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Calling All Angels. The Passing of Celeste.

Mon, 2014-10-06 16:20 — Robin Olson

It's hard to hold your head up high as a cat rescuer when you feel like you completely failed and in that error, an animal died because of it. It's one thing to make a mistake on your taxes—sure it sucks, you might pay a fine or owe more than you should, but it's not life or death.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Celeste giving birth May 13, 2014. Twinkle-Twinkle and Little Star were her first two born to a live audience on our web cam.

I've already had one experience this year feeling like I failed when Celeste's kitten, Fiorello died. He only lived a day and though I tried, I'm not an experienced bottle-feeder. There was no time to even FIND someone to help me and because I wasn't completely prepared and I didn't even have all the tools that might have helped him. After he died, I took my starfish pendant off. Prior to that day I'd rarely been without it. It's my rescue totem. I thought perhaps I could put it back on one day, but that day has not come. With what happened a few days ago I wonder if I ever WILL be able to wear it again.

Celeste is dead. My sweet foster mama of 5 is gone. Forever. When she died, between the shock and grief all I could think about was how I must have made a mistake and SHE paid for it with her life. I didn't feel I deserved to do rescue any more. I thought it was time to stop. I was getting a sign that I just didn't have the chops and I should LISTEN to that and not be arrogant by pointing a finger at the Vet who did the spay surgery or the foster home who didn't realize she was in bad shape after the surgery was over. I missed something and now I'd have the rest of my life to reflect on how stupid I am.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. *The ever-lovely Celeste.*

Celeste went in for a routine spay surgery. In fact I had to put off her appointment over and over again because some of our foster kittens were having accidents and I was finding myself at NVS (*our emergency Vet*) at least once or twice a week. I also needed to separate Celeste from her kittens so her mammary glands could dry out before spay and that took two weeks.

From my goal of July, here it was the end of September and I finally had everything ready so she could not only get her surgery, but finally GO TO HER FOREVER HOME.

The woman who first took Celeste off the streets after she was dumped and pregnant had wanted Celeste to return to her one day. I'd kept in touch with her all summer and she was very understanding about the constant delays. The latest plan was to do the spay, give Celeste a few days to recover and by the end of the week, Celeste would go home.

But things didn't go as planned.

Celeste survived the surgery and there was nothing to suggest she was in any trouble after the procedure was completed. Before I picked her up the morning after her spay to bring her to her foster home they tried to give her a shot for pain, but she was so fractious they couldn't do it and decided they could only release her as is. **When I dropped her off at her foster home I was concerned when I saw her leave her cat carrier. She wobbled badly as if she was STILL sedated. I called the vet and the tech said she was just in pain and I could come back and get the painkiller if needed.** I thought I'd wait the night to see how she was doing and go back. I'd just driven 50 miles to pick her up and deliver her and it was only 10 AM and I wasn't up for driving any more. I'd been taking care of little Freya around-the-clock for 2 weeks at that time and I was grossly sleep deprived. Looking back I wish I had taken Celeste right back to the vet, but I didn't. I told the foster family to let me know if anything was off and to call me right away if they thought something was wrong. They checked in that night and said she was sore but seemed okay.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. *Celeste holds Fiorello who lived only a day.*

At 7 AM I got a call. They were worried about Celeste. I was there by 7:15 AM. When I saw Celeste I thought she was dead. When I ran my hand along her side as she laid so very still on the floor. She was cold. She was cold in a way that told me she was dying.

She lifted her head and cried softly. I gently lifted her and quickly put her into the cat carrier on a thick warm towel. I raced to NVS, calling them on the way, telling them Celeste was critical so they would be ready when I arrived. I talked to Celeste. She was so limp she slid along inside the carrier as if all her strength had run out. I told her she was a great mama. **I told her I loved her and her kittens were doing really well. I told her to hang on that I was going to get her help and I prayed I was right.**

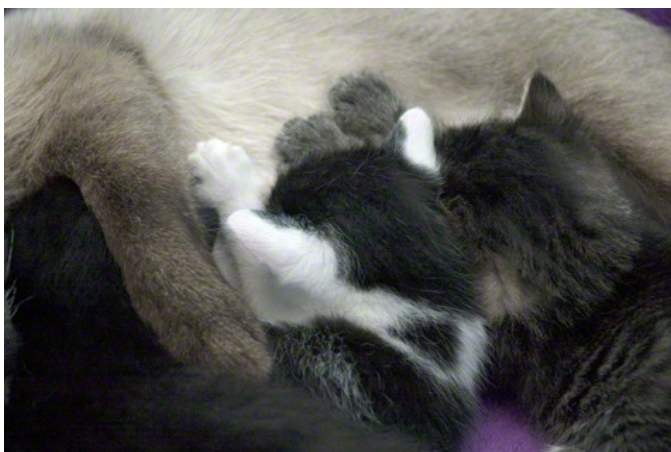
It was a cold, slate gray, rainy morning. I parked in the handicapped parking space, grabbed the carrier and was in the building a few seconds later, not caring that I was breaking the law. A tech ran out and took Celeste from me. **That was the last time I saw her alive.**



