

# A CAT'S



# TALE

Friends of Feral Felines

Spring 2004

## FELINE FEATURE



### JASMINE by Melissa Jeffers

Our feral cat experience began in the fall of 2001. Tim and I had just moved into our new townhome, which backs up to a mini ecosystem with a creek and ample woods. We noticed an orange tabby coming around and decided that he was probably a stray, and we began feeding him. Little did we know that he was a she and would soon bring her new litter of six kittens to eat one at a time. This began our feral cat colony.

We ended up with three of the original kittens. The others disappeared with time and the momma orange tabby was euthanized because of serious medical complications. Simone, Sonny and Checkers were forced to open up their home to two newcomers. BP (short for Black Pepper) appeared about a year ago. He tried to rule the roost, but after neutering he settled down. Much to our surprise, another calico kitten showed up. We named her Jasmine.




Jasmine was quite a challenge for us. She was very skinny, very nervous and obviously desperate for food. Jasmine would binge eat and run all of the other cats away from the food on our back patio. She didn't seem to have had any human interaction before she saw us, but that didn't make her run. She was the first of our feral cats who would stand her ground and growl at us. I knew she was desperate, and we trapped her on the first try. Quite an accomplishment for us!

News came from the doctor she was pregnant and was very undernourished. When I picked her up, she looked as wild as ever and continued to growl at us when we would check on her. My past experience with my feral felines is that it would take a day or so before they would get their appetite back, but not with Jasmine. She ate two bowls of food the first night I brought her back from the vet. I knew it would be a long road to recovery for her both mentally and physically.

It took a couple of months before Jasmine calmed down enough to allow the other cats to join her in eating. At first she would run from bowl to bowl growling and hissing at the other cats in fear that she would go hungry again. I used this to my advantage and was able to earn her trust in record time. She finally allowed me to pet her. I could feel the bones along her spine and she was so small.

Patience paid off and Jasmine is now quite plump and very friendly to us. She is quite the clown and her temperament has completely changed for the better. Being somewhat of a kitten, she has added some humor and playfulness back into the colony. She can be found on top of the patio furniture or picking on one of the male cats. Our feral colony has had its ups and downs, but they are pretty well established. Sonny, Checkers, Simone, BP and Jasmine are one big happy family.

### A TRIBUTE TO MARGARET HAILEY by Mataya

 Margaret Hailey, "The Cat Lady," was my good friend and mentor for over 30 years. I affectionately called her mom. She was born in 1918 in Charlotte and passed away on Feb. 11, 2004. She had a passion for helping animals. In 1930, mom became one of our nation's earliest rescue and adoption educators and activists.

She would tell stories of the sites and sounds of old Charlotte describing in details so vivid you could feel the warm summer day or the crisp winter morning. Outgoing and outspoken, she met many everyday people and prominent Charlotteans alike.

About 10 years ago, I remember how her voice broke as her eyes filled with tears when she spoke of how she lived long enough now to have buried over 100 friends.

She married and lost two husbands and many beloved pets. With strong roots in her faith, mom was looking forward to reuniting with all those that had gone. She and I agreed we didn't want to be anywhere without our animal friends. Mom didn't want to go to a Heaven where animals weren't permitted.

She enjoyed sharing the tales of her youth. Laughingly, she told me how her family gathered around a bare light bulb hanging in the middle of a large room in her home. Electricity was going to make light in that little glass thing precisely at 12 noon and it did! Mom became a bright light in a sometimes dim world. She moved through each day accepting challenges most people would avoid or pretend not to notice.

We were sitting and talking one day when I asked her how she began helping animals. She closed her eyes

Contd. on page 2



## LETTER FROM ANN GROSS, CO-DIRECTOR

This newsletter is lovingly dedicated to two devoted animal rescuers/caretakers who are no longer with us. They are Margaret Hailey, "The Cat Lady," and Bill Lundell, father of Tracy Lundell.



During the last winter months, TNR (Trap/Neuter/Return) of our community homeless/feral cats continues through dedicated volunteer caretakers. Lisa Steffy, our co-director, is busy updating our tracking record and preparing for our our high-volume Feral Angel Cat Clinics in 2004. Beverly Sammarco and Lisa Steffy provided an information table and baked items at the Piedmont Cat Show on Feb 14. On Feb. 21, we held our Feral Angel Cat Clinic for 28 homeless/feral cats with our wonderful volunteer veterinarians, vet techs and lay volunteers. Our next clinic will be March 28.

