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The Other Side

Fri, 2013-05-10 11:23 — Robin Olson

The past month has been one of the worst of my life. Although I've witnessed the slow decline and eventual passing of my own senior cats, and all the fear and sadness that brings, I've never watched it happen to a mere kitten. It is so much worse because there's the added tragedy of the full, long life that never got to be lived. The family I imagined coming to adopt him, never came to the door. The joy he'd have being loved and cherished for a lifetime, was taken away by a fatal disease.

Yesterday afternoon, Fred made his journey over the Rainbow Bridge.

The past month, I've had to face Fred's decline, despite so many efforts to revive him, find an answer, at least keep him stable for a while longer. I've had to watch him as he lost use of his back legs. He could still get around after we made changes to his living space to make it easier on him to still have some freedom.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Barney often tried to get Fred to play, which I discouraged. Eventually, Barney realized his brother couldn't play with him any longer.

He became incontinent. Not surprisingly because he couldn't get to the litter pan. We just made more adjustments and bought a lot of "wee-wee" pads. **The goal was to keep him comfortable, hoping we'd get enough time for the test results to come back or to start another treatment.**

I set up the web cam so I could watch him when I wasn't in the room, but felt sick to my stomach every time I looked in on him. Seeing him struggling broke my heart. **There was a time I saw him slip and fall off the pet stairs onto the floor.** I raced up to the room to help him back up. He seemed so confused about how such things could happen to a once agile creature. I kissed him and told him to hang on that I would find a way to make it better.

I realized I was running out of things to hope for last week. I realized how ridiculous it was to find myself hoping Fred had lymphoma, instead of FIP. Both were fatal, but at least with lymphoma Fred could live longer, maybe over a year. It was crazy to hope that, at least, Fred wouldn't lose use of his front legs, too, but eventually he did. He could sit up, but other than that, he didn't move around. Sam and I took turns changing his position or location in the room. I'd place him on a bed in the sunshine and he'd groom himself, perked up by the joy of being in his favorite place.

Fred hadn't eaten anything on his own over the past week, not even his favorite chicken treat. Sam and I fed him three times a day via a syringe. He struggled at first, but as the days passed, he just took his food without a fuss. **Sam would hold him against his chest, shielded by a pad because Fred would often urinate when we held him up to feed him. We'd cheer him on when he peed because that meant his body was still functioning normally.** A few times we even got him to poop, which caused us to be even happier. He still had some strength. It wasn't time. We still had a chance.

I would focus on coming up with the tastiest, most nutritious, combinations I could put into the blender to make Fred enjoy his food. He would take a taste, then smack his mouth with his tongue. **He'd look up at Sam with this silly, sweet expression and Sam would look down so lovingly at this little cat. I'd syringe a tiny bit more food into him and he'd swallow some and dribble some onto his fur.** Between syringes of food, I'd carefully wipe Fred's face with a paper towel I'd wetted with very warm water. I wanted to recreate the feeling of his mama washing his face. He seemed to like it and often purred.

When we finished feeding, there were the many medications, eye drops, bad things. I washed Fred again and we'd put him on a soft bed. **We'd take turns brushing him, again, anything to help him feel clean and comfortable. Some times Barney would come over and lick Fred's face, ears, or paws.** Fred almost smiled at Barney's attempts to connect with his brother.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Fred (front) and Barney (by the pillows).

I found I couldn't focus on work or eat much. My only respite was sleep and I couldn't get to sleep unless I was exhausted. I'd get a few hours, only to wake up as the first glow of sun peeked over the horizon. My gut would go back to its familiar ache. Should I look at the web cam? Is Fred still alive? Did he pass away over night?

Eventually I'd work up the courage to look and I'd see him in his bed, so very still. I'd race into the room to find him still with us. I hate to say that some times I wished maybe he'd have left us over night and it would just be over and done. I kept reminding myself that the other side of this means how I live my life without Fred, knowing he is gone. The sheer Hell of watching him fade away would be over, but a new Hell-one of grief and remorse would take its place.