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. *The last good photo of Celeste after her kittens were weaned. She looked so radiant.*

I've been to NVS so many times in the past month that just about everyone there knows me. The ladies at the front desk were very comforting as they handed me tissue after tissue. I knew Celeste was dying and I was pretty sure I was too late. I paced back and forth, waiting for Dr. Berube, the Critical Care specialist, to let me know what was going on. I'd told the tech to spare no expense, to not bother to give me an estimate and to focus on helping Celeste. Time was running out.

About 30 minutes later Dr. B. came out to talk to me. She was very calm and matter-of-fact, but told me that Celeste's blood couldn't clot and that they could try a blood transfusion, but that also her temp was critically low and they were having a hard time getting blood for a CBC because she was so cold. A tech interrupted us and I knew it was bad news. Dr. B left and returned a few minutes later. She told me that Celeste's heart had stopped. That they were doing CPR. She told me some options of what they could do. I felt all the blood leave my face. My legs felt weak. I asked her to help me because I couldn't think any more. I told her that money wasn't a worry and that IF there was something heroic to do it because she was a young cat, but the tech returned only moments later and I could tell from the look on her face that our options had run out.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. *Giving life on so many levels.*

I asked Dr. B. to take me to Celeste. She was surrounded by the staff. One was squeezing a pump to breathe for Celeste and the other was rubbing her chest. **I told them thank you but it was okay to stop. They stopped, bowing their heads in unison as we all knew that Celeste was already long gone.** Some moved away and went about other tasks. I asked them to extubate Celeste. She didn't need a tube down her throat any more. They detached all the equipment, only her back leg still had a blue bandage wrapped around it. Beth, one of the techs, and Dr. B talked to me. I'm not sure what Dr. B said. I was in shock. I heard words like "clotting disorder" and "internal bleeding," but I can't even be sure. **All I knew was the once playful, silly, sometimes cranky, always beautiful Celeste was dead and it was my fault.**

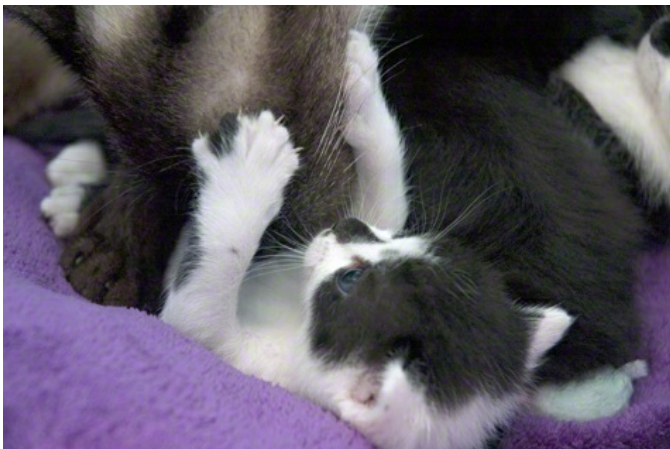


©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Farewell beloved girl.

I held Celeste's paw and said goodbye. I petted her as I told her how sorry I was for letting her down. I said I loved her again and many other things as I looked at her lifeless body, secretly praying that like on a TV show maybe her heart would miraculously start beating again and she would really be just fine after all. We'd all hug and smile and laugh, relieved that the nightmare was over. How I wish that had been the case.

Beth kept me company, handing me tissues. She talked to me about her cat and I told her about how great Celeste was as a mom and how I never rescued a seal point Siamese before. Everyone was very kind to me as I waited for Sam to arrive. I called Celeste's foster mom and told her the bad news, sick to my stomach with fear that maybe they missed something and if we'd had more time maybe Celeste would still be alive. Maybe I didn't tell them enough things to look for—again it was my fault. Maybe the vet killed her with a bad spay surgery so I called them and yelled, then hung up on them after screaming "She's DEAD! What the F_ did you do to my cat?"