Bill Laudati, Johanne Woodall, Beverly Sammarco, Lisa Steffy and I are working on a PowerPoint presentation for TNR – teaching the nonlethal approach to pet overpopulation for our communities. At UNC-Charlotte, Anne-Marie Gearhart, Bill Laudati and I are meeting with student/faculty/administration volunteers in forming a campus group to continue the present TNR program for homeless/feral campus cats. We are encouraged and supported by their participation and enthusiasm.

We are grateful to Judith Jolly, a Girl Scout volunteer, who along with her parents' assistance, gave a presentation to a community group about TNR and raised public awareness about pet overpopulation. The group listened respectfully and donated a generous amount of money to our nonprofit group. Thank you for a job well done!

Please consider joining our volunteer effort at these upcoming events (details listed on page 4). Possibly City Fest Live, Paws For a Cause, Bow-Wow/Meow Animal Adoption Festival and our annual yard sale. To volunteer, contact Sandra Synder, Volunteer Coordinator, at 704-752-0400 or saundrahnyder@aol.com. We warmly welcome Waxhaw Animal Hospital to our veterinary network who provide low-cost spay/neuter/ vaccination of homeless/feral cats.

We thank you for your continuing support, generosity and encouragement which makes our work possible. Our homeless/feral community cats live a better quality of life because of you and hopefully, the population will reduce with time with our continued efforts.



**FERAL UPDATE  
AS OF 1998,  
OVER 2,020 CATS  
STERILIZED & VACCINATED  
TO DATE**



**An Omission from our Winter issue:** Thank you to Eileen Abbe and Diane Osborn, who participated at our annual Christmas bookwrap at Barnes & Nobel - Birkdale Commons.

Contd. from page 1

briefly as if she was reliving that very moment so many years ago, a moment that had changed the course of a young life. When she was 12, she was walking home from school when she heard the weak, muffled cries of dying kittens. She saw two men drowning bags of kittens in the creek near her home. As a child, she couldn't stop the men, but realized at that moment that if the kittens weren't born, they would not be hurt by people. She was determined to stop the sound of drowning kittens.

She gathered wood, nails and a hammer and began boarding up stalls in the barn. She kept an eye on all the neighbors' pets. As soon as she noticed they were in heat, she would gather them into the stalls and they would stay there the duration of their cycles.

In her quiet moments, she could still hear that horrible sound she heard, and mom began a life long journey befriending people and animals.

Mom Hailey was a kind person, who not only loved animals, but she loved people too. She knew she couldn't save the world, but would do all she could. Always in service to others, she became a nurse. Mom married and used her small salary to help others. She would do without and make many sandwiches to take to homeless shelters. At Christmas she would put together gift bags for men and women at the shelters, which included socks, shaving cream, soap, women's hose and cosmetics. She had no children, but put one young man through college. Mom helped a married couple (both mentally challenged adults) to purchase a small house so they did not have to live on the streets.

As an adult, she chose a profession where she could help people through her nursing skills, but her love of animals was by far her most consuming passion. Living in the city as a young adult meant animals in her care must be confined. Mom bought materials to build kennels and cages in her yard, providing rescued animals a temporary home. She found a few vets who provided volume vet care at a reduced price. She took in thousands of homeless animals, provided safety and vet care, then adopted them to a new home.

She began a quest to learn all she could about pet overpopulation, adoption and spaying/neutering. Once she gathered the information, she approached city council throughout much of her life, attempting to educate council members and local vets about the need to sterilize animals. Her pleas seemed to fall on deaf ears, but she did not give up. She told me how city council members at that time thought she was a strange person for wanting animals to have rights and free surgery paid for by the city. It was an uphill battle and not a popular cause at the time.

Finally, she had gathered over 10,000 names on petitions and presented them to city council. She asked for a free spay/neuter clinic for Charlotte Mecklenburg. Under pressure, they voted to begin the clinic in the early 1980s to the dismay of many vets who felt threatened. The clinic began, but not the free clinic funded by the city she had fought so hard for. But it was a start. Most of the public and city officials alike thought spay and neuter meant "stay in neutral" as appropriately expressed in a recent *Charlotte Observer* editorial cartoon.

In her lifetime, mom spayed or neutered over 20,000 animals out of her pocket.

For a number of years, mom was a member of The Humane Society of Mecklenburg County, founded in 1938. I have joined their efforts as part of the Fundraising and Events Planning Committee raising money to fund SNIP (Spay/Neuter Intervention Program). The program provides free spay/neuter to qualified applicants. It will help reduce the number of animals entering Animal Control, decrease the euthanasia rate and increase the adoption rate of these animals.

