



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Buddy was rapidly turning into a public relations disaster.”

Tomato was one of the earliest members of the Best Friends TLC Club for cats with special medical needs.

He used to complain endlessly about the “yucky medicine” he had to take every day. But he lived a long and happy life and went over the Rainbow Bridge in the summer of 1998.

The Best Friends TLC Cat Club is sponsored through the generosity of Best Friends Guardian Angels who provide for all the animals who have special medical needs.

Buddy the Magician

I know. I'm not supposed to be here. In fact, I'm not really “here,” or rather there, at all. After all, I did go over the Rainbow Bridge last summer.

But let's face it: This magazine just isn't the same without me. So, if you don't mind, I'd really like my column back. At least, from time to time.

I think I can manage to do it from up here. And my investigative reports could well be more objective this way and therefore have more journalistic integrity.

Whatever, I can't just go on sitting up here in “Kitty Heaven” where, frankly, there's nothing much to investigate while the most exciting story has just been transpiring over at Dogtown and there's nobody to go behind the scenes and give you the real inside story.

Nobody, that is, except my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound who's been keeping an eye on things for me and who wants *her* job back, too.

“This one could be your posthumous Pulitzer Prize-winner, Boss,” she said, soon after Buddy the dog arrived at Dogtown.

It all began last December, explained Tammy, with a young lady in North Carolina who fell down a 25-foot well.

This sounded intriguing, so I started to write my report:

The story begins with Kimberly Cheek – that's the young lady – delivering groceries to one of her neighbors, a nice old geezer who can't manage too well by himself. She's carrying the bags over the porch and into the house for him when the porch suddenly collapses and Kimberly tumbles down an old well that's underneath the house.

I know. It does sound pretty weird, but it's about to get even more bizarre!

It just so happens that a stray dog is crossing the porch at exactly the same moment as Kimberly. He promptly falls down the hole, too, right on top of her.

It's impossible for either Kimberly or the dog to get out, so they cuddle up together to keep warm and cozy since they've landed in a big puddle of water at the bottom of the well.

(Some versions of the story have Kimberly up to her waist in water, but she says it was only ankle-deep.)

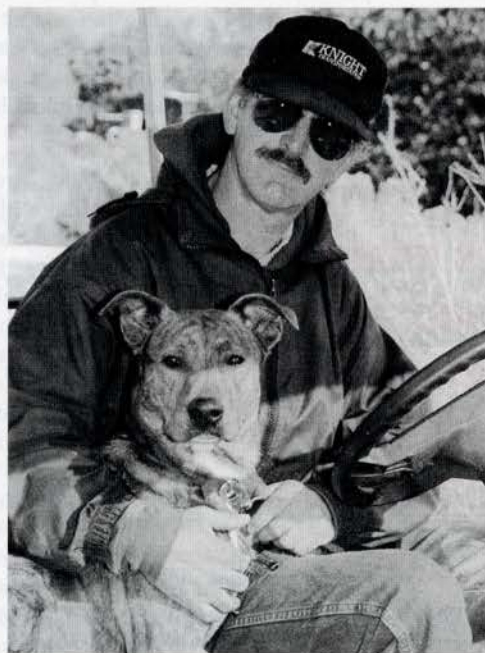
An hour or two later, the local fire department arrives and hauls the two of them out. Kimberly is remarkably okay, except for some cuts and scrapes. So she heads off home. The little dog, who has no home, is taken to the county shelter. No word, however, on whether the groceries ever made it into the house.

A month later, Buddy, as he is now known, is still at the shelter where he's rapidly turning into a public relations disaster. He's been behaving very badly, can't possibly be placed in a home, and can't stay at the shelter, either. Everybody there agrees that they can really only give him one more week before the you-know-what.

Then, suddenly, the story appears in the local newspaper and on the wire services, and then on TV. Except that now Buddy has been magically transformed into a “hero” who, according to the crew from the fire department, “may have saved Kimberly's life through his warmth and companionship.”

(Tammy is suspicious of this. Her investigation reveals that it was actually about 50 degrees that evening and that it usually takes more than a couple of hours for a person to die of loneliness!)

Anyway, then comes the sentence that sets the proverbial cat amongst the pigeons



Buddy the Hero Dog driving around Dogtown with his new alpha person Tyson Horn

here. According to the newspapers, "shelter workers checked with Best Friends ... but it was full."

Well, this is true. Dogtown is always full. As fast as one dog goes out to a new home, the next one comes in. And a dog like Buddy would need an entire fenced area to himself. I mean, who knows what kind of dog he really is? According to the people at the shelter, he's like Lassie one minute, and the Hound of the Baskervilles the next!

But the phones are soon ringing off the hook here and the P.T.B. (the Powers That Be) are in danger of falling into Buddy's public relations disaster area - which is even worse than falling down a 25-foot well.

Kimberly, meanwhile, is telling everyone in the press that Buddy is the sweetest dog ever. "He licked my wounds when we were down the well together," she tells Estelle, our assistant editor here. "And the wounds he licked healed up quicker than the ones he didn't lick."

"This dog should be running for office," I'm telling Tammy.

But within 24 hours yet another magical transformation has occurred: The P.T.B. and the people at the shelter have figured out how to put all the pieces together so that Buddy can come to Best Friends after all.

It's still going to be an expensive project, so they call the newspapers and TV in North Carolina to say that Buddy is indeed coming to Dogtown but that he's going to need his own special accommodations here and that we could really use some help at this end.

Which leads to the next magical event in the story: By the end of the next day, and before Buddy is even on the plane to Best Friends, his new "Buddy Fund" has collected more than \$5,000 from his fans all over North Carolina and the P.T.B. are starting work on his new home.

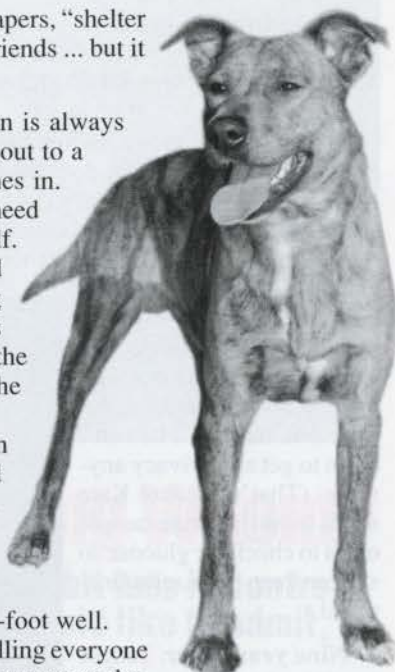
So, finally, the hero arrives at Best Friends Dogtown where he does indeed get to live happily ever after.

And so, as it turns out, does everyone else: The shelter is happy because they saved his life. The newspapers and TV are happy because they got a great story with a happy ending. The firefighters got to do a famous rescue. And Kimberly and her neighbor and everyone else in North Carolina are all delighted, as well. (I have still been unable to establish what happened to the groceries.)

Tammy says that Buddy is probably a magician, after all, and that it was all part of some great plan for him to fall down the well on top of Kimberly so that everyone could have a great adventure together and do lots of good stuff.

... And so that I could get back to the magazine! I still can't quite figure out how this all works, but I'll try and keep you up to date from wherever I am.

P.S. Please ask Mrs. Pulitzer not to cross me off her list of nominees for a journalism prize quite yet. 🐾



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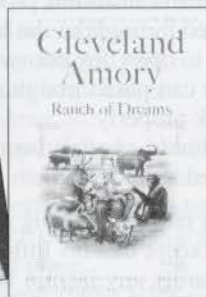
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Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

The Colonel's Campaign

► **By Tomato the Cat –
Best Friends
Investigative Reporter**

"You have another message from the Colonel," said my investigative assistant Tammy the Greyhound.

"That's the third message today! I am not going to work for that petty, half-baked, tin-pot dictator," I replied firmly. "And that's final."

The Colonel, you may remember, came to Best Friends after he was convicted of war crimes by a jury of chickens that had been convened in someone's backyard.

As soon as he arrived at the sanctuary, he set up his new headquarters at the WildCats Village and declared war. Nobody was ever quite sure exactly whom he was at war with, but he launched air strikes on everyone who was feeding him, fought a no-holds-barred ground war when it came time to have his shots, and refused to negotiate until the enemy had surrendered and the Battle of WildCats Village was over.

"Now that he's won the war," Tammy continued, "the Colonel has apparently decided to declare peace. And, since he *is* the Colonel, after all, he is determined to win at all costs. Nobody has ever defied the Colonel and lived to tell the tale."

The Colonel, I will be the first to admit, is not one to be trifled with. He is considered irresistible. He won the peace even faster than he won the war. These days, you can't go into his headquarters without being smothered in kisses.

"He's inviting you to join his campaign," said Tammy.

"What campaign?" I asked. "He's won the war and he's won the peace. What's left to have a campaign about?"

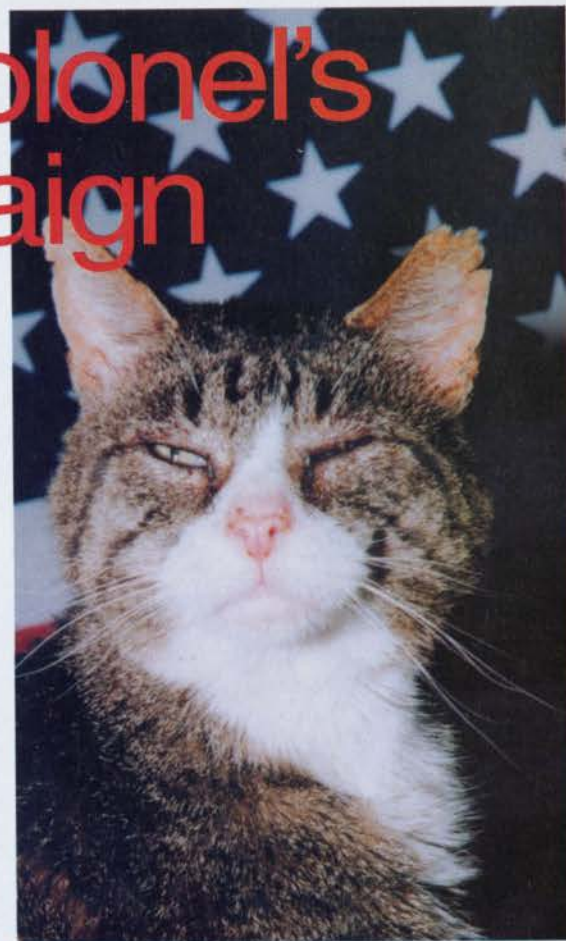
"This is top secret, Boss," said Tammy, lowering her voice to a whisper. "The Colonel says that the Treaty of WildCats Village was just the start. He's been gathering his troops and is planning to declare peace on the entire world."

I sat down, stunned. "This is the biggest story that's ever come my way," I said. "Mrs. Pulitzer will *have* to give me one of her prizes this time."

"I'm afraid that's not a possibility," replied Tammy. "The Colonel doesn't want you to be an ordinary reporter. He's inviting you to be his press secretary and full-time spin veterinarian."

"A *spin veterinarian*?" I spluttered. "He wants me to go out there and *lie* for him? What's going to happen to my journalistic integrity?"

"He says he wants you to think very carefully about this and that you are very important to his cause. He says the stakes are very high. He's talking about world domination. Forcing everyone to live happily ever after. The Colonel shall lie down with the chickens. A new millennium. Beating their swords into treats – the whole nine yards. Plus, he's asking me to point out that you won't just be *reporting* the news; you'll be *making* the news."



Oscar: He'd better try explaining that he simply thought people were toys and were there to be played with.



Kelly: She says she thought she could shop for a new home in a catalog rather than having to go look in a mall.

Tammy could see that I was not a thousand percent convinced. "The Colonel does admit that there are some small problems in his campaign that could come back to haunt him," she agreed. "So these have to be cleared up as quickly as possible. That's where you come in, Boss."

"Small problems? Like the guy is a convicted war criminal!"

"He's not worried about that," said Tammy. "It's the rest of his army he's concerned about. They have a bit of a record, too."

"Oh no," I groaned. "Let me guess: Oscar is involved in this."

