. She looked so helpless laying on the table. I whispered to her that it was going to be okay. I hoped it wasn't a lie. A monitor nearby beeped every time her heart beat. As long as we heard the beep, she was okay.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Aww..Bobette!

Bobette's leg was wiped down a few times. Dr. Mixon saw what the Tech was doing and stopped her. She missed a spot on Bobette's leg right under the tape that held her leg in place. She had to shave it down and re-do all the antiseptic wipes, which again, Dr. Mixon corrected, making certain that the area where the surgery was being done was NOT getting wiped over twice. Even though it took a lot of time, I was glad he was a stickler for keeping things clean.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Wiping down her leg. Make it nice and clean.

So far, so good. I was on my feet. I hadn't passed out. Okay, no blood yet, either. Sheesh! I got this far, I need some credit.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. All set. What's next?

Bobette was fine so far. I was fine, too, but was glad I wasn't attached to a heart monitor because everyone would know just how scared I was. Bobette's monitor kept beeping along...beep...beep...beep.



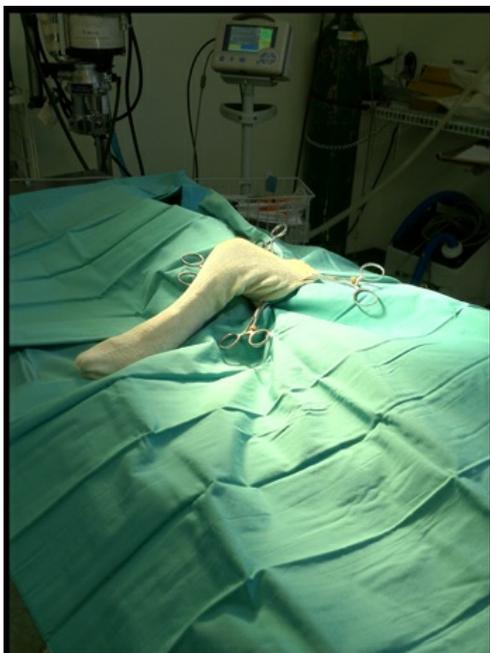
©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Dr. Mixon begins his part of the prep work.

Then Dr. Mixon began draping Bobette with layers of cloth that would allow him to focus only on her leg and also to keep the surgical area cleaner. I kept thinking that surely he was done, but he'd add another layer. Then he slipped a small sock over Bobette's leg and cut a hole into it which was over the area where he'd be making the incision. After he created the opening, he quickly sutured around the edges of the opening so the fabric would stay in place. This was the final task he had before he could get started.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Paging Dr. Robin! Does this mask make my face look fat?*

He was very focused and there was little talking. The only sound was the beeping of the monitor. Dr. Mixon looked up for a moment and said; "Now you know why these surgeries cost so much money." And even before he made one cut, I understood. The prep work took at least an hour if not more. When he was done, Bobette the cat was gone and in her place was an alien leg sprouting from a field of pale green sterile sheets.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Where's Bobette?*

...stay tuned for Part Two: SURGERY...next.

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Comments

Wed, 2012-01-18 13:36 — Sharon (not verified)

[Bobette](#) ^[19]

Poor Bobette. I sure hope this surgery helps her so she can run and play the rest of the kitties. She just looked so pitiful, but hopefully it will be all worth it.

Wed, 2012-01-18 14:24 — [Shelli](#) ^[20]

[awww, sweet](#) ^[21]

awww, sweet Bobbette!

Alfalfa! Ah, the little rascals. Fond memories.

Wed, 2012-01-18 21:02 — [Teri and the ca... \(not verified\)](#) ^[22]

[Bobbette's Surgery](#) ^[23]

Thanks for posting this and will all the pix (I was eating dinner at my desk, hahameow--I knew whatever I saw wouldn't nauseate me...but even me, the vet tech, didn't want to be there for Coco's surgery, lol.

Thu, 2012-01-19 06:24 — [Angie Bailey, C... \(not verified\)](#) ^[24]

[What an interesting post! I](#) ^[25]

What an interesting post! I learned a lot about what happens behind the scenes. Here's hoping sweet Bobette heals up quickly and is ready to romp!

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