After weeks of sleep deprivation, not eating well, rushed design projects to complete so I could make something of a living, I had no gas in the tank. **I was completely destroyed by this loss and what made matters worse was I could not forgive myself.**



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Little Star gets a bath from mama.

For the next two days I cried. I tried to sleep. I tried to understand what I did wrong and how I would never do it again. I focused on work, on caring for Freya and the other fosters. I couldn't even talk to the Vet because Dr. Mille's office was closed until Friday so I had to wait another day to talk to him. I didn't even want to make the call because I felt so let down. Why let a cat leave the clinic when she might have not been doing so well in the first place? Maybe it WAS their fault?

It was my fault. Kitten Associates [1] is MY rescue. It's my mistake no matter what the truth turns out to be. I can't describe how ashamed and angry I felt.

I finally got up the nerve to call to Dr. M.. I knew he was waiting for me to put blame on him so before I could do that he thoroughly went over the surgery and what he found. I learned a lot of things that shocked me deeply.

What I didn't know was that Celeste was fractious at the Vet. So fractious they listened to her heart but that was all they could do before her surgery. It wasn't ideal, but it wasn't a deal-breaker.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Celeste went crazy over her organic wool pom-poms. She went nuts over catnip, too.

Celeste's surgery was more time consuming than normal because she was in heat. It's not a life or death procedure if a cat's in heat, but it takes longer and is more invasive. While Dr. Mille was doing the surgery he noticed a few things that surprised him. Celeste's uterus showed clear signs of NOT being that of a young cat. I'd been told Celeste was 2 years old and never questioned it and since Dr. M. couldn't do a careful exam, he didn't see her worn teeth and yellowed build up of tartar. Opened up Dr. M. could see Celeste's ovaries were full of cysts. This would cause Celeste to be in heat 24/7/365. The hormones would be coursing through her body. She'd have emotional issues. It could cause a whole host of problems which lead Dr. M to change the estimate of Celeste's age to closer to 10 years old.

Celeste was nearly 10 years of age, but no one told me when I picked Celeste up after her spay.

The other shocker was the report from NVS and Dr. B. It said that they pulled some blood from Celeste's abdomen. Her blood would not clot. If blood doesn't clot, it's fatal. You can do a blood transfusion and it buys time, but it's not a cure. The root causes of the clotting disorder are many. Celeste could have had an underlying heart or liver condition. She could have had a very rare disorder called D.I.C. ^[2] caused by her being so fractious and being spayed shortly afterwards or from having cancer or other issues or any combination of issues.

Or the clotting disorder could be genetic.

Then my heart truly sank. **Celeste could have been a ticking time bomb all her life. If she'd been spayed at any other point, by any other Vet she still would have died.** If the clotting disorder was more recently an issue, there still wasn't a cure. **Celeste's death wasn't anyone's fault, not even mine, though if I'd known she was 10 I would have done pre-op blood work, but if we discovered she couldn't be spayed, what would her life have been like being in heat forever?**

Dr. M. was very gracious. He offered to help me develop a protocol for pre-screening cats when it's time to spay them. He told me about a 6-month old kitten who was at a very big vet hospital getting neutered, where they had Board Certified surgeons who could have done something. They sedated the kitten and he died. He had a serious heart problem and the sedation killed him. Not even the brilliant surgeons could save him. **He said things like this, though rare, can happen and that he was very sorry about Celeste. I realized he was not at fault and I finally had some peace knowing I could let some of my pain go.**

©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. First catnip after kittens were weaned.

But then something occurred to me that made me feel sicker. I asked him about Celeste's

kittens. They'd been spayed and neutered and were fine, but could they have the clotting disorder, too? Dr. M. said they could and that they all need to be tested. I told him I'd set up an appointment later, but I'd heard enough. I needed to process this shocking news. After I hung up the phone I had another long crying jag.

It wasn't my fault. I wasn't a total loser. We'd lost a great cat and that would never change. **Hopefully if, God-forbid, her kittens have this disorder we will know and maybe they can still have a good life. I don't know if that's even possible, but we'll do our best.**



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Our first look at Celeste, pregnant and on her own, dumped by her family who didn't have use for her any longer.

I thought about Celeste, dumped, pregnant, with what I always assumed was her first or second litter. How many kittens had she delivered over her lifetime? Easily she could have had well over 100. Maybe they were out there somewhere with that same time bomb ticking away inside them? I would never know, but Celeste must have had a very difficult and pain-filled life.

Lessons Learned

Our two remaining mama-cats in Georgia will benefit from what I've learned. We're going to be doing full CBCs, a PT/PTT blood coagulation test and x-rays to make certain that due to them having multiple litters of kittens that they, too, don't have issues that would make their spay surgeries high-risk or fatal.