"The Colonel says he knew you'd understand. He wants Oscar to be his Chief-of-Staff."

"Chief-of-Staff?" I exploded. "That cat is here because he was thrown out of Saudi Arabia by the authorities. He attacked an entire country, a sovereign nation. We're not just talking about chickens. He attacked everyone. He was even worse than the Colonel."

"The Colonel is sure you'll be able to come up with a good explanation for what went wrong. Oscar has been behaving very well in his barracks recently. He only attacks his toys these days."

"Oh, fine," I said, sarcastically. "I'll just tell the media that he thought the people in Saudi Arabia were his toys."

"It gets worse, Boss," sighed Tammy. "He's picked Kelly to be his Secretary of Living-Happily-Ever-After."

This was too much. Kelly came from Minnesota and can't even be placed in a home *herself*, let alone arrange for anyone else to live happily ever after. Last time she went out on an Adoption Day, she managed to embarrass her entire entourage by screaming, hissing, and lashing out at everyone who even looked at her.

"How am I supposed to explain *that* away?" I moaned.

Tammy thought about this for a minute. "You could try a line like 'Kelly really did want to look for a nice new family but she didn't realize this meant having to go shopping for one in a mall. That's why she was so upset. She thought she could buy a new family in a catalog or by watching Home Shopping on TV.'"

We both thought about this and even Tammy had to agree that only a few people would find this explanation very convincing.

"There's one more," she continued. "The Colonel says he wants C.C. to be his Minister of Recreation and Fun."

This was the final straw. "C.C." stands for Cemetery Cat. This charming feral kitty, who used to enjoy hanging out at a cemetery in San Francisco, was brought to Best Friends after the people who "rescued" her realized that her idea of fun was likely to end up with all of *them* in the cemetery!

Tammy was, however, right in advising me to join the Colonel's army. Since no one has ever defied the Colonel and won, I have sacrificed my career and joined his campaign — at least temporarily.

Meanwhile, if peace breaks out in your neighborhood, take my advice and don't try to fight it. It means the Colonel is advancing and he has enlisted your kitties, too. 🐾



CC's idea of fun was likely to end up with everyone laid out in the cemetery.



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Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report



The Colonel and his Gang.
They always look at you as though you're the alien!

Will The Real Aliens Please Stand Up

► **By Tomato the Cat**
— **Best Friends Investigative Reporter**

"I got a hot lead from a newspaper that the Colonel's Gang are reading at the WildCats Village, Boss," said my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound.

"The Colonel's Gang reading newspapers?" I asked, suspiciously. Everyone knows that feral cats don't read proper newspapers. Trashy tabloids are more their style — brash headlines about conspiracy theories, dreadful ads inviting you to call the Psychic Pets Network, and dire predictions about the end of the world and the Y2Kitty problem.

Tammy handed me the newspaper. It was the latest edition of the *Weekly World News*. "They were all poring over this article, Boss. It says that one in five dogs and cats are descended from space aliens. And if this is true ..."

"That's a very big *if*," I interrupted, leafing through the newspaper. "Just look at the rest of what's in it: *UFOs are angels; Toilet paper can kill you; People float in midair over mystery lake; Bulletproof vest saves werewolf; A visit to your dentist can make you pregnant.*"

"Well, that last one could be quite helpful," Tammy suggested. "Maybe people really don't know that they should always go to the spay/neuter clinic before they go to the dentist. Anyway, if it really *is* true that one in five dogs and cats are descended from space aliens, then that would mean that we have approximately 360 aliens here at the sanctuary on any given day."

"You think we should try to find out who they are?" I asked.

"The Colonel has already ordered a full count of the cats at the WildCats Village. As of this morning, there were precisely 360 feral cats there."

"Well, that is quite compelling evidence," I agreed.

"He is preparing to issue a statement that all feral cats *everywhere* are aliens," said Tammy.

I pondered this remarkable development for a few minutes, but something about it just didn't seem quite right. Feral cats would certainly seem, at first glance, to be the most likely group of aliens. They live on city streets and have no real homes. And nobody is quite sure where they came from. So it would be logical to assume that they are the aliens.

But something deep down inside was telling me that this was not true — indeed that the absolute opposite might well be the case.

"Bear with me for a moment," I said to Tammy. "Have you ever noticed how, whenever any non-cat — especially the PTB (*Powers That Be*) — steps into the WildCats Village, the cats instantly treat them like *they're* the aliens?"

"I think I see where you're going, Boss," exclaimed Tammy.

"Exactly," I said. "My own theory is that feral cats are, in fact, indigenous to this planet, while the PTB, and perhaps most other species, are the aliens."

"Maybe we need to talk to Professor Barkalot about this," said Tammy . . .



... Professor Barkalot, you may remember, met secretly with Tammy and me two years ago, after his extended visit to Transylvania where he had uncovered the remarkable truth about the cat who created the universe (May 1998 issue).

He told us that he was on the track of many other dangerous secrets and that we should feel free to contact him in Transylvania should anything come up that might need his help.

Since it now seemed like we might really be onto something, I agreed that Tammy should contact him at once...

... "It's true, Boss," she said breathlessly, racing into my office later that evening. "Professor Barkalot has confirmed your theory. He says that he has been conducting parallel research and that the people we refer to as the PTB are descended from the original aliens.

"As you correctly surmised," Tammy continued, "the original inhabitants of Earth were, indeed, feral cats. The Professor says that their first major civilization was in Ancient Egypt. It was an ideal country for cats since there was lots to eat around the river Nile and they could use the rest of the country as a litterbox.

"Eventually, of course, even a litterbox the size of a whole country needed cleaning up, so the cats arranged to import some people from another planet as a housekeeping crew.

"The cats charmed the new arrivals into working for them. Since the accumulated ancient cat litter had to be piled up somewhere, this led to the building of the pyramids. The people even began to worship the cats and were happy just building more pyramids."

"Which explains why they are still so fascinated by pyramids and litterboxes," I muttered.

"Exactly," agreed Tammy. "But there was a problem. The feral cats had grown so dependent on the people that they were beginning to lose control. Within a few thousand years, the descendants of the aliens were running the whole planet. Plus, there were now too many of the alien people because the cats had not yet invented spaying and neutering."

We sat in silence for several minutes. "This explains everything" I whispered. "It's absolutely explosive, and it's a story that can never be told."

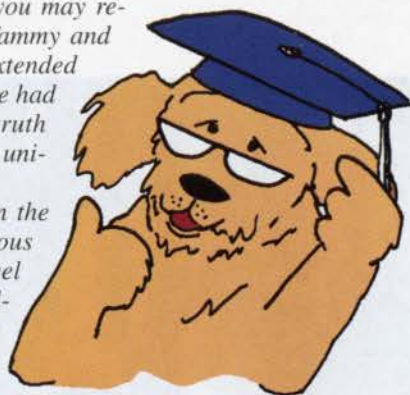
"The Professor has been working secretly with the Colonel and his Gang to reverse the situation," Tammy continued. "His strategy is to locate the descendants of the original aliens and enlist their cooperation in saving the planet by returning it to the feral cats."

"How is he going to locate the right people?"

"It's quite easy," Tammy explained. "Descendants of the original aliens have inherited a fascination with cat litter, pyramids, and feral cats."

Readers of this magazine who fit this profile will almost certainly be contacted, sooner or later, by a representative of the Colonel and his Gang - i.e. by one or more feral cats in your neighborhood. Please allow yourself to be charmed into taking care of them. 🐾

For more information, send for the Best Friends booklet on *How to Care for Feral Cats in Your Neighborhood*. And visit Tomato the Cat's site on the Internet at www.bestfriends.org/tomato.htm



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Skills Development	Oct 14-17	Morrison, CO
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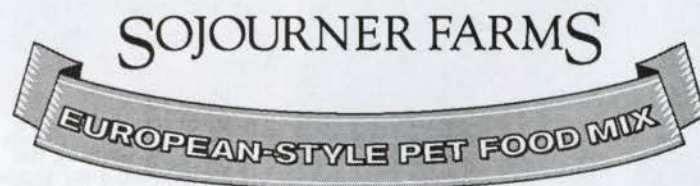
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Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

Watching Out for Voter Fraud at Benton's House

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

Who will be the new Chairpurrson at Benton's House?

The PTB (Powers That Be) are agitating for someone a little more flexible than Benton the Cat who, you will remember, went over the Rainbow Bridge this summer.

For all his faults (he was grumpy, dictatorial, and egotistical, had a whole building named after him, but was ever so charming when ladies came visiting the sanctuary) Benton always managed to keep the PTB in their place. No cat could come into Benton's House without his say so. And since his room was the heart of the TLC Cat Club, he insisted on special-needs cats *only* and absolutely would not put up with the PTB trying to bring homeless kittens in there. As soon as he heard them say, "Just for a day or so while there's an overflow," he would turn into a monster. (The kittens didn't mind – they got to scamper around the passageways and annoy everyone by hiding in the cupboards.)

Anyway, Benton is no more and the PTB want a new Chairpurrson who can be relied on to "cooperate." They have agreed to put the matter to a vote, but I assure you that they are not above rigging the election and then issuing an apologetic announcement that "the dog ate the ballot boxes."

The Colonel and his Gang have agreed to count the votes over at the WildCats Village. (They are hardly above a touch of voter fraud themselves, but at least they agree with me that the PTB have more authority than is good for them.)

The PTB have agreed on five candidates. They are pushing for one of them, whom I shall not name here in the interest of fairness, as their preferred Chairpurrson.

Before you vote, here are some of the characteristics of a good Chairpurrson:

Has to be unadoptable. Members of Best Friends often like to adopt famous "unadoptable" cats. But the Chairpurrson has to really be a permanent resident.

Has to be a good host. The most completely unadoptable cats at Best Friends are the Colonel's Gang over at the WildCats Village. But, like most ferals, they make rather bad hosts – well, *very* bad hosts.

Needs a certain "gravitas." A Chairpurrson has to be affectionate but not too cuddly and must not appear to be craving attention which always brings down the tone of the TLC Cat Club.

Needs to realize this is just a role. Any cat who starts to believe what the PTB are telling visitors about him or herself ends up believing their propaganda and therefore living in complete unreality about him/herself.

Here, then, are the choices:

Camille – Support Your Right to Bear Claws

Pro: This highly photogenic candidate is perfect for the media age. (Was on the cover of the last issue.) Has no problem exercising authority, making decisions, and taking a stand on unpopular issues.

Con: The issue that she takes a stand on the most is being picked up. Indeed, she defends her right not to be picked up and repeatedly cites her Second Amendment right to bear arms (plus teeth and claws) when challenged on this.



Official PTB Voting Form

Your name: _____

Your city and state: _____

I vote for:

- ☐ Julius
- ☐ Patience
- ☐ Bijou
- ☐ Julius
- ☐ Camille
- ☐ Blackjack
- ☐ Julius

to be the new Chairpurrson of the
TLC Cat Club.

Official Warning: I understand that if I am caught cooperating with the PTB by voting twice for Julius or otherwise rigging the ballot, I may be sentenced to be adopted by an overweight, incontinent black Labrador-mix with acute separation anxiety.



Julius – A Prez You Can Hug

Pro: Perfect poster boy for the Best Friends TLC Cat Club. Slightly cross-eyed expression and other neurological problems make him a winner with everyone who meets him.

Con: This guy is goofy. The elevator does *not* go to the top floor.

Patience – Supports Medicare & Good Education

Pro: Needs daily medical treatment, so she really understands the problems with Medicare and HMOs. A vote for Patience is a vote for good manners and modesty. Plus, she adds much-needed tone and class to the TLC Cat Club.

Con: Not very cuddly. Gets embarrassed when visitors see her black mustache and say to their husbands: "Oh, Honey, she's so *darling*. She looks just like Hitler!"



Bijou – Vote for the Disabled

Pro: This handsome Abyssinian show cat was hit by a car and then abandoned at the hospital because he is now incontinent. Believes in the right of the disabled to be cuddled at all times.

Con: Bijou is a shoo-in for adoption by anyone who likes to play nurse. So we'd be back at square one, looking for a new Chairpurrson in a month's time.

