

Farewell to a favorite feline

Wed. Apr. 23

Ed-Buffy-the-cat died Monday.

I know it's silly, and maybe I'm an emotional marshmallow, but I'm really going to miss him. I didn't realize I'd become so attached.

When I took him to the vet for his emergency afternoon appointment, I was certain he'd be all right.

The doctor stuck a thermometer into him, poked all over, looked down his throat, and then tested his reflexes.

"Does he run free outdoors?" he asked me, shaking his head.

"Yes," I nodded.

He poked around gently a little bit more while I rubbed Ed's forehead, trying to calm his periodic howls of pain.

"He's in bad shape," the doctor told me.

I tried to swallow the huge lump suddenly stuck in my throat.

"As a matter of fact, I'd say he's in poor condition," he continued. "He has serious internal injuries — he must have been hit by a car — and right now he's going into shock. His back legs are already paralyzed."

I was embarrassed, but I started to cry. The doctor stood there quietly, and I turned my back so he wouldn't have to look at me. I stared at Ed, and rubbed his brow a little harder.

"What can we do for him?" I asked.

The doctor shook his head.

"Well," he said quietly, "we could try to save him, but I really don't think there's much chance he'd survive."

I sobbed harder.

"You'd have to take him in to our Boston hospital right now, and, to tell you the truth, I'm not even sure he'd survive the drive."

The initial tests would cost at least \$150, he said, and rescue attempts would cost more.

I tried to divide \$150 in two, but I was too upset to come up with a figure. If I really believed it would save him, I would have sprung for it and worried about finding the money later; but the doctor didn't give me much hope.

"Do you think it would be more merciful to put him to sleep now?" I asked. "It seems cruel to subject him to all those tests while he's in so much pain, especially if there's very little chance he'll live."

The doctor nodded.

"If he were my cat, I'd put him to sleep," he said.

He left the room to make all the



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Karen Cubie

arrangements, and I had a few minutes alone with Ed.

He looked at me, meowed, and I started sobbing all over again.

As stupid as it sounds, I felt responsible for that cat.

He trusted me to take care of him, and even though it wasn't my fault he'd been injured, I had to watch him suffer and cry with this terrible pain I couldn't prevent.

I felt worse because he had lain all alone on the porch for several days before I found him.

Both Brenda and I had gone away for the weekend. When we left, we knew Ed had a slight limp, but it had been getting better. He had plenty of food and water, and my sister was supposed to check on him.

"He was sleeping when I saw him yesterday," Priscilla told me. "But he didn't seem to have touched any of his food."

When I returned Monday morning, he was lying huddled and crying, behind Bork's windsurfboard.

The doctor came back and told me I should probably wait outside.

It was over in a few minutes. The doctor told me I could step in "and have a few moments alone with him."

As stupid as I knew it looked, I did.

The doctor stepped out, shut the door, and left me with what used to be a small, warm, and lively kitten.

Ed lay on the cold metal stand with his eyes open, and a slightly frightened expression on his face.

I noticed a small, shaved area on his right front arm, and I reached out and touched the cold bundle of fur. He was already slightly stiff. I tried to close his eyes, but they wouldn't stay shut.

I couldn't stand to pat him like that.

I remembered how he used to love to be patted, especially under the neck. Now he just lay there, without feeling.

I remembered how he would follow me from room to room, or how he'd run close to my heels anytime I went for a walk outdoors.

"Cats aren't supposed to be like this," I'd think. "He really thinks he's a dog."

I remembered how Tammy, a neighbor girl, would come to the door and ask, "Can Eddy come out to play?"

I thought about the foot prints he used to leave on the hood of my

cousin's car, and the way he'd scamper, splay-footed, up the apartment stairs any time he saw the opportunity to slip through the door.

"He's a silly looking little cat," my brother, Robert, used to tell me. "He's got as much coordination as you, Karen."

After saying a final good-bye, I stepped back into the lobby to write out the check. I was still crying.

Bork gathered up my things, and I tried to walk out the door without looking back at the staring couple who sat across the room with their terrified German Shepherd.

The drive home was quiet. Bork had overheard the doctor, so I didn't have to explain anything to him; but he didn't understand why I was so upset.

When I told my brother and sister about it later, the three of them sat there and laughed when the tears came to my eyes.

"I could hear her crying from the lobby!" Bork said.

They finally forced me to laugh at myself, and for a little while I felt better.

Now all that's left of Ed are the cat food and water dishes I can't bring myself to throw out, the litter box still sitting on the porch, and a mound of yellowing baking soda on the living room couch marking Ed's last act before we took him away.

