

A CAT'S TALE



Friends of Feral Felines

Summer 2003

FELINE FEATURE



WILLIE AND GRACE by Ray Kroninger

I was at work when I received a call from my wife, Diana. "I just rescued two kittens from the middle of Highway 51. "The middle," I replied. She said the kittens were in the middle turning lane (5 lanes of traffic). Diana almost wrecked her car trying to block the other vehicles from getting by. A good Samaritan helped her corral the two kittens. She held them firmly to her chest as she drove home. They were very nervous and frightened, to say the least, but safe.



Willie, Grace and Diana

I came home from work with no quick fix ideas. We have two adult cats, Ms. Kitty and Julius, and a 13-year-old dog named Ginger. I told Diana many times, "no more animals." My sister, Karen, lives in Colorado Springs, CO. She has taken in 14 cats. I often tell her I'm an animal lover, but 14!

Kitten #1, the orange one, was very shy and timid. Kitten #2, the black one, was outgoing and nosy. They were absolutely precious. We fed them tuna and they growled as they ate. I bought a litter box and they took right to it. I was amazed. Questions remained... Animal Shelter, certain death; take them back to the woods, certain death; foster them and adopt them out, possibility; keep them, well we're not sure. Guess what? We decided to keep them and became the proud parents of a girl and boy we named Grace and Willy. Grace is the black and white with white boots. She has beautiful blue eyes and is a real charmer. Willie is the orange kitten with a "W" on his forehead and has white boots. He is so sweet and easy going. We hope that eventually Ginger, Ms. Kitty and Julius will become friends with them.

I can't help but think of the people that passed by these kittens. Were they in a hurry; did they see them; or did they really care? Surely, if Diana had not stopped and not had the help of a good Samaritan, they would have been killed. I think of people like Diana and my sister, Karen, and many others who make a difference.

Peoples' lives are rewarded every time they open their doors and hearts to a homeless/feral cat and I thank God for them.

SPAY/NEUTER CLINIC ON JUNE 29

FFF had another successful high volume • low cost • all volunteer clinic at the Paw Creek Animal Hospital. Thirty two homeless/feral cats were brought to the clinic for sterilization, vaccination, ear clipping, flea comb and ear cleaning. Seven cats were humanely euthanized for feline aids.

We want to thank the volunteer staff and vet techs at Paw Creek. They were so generous in volunteering their facility and time on a Sunday to make another clinic possible for FFF. They are: Dr. Angela DiLillo, Matt Bryant, Dr. Herrick Hay, Dr. Joyce Carnevale, Karen Misconis, Kim Boone, Katy, Dawn Conner and volunteer vet techs, Allyson Crunkleton and Tammy Wilson.

Thank you FFF volunteers for your time and efforts - Bill Laudati, Ann Marie Gearheart, Kay Jones, Allison Mclean, Lisa Mervine, Brenda Thrasher, Sandy Hawkins, Kathy and Judith Jolly, Ann Gross, Lisa Steffy, Beverly Sammarco and Karen DeMart. Also, a generous thank you to all the contributors who help make these clinics possible.



LETTER FROM ANN GROSS CO-DIRECTOR OF FFF

Dear Friends,

An important message has reached us from Alley Cat Allies in Washington, D.C. Please show your support for TNR

(trap/neuter/return) to reduce the feral cat population and provide education for the general public. E-mail the editor of the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* at JournalLetters@avama.org or fax 845-925-9329. Include your e-mail address or your mailing address. The JAVMA will revisit its policy on TNR in the coming months. Please act today. Your strong support of TNR is crucial.

The spring and summer have brought a bumper crop of homeless/feral kittens. Most local nonprofit rescue and adoption groups are straining to keep up with the intake, maintenance and adoptions. The recent excellent series in *The Charlotte Observer*, "Death at the Pound" by Michelle Crouch and Scott Dodd, highlighted the need for more involvement at all levels to reduce the embarrassingly high numbers of euthanasia in Mecklenburg county and environs.

We are in need of volunteers in many areas. Please take time to read the insert.

FFF would like to take this opportunity to thank the veterinarians and vet techs who provide excellent care for our homeless/feral cats in our community.

Our work would not be possible without the kindness and generosity of our contributors and our dedicated volunteers.

*There is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer.
General Jimmy Doolittle*



A SUCCESSFUL YARD/BAKE SALE

by Beverly Sammarco, The Yard Sale Lady

The FFF Annual Yard and Bake Sale on 6/21 was a great success! We had a wonderful sunny and breezy day at the pavilion at Park Road Park. We had plenty of merchandise and homemade baked goods for sale.