Time was quickly running out for Fred. **Tests kept coming in negative for lymphoma so for certain it was FIP. Fred's condition got much worse on Tuesday night.** We had to hold his head up to get him fed. He was much weaker. I've never seen a cat, while still alive, who was so very limp-everywhere. Fred couldn't lift his head or lick his paw. He could flick his tail ever so slightly-and that's how I knew it was time to change his wee wee pad, but that was it. After we fed Fred, got him cleaned up and on a fresh blanket, we left the room. **I broke down in tears and said to Sam that it was time. He agreed.** We were taking turns changing Fred's position every hour and making sure he wasn't urinating on himself. I was to call Dr Larry in the morning to make the appointment for that day. We couldn't wait any more. Now my last hope was that we could end Fred's life in a peaceful way and without pain or fear.

Sam and I discussed what we would do, how it would be done. **I made a promise to Fred-no more Vet runs and that the Vet would come to us. Sick to my stomach, I made the call. Dr. Larry was out sick that day. My only option was to bring Fred to them and have Dr. Mary put Fred down. Sam and I discussed it and felt we could keep Fred going on more day, so we made the appointment for yesterday afternoon.**

When you know your cat is going to die and you know when, you can't focus on anything else going on in your life. Any other issues fall to the wayside. **The irony is that through this past month, Sam and I have been working on refinancing our mortgage so we can stay in our home.** I've been so sidetracked I ignored all the calls and paperwork. I even put off the Closing last week so we could watch over Fred. We managed to get everything taken care of and in the end it saved us a lot of money. **We should have been happy since it's been a constant worry for us for a long time, but we were both like zombies, signing papers, nodding yes or no to any questions our Lawyer had, hoping we'd just get it over with.** We got the job done and raced home to be with Fred because we knew we had less than 24 hours to be with him.

The last twelve hours were spent with Fred. He was not left alone, even for a second. Around 10pm on Wednesday, we put our pajamas on and set ourselves up in the foster room with Fred and Barney. Fred was either on a cozy cat bed between us or on Sam's chest. We each were petting him or holding his little paws. They were starting to feel cooler and I wanted him to feel the warmth of my hand. We didn't say much.

Trying to lighten the mood a little I blurted out, "tell me a story." and Sam began reciting bits of Dr. Seuss books he read to his daughter 30 years ago. "Look what we found in the park, in

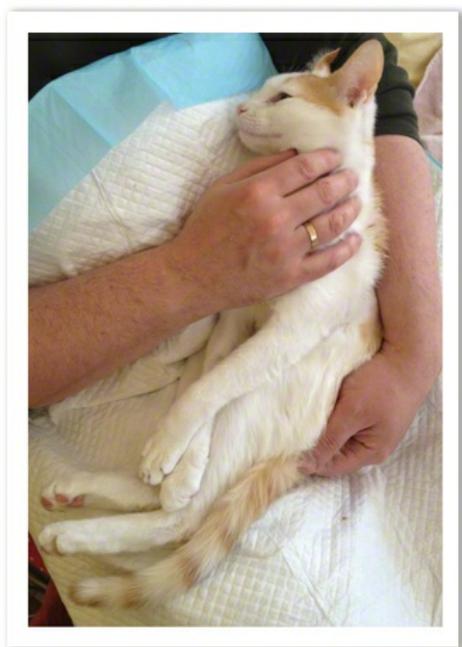
the dark! We will take him home, we will call him Clark. He will live at our house; he will grow and grow! Will our mother like this? We don't know."

I thought Clark would be a good name for the next cat we rescue, then I caught myself. The next cat? Would there be one after this?

We tried to include Barney or play a little bit with him. He was somewhat curious about what was going on, but eventually settled down on a blanket near Fred, too. **We formed a circle of loving kindness around Fred. His breathing was slower. He reacted to less and less.** I started to hope that Fred would hang on because I didn't know how the FIP would kill him. Would he suffocate and struggle? Would his heart just give out? **I just wanted this one thing since I couldn't have anything else. I couldn't have Fred rebound or recover. At least he could die without pain.**

Sam slept with Fred that last night. I couldn't do it. I just couldn't see him in such terrible condition for hours on end. I still got up at 4am and again at 7am to check on Fred and to clean him up because he was urinating on himself. Every time Fred peed we still cheered him on. *"Good boy! Okay, let's get you cleaned up. Oops! Here's some more! Get another pad. Okay, good boy, Freddie!"*

But this was it, the morning of the end. I did all the chores getting our other cats feed, watered, boxes cleaned out, so Sam could stay with Fred. I was so busted up that seeing him was killing me, too. I had to go back and face him because time was running out. We got the room cleaned up and got ourselves washed and dressed. **Fred was very frail now. We both sat on either side of him, petting him, talking to him. Telling him we loved him. He was barely conscious. It was devastating.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Sam holding Fred before we start feeding time. You can see how limp he is in Sam's arms.

