

Two Out of Three Ain't Good



Honorary Adoption Story by Shanti's House Ambassador Don Micheli

The Punk was one of four kittens a young girl was giving away in front of a Safeway grocery store in August of 1981. I checked them out on my way in and noticed something very peculiar. The Punk was staring at my chin - no eye contact. Very odd, I thought. I did my shopping and while waiting in the check out line, I noticed the girl walking away from the front door of the store. She went to a parked car that had its driver's window down. She placed the Punk in the parked car and walked out of the parking lot - abandoning her. I walked up to the car and saw nobody was in it. Only the Punk. I realized she had been abandoned. I got in the car and picked her up. Love at second site. I decided I had to keep her (I refer to this as the first time I rescued her). She was very small. So, I dumped my groceries on the front seat of that car and put her in the grocery bag. I wanted to make sure she was secure as I drove home. It worked perfectly. I just hand carried the few items I bought.

My wife, Monika, had "adopted" Spot, a stray Calico cat that was hanging around her parents home in Encinitas a few years earlier. I told Monika that I knew that Spot had seniority and if they did not get along, I would offer the Punk to a friend of mine. He already had some cats. I knew the Punk would be well taken care of. However, no problems. We kept both girls. Not long after I brought her home, I held her up to my face just talking to her as many people do. Then, she started licking the whiskers on my chin!! She had probably been thinking about that since she first saw me. Perhaps her first ever human beard! Then, followed 20 years and three months of friendship. My first ever pet of my own.

Nine months after I adopted her, Monika and I went to Europe on vacation for about 20 days. I was new to owning cats and figured she would be happier outside than stuck indoors. I had my friend come by and feed her outside every day. I phoned him every week to see how things were going. The first two weeks were fine. In the third week, he said that he had not seen her for a few days. It never occurred to me that she just might get lonely and leave.

When I got home, she was still gone. I drove around endlessly for a few days looking for her and asking people if they had seen a Tortoiseshell colored cat. No luck. I finally thought about calling the Humane Society here in Escondido. The girl told me that they did not have any cats that matched the Punk's description. In fact, they only had one stray that was brought in recently. I asked about the stray and the girl told me that today was her last day – that she would be euthanized tomorrow. That was pretty normal back in 1982, I guess. I figured that since it was that cat's last day, I should go make sure it was not my girl. Amazingly, it was the Punk! I couldn't believe it. Why the girl did not recognize her as being a Torty, I will never understand. I asked who turned her in and they told me. I drove over to their home - about eight blocks away from where my house was. I thanked the people for turning her in to the Humane Society and gave them a small reward. (I refer to this as the second time I rescued her.)

On my birthday, in November, 2001, I came home and saw her having trouble walking any distance. She had to take a rest to just walk up the stairs. Her back legs would even give out every so often and she would drop down in the back. I took her to the vet. After X-Rays and other tests, he told me that her heart was failing. Trouble getting oxygen to her muscles. I asked what we could do about it. He said, unfortunately, nothing. He said that there is no treatment for what she had. She was 20 years old and her heart was simply giving out. Naturally, I did not want to accept that. I took her to another vet for a second opinion. The opinion was the same. Then, one more vet. The same story. Her old heart had run its race. I was told that when humans had this problem, the only solution was a heart transplant. I said OK - can we do that? Money was not an object. The doctors said that they never heard of a cat having a heart transplant. I believed them, but I still did not want to give up on my friend. I had heard about UC Davis here in California. They are famous worldwide for their Department of Animal Science. I wanted an opinion from them. I phoned them and told them my story. I asked if they had ever heard of anyone performing a heart transplant on a cat. They said they had not. I asked them if they wanted to be the first ones to do it. They declined. Then, I knew the Punk's days were numbered. So, I had no choice but to wait it out. The Punk died exactly 30 days after my November birthday. She lasted only one month.

That was my third attempt to rescue her. It did not work.