Of course, behind every successful yard sale are the people who volunteered their time. We had a truck loading party at my home the night before. We loaded a 14 foot rental truck, station wagons, SUVs and a pick up truck! Thank you to the loading crew: Vickie and Jerry Bryant, Karen and Don DeMart, Ann Gross, Michelle Nedopak, Steve Politowski and Lisa Steffy.

On Saturday a.m. our crew unloaded and set up over 150 boxes of merchandise. Special thanks to: Kathy Jolly, Michelle Nedopak, Steve Politowski, Cheryl Nedopak, Toni West, Mary Ralston, Ann Gross, Lisa Steffy, Theresa Gahren, Karen and Don DeMart, Cheryl McDermott, Al Rich and Vickie Bryant. Items not sold were donated to Goodwill and clothing to Crisis Assistance Ministry.

Thank you volunteer bakers for making the delicious homemade goodies.

FFF thanks our customers. The funds raised will benefit the feral cats in our area. See you next year!

THANK YOU BEVERLY!

A mere thank you is not adequate for Beverly's enormous undertaking in organizing our sale. She collected, categorized and priced all donated items - probably over 1200. She filled her double car garage and attic to the brim. Her tireless effort is greatly appreciated by FFF.



Michelle Nedopak, our webmaster and secretary, was recently in a car accident and is trying very hard to keep our website up to date. She is also responsible for answering our e-mail from fffcharlotte@yahoo.com and regrets that she is unable to do so at this time.

Michelle will post a notice on our website when it becomes operational again.

FFF wishes her a steady recovery and appreciates her stamina keeping up with our website while she is recovering.

UPCOMING EVENTS

See our website for specifics regarding the following events:

- FFF General Meeting, Tuesday, October 7, "Building Simple Shelters for Homeless/Feral Cats"
- September Spay/Neuter Clinic

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 the 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 and take them home in a larger 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 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 cover 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 week - eyes shut, ears flat to head, skin looks pinkish and part of the umbilical cord may still be attached.
- 1 week-10 days - eyes beginning to open, ears still flat. A kitten this age is smaller than your hand.
- 3 weeks - eyes fully open, ears erect, teeth visible. Kittens will attempt to walk but are very wobbly.
- 4-5 weeks - eyes have changed from blue to another color (all cats are born with blue eyes). They begin to pounce and leap.
- 8 weeks - they weigh about 2 pounds. 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, which can make them sick. USE KMR or other kitten milk replacement formula along with special bottles for feeding.** Pre-mixed formula is easier to use than powdered. Supplies are available at pet stores and vet clinics. The kittens will need to be fed every two to six 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 instead 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, kittens 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. A small amount of wet food can be given twice a day. Chicken flavored baby food is a treat no kitten can resist. Make sure they have water at all times. You will need to provide a litter box. You may want to keep them in a cage, but handle them cautiously - nails and teeth are sharp.

At 6 weeks of age, a trip to a veterinary clinic is recommended to check their general health and receive worming and inoculations.

SOCIALIZING

Kittens who have no contact with humans early in their lives 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.



Four-week-old kittens can usually be socialized in a few days. Kittens up to 8 weeks old can take about 2-4 weeks to be socialized. Ten to 12 week old kittens may take longer to be socialized. Taming feral kittens older than 12 weeks can be difficult. It takes a great deal of patience.

Confine the kittens at first 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, kittens should be separated to facilitate taming. If you cannot separate them, be sure to spend time alone with each one.

The housing should contain a small litterbox, food and water dishes and something to cuddle in.

Food is the key to taming. Make dry kitten food available at all times. Give a small amount of wet food twice a day. The kitten may be hesitant to eat in your presence. Eventually, the kitten will associate your presence with food.

It may be hard to handle 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 allowing the head to stick out. Offer wet food from your finger or a spoon. If the kitten does not respond, dab a tiny bit of food on their nose.

When petting a kitten, approach them behind the head. 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 will depend 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.

Once the kittens are willing to play, offer toys (no yarn). Do not let the kittens bite, scratch or play with your hand.

Cover their cage(s) at night with a towel, bedsheet or a lightweight blanket.

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.

WE NEED LOVING HOMES

NOTE: FFF is not an adoption agency. These are private adoptions.