It was a gray day. I was hoping for some last rays of sun for Fred, but it rained. Around 12:30pm, the clouds opened up and it started to pour. I saw Dr. Larry's car come down the driveway and my heart sank. This was it. It was time. I got up to answer the door, but my legs felt weak. Dr. Larry and super-Deb said hello as they entered the house. My mouth opened to reply, but no words came out.

We went upstairs to the room where Sam was waiting with Fred. Dr. Larry was quiet, then sighed and looked at Fred. He and Deb got to work. I had to sign a form saying Fred hadn't bitten anyone in 15 days and that I was giving my consent to have him euthanized. Dr. Larry talked about how tough cats are and that he could see Fred living a few more days even though he was barely alive. He said that Fred's body condition looked really good because we'd been constantly feeding and cleaning him, but that, too, it was clear it was time for Fred to be helped to pass away.

I asked if Dr. Larry could take a look at Barney first. I was worried that Barney could get sick, too, because I'd heard that FIP can hit siblings since they have the same DNA. He and Deb examined Barney and felt he was okay, but we would keep a close eye on him going forward. He suggested we thoroughly scrub down the room and get rid of the cat trees and bedding, just to be safe. We couldn't risk having an unhealthy environment since I still have three adult foster cats in my bathroom who would benefit being in a bigger space. Although I knew it meant more fundraising to replace all the cat furniture, I agreed it made sense.

There wasn't anything else I could do to put off what was to come next. It was time to let Fred go. Dr. Larry explained that we had to be calm because Fred's veins were compromised by the steroids and that the needle might blow out a vein and that we had to not get upset. Sam was still sitting on the bed next to Fred so he lifted the cat bed with Fred on it into his lap. **I gave Fred a few kisses and moved aside to hold his front paw while Dr. Larry slipped the first needle into his vein.** Dr. Larry fussed over the placement, but the vein held. Fred didn't even react to the sting of the needle. **Fred was**

already so far gone that when he passed, none of us even saw him go.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Fred's last night. Sam held him for hours.

Dr. Larry listened to his chest and there were no more signs of life. He said, “okay, it’s done.” as I burst into racking sobs. Some how I had enough strength to remember one last thing as I cried. I had cut sections of green and white ribbons, which are the colors that are associated with the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. I tried to tie a bow around Fred’s neck, but my fingers didn’t work. It took five tries but I finally got it done. Fred was our Mascot for Kitties for Kids. He made so many kids happy. Super Deb remarked, now all the children who were killed will know Fred when he arrives in Heaven and I agreed.

I kissed Fred a few more times and told him I was sorry and how much I loved him. Deb carried him out in her arms. He was still on his comfy cat bed. She said she didn’t want us to see her put him in the black plastic bag and I agreed I didn’t want to see that either.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Fly free, sweet Fred. We will love you and miss you, always.

I closed the door and came close to fainting. **I was crying so hard I couldn’t stand. I willed myself to go back to the foster room, which had so often been a place of joy, to find Sam on the bed, weeping.**

I sat on the bed, in the same place I’d spent the better part of the last day, but now we were on the other side of this journey, the side where the questions are answered and where the real pain begins.

A loud rumble of thunder traveled through the house. I said to Sam; “that was Fred. He’s on his way to be with the children and they’re celebrating his arrival.” He looked at me through tear-filled eyes and nodded “yes.”

CICH Content Categories:

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[Rest in Peace](#) ⁽⁷⁾

[Euthanized](#) ⁽⁸⁾

Comments

Fri, 2013-05-10 11:37 — [The Island Cats \(not verified\)](#) ^[10]

We are so very sorry. You ^[11]

We are so very sorry. You did so much for Fred....if only love could have saved him. Gentle purrs and headbutts to you...

Fri, 2013-05-10 11:53 — Susan (not verified)

No Words.... ^[12]

There are no words to say to you that will help - I am sobbing reading this - I can say I know how you feel - as I have been in the place you were and are...and I am so sorry that you are hurting - You did all you could for him - and he knew it - now he is free to be the wonderful precious little Kitty he is.....I am so sorry - my Heart is breaking for you...and for all of us who you have allowed to love him as well. I know that what you took the time to write has been so hard to do - I Thank You for telling us all you did. You all will be in my Prayers....and know you have touched my Heart for always. Susan

Fri, 2013-05-10 12:21 — [Lynda](#) ^[13]

I'm so very sorry to hear ^[14]

I'm so very sorry to hear that Fred has moved on. You did everything in your power to make him comfortable and let him know how loved he was and because of that, Fred was able to move on with dignity. It's a great gift (as well as the hardest gift to give) to be able to be there at the end of your pets lift and help him to the other side.