Blackjack – The Elder Statesman

Pro: Three-legged Blackjack can still win any race he enters although he doesn't race around as much as he used to. A vote for this truly ancient and wise kitty is a vote for sanity at the TLC Cat Club.

Con: Blackjack is too wise ever to accept the nomination. (And this is *not* a campaign ploy.) Although he is too polite to say so, this is one race he will never enter since he considers all this Chairpurrson stuff to be a bunch of hype.



You can vote by mail or by fax, using the convenient form on the left. You can also e-mail your vote to tomato@bestfriends.org, saying simply "I vote for ____." Or you can cast your vote on my website at www.bestfriends.org/tomato.htm. However, you must read the warning on the official form on the left before voting. 🐾

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Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

Representative Selection of Votes

"I vote for Julius. My elevator doesn't go to the top floor, either."

"I vote for Camille since she attacked me when I volunteered last month."

"I vote for Camille. Ain't nobody pickin' me up, either!"

"My companion, Scout Annieface, votes for Bijou, and is sending her picture as she thinks he is quite a chunk of man!"

"I vote for Patience: While all contenders can steal your heart, I think the Lady with the smudgy face deserves a go."

"Julius reminds me of my sophomore math teacher in high school...you never knew who he was hollering at!"

"I must vote for Camille, having personally felt her teeth and her claws during my recent visit to Best Friends. I respect a cat who knows what she wants."

"I vote for Blackjack. He has that tough, Ronald Reaganesque, get-things-done look."

"My cat, Mr. Black-and-White, and I vote for Blackjack. He looks very similar to Mr. B."

"Can I vote several times since I already own an overweight, incontinent black Lab-mix with acute separation anxiety?"

"We vote for Julius, Patience, Bijou, Julius, Camille, Blackjack, and Julius. Yes, yes, we know about the warning."

Who Wants to Be a Chairpurrson?

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

"The votes are pouring in for the new Chairpurrson of the TLC Cat Club," said my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound, as she raced in.

"We're going to have to announce a winner soon," I agreed.

"By the way, Boss, the Colonel is following the returns with great interest."

"The Colonel?" I asked, suspiciously.

The Colonel and his Gang of feral cats, you will remember, maintain their barracks over at the WildCats Village, which is beginning to look like a campaign headquarters. And although everyone is being quite tight-lipped over there, there's little doubt that the Colonel is getting ready to announce that he's joining the presidential race.

"The Colonel has been scrutinizing the votes for Chairpurrson each day," Tammy continued. "He says they offer profound insights into the psychology of the electorate."

I had been looking at the returns, too. "Almost nobody is voting on the issues," I said to Tammy. "They're all voting on character."

"Precisely. The voters are looking for a real character. And the Colonel's pollsters believe that if he can present himself as the perfect composite of people's preferences, he could win the general election with a landslide."

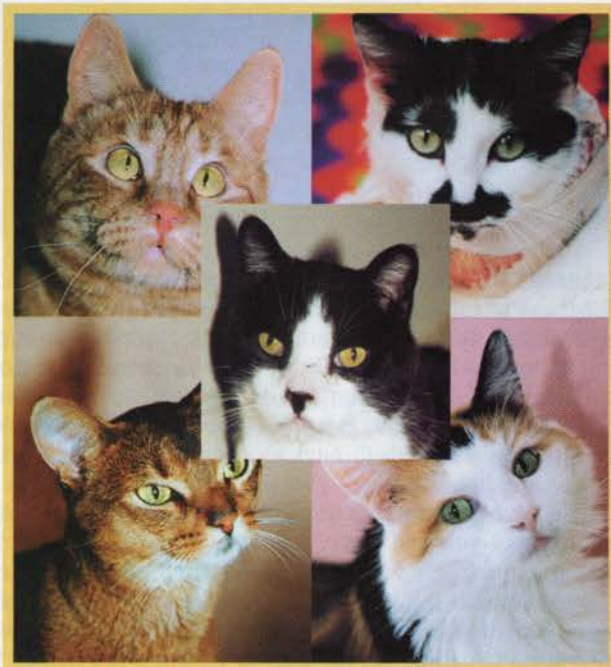
"Do they have the winning profile yet?" I asked.

"They do, indeed. Taking the most frequent comments of the voters, the Colonel's gang have concluded that he should present himself as a goofy, yet adorable, hunk whose elevator doesn't quite go to the top and who looks like Groucho but scratches and bites you while reminding you of your cat at home."

"Hmm, that doesn't sound much like the Colonel," I said.

"This is true," admitted Tammy. "But the Colonel says he and his gang will practice the scratching and biting part. And he wants you, as his spin veterinarian, to take care of the rest. Some of the voters have been voting twice anyway, so they obviously don't mind who does what as long as their favorite candidate wins."

"That's disgraceful," I said to Tammy. "But we haven't started on the presidential election yet. Right now we have hundreds of votes pouring in for the new Chairpurrson and we *have* to announce a winner."





"So you'd better start counting the votes," replied Tammy.

"We can't possibly do that," I said. "People will be angry if the cat they voted for doesn't win. I'm already getting threatening letters. They might even stop reading my column."

Tammy agreed that this could be a problem. "In Ancient Rome," she said, "the Powers That Be used to distract the voters by putting on lots of circuses."

"I hate circuses."

"So do most of our readers," agreed Tammy. "But they love game shows, and so do you."

Before I could say anything, the music had come up, the stage had gone dark, and spotlights were flashing down from the top of the studio.

"You know the rules," said Tammy. "And you've got your three lifelines: 50/50, where the computer will adopt two of the wrong candidates; *Phone a Friend*, where you can call anyone in America; and *Ask the Audience*. Are you ready?"

"Ready for what?" I spluttered. "Of course I'm not ready."

"Then let's play *Who Wants to Be a Chairpurrson*. Okay, you're going for 64,000 treats. Here's the question:

"Who won the recent election for Chairpurrson at the Best Friends TLC Cat Club? Was it:

- a) Julius,
- b) Patience,
- c) Bijou, or
- d) Camille?"

"You left out Blackjack," I sniffed.

"Blackjack has stated quite categorically that he will not accept the nomination. You warned the voters of that yourself. Now, do you want to phone a friend?"

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"No. People will think I'm calling the PTB."

"Do you want to ask the audience?"

"We've already done that. They've sent in their votes. Alright, I think I'm going to go with: b) *Patience*."

"Are you sure it's Patience? Remember, if you're wrong you'll be down to 32,000 treats."

"I'm not sure. It should have been Blackjack but I'm thinking it may be Julius. So, I think I'm going to say: a) *Julius*."

Tammy paused. Then she looked up at me. The tension was unbearable.

"Final answer, Boss?"

"No!" I said. "I can't decide! I'm going to take my treats and walk away."

The audience cheered.

"Well, congratulations," said Tammy. "Now, just before you leave, do you want to know who really *is* the new Chairpurrson?"

"Of course not," I whispered. "You'll ruin everything. Just bring on the next contestant and keep handing out the treats." 🐾

Cat Writers Vote Best Friends Best Magazine

"Good news, Boss," said my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound, as she raced in. "*Best Friends* magazine was just voted Top Magazine for 1999 by the Cat Writers Association of America."

"That's strange," I said. "I'm a cat writer and nobody asked me for my vote."

"That's because you're a cat," explained Tammy.

"How can you have a cat writer who isn't a cat?"

"Cat writers usually aren't cats, apparently," said Tammy.

"Does that mean I'm not a cat, after all?" I wondered. "Except that if I weren't a cat, they might have asked me to vote. So I probably *am* a cat."

"Perhaps we should check with Professor Barkalot, Boss. He's sure to have the answer. It may turn out that you're even more unusual than we thought."

"Excellent idea," I replied. "I shall start an immediate investigation of myself."





Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“I could never have imagined a situation in which I would support the subversion of the democratic process.”

Tomato the Cat came to Best Friends in 1985 and was the founder of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club for kitties with disabilities. He began his Investigative Reports in order to bring journalistic integrity to this magazine. After going over the Rainbow Bridge in 1998, he decided to keep writing anyway, explaining that he had only used up one of his nine lives.

And The Winners Are...

Results of the Chairpurrson Election

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

In a previous report, Tomato invited readers to vote for a new Chairpurrson of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club. He also gave fair warning that the Powers That Be (PTB) at the sanctuary might try to rig the election.

The votes are all in and – wouldn't you know it – the election for the new Chairpurrson of the TLC Cat Club has been rigged.

As it turns out, however, it was not the PTB who are to blame. One of the candidates just went ahead and staged a coup.

Here, then, are the results of the election:

There were, as you will remember, five candidates: Julius, Patience, Camille, Bijou, and Blackjack.

Wise **Blackjack**, as I pointed out, has never had any real interest in being a chairpurrson. This three-legged elder statesman, one of the oldest members of the TLC Cat Club, prefers to work quietly in the background, helping new arrivals make themselves at home in Benton's House.

Still, lots of you voted for Blackjack, which he is certainly very honored by.

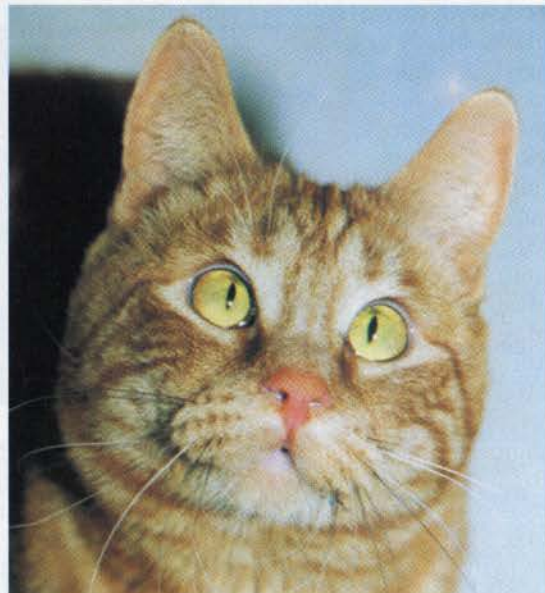
Handsome **Bijou**, the beautiful Abyssinian who was abandoned at an animal hospital after being hit by a car, has suddenly had several adoption offers since the voting began. Rather than becoming the new chairpurrson, this super-handsome kitty may well find the perfect new home quite soon, instead.

Bijou got lots of votes, too, but I agree with the PTB that it would be unconscionable to have to put you all through the ordeal of a new round of voting if Bijou was installed as the new chairpurrson and then promptly adopted.

Camille, who defends her right not to be picked up at all times, received lots of votes from the masochist wing of the Best Friends Party. However, she violated the rules of the Electoral College by staging a hostage drama while Elaine, a member of Best Friends from New Jersey, was visiting the sanctuary and volunteering at Benton's House.

“She lay down in my lap,” explained Elaine, “and whenever I tried to remove her, she would attack my leg.”

Elaine tried negotiating by herself, then called for a rescue team. Eventually, everyone agreed that negotiations were futile and, in-



Problems with his elevator notwithstanding, Julius got the most votes.



Once known as Ms. Manners, Patience suddenly staged a coup.

stead, Camille simply accepted Elaine's unconditional surrender. Elaine then filled in an adoption form and asked if she could take Camille home. "I absolutely fell in love with her," she reported later, "and she only bit me a few times!"

Frankly, as you can see, Camille would have made a terrible chairpurrson, anyway.

That leaves Julius and Patience.

Well, **Julius** definitely got the most votes. Many of you insisted that you couldn't care less that he's goofy and that his elevator doesn't quite go to the top. Lots of you pointed out that your elevators don't go to the top, either! (My investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound, has asked me to mention that we have no elevators at all here at Best Friends, so the entire matter is irrelevant.)

So, you would assume that we are ready to install Julius as the new Chairpurrson. As it turns out, however, it's not quite as simple as that.

Patience, who came in second in the voting, has actually staged a coup and has installed *herself* as the new Chairpurrson.

Nobody is quite sure how this happened, but the PTB confirm that it is absolutely the case. She is doing everything that Benton, our original Chairpurrson and Founder of Benton's House, used to do. She even eats first, while everyone else has to line up patiently behind her.

And, along with Julius, she greets everyone who comes in and helps show them around by perching on their shoulders.