Sam said to me that as bad as this loss is that maybe it would save 1000 cat's lives because of this painful lesson and that I would share this news with others. I would tell them that if they have purebred cats, to screen them for clotting ability before surgery. If they rescue, make sure they check the cat and do their own age assessment and for adult cats, talk to their Vet about if they should run a PT/PTT before spay surgeries. For myself, I need to do a much better job communicating to my foster home what the signs are if a cat is not doing well beyond *"anything that seems odd."*

This morning I was in my car listening to my iPod through the car speakers. I was playing songs in alphabetical order and *"Calling All Angels"* started to play. I sang along as tears raced down my cheeks. **Knowing I couldn't have saved Celeste was a minor comfort, but the pain of her loss will always be with me.**

Calling All Angels

Oh, a man is placed upon the steps, a baby cries
High above, you can hear the church bells start to ring
And as the heaviness, oh the heaviness, the body settles in
Somewhere you could hear, a mother sing

Then it's one foot then the other as you step out on the road
Step out on the road, how much weight, how much weight?
Then it's how long and how far and how many times
Oh, before it's too late?

Calling all Angels, calling all Angels
Walk me through this one, don't leave me alone
Calling all Angels, calling all Angels
We're trying, we're hoping, but we're not sure how

Oh, and every day you gaze upon the sunset
With such love and intensity
Why, it's ah, it's almost as if you crack the code

You'd finally understand what this all means

Oh, but if you could, do you think you would
Trade it all, all the pain and suffering?
Oh, but then you would've missed the beauty of
The light upon this earth and the sweetness of the leaving

Calling all Angels, calling all Angels
Walk me through this one, don't leave me alone
Calling all Angels, calling all Angels
We're trying, we're hoping, but we're not sure why

Calling all Angels, calling all Angels
Calling all Angels, calling all Angels
Walk me through this one, walk me through this one
Don't leave me alone

Calling all Angels, calling all Angels
We're trying, we're hoping, we're hurting, we're loving
We're crying, we're calling
'Cause we're not sure how this goes*

SONGWRITER
JANE SIBERRY

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Comments

Mon, 2014-10-06 17:33 — Cami DeVille (not verified)

Condolences ^[7]

I am so sorry for your loss! I know you are hurting. I hope & pray that you are someday comforted by the love & life you provided for Celeste as well as her offspring.

God Bless you & the fur babies in your care. You serve a greater purpose!

Mon, 2014-10-06 17:59 — [Tina Taylor Johnson \(not verified\)](#) ^[8]

Re: Calling all Angels. The Passing of Celeste ^[9]

Ms. Robin,

I am trying to type this through my tears so please forgive any typos.

First, please put your starfish pendant back on. It represents to you what your goal is and what you strive to do in making a

difference and bring better circumstances in these cats lives. You do this well, without thought , and unselfishly. Without you and people like you, these cats would not in most cases have had a chance.

You DID NOT FAIL little Fiorello or your beautiful Celeste. Failure only occurs WHEN YOU DON'T TRY. You tried. You try every day when you deal with little Freya and all her issues, when you play quarterback to make sure your foster near you and other states get what they need and get it in a timely manner. I understand this loss is hard. Maybe even harder to know that Celeste may have been going through what she was and you were unaware. Hard because she had such a hard life before you. Hard because you could see her in her foster home where goal is always is where you want you cats. But you loved and gave her more care in the short time you had her than she probably has had all her life. Maybe she decided iit was ok to let go because she left her babies in the best possible hands. Animals are not much different than us in that regard I believe. She left this life knowing unconditional love from you and ours. And again, she left you with her nost precious treasures. Something that she may not have been able to do ever in her life.

You don't know how little Freyas' situation is going to turn out but at this moment in life, she is growing and thriving. That is because YOU did not give up on her. The Clemtines came to you with a bunch of things going on and You did not give up on them. Look at them now... :-) Sometimes when things hit us like this unfortunate situation with Celeste has, we have to sit back and reflect. Look at your work and know that it just does not mean something. It means EVERYTHING. To that kitten or cat who gets their first taste of good food or milk instead of that stale water and food from the trash or no food at all.. it means EVERYTHING. To that momma cat who gets nurshment from the food you prvide and who gives birth to kittens in a clean enviornment and has someone there to sooth them while they go through it instead of she giving birth in the some old abandoned house in filth... It means EVERYTHING. To the kittens who can grow and play without worry of being poisoned and die painfully because they are so hungry they eat what they can find.. It means EVERYTHING.