Fri, 2013-05-10 13:14 — Karen Farrar (not verified)

Fred ^[15]

OMG I am sitting here at my work desk crying my Eyes out for FRED!! I just went thru this with my Tacky Cat who looked like Fred's Twin. It has been a Month and it seems like yesterday and I still can't get it together. This is by far not the first cat I have ever lost. It's horrible loosing a Pet!!! All I can say now is when I get too the Pearly Gates there is going to be a Big reunion and I will never be alone again reuniting with all my long lost pets. I have Dogs, Cats, Horses, Ferret's, Fish, and Birds to see again. Till then Happy Trails.....

Fri, 2013-05-10 13:39 — Catnonymouse (not verified)

Fred ^[16]

This is so beautifully written, and so heart wrenching. I love the ending when you hear the thunder of the kids cheering for Fred. My heart goes out to you and Sam for I know what it feels like to sit on the edge of your bed while a vet puts your precious baby to sleep after FIP has ravaged his body. You've renewed my interest in doing fundraising for FIP research. I hope we can find a cure someday. Be strong and bless you for all you did for Fred.

Fri, 2013-05-10 13:40 — Catnonymouse (not verified)

Coming Home ^[17]

Our hearts are broken and the tears just don't stop.
And God asked the feline spirit
Are you ready to come home?
Oh, yes, quite so, replied the precious soul
And, as a cat, you know I am most able
To decide anything for myself.

Are you coming then? asked God.
Soon, replied the whiskered angel
But I must come slowly
For my human friends are troubled
For you see, they need me, quite certainly.

But don't they understand? asked God
That you'll never leave them?
That your souls are intertwined. For all eternity?
That nothing is created or destroyed?
It just is....forever and ever and ever.

Eventually they will understand
Replied the glorious cat
For I will whisper into their hearts
That I am always with them
I just am....forever and ever and ever

Fri, 2013-05-10 14:00 — Jeanne Voreis (not verified)

Fred, your golden eyes opened the gates of "Rainbow Bridge" [18]

I have been following Fred's story and sent prayers and wishes that he could make it through this disease. I cried my heart out as I read his sad ending. I believe in Rainbow Bridge and am sure Fred is whole and new again. Running and jumping as high as he can. I'm sure he is thanking you for all that you could do for him and sure he is looking down and telling you he is whole again and not to cry. We will miss him on this earth, but one day we will all be together. laughing, playing and having good times again. I hope Fred finds my Thunderbolt kitty I had to put down a few years ago and they become best friends. When I had to put down Thunderbolt, I held him in my arms as he was put down and sobbed till no tomorrow. So I know how hard this hit Fred's guardians as it had hit me. I thank you Fred for the time you were with us on this earth. You were a strong little guy that tried your best to stay with us. I am sorry that this earth has such a disease that took you away from us. Hopefully one day there will be no disease like this or find a cure for it so that no other furry friends have to go through what you did.

Love and will miss you Fred,

Jeanne & my three furry angels, Sunshine, TJ & Sweet Pea

PS: Thank you guardians for all that you could do for Fred.

Fri, 2013-05-10 14:15 — catmom5 (not verified)

Angel Fred [19]

I knew this was coming . . . and I am so very sorry. It's hard enough to lose our seniors, but the babies are heart-breaking in a different way. It's clear that Fred was ready to go, leaving behind a body that just couldn't allow him to be the beautiful kitten boy he can be now.

I am so sorry for your loss. You did the best for him . . . and I hope that gives you some comfort. And I will hold the image of Fred being greeted by the children from Sandy Hook ~ kids and kittens loving each other.

Run free and whole once again, sweet boy. You are loved and you will be sorely missed.

Fri, 2013-05-10 14:27 — Maria Romano (not verified)

Fred [20]

Thank you for telling your story about Fred. I am in tears. I didn't realize he was the mascot for the Kitties for Kids program. It is highly symbolic that he has now joined the children of the Newtown tragedy. I hope this will provide you with some comfort.