To top it off, Patience is currently wearing a "crown" – the specially padded collar that's helping her to heal from her allergies.

The PTB came to the conclusion that there was no point in fighting the facts on the ground and that it would be wisest to rig the election and name **Julius and Patience** Co-Chairpurrsons of the TLC Cat Club.

Although I could never imagine a situation in which I would support the subversion of the democratic process, I would have to say this is the best outcome.

So, thank you all for participating, and Long Live the New Chairpurrsons. 🐾

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**Tomato the Cat's
Special Investigative Report**

Colonel Seen in Cosmic Campaign Conspiracy



**Pawprints identified in galaxy
5,500 light years away**

► **By Tomato the Cat
- Best Friends Investigative Reporter**

“Is the Colonel
planning a
galactic-sized
WildCats Village
somewhere near
the constellation of
Scorpio?”

Readers will be aware that I have, for some time, harbored deep suspicions about The Colonel's true intentions should he be elected President in November, which pollsters already say is a foregone conclusion.

Since announcing his candidacy two months ago, The Colonel has declined to give any interviews at all, let alone issue a single policy statement. It is also increasingly unlikely that he will agree to appear in televised debates.

Meanwhile, visitors to his barracks at the WildCats Village are still being met by his feral cat campaign chiefs Saturn and Daiquiri, who “greet” them by glaring down balefully from the rafters.

What is The Colonel hiding?

Thanks to the incomparable Professor Barkalot, I can now reveal the astounding truth...

Last week, quite out of the blue, The Professor contacted my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound, and asked us to come to the same rendez-vous where we met exactly two years ago. (*That was when he revealed to us the truth about the stray cat who created the universe while wandering around in Eastern Europe one evening during the 17th Century.*)



“I am recently returned,” he began, speaking in his mellifluous, Transylvanian accent, “from an expedition most remarkable to the constellations of the Zodiac.”

The Professor looked remarkably fit after such a long journey as he pulled a photograph from his fur and handed it to Tammy.

“A cat's paw!” she whispered, passing it to me.

The Professor beamed. “I am having come across this phenomenon while passing through the constellation of Scorpio. And I am believing that you will find it to be a match quite perfect with the pawprint of a certain cat in whom you are most interested.”

“The Colonel!” I exclaimed.

“No less,” affirmed the Professor. “The Colonel is being most agile in keeping you all wondering what he is planning in this country and on *this* planet. But I believe you will find that his ambitions lie somewhere else altogether.”

“A cosmic conspiracy?” I spluttered. “This will be the most incredible exposé. But what could he possibly be doing leaving paw prints out there in the galaxy?”

“I think I can answer that,” replied Tammy, sitting down and looking very wise. “We know that The Colonel's promises of world peace are just a campaign ploy.

“We also know that he has established a global network of feral cats who live on the streets, as he himself once did. And we have reports that millions of house cats have also secretly joined the network to support The Colonel's cause.

“In addition, we have reason to believe that once he has won the election and lulled the electorate into dreams of world peace, The Colonel plans to activate this network.

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The Cat's Paw Nebula, a.k.a. NGC 6334, in a recent photo by Jason Ware.

"What we have *not* known, however, is his true goal in all of this. So the question now is: What would The Colonel and his Gang, who have a perfectly comfortable barracks here at the WildCats Village, be looking for in the far reaches of space? And what is the purpose of their secret global cat network?"

Tammy paused and looked from me to the Professor.

"Very wise, my dear," murmured Professor Barkalot, his mellifluous Transylvanian tones wafting through the air. "Now, answer me this: How many feral cats are living at your WildCats Village?"

"About three hundred," I said.

"And how many feral cats are there in the whole world?"

I did a quick count in my head. "Millions. Maybe billions."

"And in the whole galaxy?" continued the Professor.

"I . . . What? You mean . . . ?" I spluttered again, as the true picture now began to dawn on me. "Are you suggesting that The Colonel is planning a WildCats Village for all the cats in the entire galaxy?!"

"More like a WildCats City, by the sound of it," suggested Tammy.

"Great Dog!" I squealed, "They must be the descendents of the original feral cats who came to colonize the Earth. You mean they're still out there? And with no spay/neuter clinic? When I break this story, Mrs. Pulitzer will be begging to give me one of her prizes."

"This would also explain why one of The Colonel's campaign chiefs is named Saturn," Tammy pointed out. "No wonder he has white rings around his chin."

"And his other chief is Daiquiri," I added.

"Daiquiri isn't a planet, Boss. It's a cocktail."

"Whatever," I replied. "But why would The Colonel and his Gang be building so far away in the constellation of Scorpio?"

"Yes, indeed," nodded Professor Barkalot, getting up and shaking the dew off his fur as Scorpio dipped below the western horizon and dawn began to break over the canyon. "The Colonel, he is very ambitious, yes?"

We both nodded.

"Then, please to consider this: There are constellations in the sky for the goat, the ram, the lion, two dogs, the snake, the fish, the rabbit, the crab, two bears, several humans, and so many more. Can you think of an animal that is perhaps missing?"

The Professor was already beginning to fade into the morning light. "So many animals in the sky, my friends. But not one cat!" . . . And with that, he was gone.

We sat in silence. The Professor's analysis of The Colonel's true intent was undeniable – its implications cosmic in scope.

"You think The Colonel and his Gang are really going to go ahead with this?" I asked Tammy.

"They have obviously never gotten over the insult of feral cats being denied their own constellation," Tammy replied. "But the really big question is: How are they going to *pay* for such an enormous construction project during an election campaign?"

We both stared at each other, our mouths dropping, as the final piece of the puzzle fell into place. *Soft money!*

"So *that's* why The Colonel is barely doing any campaigning, and spending no money on advertising," I said. "His campaign funds are all being diverted into building a new constellation."

"It's the ultimate campaign finance scandal, Boss," Tammy agreed. "I just wonder what he's going to name it."

"He'll probably want to name it after himself," I sniffed. "But the perfect name for a new cat constellation between Leo and Scorpio would obviously be Tomato." 🐾



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“At a meeting of the Board of Directors, the PTB voted to do the right thing by ordering a full cover-up.”

Asteroid Secrets!

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

Dear Tomato,

I was most impressed by your startling report about The Colonel's paw print being discovered in the constellation of Scorpius (incidentally, we astronomers say "Scorpius," not "Scorpio").

Just after your report appeared in Best Friends Magazine, NASA released this remarkable photo of the asteroid 216 Kleopatra, as recorded by the Arecibo Radio Telescope in Puerto Rico.

As a result of seeing this, I am developing a new Copernican Theory which will postulate that the entire asteroid belt, between Mars and Jupiter, is composed of dog biscuits and other treats that were once thought to have been irretrievably lost behind the refrigerator.

Do you have any investigative insight into this?

Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543)
Frauenberg, Germany



Dear Dr. Copernicus,

I am most honored to receive your letter. (Professor Barkalot is a great fan of yours and was most impressed with your discovery that the earth goes around the sun without a leash.)

I must advise you, however, that this is a most sensitive matter since my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound, appears to be unwilling, in this case, to cooperate in our research.

Readers of this column will recollect that shortly after Tammy arrived at Best Friends from a race track in



My investigative assistant,
Tammy the Greyhound

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This image of the asteroid 216 Kleopatra was received by the Arecibo Radio Telescope in Puerto Rico. Astronomers who have examined the photo speculate that the asteroid, which is about the size of New Jersey, is composed mainly of nickel and iron, which may account for why it has remained uneaten so long.



Neither was this the end of the matter. Every afternoon, while Tammy was out investigating other important scandals here, items continued to disappear. The thief also began to stash her pilfered products somewhere else – nobody knew where.

Since that time, Tammy and I have unmasked some of history's most chilling conspiracies. But we have never been able to get to the bottom of the seemingly simple but intractable question of where lies all the lost loot.

However, Dr. Copernicus, I now believe that you have stumbled upon the answer to what has become one of the great mysteries of our time – and that this is a feat no less breathtaking than your discovery that the Rings of Saturn are composed of socks that go missing in the laundry.

Moreover, in terms of my being able to assist your research even further, I believe you may be able to prove your theory conclusively if you will simply train your telescope on the Asteroid Belt tonight . . .

A bowl of dog food was observed going missing from Dogtown this morning. After studying the trajectory in which the dog who purloined the bowl was moving, I am able to predict that it will reappear among the asteroids at precisely 9:45 this evening. Focus your telescope midway between 361 Kleopatra (the dog bone) and a painting by Rembrandt, *Child with Soap Bubbles*, which you will see close by and which disappeared from the Draguignan Museum in France last July.

Behind the bowl of dog food, you may also observe the first edition copy of your own book *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* which you published in 1543 and which was pilfered from a library in Poland in 1998. (I was unable to investigate that burglary because, once again, Tammy was nowhere to be seen that afternoon.)

Good luck in your research and let me know if I can be of further help. 🐾



This bowl, which Chandler was seen purloining this morning at Dogtown, is expected to reappear in the asteroid belt at approximately 9:45 this evening.

Tijuana, Mexico, 12 years ago, a growing number of valuable items suddenly began to go missing from the sanctuary.

Tammy had come to live at the TLC Cat Club, rather than over at Dogtown, since she was quite nervous of people and other dogs. Since she was also very nosy and liked to run around in the afternoons, I invited her to become my investigative assistant.

On her second day on the job, two members of Best Friends reported that they had lost their car keys while visiting the TLC Cat Club and were therefore unable to drive home. When I offered to investigate the matter, Tammy was nowhere to be seen and the visitors had to have their keys replaced.

The following afternoon, a staff member took off a ring while treating a sick cat. Minutes later, the ring had vanished. Tammy, who had been in the room when the ring was placed on the table, had vanished, too. Soon after that, folders full of cat records went missing. Then more car keys. A purse containing money. Bowls of cat food and cat toys.

Finally, and most regrettably, Tammy was observed making off with a full cup of coffee, without even spilling a drop, and carrying it off down the hill below the TLC Cat Club. This led to the discovery of an entire stash of money, car keys, jewelry, cups of coffee, and other valuables.

A meeting of the Board of Directors was hastily convened and the PTB voted to do the right thing by ordering a full cover-up. Tammy and I did a full investigation of the matter, but the results likewise went missing a few days later.



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Harry likes to wear ladies' clothes and he won't go to bed at night if he doesn't have his pajamas on.”

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Pet Survivor Scandal!

How The Colonel's campaign was subverted by a TV game show on the Psychic Pets Network

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

The dumbing down of the pet public has reached new heights.

Just for starters, is anyone actually *following* The Colonel's campaign?

Does anybody even *care* that an extremist group of former feral cats, living right here at the Best Friends WildCats Village, is planning to capture the presidency and then carry out its plan for world domination – and maybe beyond?

Have any of your pets at home been watching *any* of this?

No, to all three questions. Instead, they've all switched channels and are now glued to the new hit show on the Psychic Pets Network, *Pet Survivor!*, to see who's going to be the next dog or cat to be voted – or, rather, adopted – off the island.

Not that Best Friends *is* an island, of course. The nearest ocean is more than 500 miles away. “Who cares?” said the producers when I queried them on this. They just looked around at the coral pink sand all over the sanctuary and muttered something about patching in a palm tree and some ocean in the background of the video.



Betting on the Min Pin. My investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound, says that the producers got the idea for the show when the PTB (Powers That Be) were trying to find a home for a rather annoying little Min Pin dog called Carter.

Carter had been thoroughly spoiled in his former home (“He passed obedience training, but I failed,” confessed his former person in Missouri.) When her husband pulled the old “It’s me or

the dog” routine, Carter came to Best Friends. He tried two new homes and came back from both for bad behavior. There were rumors that a deputation of dogs were heading over to the PTB to say “It’s *us* or the dog.”

