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Fri, 2014-05-09 12:55 — Robin Olson

Dear Fred,

When I saw the news the other night, they were talking about the one-year anniversary of the bombing at the Boston Marathon. A few minutes after it happened, I was sitting in a waiting room at an Emergency Vet watching the TV news in the lobby, shaken by the upsetting news. I was waiting to take you to meet a Vet—a cold-hearted Ophthalmologist. **It was the day I learned it was very likely you had Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) and that you'd have a few weeks to live or you had lymphoma.** Either way it didn't look good for your future. The news was delivered without one ounce of compassion. It was delivered by a beast. I will never go back to that Vet again. You were just 9 months old. I couldn't understand why she'd be so uncaring, but the photos of dogs and horses in her office hinted that maybe she didn't care for cats at all.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *The strange coloration in Fred's eyes was one of the first signs of FIP. It's called Uveitis ⁽¹⁾.*

You could still walk then, but it had been weeks since you last jumped after a toy. If I had known what lay ahead for you in all honesty I think I would have just killed myself to avoid seeing you fade away like that. I've never witnessed something so completely devastating other than the one secret I could never share here until now.

My father killed himself with a shotgun in 1999. My mother offered to tell me what happened, but I was too distraught to know the details at the time. She never asked me again. We didn't talk about it.

After she died in 2006, very unexpectedly, in going through her things, I discovered a photo album near her bed. My mother took photos of everything. I guess it was her way to control us because we always had to "form a group" or "stand by that flower" or she'd do weird things like photograph us when we were crying...even my cat after she died (*she didn't tell me she took my camera and photographed my DEAD cat! I found out when I picked up my photos from the drug store*).

She photographed my father after he shot himself in the head. Maybe it was her way of processing what happened. I can't fathom or forgive her for doing that. The photos were in that bedside photo album...there was a story added to it about what really happened...how she saw him do it and could have stopped him, but didn't. I was horrified in ways words cannot describe. I almost threw up when I saw the images of my dear father with his brains blown out, slumped down on the floor of my brother's old bedroom. I had to call Sam to leave work right then and there, to drive an hour to come get me. All I could do was curl up in a ball on the floor and cry.

I only reveal this because seeing you die, Fred, die so very slowly, losing the ability to use your hind legs, then your front, then you couldn't even sit up...and on the last day I know you had a hard time swallowing was heartbreaking...seeing that happen to a little innocent, once joyful kitten, who I loved dearly, cut through my heart as badly as seeing the aftermath of my father's suicide. It made me question whether I had the strength to continue to do cat rescue

any longer.

Seeing a kitten die from the dry form of FIP is horror I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. I'm so sorry it happened to you Fred.



On this, the anniversary of your passing, I'd like everyone to know that I created The Fred Fund in your honor; where we can set aside assets to only go to cats who need more than routine Vet care. That way, should we have another kitten in dire straights, we'll be able to provide for him or her.

I'd also like to tell you about two special people who gave from their hearts well after you passed away. I commissioned a custom piece of art to remember you by from a crook (paper sculptor) named Matt Ross. We paid him \$200.00 and he never did the art. He never did the art for another reader of this blog and took \$300.00 from her. It wasn't so much about losing the money, it was about him lying over and over again for months on end about how he promised he'd do the work, but then never did.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Fred's shrine. The red ball is his last "boo-boo" bandage. I found it in my bag one day and couldn't bear to part with it.

Two artists heard about what happened and offered to do tributes to you for no charge. Jodie Penn asked me to send her a photo of Fred and she used the image to create a custom pillow. It was almost the same size as you were, a bit bigger and better to hug. When it arrived Sam and I cried. It was like holding you in my arms again.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Jodie told me she's stopped making pillows for now, but is revamping her web site and will have them again this summer. So stay tuned for info on how you can get a pillow should you want one, too.

Alysia Prosser ^[3] offered to create a watercolor portrait of you. In the end she graciously created one of both you and your brother Barney so we could have a matched set. Her style captured your sweetness and her talent is clear. We will be framing the portraits and hanging them side by side so they will be together always.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Joey, part of a litter of kittens I rescued after Fred's passing.

In the year since you've been gone your brother found a wonderful home with his new dad, David and Willow. You remember her. She was a friend to both of you for a long time. Everyone in your group got adopted into good homes. We rescued a mama cat we named Minnie a few weeks after we lost you. **I wasn't sure I could do rescue any more until I saw one of her kittens. He looked so much like you I felt it was a sign from you to keep going.**



[Alysia Prosser](#) ^[3] does do commissions if you're interested in a portrait of your cat.

Cat Fancy magazine wrote a story about [Kitten Associates](#) ^[4] and they did a special photo memorial of you. I couldn't have been more proud of you at that moment for being the star of Kitties for Kids and for bringing joy to the children of Sandy Hook after the tragedy here in 2012.