Fri, 2013-05-10 14:36 — jmuwj (not verified)

RE NEW ANGEL FRED [21]

Fred had the BEST life possible with you, Robin and family! Having his brother right there with him is something so many people don't think about, but we know how deep the bond can be between siblings, just like with other mammals including humans. I am so glad they got to stay together.

A couple of things: reading your post, I must respectfully beg to differ on the issue of lymphoma vs. FIP. As you know, I lost two precious beloveds to FIP, one at only three months of age; she was due to go in to the doctor the very next day, and when I opened her door (she had her own room) that morning, she was gone. I was dumbfounded. She went so fast.

I also lost a beloved cat to lymphoma, and it was certainly not a better alternative in any way. She developed a huge growth on her neck, which was removed and biopsied; it was Mast cell lymphoma, and she did not have much longer with us at home. It was not an easy passage.

Surely Fred is up there with all of those kids and the adults who went with them. Surely there is no justice here, no "closure", no answers to the question, "WHY?"

If we can, we must hold to the thought that they are all free of pain, of stress, of fear, and of all the terrible things that can befall us in this earthly life, safe now in the Perfect Love of the One to Whom they are all cherished forever. And we will all hold them in our hearts until we are reunited in due time.

Fri, 2013-05-10 15:39 — Catdude (not verified)

Rest now handsome Fred. I [22]

Rest now handsome Fred. I type this through tear filled eyes. Robin and Sam you both are angels on earth. Fred knew how much you loved him. Thank you for sharing this handsome boy with us. You gave Fred the most precious gift that could be received, unconditional love. We all know how hard it is to let a furry member of our family go and that this decision wasn't made lightly. I don't consider them an it or a pet, they are family. They are our kids that walk on four legs and deserve the

love and respect that we all do. You did the best that you could for Fred and in the end let him go peacefully and with dignity. Remember you didn't say goodbye to Fred, you just sent him on the next leg of his journey. When you feel the sunlight on your face, that's Fred. When you see the leaves blowing in the wind, that's Fred. And even when you hear and feel the thunder and the rain, that's Fred. Fred is telling you he is safe and healthy again, he is there with you every second of your day and night. Rest your weary soul now Fred, your task here on earth is now completed.

Fri, 2013-05-10 15:40 — Catdude (not verified)

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Fri, 2013-05-10 16:11 — Barbara UK (not verified)

Heartbroken for you and Sam [24]

I'm so very sad to read about Fred. I don't know what to say that won't sound trite. You did everything and more than anyone could have done. How wonderfully you both cared for him at the end - it was so full of love. If he had had to go through that without meeting you and Sam - how dreadful his end would have been.

Not even the finest doctors can save every child - and it was the same with Fred.

You were angels.

Barbara UK

Fri, 2013-05-10 16:33 — [Ace \(not verified\)](#) [25]

God bless you [26]

For the exquisite care you gave to Fred. May God and the angels and Fred himself soothe you in your time of sadness.

Will you spread Fred's or will you ner you in a handsome urn?

Fri, 2013-05-10 17:35 — HollyAnne Dustin (not verified)

Much love [27]

I'm so very sorry. The pain of losing a cat is terrible. You did the best for him in every way possible and loved him to the very end. I love the idea that he has gone to be with the Sandy Hook children. I know the Fred-sized hole in your heart will never heal - but I don't think he'd want you to let the pain be so great you don't rescue another kitten - let there be a Clark in your future when the time is right. There are so many who need love like you shared with Fred. Purrs to you and Sam tonight. I hope that you know that the many of us how follow you are crying and mourning with you.

Fri, 2013-05-10 18:07 — [Shelli](#) [28]

we lost our beloved Sweet [29]

we lost our beloved Sweet Pea, z"l, (may his memory be for a blessing), to FIP. It sucks. But he knew love. And I still mourn his loss, some 10 years later...

Fri, 2013-05-10 22:31 — Bobby (not verified)

Words won't come; my heart to [30]

Words won't come; my heart to Fred's, Sam's, and yours.

Fri, 2013-05-10 23:00 — Rick (not verified)

"Second star to the right and straight on 'til morning." [31]

Blessings for Fred and those he loves. Watch for him...