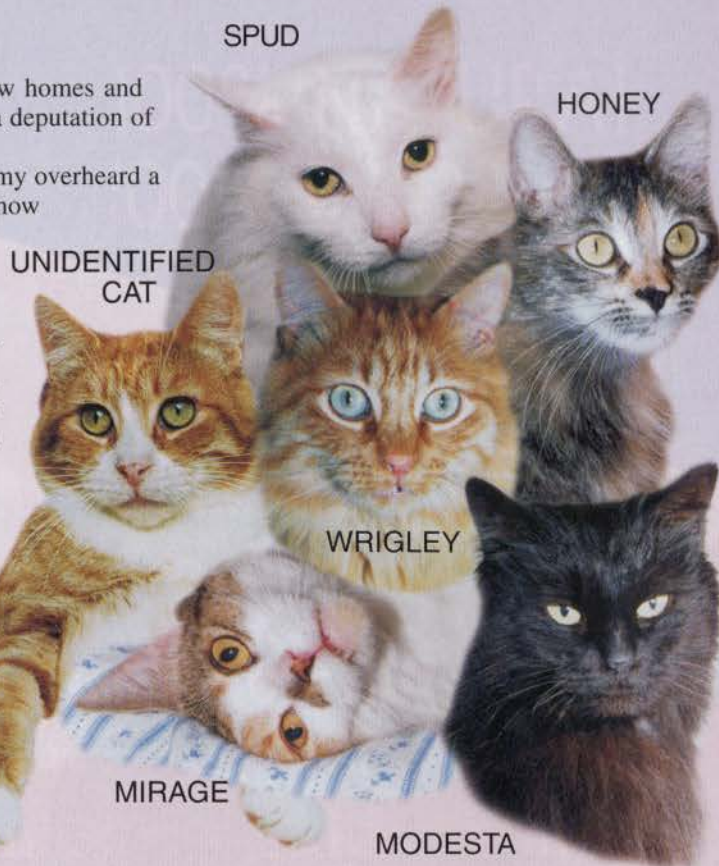
Anyway, when Carter went up for adoption a third time, Tammy overheard a group of cats at the WildCats Village one evening betting over how long it would take this time for him to be returned to the sanctuary. (They all lost. Carter had hit the jackpot this time. His new person, in Ohio, describes him as “a bit of a project!” But she loves Min Pins and he’d doing better and everyone’s happy.)

But nobody at the WildCats Village was the slightest bit put off by losing their bets. Quite the opposite. By the following morning, the whole thing had escalated into a game show and in July they launched *Pet Survivor!* during prime time on the Psychic Pets Network. The ratings went straight through the roof.

Dogalogs and Kittywits. Tammy immediately infiltrated the show to get the whole story. “They auditioned every dog and cat at the sanctuary,” she reported. “Then they chose six dogs and six cats for the first game and announced to the audience that these twelve had been ‘abandoned’ on a desert island and had been divided into two competing tribes: the Dogalogs and the Kittywits.

“How did they choose who got to participate in the show?” I asked.

“They went for a full demographic spread, Boss,”



*Louise, a member of Best Friends, sent in this photo of her cats apparently watching educational wildlife videos. What Louise doesn’t know is that as soon as she leaves the room, the cats switch channels to watch *Pet Survivor!**

Tammy explained. “They wanted a white one and a black one in each tribe – plus old ones and young ones and pretty ones and crotchety ones.

“And there are a couple of real characters in each tribe, too,” she added. “Like Harry, who loves to wear ladies’ clothes. He was adopted off the island very quickly and we heard from his new person that he won’t go to bed at night unless he’s wearing pajamas.”

“But isn’t it bad for the ratings if someone like Harry gets voted off the island?” I asked.

“Not really,” explained Tammy. “Right now, the audience is focused on a pug-shepherd mix called Lefty who has a Napoleon complex.”

“What’s a pug-shepherd mix?!” I gasped.

“It’s pretty weird, Boss,” Tammy agreed. “And so is he. He can never quite decide whether he’s very big or very small. So he spends half his time bullying the other dogs and the other half running away from them. And there’s Bryson, too, who has separation anxiety and keeps moaning about not wanting to be left alone on the island.

“What about the Kittywit tribe?” I asked.

“They’re dominated by Spud, a grumpy old white cat who used to be in middle management, and Modesta, who was rescued from an electrical pole and now seems determined to drive everyone else up the pole. And there’s Mirage who gets the sympathy vote because she has a liver problem and whenever she gets stressed by the other cats, she throws up.”

The Winning Strategy. “So, who’s going to be the winner?” I asked.

“That’s where it gets complicated,” Tammy explained. Since the PTB are secretly sponsoring the show, they want everyone to be adopted off the island quite soon. On the other hand, we have reason to believe that The Colonel and his Gang now actually *own* the Psychic Pets Network and that his campaign advisors dreamed up *Pet Survivor!* as a deliberate strategy to keep the electorate from getting bored during the campaign. So they want to keep the show going for as long as possible.”

“And if The Colonel loses the election?”

“That’s no longer a possibility,” Tammy replied. “As long as everyone keeps watching *Pet Survivor!*, then The Colonel wins in the ratings, which is, after all, the only thing that matters.” 🐾



**Tomato the Cat's
Special Investigative**

Tomato Wins Pulitzer Award

► From the editor of Best Friends magazine

Regular readers of Tomato's column will remember that our investigative reporter has been wondering for years why "Mrs. Pulitzer," as he calls the Pulitzer Award Board, has never seen fit to send him one of her prestigious annual awards for investigative journalism.

Then, just a few weeks ago, on September 14, we received this letter, addressed to Tomato, from the Office of the Administrator of Pulitzer Prizes.

Tomato had been nominated by a member of Best Friends, Ann Elise Wort, who is research assistant to *New York Times* columnist William Safire, himself a member of the Pulitzer Prize Board.

Ann and her husband had spent their honeymoon together at the sanctuary this summer, and it seems that the cats at the TLC Cat Club did a little lobbying themselves. We are assured, however, that this played no part in Ann's decision to place Tomato's reports in nomination.

(Nor, of course, as Pulitzer administrator Seymour Topping assures us in his letter, did the fact that he himself has eight rescued pets at home play any part in the award.)

Several people who read this letter from the Pulitzer administrator suspected, at first, that it had been fabricated as a joke by someone on Tomato's staff.

Fabricating the news on Tomato the Cat's own page?

What a scandal that would be!

Anyway, we hasten to assure you, dear readers, that the letter is, indeed, for real, and that we are all delighted and honored for Tomato, and for the cause of feline journalism everywhere.

And thank you, Seymour Topping, Ann Wort, Bill Safire, and the rest of you delightful, animal-loving, Pulitzer people! 🐾

August 31, 2000
Tomato the Cat
Best Friends Paradise
Kanab, Utah

Dear Tomato:

Forgive the delay in notifying you that you are the winner of a Pulitzer award in a new category: the Purr Prize for service to man's best friends. What clinched your prize was the nominating letter of Ann Elise Wort, in which she pointed out that the Cat's Meow made more sense than what we've been hearing on the presidential campaign trail. Ms. Wort has been given the prize for making this prize announcement. Two Harvard professors on the Board resisted the majority view that the four-legged are turning out better copy than journalists who wear two shoes. (That's Harvard for you, never in the real world.) As a consequence of this confrontation, the Board meeting continued for days with Bill Safire (our most devoted member) making the ultimate sacrifice of foregoing one of his columns pointing out the flaws in the Platform of the Democratic Party. There you have it! Enthusiasm has been generated to the extent that the Board is considering making a Paws Are It award next year.

Sincerely yours

[Signature]
Administrator, Pulitzer and Purr Prizes

P. S. Ignore those assertions at Harvard that there is a conflict of interest since the Toppings have six cats, no less, and two dogs, all from an animal shelter.

The Pulitzer Prize Board
702 Journalism
Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027
Tel. (212) 854-3841 or 3842

Seymour Topping, who wrote this letter, is the administrator of Pulitzer Prizes.

New York Times columnist **William Safire** is a member of the Pulitzer Board.

Ann Elise Wort, a member of *Best Friends* and research assistant to Mr. Safire, placed Tomato's columns in nomination.

Tomato's Acceptance Speech

Delivered at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, October 1, 2000

Mrs. Pulitzer, Members of Best Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this extraordinary honor. It will be a source of inspiration and encouragement to cats everywhere who believe that the pen is mightier than the claw. I should add, without meaning any disrespect, that for as long as I have worked as an investigative reporter for *Best Friends* magazine, Mrs. Pulitzer has been my mews.

I would also like to thank my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound, without whom none of my reports would have been possible, as well as the inestimable Professor Barkalot, who cannot be here this evening since he is in Ancient Egypt uncovering some remarkable information for my next report.

We live in an age, my friends, where so much is possible. Who would have thought that an alley cat once under sentence of death for attacking some chickens, could today be running for the presidency of the United States? (I speak, of course, of The Colonel, who has so electrified this year's campaign.)

And who could have imagined, just a few short years ago, that a charming yet unadoptable young cat named Julius, whose elevator does not go all the way to the top, could become Chairpurrson of the TLC Cat Club and be appointed to the Joint Chiefs of Stuff?

These achievements are, of course, not new. As my investigative reports have shown, cats have been excelling in science and the arts for generations. It was, after all, an apparently nondescript, small, gray, homeless cat, living in eastern Europe in the 17th century, who created the universe one evening after a rather unsatisfactory dinner.

Another stray cat, who wandered into someone's home in Ancient Egypt thousands of years earlier, so delighted the people in her neighborhood that she was elevated to the position of Great Egyptian Cat Goddess.

In our own time, evidence points increasingly to the fact that millions of cats, whether living in people's homes or on the streets, are combining their resources to influence the decision makers of our day – an effort that has clearly borne fruit with the Pulitzer Prize Board.

Indeed, your esteemed administrator informed me in his letter that certain members of the Board suspected that having eight rescued cats and dogs in his home could have led to a conflict of interest regarding this prize. I am happy to report that next year this possibility will be eliminated altogether. As I speak, our adoption team is arranging for enough pets to be placed in the homes of Pulitzer Board members to ensure that future decisions will be swift and unanimous.

Today, Mrs. Pulitzer, you have conferred the ultimate recognition upon this column. I can only say that we will do our best to live up to this honor and that you can count on us to get to the root of any scandals with which you may need future investigative assistance.

It is with great pride, then, and in the name of journalistic integrity everywhere, that I accept your most gracious award.

Thank you, and good evening.





Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“It was
rumored that her
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Tomato the Cat came to Best Friends in 1985 and was the founder of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club for kitties with disabilities. He began his Investigative Reports in order to bring journalistic integrity to this magazine.

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The Search for A-Pop

Is the source of all chaos in the entire universe
living in *your* home?

► **By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter**

Why do things go wrong? Scientists and philosophers have been baffled by this question for thousands of years. But, after what has been happening here at the TLC Cat Club, I am able to reveal Why Things Go Wrong. Her name is Arabella GingerPop.

Nobody took much notice when things started go awry this month. When one of the water heaters went out, they simply repaired it. Then another water heater went out. And the washing machines developed a problem, too. Still, nobody was very alarmed.

Next, the pet supply warehouse called to say that cat litter was on back order and would be late. (Having no cat litter is when you *really* know things are going wrong.)

And finally, one of the skylights at the WildCats Village leaked during a big rainstorm and Topcat Jimmy got wet. (Jimmy hates getting wet.) Plus, lightning struck a nearby tree, blew the electrical circuits at Cat HQ, and knocked out the computer modems there.

That was when my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound, and I looked at each other and realized that we were almost certainly dealing not simply with things “going wrong,” but with a supernatural force of nature: Arabella GingerPop.

The Tail of Arabella GingerPop

Here’s how it all began. Back at the start of time, before the TLC Cat Club was even built, a big, fluffy, orange cat was rescued from busy traffic and brought to the sanctuary. She called herself Arabella GingerPop, or A-Pop for short.

This handsome, slightly arrogant, yet engagingly vulnerable kitty was quite undeterred by the fact that she had feline leukemia and a host of other conditions that did not bode well for a long life. Armed with a bushy ginger tail that could lay waste to any unsecured object within a three-mile radius of her being, she was also endowed with even greater magical powers. When she walked into the office, for example, computers would crash. If you picked her up and touched a light switch, chances were that all the power would go out. If she sat on a washing machine, it would stop working. If she wandered into the bathroom, there would, likely as not, be a flood five minutes later.

Nevertheless, everyone she ever met was charmed by A-Pop. So, in spite of all the chaos, it was a sad day when, a few months later, she went over the Rainbow Bridge.

