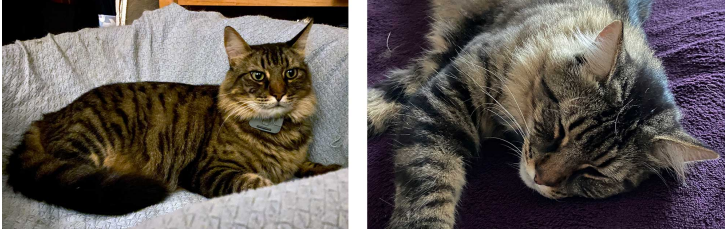


There are things you never get used to. Losing a wonderful pet, part of the family, is high on the list.



Zack has been a pretty amazing animal from the beginning, a rescue cat that used to live on the streets near Redding, if I recall the story correctly. A bit skittish at first, but quickly got used to the family and vocal in the nicest way, not the way a Siamese makes noise but almost an extension of a purr. Hearing Zack "talk" let you know something about the day was OK. Covid-19 and all the rest could take a break for a little while.

Zack was definitely not an indoor cat. He loved to bring home gifts; rats, mice, birds and a few things you couldn't quite figure out. Sometimes he'd bring them in with his teeth; sometimes he'd regurgitate them on the carpet. You wondered how he got all the birds. From a branch above them? He wasn't a small cat; Maine Coons are among the largest. And when we say large, he wasn't fat, he was just... big. Big paws. Big voice. Larger than life.

Zack and I had a very special thing going; I could make him purr pretty much whatever mood he was in. It was all about scratching/massaging his back, near his tail. He loved that.

Zack also loved attacking you as you walked by. Or any time he just decided it was the right time to strike out and snag an arm. And bags. He loved to climb into bags. Or boxes. He loved boxes. Clearly no fear of confined spaces.

He'd come home around 6pm at night, and Becky (our daughter) would "trap" him by locking the dog door, then let him back out around 5am, after he'd make enough fuss she wouldn't be able to sleep. He'd cruise back in for a few minutes around 8am, then head back out for a long day in the fields. But Friday night he didn't come back, and his tracker wasn't showing his location. No sign all-day Saturday. Didn't come back Saturday night. Becky was pretty panicked, but the tracker was still active. Finally, Sunday morning, 3:30am or so, the tracker sends Becky a text message that Zack is "home", something it does when he comes within range of our home's wifi network. (Skip the rest of this paragraph to avoid the gory details) She goes out looking for him, and there, in the middle of the street, near our driveway, is his head. Nothing else. She gets me up and I find his hind legs about 50 feet away, and in-between, his tracker. A pretty horrifying thing to face. Needless to say the family hasn't been in great shape today.

We know he's in a better place, up in heaven, catching endless mice and birds (which doesn't really make sense; why would heaven for mice and birds include being tortured by cats?). But that really doesn't help that much, not now. At 64 it's not like I haven't seen a lot of wonderful pets come and go, and I probably thought they were all special, but Zack... even more so. Zack, I know you can't read this, but we miss you. We really, really, do.

Update 6pm 2/1- Sent photos to Jeff Christner, Director of Animal Rescue & Control and Humane Investigations at the Peninsula SPCA. He confirmed it was an animal attack, which is a relief, probably Coyote but possibly Mountain Lion. He took it quite seriously and forwarded the photos on to someone else as well.

--Mike--