Sat, 2013-05-11 10:17 — [Deb Barnes - Ze...](#) (not verified) [32]

I have no words... [33]

Robin - I am so sorry and have no words left in me at the moment, as I too am a shell of myself and a walking zombie. My beloved Jazz who has been with me for 15 years is nearing the end and I am in a constant state of pain watching him slip away before my very eyes. I hover next to him, trying to remain strong, but inevitably I break down into tears. I don't know if I am offering him comfort at this point, or just annoying him.

Fred was so well loved and you did the best you could. It is tragic that such a young life had to be taken, but I am glad he had you in his life.

Thu, 2013-05-16 07:15 — [Cheesy*Wotsit \(not verified\)](#)

Simply, Fred ^[34]

You did the best thing that he needed - gave him love, a home and purrrents. That's all we can ever do. No matter how much it hurts now, you will look back on all of this with fondness knowing that you did everything that you could do - and more than most. I donated for Fred and cried every time I received an update, hoping that he would get better - the best thing now is that he is with his cat friends and you *will* see him again. All the best from the UK, cw. =^..^=

Tue, 2013-05-21 10:35 — [Long Life Cats ... \(not verified\)](#) ^[35]

My deepest condolences ^[36]

There are no words to possibly help. All I can do is offer to you my deepest condolences for your loss and many thanks for working so hard to make Fred's days as pleasant as possible. God Bless you

Tue, 2013-05-21 16:11 — [Angie \(not verified\)](#)

Fred ^[37]

I am so sorry. I just discovered this blog today and I almost cried at work. It's almost as though I can feel some of your pain through your words and my heart is broken for you. Just do yourself a favor and don't try to be strong until you're ready. It sounds like you have been strong for so long and it's okay to break down and cry and stay home and avoid people and some responsibility for a while. Take the time you need to grieve for Fred. Not all people believe, but I hope to someday see all of my critters that have passed on the Rainbow Bridge and sometimes just that thought gets me through. I hope that helps you too.

Wed, 2013-05-22 12:06 — [Riverfront Cats \(not verified\)](#) ^[38]

Very sorry ^[39]

Oh I'm so sorry for your loss. You did everything you could to save him. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Thu, 2013-06-27 15:05 — [Blue Kitties \(not verified\)](#) ^[40]

Purrs and Hugs and Condolences ^[41]

We never knew about this disease until we started blogging. We hopped over here from A Tonk's Tail after reading about breakthroughs in finding a treatment for this disease. Our humans have never had to euthanize a kitty, but in the last 30 years of sharing their home, they have lost nine of our previous meowmates, and many died in our mom's arms, one only 13 days after being diagnosed with lymphoma. As she read your story her heart was breaking for you and she knows how your life has been forever changed by this loathsome disease and Fred being taken away before he even had a chance to live. She is sending you love and all the healing strength she can manage. Remember, you are forever blessed for having this sweet kitty in your life as he is forever blessed for having you. Purrayers, purrs and hugs from the kitties at www.thecatonyourhead.com ^[40], Lily Olivia, Mauricio, Misty May, Giulietta, Fiona, Astrid, Lisbeth and Calista Josette

Sat, 2013-08-24 03:44 — [Tabicatz \(not verified\)](#) ^[42]

Crying in AZ ^[43]

I just read your story on Fred. I came to your site from Jackson Galaxy's facebook page. He posted that we read about Minnie and her kittens, and you kept referring to Fred, I just had to read it. As a mama cat to 3 beautiful rescues, a pitbull rescue who thinks he's a cat, and a volunteer at the local no kill cageless cat shelter (The Hermitage in Tucson, AZ), this broke my heart. I had to put down my 21 year old girl about 7 years back, and reading about the euthanization brought memories back I have blocked out for years. I've always wanted to foster, but could never bring myself to letting them go after my job is done. You and Same are two tough cookies. Don't ever stop what you're doing. One of my boys is special needs, he has a slight mental retardation, and I sometimes get overwhelmed with him. And his issue is just issues with going potty backwards (they're potty trained) or the pup wanting to play too rough with him and he doesn't know how to walk away. I will keep up with your blog, you two are fantastic cat ambassadors.

From one 'crazy' cat lady to another

Tabi

Thank you, Tabi ^[45]

Thank you for your kind-hearted comment. I still grieve over Fred. His ashes are in a little tin in my living room next to a portrait of him. He was a dear creature and it took a chunk out of my heart to put him down but he was leaving us on his own, I just kept him from suffering. Keep loving animals and opening your heart. It's tough work, but in the end, what else should we be doing? :-) xo

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

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