Or did she? Some of the older cats here, who knew her, say that Arabella GingerPop would never have gone over the Rainbow Bridge. After all, they argue, things still go wrong, so she must still be around somewhere. (Off the record, they suggest that maybe she went *under* the Rainbow Bridge, rather than over it.)

The Mystery Deepens

So, while everyone else was scurrying around repairing water heaters and computers and bringing in emergency supplies of kitty litter this month, Tammy the Greyhound and I launched an official investigation of the matter.

“This has A-Pop written all over it, Boss,” said Tammy.

“Not so fast,” I cautioned. “Rumor and gossip cannot replace journalistic integrity.”

“True enough,” Tammy agreed. “But last night, I consulted with the esteemed Professor Barkalot who, as you know, is on a secret assignment in Ancient Egypt.”

I could feel the fur beginning to rise on my neck as Tammy continued.

“According to Ancient Egyptian inscriptions, the Great Egyptian Cat Goddess had an archrival who was known as A-Pop. Their A-Pop, like our A-Pop, had a huge tail that



This ancient prayer, carved in hieroglyphics, entreats the Great Egyptian Cat Goddess to defeat the forces of chaos "just as you once conquered the great A-Pop."

went around the whole planet. She was portrayed as a dragon and she was known as the source of all chaos in the entire universe."

"The entire universe?" I gasped.

"No less," Tammy repeated.

"She sometimes even tried to eat the Sun for breakfast. And if the Great Egyptian Cat Goddess

couldn't stop her in time, the power would go out all over Ancient Egypt and there would be no kitty litter for weeks."

Could Arabella GingerPop really have been the same A-Pop as *their* A-Pop?

"We must begin a search immediately," I instructed. "How many big, fluffy, orange, female cats with bushy tails do we have at the sanctuary right now?"

"There aren't any at all, Boss. I already checked."

"That's impossible. Out of 700 or more cats, there must be dozens."

"You'd think so," Tammy agreed. "But it seems that pure orange, domestic long-hair, girl cats are few and far between. There are plenty of boys, but A-Pop was a girl. And there are plenty of orange Persians and Siamese, but that's not the same, either."

"The plot thickens," I mused.

An All-Out Search for A-Pop

Tammy proceeded to launch a nationwide search.

Her first break came when our Salt Lake City adoption group reported that a cat named Ariel, fitting Pop's description to a T, had just gone to a delightful new home. Her new person, Maureen, agreed to take a photo and send it here. "Ariel is the love of my life, and very sweet," she added. (Isn't that exactly what people used to say about Arabella GingerPop?)

Next, Tammy looked for big, fluffy, orange, female, adoptable cats on the Internet. She found just one, named Bashful, who lives in Minnesota where she was recently adopted to a new home. She is, as her name implies, quite bashful, and not at all arrogant, so I wondered at first whether she could really be A-Pop.

Could A-Pop be in your home?

Tammy had a further consultation with Professor Barkalot to discuss our latest findings. The professor reminded her that A-Pop's magical powers mean that she is not necessarily bound by space and time like the rest of us. She could, in fact, even be living in many homes at once – and quite possibly in yours.

The professor even posited a remarkable new theory: that *every* big, fluffy, orange, domestic longhair, female cat may be a manifestation of A-Pop.

So, if you have a cat at home who fits A-Pop's description, please send us a photo.

One more thing: According to the professor, A-Pop and the Great Egyptian Cat Goddess are rarely far apart. This could mean that if one of your cats at home, other than the

orange one, is regal and imperious, you may have unwittingly landed the entire Ancient Egyptian pantheon in your household.

This would obviously be quite big news – big enough, indeed, for me to win another Pulitzer Award this year. 🐾

If you have a cat who could be A-Pop, send a photo to Tomato's Investigative Reports, Best Friends Magazine, Kanab, UT 84741. Or e-mail it to: tomato@bestfriends.org



This fluffy, orange, new arrival looks like an A-Pop in the making, but Pop is always a girl not a boy.



"Ariel is the love of my life, and very sweet." Isn't that exactly what people used to say about Arabella GingerPop – even at times of maximum chaos?



Bashful, who was adopted in Minnesota, is quite bashful and not very arrogant. But, according to the Professor's theory, she may be part of A-Pop all the same.

The Seven Signs of A-Pop

1. She is big, orange all over, and very fluffy.
2. She is a domestic, longhair girl – not a boy, and not Persian, Siamese, or any other type.
3. She is handsome and arrogant, highly charismatic, and yet with a certain engagingly vulnerable quality.
4. Her bushy orange tail is capable of laying waste to any unsecured object within a three-mile radius of her being.
5. She is endowed with all manner of seemingly inexplicable magical powers including, perhaps, dematerialization and teleportation, but not behavior modification.
6. You suspect that she may, like the original A-Pop, be the source of all chaos in your household and, quite possibly, the entire universe, but ...
7. You love her to distraction all the same.



**Tomato the Cat's
Special Investigative Report**

“Most
alarming of all was
the letter from a
reader who
believes that her
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A-Pop!”

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A-Pop Revealed

It seems like the source of all chaos and disintegration is everywhere – especially in California

► **By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter**

In my last report, I warned that A-Pop, the source of all chaos, disruption, and disintegration in the entire universe, may be alive and well – and possibly living in your home.

You will recollect that in her last known incarnation, many years ago, A-Pop was a big, fluffy, orange girl cat here at Best Friends. Her bushy tail could lay waste to any unsecured object within a three-mile radius of her being and she was endowed with all kinds of magical powers that caused electric circuits to blow, water pipes to explode, and other catastrophes to occur whenever she walked into a room.

My belief that she may have somehow rematerialized in your household has now been confirmed by reports and photos from around the country.

Her most perfect representation is in Molly, who lives in New Jersey (*photo right*), but there are plenty of other cats who closely fit her profile. So it seems certain, as my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound, proposed, that A-Pop is, in fact, living in many homes at once.

Her powers, however, appear to have increased dramatically. Several readers on the west coast who have an A-Pop lookalike in their home believe that she may be the cause of the entire power crisis in California.

More alarmingly, those of you who should be relieved to know that you *don't* have A-Pop living in your house, nonetheless unaccountably insist that she is there *anyway*. One reader, for example, wrote in to say that when her cat goes racing around the house, she is being chased by the *invisible* A-Pop.

And in spite of the fact that A-Pop is a big fluffy orange cat, readers sent in photos of bright calicos, gray Persians, and brown Siamese, all of whom they claim to be A-Pop.

But if you think *these* people are stretching reality, consider

the following from a reader who believes that her *husband* may be A-Pop.

"My darling husband puts out street lights when he drives or walks under them," she writes. Without even stopping to check whether he has a bushy orange tail, she tried to get him to sit still for a photo by offering him a large dish of tofutti ice cream as an extra treat. He ate the treat but apparently began to hiss and threatened to scratch the furniture when she tried to take his photograph.

If you, too, find yourself believing that your husband, or the kids, or the family dog, are really a big, fluffy, ginger cat, please take a deep breath. You may simply be succumbing to a new condition known as A-Popsicle Paranoid Hysteria. People suffering from this end up believing that they are being stalked by a huge and infinitely expanding A-Pop and that their sole purpose in life is to take her photo. 🐾



Molly, who lives with Bob and Jean Bussell in New Jersey, is an exact model for A-Pop.



Could Langlois be A-Pop? Too much white fur, but with A-Pop, you can never be certain.



Cina, a.k.a. C-Pop, may be chasing an invisible A-Pop around her home.



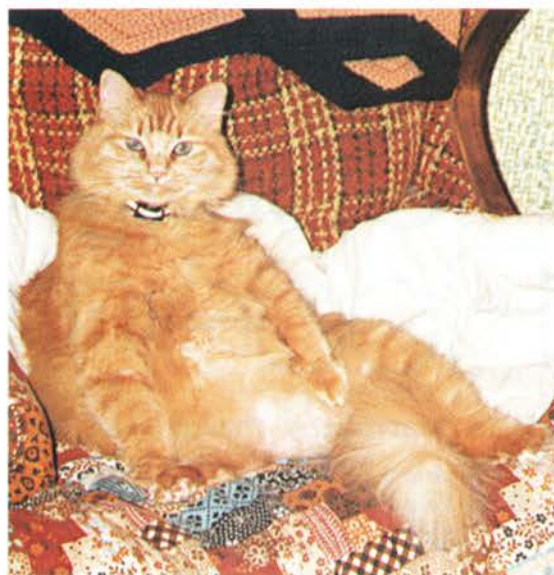
Michelle says that E.T. is part alien and has been wreaking havoc in her home for 12 years since Michelle adopted her as a special needs cat.



Gemma does not look like A-Pop but her calico "sister" stays in the linen closet whenever Gemma is around. "She once boarded a school bus during a soccer game and ended up 22 miles away!"



Purr is extremely imperious and arrogant, although not quite the right color for A-Pop.



Peggy and Wally say that Pumpkin came to live with them 10 years ago and that she has "all the qualifications to be A-Pop."

Tammy's Final Investigation

Tammy's tour of duty as my investigative assistant has now come to an end. Last month, after completing her investigation of A-Pop, she decided that it was time to go over the Rainbow Bridge and begin an altogether new career.

Tammy began her professional life at a Greyhound racing track in Mexico. She wasn't the best racer, so they were going to "donate" her to a medical laboratory to be experimented on. Instead, she was rescued and brought to Best Friends.



She was a bit scared of dogs, so she came to live next to the TLC Cat Club here. Soon after that, all sorts of things began to disappear in mysterious circumstances from wherever Tammy was located – keys from cars when the windows were open, full mugs of coffee from the staff room, watches and jewelry left unattended for the briefest moment.

Tammy agreed to help find the thief, but the investigation petered out when somebody followed her down the hill one morning and found all these items buried in one stash. Tammy claimed that she had "found" the stolen goods, but could not locate the actual thief. (The problem was that she didn't have a mirror!)

I immediately hired her as my investigative assistant, and she excelled in uncovering some of the greatest scandals and mysteries of our time, as well as bringing an unparalleled level of journalistic integrity to this magazine.

While Tammy was unique in her skills, I am now conducting interviews all over Dogtown here at the sanctuary, and will hope to introduce a new investigative assistant in our next issue.



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

The Seven Signs of A-Pop

The source of all chaos, disruption, and disintegration in the entire known universe

1. She is big, orange all over, and very fluffy.
2. She is a domestic, longhaired girl – not a boy, and not Persian, Siamese, or any other type.
3. She is handsome and arrogant, highly charismatic, and yet with a certain engagingly vulnerable quality.
4. Her bushy orange tail is capable of laying waste to everything within its sweep.
5. She is endowed with all manner of seemingly inexplicable magical powers including, perhaps, dematerialization and teleportation, but not behavior modification.
6. You suspect that she may, like the original A-Pop, be the source of all chaos in your household and, quite possibly, the entire universe, but ...
7. You love her to distraction all the same.

Tomato the Cat came to Best Friends in 1985 and was the founder of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club for kitties with disabilities. He began his Investigative Reports in order to bring journalistic integrity to this magazine.

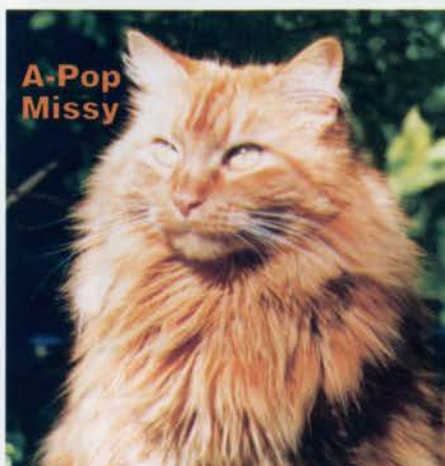
After going over the Rainbow Bridge in 1998, he decided to keep writing anyway, explaining that he had only used up one of his nine lives.

Last year, he received a Pulitzer Award in the new category of "Purr Prize for service to man's best friend."

More "A's" A-Poppin!