In 1998, Friends of Feral Felines was started in her honor to continue her life's work. Ann Gross and Lisa Steffy, co-directors of FFF together with dedicated volunteers keep mom's legacy alive. They share responsibilities, accept challenges, solve problems and educate the public to benefit homeless/feral cats in our area. FFF has worked closely with The Margaret Hailey Cat Sanctuary. It is on acreage owned by its founder, Kay Jones, where many homeless/feral cats receive food and shelter.

It was mom's wish that any memorials in her honor, be made to Friends of Feral Felines.

Along with many others, I had the good fortune of knowing Mom Hailey. She was the most giving, compassionate person I've ever known and she lived her beliefs. She never stopped hearing the cries of those drowning kittens.

## BASIC FERAL KITTEN CARE

If you find kittens, first determine if they have a mother. Mother cats may be out of sight for several hours at a time. Try to wait somewhere unobserved to see if she comes back.

When possible, young kittens should remain with the mother. In the first few weeks of life kittens absorb critical antibodies from the mother. She may move them at any time, so make sure the location is protected and comfortable, perhaps with a small shelter. Provide daily food and water. Once the kittens are weaned, try to catch them. Take them home in a large carrier or place them in foster care. Trap the mother cat and have her spayed, vaccinated and tested for feline aids and leukemia. She is to be returned to the site of origin with daily water and food.

If the mother cat is not able to care for her kittens, they will depend on you for survival. Bring the orphaned kittens to your home in a carrier with a towel covered hot water bottle, placing the kittens on top of it and then covering them with a towel to keep them warm. Neonatal kittens are very fragile and should be handled very gently.

Kittens should be alert and warm to touch. If they feel cold and listless, they must be warmed immediately. Do not attempt to feed chilled kittens. Once at home, place them in a box or pet carrier on top of a towel-covered heating pad set on low. Make sure the heating pad covers only one half of the bottom of the box/carrier because they need to move off if they get too warm.

## DETERMINING AGE

- Under 1 wk: Eyes shut, ears flat to head, skin looks pinkish and part of the umbilical cord may still be attached.
- 7-10 days: Eyes begin to open, ears still flat. Size is smaller than your hand.
- 3 wks: Eyes fully open, ears erect, teeth visible. Will attempt to walk but are very wobbly.
- 4-5 wks: Eyes have changed from blue to another color. Begin to pounce and leap.
- 8-10 wks: Weigh about 2 lbs. If they have not been exposed to humans, they will likely be feral and unapproachable.

## FEEDING

Four weeks old and younger: If they are chilled, they cannot be fed until they are warmed. **Do not feed them cow's milk. USE ONLY KMR** or other kitten milk replacement formula along with special bottles for feeding. Supplies are available at pet stores and vet clinics. Kittens will need to be fed every 2 to 6 hours around the clock. Test the formula on your wrist. It should be warm, but not hot. Slice a small slit in the nipple adequate enough for the formula to get through. Don't squeeze on the bottle, but pull the bottle gently away to engage their sucking reflex. Hold the kitten at a 45 degree angle and tilt the bottle so milk flows to the nipple. After every feeding, they need help to urinate and defecate. Moisten a cotton ball with warm water and gently rub the kitten's anal area. Waste will be mostly liquid at this point.

Kitten food should be available at all times. Small amounts of wet food can be given twice a day. No kitten can resist chicken-flavored baby food. They must have water at all times. Also, provide a litter box. You may want to keep them in a cage, but handle them cautiously. Their nails and teeth are sharp. When 6 weeks of age, take them to the vet to check their general health, be de-wormed and receive inoculations.

## SOCIALIZING

Kittens learn from their mothers and quickly become feral. If they are caught and handled at a young enough age they can be socialized and adopted. Kittens can be socialized from 4-12 weeks of age. Taming feral kittens older than 12 weeks can be difficult and takes a great deal of patience.

At first, confine the kittens to a large pet carrier, cat condo or large cage. **Do not let them run loose in your home.** Because they are easily frightened, they will hide and be difficult to find and coax out. Ideally, they should be separated from each other to facilitate taming. If you cannot separate them, be sure to spend time alone with each one. Housing should contain a small litter-box, food and water dishes and something to cuddle in.

Food is the key to taming. Make dry kitten food available at all times. Give small amounts of wet food twice a day. The kitten may be hesitant to eat in your presence, but eventually will associate your presence with food. For an older kitten, begin by offering wet food on a spoon through the cage. When they become used to this, you can begin handling them. Be very gentle picking them up. Wrap the kitten in a towel (makes them feel secure) allowing the head to stick out. Offer wet food from your finger or a spoon. If necessary, dab a tiny bit of food on their nose.