I trapped a momma cat and took her to the vet where she promptly gave birth to six kittens, three boys and three girls. The momma (several years old) is a brown and white tabby with white paws. Her babies are 12 weeks old. Five are black and white and one is brown and white. They purr a lot and love to have their tummies scratched. I have complete medical records. The momma cat and kittens need loving homes. Unfortunately, we cannot keep them. Cost is \$30 per cat. Please call Ann Marie Gearheart at 704-821-4948.



Greylin is a greyish/brown DSH tiger. He was born around Thanksgiving 2002 at a dumpster behind K-Mart in Pineville.



His mother struggled to keep her babies alive during the cold months.

Sadly, during the December ice storm, Greylin was seen hovering near his mother's body in the road. Greylin needed immediate rescue. Caretaker Kathy Vance asked me to remove the body so Greylin would not stay by her side and be killed too. We set traps to capture Greylin and any siblings. Unfortunately his siblings did not survive.

We successfully trapped Greylin and it didn't take long for him to realize that I loved him. With lots of hugs and kisses later, he is ready for a loving home. He is in a large, two-level cage with his buddy, Austin, whom he dearly loves. Greylin is approximately 9 months old and has spent most of his life in a cage.


Austin has a tremendous need to nurture Greylin, just like a momma kitty. He is a big sweet, white shorthair with beautiful gray spots, and yellow eyes. Austin is about two years old and may have been a pet at one time. He calmed down quickly after rescue. His two favorites are having his tummy rubbed and lovingly cleaning Greylin's face.



They are in the cage on my back porch with a fan blowing to keep them from getting too hot. Unfortunately, I have lots of pets and cannot keep them. They need a loving home. I prefer they stay together since they are so close, but I'll separate them. They promise to hit the litter box every time!

Greylin and Austin have been neutered, have up-to-date vaccinations and are in good health. Please call Mataya at 704 543-0280.

FERAL UPDATE
AS OF 1998,
OVER 1900 CATS
STERILIZED & VACCINATED
TO DATE





In Memory Of...

Max from Max Maintenance Co.

Francus from Rosalind Walker

Francus, "my boy," from Margo

Sidney from Ruth DeBoer

BOOK REVIEWS



The Stray Cat Handbook by Tamara Kreuz.
An excellent how-to guide for dealing with stray and feral cats. A lot of very practical information.

Shadow Cats by Ann K. Fisher. Follow the real-life adventures of a Manhattan woman who comes upon a colony of feral cats living in the courtyard of her building and decides to try to help them. Ann relates her encounters with the fascinating cats and people she meets and their profound impact on her life.

Mavrick Cats - Encounters with Feral Cats by Ellen P. Berkeley. With a profound respect for the lives of her subjects, the author observes the doings of the feral cats who live near her home. Her insight into their behavior, as well as her study of the available research on the cats, leads to a deeper understanding of these mysterious beings.



**NATIONAL FERAL CAT DAY
OCTOBER 16, 2003**

DO YOU E-BAY?

Do you sell/buy items on e-Bay and are you familiar with PayPal?

Friends of Feral Felines would like to start selling items on e-Bay as an additional fundraising project. If you are interested in organizing this project, please call our hotline at 704-348-1578 and leave your telephone number and a convenient time to call.

DO YOU MAKE CRAFTS? PLEASE CALL US!

FFF is considering selling crafts at its booth at area cat shows.

The price range can be from 50¢ to a few dollars for stocking stuffers. Other items can be under \$50. They don't all have to be Christmas related because two shows are after Christmas. However, they must be cat related.

Please call 704-348-1578 and ask for Karen or Beverly to return your call.

HAVE YOU SIGNED THE PETITION TO OUTLAW CARBON MONOXIDE EUTHANASIA OF ANIMALS IN NC?

FFF urges you to sign the petition started by Ann Harrison regarding the use of lethal injection by all animal control facilities in North Carolina. Carbon monoxide euthanasia would be outlawed.

Go to:

www.thepetitionsite.com/takeacion/832620530 or write to our State Senators and Congressmen to let them know you support humane euthanasia by lethal injection.

OUR ADDRESS HAD CHANGED AS OF 1-1-03

Friends of Feral Felines
P. O. Box 473385, Charlotte NC 28247

Our hotline remains the same
704-348-1578

PUBLISHER'S CORNER

A Cat's Tale is a quarterly publication of Friends of Feral Felines

Comments, opinions, articles and photos welcome.
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