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

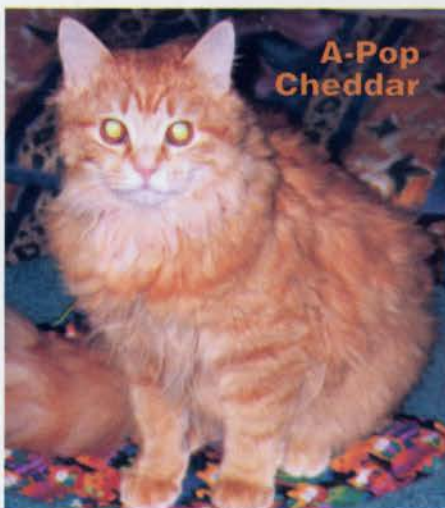
The mail is still coming in from readers who confirm that A-Pop, the source of all chaos, disruption, and disintegration in the entire known universe, is alive and well – and living in their home. Here are some of your letters and photos. More of them are on my Web site at www.bestfriends.org/tomato.htm 🐾



A-Pop
Missy

I know this will sound crazy, but like the husband mentioned in Tomato's last report, I have two close relatives who put out street lights when they drive or walk by. It's been happening for years and I have seen it myself! Can you put me in touch with this family? My family is hoping to discover what it is that causes these mysterious things.

Thanks, Kate.



A-Pop
Cheddar

Dear Tomato,

Yellowcat meets all seven of the Seven Signs of A-Pop.

Signs 1 through 3 are self-evident.

Sign 4: Her tail can sweep a newspaper from your hands, or a dog off the couch. But she specializes in adding hair – lots of it – to your coffee cup or dinner plate. One twitch of the tail does it.

Sign 5: She is definitely magical. She came with the house – the previous owners had found her a home, but she kept reappearing here: first in the shed, then in the garage, and finally back in the house where she belongs. As you can see, she's in full possession.

Sign 6: There's plenty of chaos here. (She has a housemate cat and 2 dogs.)

Sign 7: Of course.

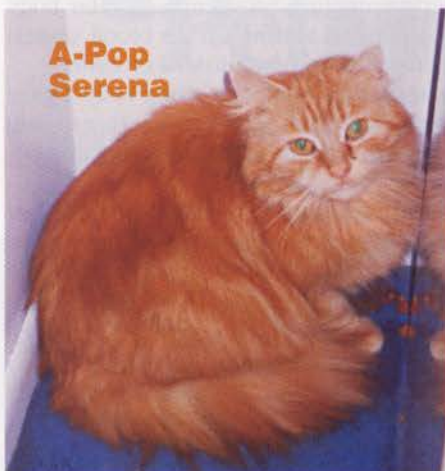
Carol Kruse, Flagstaff, Ariz.





We've named two businesses after our **A-Pop Kamra** and even have "Kamra" on our license plate.

Thomas M. Herrick, Cudahy, Wisc.



Dear Tomato,

As soon as I adopted **Punkie-Doodle** – an innocent-looking little thing with the longest, fluffiest tail I had ever seen – the chaos began.

In the mornings we awoke to a toppled clothes basket with underwear and socks strewn all over the house. We found Punkie curled up asleep on the remains of an entire roll of toilet paper. Then my bedside radio began to play in the middle of the night. (The orange fluff ball was always close by.) Bookshelves were cleared of books regularly, thumps and bumps were heard all through the night, and I had to hide my bath-oil beads after several containers managed to get into a bathtub full of water.

So you see, Punkie-Doodle A-Pop is alive and well in Brandon, Mississippi, and we love her to distraction!

Sharon Hoffman, Brandon, Miss.

P.S. Last night she got herself closed up in the silverware drawer.

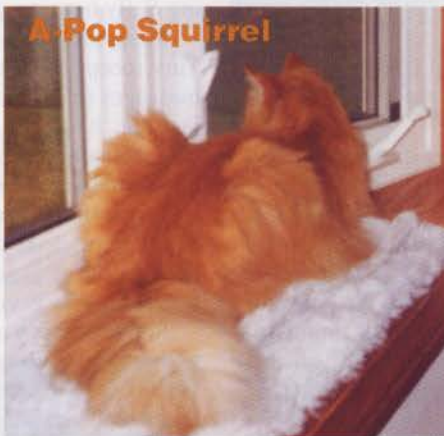
Dear Tomato,

I adopted a sickly, fluffy orange kitten and my daughter named her **Zohee Tiamat**. Tiamat was an ancient Egyptian dragon, just like the original A-Pop. Coincidence? I think not! She was soon transformed and now tears through the house, racing up and down the stairs, banking sideways across the walls, as she chases some sinister menace that only she can see.

Whenever a loud crash is heard, she is always sitting in the middle of the room surveying the mess. Her long fluffy tail has been the source of more than a few knick-knack casualties, including two angels in a Nativity scene she knocked over after deciding no manger was complete without an orange kitty curled up around baby Jesus.

Joni Jones, Winnemucca, Nev.

A-Pop Squirrel



Dear Tomato,

Everything seems to fall apart when **Pumpkin** walks into the room with that fluffy orange tail. Food slips out of hands. Stuff gets knocked over by The Tail and then the dog gets it. On occasion, the dog joins in and things really get wild.

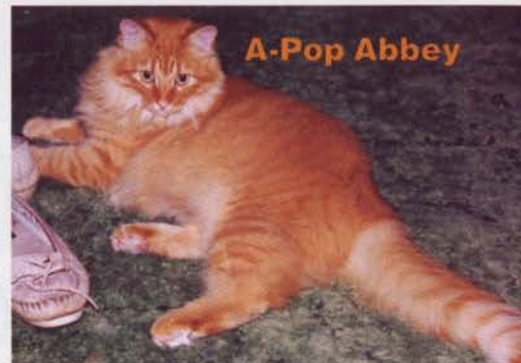
Aimee Pieszak, Mars, Penn.



Dear Tomato,

We suspect a direct correlation between our **Amanda Jane** (here in Wisconsin) and the recent Seattle earthquake. We are, of course, sorry for any damage she may have caused.

Dawn and Tom Gralewicz, Greenfield, Wisc.



A-Pop Abbey

Dear Tomato,

Our **A-Pop Miranda** oversaw the operation when we had a water softener installed. The company hooked the discharge tank by accident to our natural gas line instead of our sewer tie-in, so when the unit discharged the brine water at 2:00 a.m., 100 gallons of dirty water came through our gas stove.

This was just one example of the many bizarre things that happened to us when Miranda was the boss of the house. She went over the Rainbow Bridge last August. Your article brought back many wonderful memories of my precious, albeit sometimes infuriating, Miranda.

Heather von Sternberg

P.S. I might add that our house has never had any mysterious problems since the sad day that Miranda left us.



Dear Tomato,

We have rescued THREE A-Pops from our local park in the last three years.

Melody got her name because we spotted her singing on a log in the park. She is highly charismatic with an engaging, vulnerable quality.

Beverly Crusher was dumped almost a year later, and this year we found sweet **Pumpkin** in the same area.

Chico Cat Coalition, Chico, Calif.



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Being seen
in *Best Friends*
magazine
reading *Best
Friends*
magazine
nonchalantly at
Best Friends is
supremely
cool.”

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Now, That's Cool!!

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

"Cool" is in. Everybody wants to be cool. Being cool is cool.

Nobody has ever been able to define quite what cool is. It's just one of those things where you know it when you see it.

Cool is usually a little out of the ordinary, but if you're too far out, then that's not cool. (That's because drawing attention to yourself is *never* cool.)

Being a little ahead of current fashion, is cool. But the problem is that as soon as it becomes the fashion, it's no longer cool. An example of this was my ancestor, the Cheshire Cat, in *Alice in Wonderland*. The Cheshire Cat was most cool, but as soon as he got in the news, everybody wanted to be a Cheshire Cat. In order to remain cool, he dematerialized, leaving behind only his grin. No one else was able to follow that, so the Cheshire Cat's grin has remained one of the coolest things ever!

Cool is generally associated with being hip and on the cutting edge. But some of the coolest people are, in fact, quite old-fashioned. That's because the coolest things of all never go out of fashion. Likewise, the coolest people, doing the coolest things, are often not aware of how cool they are. Nor do they care. (Which is also super-cool!)

Being at Best Friends during the summer is definitely cool. Here are some of the coolest things I have come across here in the last month or so:



Being
walked by
bunch of
dogs on a
summer
afternoon
at Dogtown
is very cool
– even
when it's
warm.



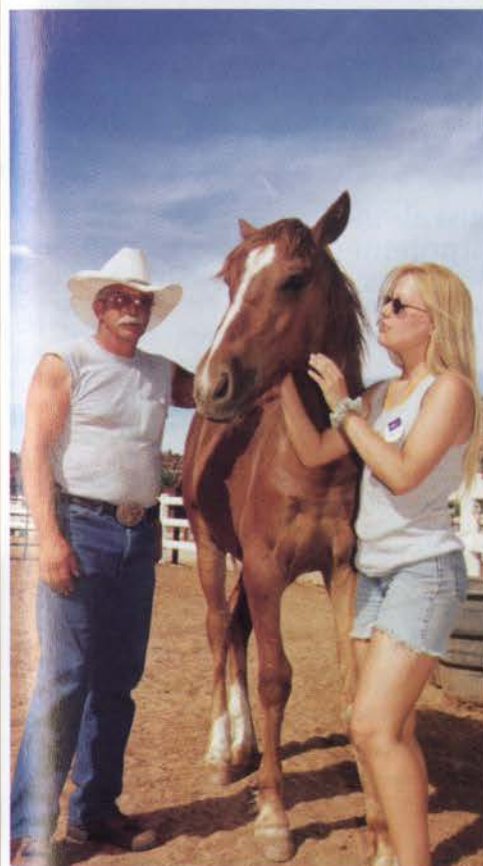
Fanning your tail to keep cool in summer, as Clarence the Turkey is doing, is most cool.



It's cool to take a hayride in the back of a truck to feed the horses.



Reading *Best Friends* magazine at Best Friends is cool. (Having your photo taken reading *Best Friends* magazine is borderline ostentatious. But being seen in *Best Friends* magazine reading *Best Friends* magazine nonchalantly at Best Friends is supremely cool.)



Cool hat, cool horse, cool volunteer. (And people used to think the Marlboro Man was cool! They never met our Paul Tharp, who looks after the Best Friends horses.)



It's cool to be seen leaning against the roof of Dogtown Heights while it's still being built. (Even if you're only a ladder, you can still be cool.)



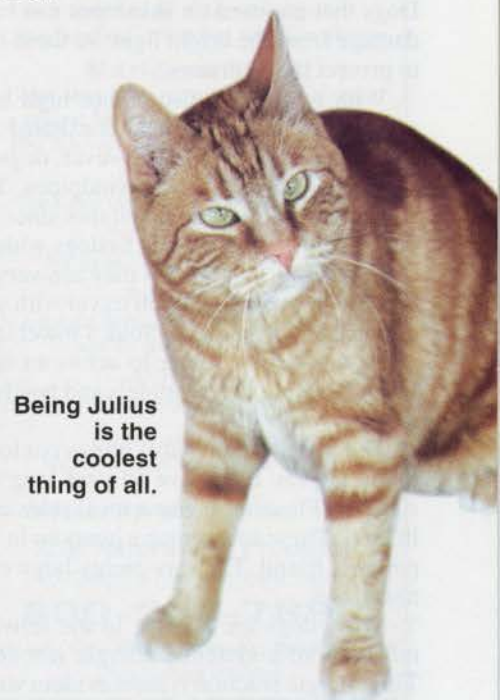
Being adopted, and adopting your new person, is cool.



Hanging with the nappy-headed burros is cool.



Angel Canyon Creek is delightfully cool.



Being Julius is the coolest thing of all.



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Word spread that Charlie Cockatoo was my husband's secret news source for his articles in *The New York Times*.”

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The Real Mrs. P

And the first Tomato Award for Investigative Journalism

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

For years, people kept telling me that there was no "Mrs. Pulitzer" and that I was wasting my time expecting her to send me a letter telling me that I had won one of her coveted prizes for journalism. Then, this time last year, as you will remember, Mr. Seymour Topping, the administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes, wrote to notify me of my Pulitzer award in a special new category: the Purr Prize.