When petting a kitten, gradually begin to gently pet the head, face, chin and behind the ears while talking in a low voice. Try to have several feeding and petting sessions (10-20 minutes) with each kitten as many times as you can.

Progress depends upon age and temperament. You will begin to notice improvements - falling asleep in your lap, coming to you for food, purring and playing. Once these improvements are noticed, the kitten and siblings can be reunited in a small, kitten-proofed room by removing anything that would injure them. A cat condo or large cage can also be used. Slowly expose them to other people. Everyone should use low voices and approach the kittens in a nonthreatening manner. Cover their cages at night. Once the kittens are willing to play, offer toys (no yarn or string). Do not let the kittens bite, scratch or play with your hand.

When they become 4 months old, they should be sterilized and have any necessary inoculations at a vet clinic.

Sources: *The Stray Cat Handbook*, Thompson County SPCA, and Alley Cat Allies.

## URGENT - CARETAKER NEEDED

An additional caretaker is needed to help the current caretaker with a large colony in the Albemarle, NC, area. Help feed, trap and transport cats to and from the vet. Cat food is also needed. Call 704-348-1578.

## FERAL ANGEL CAT CLINIC

On February 21, we held our seventh Feral Angel Cat Clinic. Twenty-eight cats were spay/neutered, vaccinated, ear-clipped, flea combed and ears cleaned. Four cats were euthanized for feline aids and/or leukemia.



We want to thank the veterinary staff for volunteering their facility and time. Also, our gratitude to Kim Earp, Allyson Crunkleton, Tamara Herbert, our volunteer vet techs and our dedicated lay volunteers: Al Rich, Race



and Valerie Farlow, Toni West, Brenda Thrasher, Ann-Marie Gearhart, Beverly Sammarco, Beth Weikart, Kay Jones, Bill Laudati, Karen and Don DeMart, Ann Gross, Lisa Steffy, Michelle and Cheryl Nedopak, Sandra Synder, Renee Crenshaw and Cindy Henderson.



### *In Honor Of*

**Margaret Hailey**, "The Cat Lady," who was caring and compassionate to all animals, from Luz Maria Aveleyra

**Bill Lundell**, who was kind and compassionate to feral cats, from his daughter Tracy, Michelle Sellers, Joseph C. & Virginia H. Travis, Mike & Michelle Welch, Glenda T. Farrell and Dennis & Patricia Gruntorad

## EVENTS CALENDAR

**FFF General Meetings: Tues., Apr. 6, & June 1, 6:30 pm**, Morrison Regional Library, Colony Rd. See our website or call our hotline for meeting place confirmation.



**The Crafty Cat Cat Show**, Freedom Hall, behind the Merchandise Mart, **Apr. 3** (10 am-4 pm) & **Apr. 4** (9 am-3 pm). FFF will have a booth (baked goods & cat-related items) on both days.

**Paws For A Cause, Sat., May 15**, Union County (NC) Humane Society. FFF will have a booth.

**Bow-Wow/Meow Adoption Festival, Sat., June 5** at Freedom Park. FFF will have a booth.

**FFF Annual Yard & Bake Sale, Sat. June 19**, 5425 Shoal Brook Ct., Providence Crossing subdivision, 8 am - 1 pm.



## ITEMS NEEDED FOR OUR ANNUAL YARD & BAKE SALE

Sat., June 19  
5425 Shoal Brook Court  
Providence Crossing subdivision  
8 am - 1 pm

Donated items should be in good, clean condition. **Accepting** cat-related items, home and office furniture, baby items, toys, CDs, tapes, office supplies/equipment, quality hardcover books, kitchen and household items, art/craft supplies, sports equipment, tools.

**Not accepting** clothing, shoes, paperback books, mattresses, window treatments.

**Call our Yard Sale Lady at  
704-541-3695  
about donating items**

## FOOD LION SHOP & SHARE

Friends of Feral Felines is registered with Food Lion Shop & Share. Each time you shop at Food Lion in Charlotte and use your MVP card, a portion of your total grocery purchase will be donated to FFF.

To register your MVP card: Go to [www.foodlion.com](http://www.foodlion.com). Click on fundraising. Click on Select Organization and fill in required information. Click on OK, then click on Add MVP Card and fill in required information. You can also register at your local Food Lion.

*National Volunteer Week – April 18-24, 2004*

*I am only one.*

*I cannot do everything, but I can do something.  
And the something I can do, I will do.*

## PUBLISHER'S CORNER

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