You love them all hard. That is the only way you can do this sort of of work. Which really is not work for you because it is your passion. Even with Celestes passing, she left you with a learning tool to use to help other kitties that may be like her. Call your new protocol when the vet helps you develop it The Celseste Protocol. Call it what you want... cause I know you gonna use it like a bible when you have it finialized. There is no failure here with you and what you do for these cats. To feel like that lessens you and your efforts and lessens all the good things you brought into Celestes' life and all the other cats you have so effortlessly fought provided for.

I know your heart is heavy. It poured off of this page and it has me crying like a baby. But Celeste is free now. No more always feeling miserable and in heat. She got to leave her last set of babies in a good place. She left this life knowing she was wanted and loved in the end by the lady who took her off the street and made her way to you and by you. I am sorry you lost her. I am sorry your heart is heavy. But you are a blessing to each one of them. Without you, they would have nothing.

So, no more talk about failure!!! Unless it is foster failure because you are allowed those. Sometimes, we find cats we just cannot part with no matter the circumstances. Being a member with a status of foster failure x3. You have never failed the cats in your care not once. You did not fail Celeste.... just has her love did not fail you. :-)

Sending you a big old hug from Staunton, Va!!!!

Tina and my furbabies Max, ZaZa, LiL Bits, Red, and Zoro.:-)

Tue, 2014-10-07 18:31 — Catnynomouse (not verified)

^^^ what she said! [10]

^^^ what she said!

Thu, 2015-10-01 11:52 — Jan (not verified)

Beautiful [11]

That post was beautiful and so true, Had me crying as much as Robins post. I have to agree with it all. Robin you do a wonderful job, And these Kitties love you

Jan & Boo pussykins xxxx

Mon, 2014-10-06 18:00 — JaneA Kelley (not verified) [12]

Hugs and compassion [13]

Oh, Robin, you've had a really horrible ride these last few months. I'm glad you've been able to scrape yourself up off the pavement and keep on putting one foot in front of the other, and I pray that you will eventually understand in both your head AND your heart that you and the vet did everything right. There are just some things you can't anticipate.

Reading about DIC, I can't help but wonder if that's what happened to Kissy, too -- she had a lot of the same symptoms (super-fractious after coming out of anesthesia, etc.), but her pre-anesthetic bloodwork didn't reveal anything out of the ordinary. We didn't think to do a PT/PTT, though, because she appeared to be a normal, healthy kitty.

Fly free, Celeste. Gaté, gaté, paragate, parasamgate, Bodhi soha!

Tue, 2014-10-07 07:52 — Debra (not verified)

I'm so sorry ^[14]

I certainly know how you feel after losing a beloved cat. I still can't go to sleep at night after losing Midnight almost a year ago. I noticed that the vet needs to bear some of the blame. After noticing that the blood wasn't clotting, Celeste should have been kept there for round the clock nursing. Someone there should've known that there was a crisis waiting to happen. That's what would've been done for a human being. No wonder the vet wants to help develop a protocol.

Tue, 2014-10-07 09:43 — [Robin Olson](#) ^[15]

Vets ^[16]

I must not have been clear. The vet who did the spay, could not have known her blood wasn't clotting. It is not something regularly tested for before a spay and her spay surgery seemed to go normally. The vet who was trying to save Celeste at the ER Vet was able to do a test to see her blood not coagulating.

Thu, 2014-10-23 10:26 — Tigrone (not verified)

She's remembered daily! ^[17]

Robin,

I just read this, so sad and beautiful at the same time. How can you blame yourself?! You mustn't! She is probably having as many catnip bananas as she wants now!

You did not fail! Thanks to mothers, life continues and I am having a little piece of her at home and in my heart, which is actually not so little anymore...growing like weed!

Sending warm and furry thoughts!

Astrid &family

Thu, 2014-10-30 17:03 — DebV (not verified)

Regarding Celeste ^[18]

Robin,

My heart goes out to you. You did everything you could do and the vets did, too. Your stories here - of your own brood - and of all the fosters - they bring joy, knowledge, and hope to many people. Your work is important and it's difficult. A million warm wishes to you and hugs for your loss.

Continue your work, and put your starfish back on... there are many more kitties who need your love, time, and attention. Celeste will watch over you from across the bridge... I believe that. :)

Deb V

CICH @ [Google+](#)
Robin @ [Google+](#)

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Links

- [1] <http://www.kittenassociates.org>
- [2] <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000573.htm>
- [3] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/33>
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