Last September, the blog post I wrote called "[Dear Fred.](#)" ^[5] one a prestigious award from [Dogtime Media for the Best Blog Post.](#) ^[6] Of all the awards I've ever gotten, that was one I will truly cherish because it helped so many people know what a wonderful kitten you were.



December 2013 Cat Fancy with Fred highlighted as the Mascot for our award-winning [Kitties for Kids program](#) ^[7]

Though your life was far too short, I hope it was filled with more love than you could have ever hoped for. Sam and I miss you so much. Tears come far too easily when we think of you.

Each day I look at your photo and the small box of your ashes that lie next to another box of ashes of your siblings, Bam Bam and Pebbles, who died a few days after being born. I will forever be sad when I think of how this story ended and I will always look over my shoulder wondering if there was just one more thing I could have done that would have saved your life.

A few months after you passed away I learned that [Dr. Gary Whittaker had made a discovery](#) ^[8] that would finally open the doorway for testing for FIP and possibly a vaccine.

I cried so hard, knowing that some day maybe no cat would have to suffer the way you and so many others did. I wrote to Dr. Whittaker and asked him some questions. I'll let you know what he said in my next letter.

I may have rescued 100's of cats over the years, but I will never forget you for as long as I live. I hope we'll see

each other again one day.

Love,

Your mama, Robin

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[Announcements](#) ^[9]

Comments

Fri, 2014-05-09 21:23 — [Catnonymouse](#) (not verified)

The secret ^[10]

I wasn't expecting such a reveal. I had a similar experience when my ex father-in-law shot himself in the head on super bowl sunday 23 yrs ago. You can never unsee something like that. God bless you and may you heal peacefully.

Sat, 2014-05-10 01:06 — [Felissa](#) (not verified) ^[11]

I'm so sorry to hear about ^[12]

I'm so sorry to hear about your precious, Fred. This post about him was impossible to read without succumbing to tears!

Sat, 2014-05-10 15:27 — [jmuhj](#) (not verified)

RE: FRED ^[13]

Heartbreaking post. I can't believe someone would be so absolutely soulless as to take advantage of people in their grief, as that so-called artist did. No words can assuage the pain of your loss, so I won't comment, except to say that Fred was much loved and that you will be reunited in due time -- and that he is whole, healthy, happy, and watching over you always. I know your dad is, too, and I hope you share those convictions.

There have been two precious beings lost to FIP in our family, and I welcome any advances in the search to identify and treat (and hopefully, prevent) this horrific scourge.

Sun, 2014-05-18 22:35 — [Sally Watkins](#) (not verified)

I lost my Simba to dry FIP ^[14]

I lost my Simba to dry FIP just a few months before your precious Fred started showing his symptoms. I knew in my heart what was wrong with Fred but prayed so hard that I was wrong. I cried and cried for my Simba and I cried and cried for your Fred. No kitten should have to suffer the way this dreaded disease makes them suffer. It is just too cruel. I am so glad that a test and the possibility of a vaccine is in sight. God Bless you Robin and Sam for all the good you do. You both are amazing people. I am very sorry about your Dad too. I have lost four Family members to suicide. My heart goes out to you.

Tue, 2017-05-09 20:51 — [Barbara](#) (not verified)

FIP ^[15]

A heartbreaking story and very touching esp for me because I have lost so many kittens to FIP also. Many years ago, it was a litter of 6, born in my house to a rescued mom, and after mom passed, her babies died one by one until the last two passed at nine months of age. I tried everything but with FIP, back then not much was available. Then last year I rescued 3 kittens, 2 brothers and their sister and I lost 2 to the wet form of FIP. It is just as bad as the dry form. I hate FIP and I hope what you say is true, that there is a possible vaccine and treatment options. I still have the one boy who either survived by beating it or wasn't infected but I watch him like a hawk, waiting for the horrible FIP to rear its ugly head.

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Links

[1] <http://www.eyecareforanimals.com/animal-eye-conditions/feline/347-felineuveitis.html>

[2] <http://kittenassociates.org/donate>

[3] <https://www.facebook.com/AlysiaProsserArt>

[4] <http://www.kittenassociates.org>

[5] <http://coveredincathair.com/content/dear-fred>

[6] <http://dogtime.com/2013-petties-award-winners-announced-by-dogtime-media.html>

[7] <http://coveredincathair.com/content/kitties-kids-winner>

[8] <http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2013/06/discovery-offers-hope-against-deadly-cat-virus>

[9] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/33>

- [10] <https://coveredincathair.com/comment/9027#comment-9027>
- [11] [Http://www.twolittlecavaliers.com](http://www.twolittlecavaliers.com)
- [12] <https://coveredincathair.com/comment/9028#comment-9028>
- [13] <https://coveredincathair.com/comment/9029#comment-9029>
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