

## Remembering Pumpkin

5/14/2015 to 11/13/2024

When Pumpkin came into my life he was unappreciated because I was not part of the selection committee. When he left my life, he was by far my favorite cat I ever met.

Dick dreamed up his name because of his orange color and also the his endearing nature. Sandy assigned his official name as Purring Pumpkin because of he loved to purr. He was the most purring cat we ever met. He would even purr when being brought back into the house after having escaped. His happiness with life overruled his discontent with capture. It was like - that was fun!

As a Maine Coon Cat, Pumpkin was impressively large. He was also beautiful, inquisitive, and friendly. It was hard not to notice Pumpkin. And so friendly and outgoing. It was not unusual for him to meet a guest at the front door, if it was a first time meeting the person. Usually Pumpkin would be perfect throughout the visit, but there were times he would say enough petting was enough via a little nip. Cats will be cats.

Pumpkin accompanied us on about forty 900 mile car trips between New Hampshire and North Carolina. During these trips he was given the run of the car with the hope that he would enjoy the trips. And it worked - never trying to hide to avoid a trip. He mostly respected the necessity of not hindering the driver but did infrequently bump the shifter from drive to neutral! He was usually at Sandy's feet or in her lap, but annoyingly also like to chill out in his "dirt box". When we took a break at a rest area or otherwise, we would find him in one of two places on return: curled up on the floor under the steering wheel, or stretched out on the dashboard, often with passing people smiling at him.

Pumpkin escaped once while we were on a trip. We were bringing back a new puppy for Wanda and Pumpkin took advantage of our distraction with the dog. Fortunately we were able to capture the cat without much of a problem.

Trips that Pumpkin came not to appreciate were the visits to a vet. For the first several yearly visits he was his friendly self. The vet technicians were so talented he did not focus on the shots. But they slowly went downhill. His last visit was a traveling clinic that was at a Tractor Supply. They seemed very competent, but took no nonsense with his hissing as he was about to get a shot, One person restrained him in his cat carrier while another shot him in the rump with the needle. His inner beast fought back impressively. We told ourselves he was never going to be forced to visit a vet again. Fortunately the need never arose again.

While at home, Pumpkin escaped more times than he should have. Since I was the one who usually let my guard down, I became the one most proficient at catching him. My approach was to let him have a few minutes to enjoy his freedom. In his younger days that meant a fair amount of walking. One memorable time he climbed a tree and decided that the best way to get back to the ground was to keep climbing up! He eventually froze and meowed for help. I used a combination of an extension ladder and step ladder to eventually rescue him. Fortunately we both arrived safely on the ground, me with just a few cat scratches. In his older years, the reward of escaping would be to stay close by the house, smell some flowers, or eat some grass.

The last time Pumpkin escape we only a few weeks before he died. I was not as patient as usual and was focused on quickly preventing southern fleas latching - I grabbing him before his version of quality time was achieved. He let me know what he thought about that, his inner

wild beast came out so forcefully Sandy had to get a blanket so I could throw it over him and subdue him. Needless to say, both Sandy and I were not impressed with his behavior. But how I wish if I hadn't worried about the southern fleas and given him a little time to enjoy the outdoors. Too soon he was no longer with us.

It is not unusual to find Dick lying down on the floor. When that would happen, Pumpkin would often welcome him to his domain by purring and lying beside him. He was especially supportive when I was doing crunches to strengthen my . . . And TV time on the bed was especially good. While I was turning on the TV and searching for a show, Pumpkin would enthusiastically rub against me in anticipation of quality family time. Sometimes I would evict him from where I wanted to lie and he might leave in a huff, but return to the bed in a few minutes. Most shows were meant for sleeping, but he would find a nature show with large African cats most fascinating.

When I broke my leg and initially spent almost all my time on the bed, Pumpkin was a great comfort, spending hours at a time with me. I think he did realize something was quite wrong with me and enjoyed our new quality time together. But there was the time he seemed to purposely jump on my leg as if to say we had played this game of inactivity long enough. He was in the dog house for that painful attack. But now even that is a fond memory!

Often while I was on the bed my phone or the tv remote would disappear. We learned that the best place to look was under the cat! If those devices were so important to us, they were important to him too. Pumpkin was very much a part of the family.

My understanding of the family dynamics was that I was top cat and Pumpkin usually agreed I deserved that role. He occasionally tried to assert his authority, but took corrections well and did not hold grudges. However, he tried to assert dominance over Sandy more than she appreciated. She was used to our previous cat James who was a real pussy cat. To protect herself from Pumpkins sneak attacks at night, Sandy often carried her secret weapon, the water bottle, with her.

While Sandy saw them as sneak attacks, I saw Pumpkins surprise swipes at the leg as like a kid initiating a game of tag, and with a sense of humor. Perhaps our differences of opinion were that I thought Pumpkin only occasionally and mistakingly had his claws out when he wanted to play tag, but Sandy it was on purpose and a sign of aggression.

Neither one of us appreciated Pumpkin often letting us know he thought it was time to get up when we were sure it was at least an hour too soon. As a reminder, we have a well scratched piece of carpet by our bedroom door that we used to keep shut to have a cat free sleep. We now sleep with the door open, but would rather have Pumpkin back.

Tonight it is raining, bringing back memories of the day Pumpkin jumped out an open window, stayed out all night which happened to be very rainy. After we had almost given up hope he finally appeared on our front porch looking like a drowned rat. Tonight it is raining and Pumpkin is buried outside. He may be getting wet, and this time he is not coming back. We are sad. This too shall pass and so shall we. Part of the sadness when there is a death that matters is that it reminds us of our limited time on earth and to use it wisely.

Going to another random Pumpkin thing, hoping to end the night on an upbeat note. He was obsessive compulsive when it came to strings of any kind. He saw one, he had to chew it to destruction. He managed to alter a winter coat of Rob's so it was not functional, went through countless shoelaces, but as years went on there seemed to be less destruction. Perhaps he grew more respectful of our goods; more likely we learned to be a little more careful about

leaving stringy things out. Damn, so many good memories! Pumpkin, you can't be replaced - at least that's what I keep telling Sandy.