The Pulitzer Committee is always scrupulous about avoiding any appearances of favoritism or conflict of interest in its awards. So Mr. Topping, the former foreign editor and then managing editor of the *New York Times*, hastened to add that the fact that "the Toppings have six cats, no less, and two dogs, all from an animal shelter" had nothing whatever to do with their decision to award this prize.

The idea that Mrs. P. would have chosen me for one of her awards for any reason other than journalistic excellence never crossed my mind, but my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound, urged me to launch a full investigation of my Pulitzer Prize.

"Believe me, Boss," she argued. "There's more to this than meets the eye. This could be your biggest story yet. Mrs. P. is clearly one of us – alive and well and in a family of cats, dogs, and journalists. We have to make contact with her at once!"

As it turned out, it was Mrs. P. who would contact us.

Audrey Topping and Charlie Cockatoo

Her real name is not, in fact, Mrs. P., but Mrs. Audrey Topping, and for 25 years she had an investigative journalist, Charlie Cockatoo, in her own family.

Audrey rescued Charlie the Cockatoo by buying him "from an evil opium dealer" on Cat Street in Hong Kong in 1963.

Her husband, whom she calls "Top," had just been reassigned from the *New York Times* Moscow Bureau to head up the Southeast Asian Bureau. Audrey was the editor of *Mandarin Magazine* and also wrote for the *New York Times* and several magazines.

She writes about Charlie in our Sweet Memories column (see page 56). She's written a whole book about him, too – *Charlie's World* – describing their times together.

Charlie was a wild cockatoo, probably captured in Australia and then shipped to Hong Kong, where he was caged, his foot was chained, and his wings were clipped.

Once he was rescued, he began to display his huge talent. He couldn't fly, but he learned to glide, spoke three languages, charmed his way through several countries, and had an ego beyond all bounds.

Charlie's Travels

At a brief stopover at the airport in Bangkok, Audrey writes, she took Charlie out of his cage as the crew and passengers gathered around.

He took one look at the crowd and began to act as if he were running for President, greeting his public politely in English and inquiring as to their health: "Hello there, howyadoin'?" When I put him back in his cage, he waved goodbye to them all with his foot, calling, "Bye, bye, bye bye!" as if he were making a grand exit off a vaudeville stage.

We went through the whole routine again in Rangoon with Charlie in the starring role, and all the Burmese at the airport came running to see the show.

When we reached Calcutta, a multitude of magnificently turbaned Sikhs, on their way to Punjab in search of a Guru, were waiting on the tarmac. They crowded around the babbling bird. Charlie raised his saffron crest in salute and I suspect he said something witty in Punjabi because all the bearded Sikhs laughed and nodded knowingly. Charlie spread his wings and yelled "Super Charlie! Super Charlie!" at the top of his voice. The Sikhs picked it up and began to chant: "Super Charlie, Super Charlie!" until it began to sound like a sacred mantra.

The Tomato Award for Investigative Journalism

Charlie met some of the greatest names in journalism and politics, and Audrey recounts that before long, word spread throughout Southeast Asia that he was actually her husband Top's secret news source for his articles in *The New York Times*.

"Truly an investigative reporter after your own heart, Boss," remarked Tammy the Greyhound.

"He deserves a Pulitzer Award himself," I replied. "But since Audrey Topping is the real Mrs. P., it would look like a serious conflict of interest if she gave him one."

Tammy and I thought about this all day and concluded that I should establish The Tomato Award for Investigative Journalism, with Charlie Cockatoo as the first recipient of the award, albeit posthumously.

"I believe," said Tammy, "that protocol dictates that you call Mrs. P. and ask her if she would be so kind as to accept the award on Charlie's behalf."

My Interview with Mrs. P

Audrey Topping graciously accepted the award on Charlie's behalf, so I took the opportunity to interview her at the same time.

Tomato the Cat: What were Charlie's most accomplished acts of investigative journalism?

Audrey Topping: The famous people who came over loved talking to Charlie, but it was our girls who really confided in him. They would tell him about the problems they had at school or with us.

T.C.: What tips would Charlie have for animals wanting to get into investigative journalism?

A.T.: He was a good listener. He would say you have to be a good listener. And he was very aggressive. His best advice would be, "If these humans can't understand what you're saying, use your body language!" Charlie would move his head back and forth, flap his wings, and when he got angry he'd stamp his feet. And, of course, he'd scream! He spoke many languages, and was definitely telepathic. He was a very good mimic. He tried very hard to understand, and to make everybody understand him.

T.C.: You've rescued animals all over the world. Do you know how many?

A.T.: I'm petting one right now. We found this big dog that was part wolf outside of the Bronx Zoo. She was brought to the shelter and then I brought Wolf [the puppy] home and fed her



with a bottle. Her eyes weren't even open. I suspect that a wolf escaped from a zoo and mated with a dog.

Then there was the time when a Japanese cowboy found a baby buffalo in Colorado, about a day old. We have a house there. We named her Amelia and fed her with a bottle. She followed us all over the place. She's now five years old, weighs two tons, and is the largest buffalo in her herd! When we go out there, which is about twice a year, I call her and she leaves the herd and comes running to me and nuzzles up to my jacket. I always dress the same so she'll recognize me. Amelia was my most unusual rescue! She goes to the cowboy's house, too, and watches television through the window!

I don't know how many animals I've rescued, but when I married my husband, my mother said to him, "I have to warn you, Top, that Audrey picks up strays." To which Top responded, "Well I'm one of them!"

So, we've had a lot of animals. It's contagious: we have five daughters, and two of them are cat rescuers. One of them has 26 cats; she's a journalist with *Newsday*. The other is an attorney. Cats just seem to find us!

T.C.: What was the biggest lesson that you learned from Charlie?

A.T.: That we're all one. A lot of people try to convey that all human beings are of one spirit, but I would include all the animals and insects and the whole universe. That's what Charlie taught us. He gave us the connection to nature in the fullest sense.

T.C.: Would Charlie have a comment on receiving the Tomato Award?

A.T.: He would say, "It's about time. What took you so long?" 🐾

The Tomato Award

For Excellence in Investigative Journalism



This is to certify that Charlie Cockatoo (a.k.a. Super Charlie) is the recipient of the 2001 Tomato Award for excellence in investigative journalism.

Howyadooin', Charlie!
Hope you're flyin' high!



Tomato the Cat,
Chief Investigative Reporter
Best Friends magazine

Michael Mountain

Michael Mountain, Editor
Best Friends magazine
August 3, 2001



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Was Dogtown
founded by
some apparently
stray dogs who
were actually
seeking hidden
treasure?”

Tomato the Cat came to Best Friends in 1985 and was the founder of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club for kitties with disabilities. He began his Investigative Reports in order to bring journalistic integrity to this magazine.

After going over the Rainbow Bridge in 1998, he decided to keep writing anyway, explaining that he had only used up one of his nine lives.

Last year, he received a Pulitzer Award in the new category of "Purr Prize for service to man's best friend."

The Search for Monty Zuma's Treasure

► **By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter**

"I am shortly going into retirement," I announced to my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound.

"How nice for you, Boss," replied Tammy. "And to what do we owe this sudden change of plan?"

"I am about to become an extremely wealthy cat. This secret treasure map," I said, waving at an ancient document on the floor in front of me, "has just come into my possession. It points clearly to the fact that King Montezuma's treasure is buried right here at Best Friends."

For those of you who may not be aware of the history of this vast horde that belonged to the king of the Aztecs in the 16th century, here's the story:

When King Montezuma was murdered by the wicked conquistadors in 1520, his followers escaped with the royal treasure and headed north. Not long after that, rumors began to grow that they had buried the treasure somewhere beyond the Grand Canyon.

Then, in 1917, a guy called Freddy Crystal rode into our local town of Kanab with what he said was a secret treasure map from Mexico. He said that the map showed clearly that the treasure was buried in one of the canyons about 20 miles out of town. Everyone followed Freddy into the caves and canyons to start digging. But a year later, having found nothing, Freddy rode back out of town, leaving behind a lot of angry people.

Two years after that, he was back again, with a "better" map. They all went digging again, but turned up nothing. Freddy looked at the map more closely and then explained that they'd been digging in the wrong canyon. They should have been in "the next one over." But the townspeople had had enough, and Freddy was escorted out of town for good.

The "next canyon over," you will now have guessed, was Angel Canyon, the home of Best Friends, which is why there are still occasional rumors that King Montezuma's treasure is buried right here.

"Now," I said to Tammy, "consider the evidence:

"There's a cat called Monti who's living at the WildCats Village right now."

"And you think that this Monti is actually Monti Zuma?" asked Tammy, somewhat skeptically.

"Not exactly," I said. "Because we have another Monty, one of the dogs over at Dogtown. He's an escape artist who can get out of *any* compound sooner or later. Maybe he's trying to find his treasure."

"Could they *both* be Monty Zuma?" Tammy mused.

"Unlikely," I replied. "But possible. There's certainly enough treasure for both of them. But Dogtown is where most of the buried treasure legends are."

I reminded Tammy of the story that Dogtown was actually begun by a group of dogs who were *thought* to be stray but who were actually following yet another secret treasure map that led to what is now Best Friends. They included the notorious Sheriff Amra the Malamute, who is said to have built up the largest stash of dog bowls in history; Ginger the Chesapeake, whose collection of tennis balls led to the founding of the Federal Reserve Tree; and Mayor Jethro's revelation about the Golden Biscuits.

"And even today," I concluded, "there is a stash of toys, old biscuits, teddy bears, and slippers that are guarded by a dog called Laddie, who is rather unfriendly, so no one has been able to get close to it and examine the entire contents."

"I see," said Tammy. "So your theory is that 500 years ago, King Montezuma had a collection of toys, slippers, teddy bears, and old biscuits that were rescued and brought here. By whom?"

"By his dogs, of course. They must have been the original founders of Best Friends."

"I think your timeline has some slight flaws in it, Boss. But even if it wasn't, are you seriously saying that King Montezuma is actually here at the sanctuary, cleverly disguised as Monty Zuma?"

Tammy paused and looked carefully at the map. "There's just one other thing," she continued. "If this map is 500 years old, Boss, how come your office is clearly marked on it?"

"You're right," I said, looking closely at the map. "X does indeed mark the spot – right here in my office. Does that mean the treasure has been in here all along?"

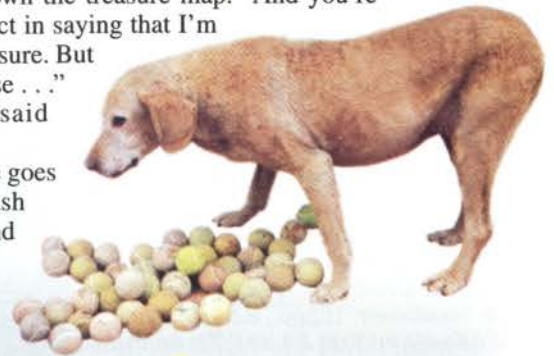
"Or perhaps," Tammy surmised, "you *are* the treasure."

I stopped to think about that.

"Now that's an explanation that I hadn't considered," I admitted, putting down the treasure map. "And you're certainly correct in saying that I'm a priceless treasure. But if that's the case . . ."

"Go on," said Tammy.

"Well, there goes my plan to cash the treasure and then retire." 🐾





Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“I believe that
this dog was
abducted by
humans.”

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The ReX-Files

Is this dog passing on a critically important message from aliens?

► **By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter**

"Are you telling me that he wrote his name on the car window while he was being driven to Best Friends?" I asked my investigative assistant, Tammy the Greyhound.

"There were three people in the car, Boss," Tammy repeated, for the third time. "The dog was in the back. They were talking about what to call him. Then Paul, who was driving, said to the dog, 'So, what shall we call you, buddy?' A moment later, he looked in the rearview mirror, and the dog had written the word 'REXY' with his nose on the back window."

"I don't believe it," I said, for the third time.

"Other people saw the window later. Are you saying they made up the story?"

"I'm saying that I don't believe that it was his *name* that he was writing."

"I see," sighed Tammy.

"Consider the evidence," I explained. "A dog is picked up as a stray. He's taken to a 'shelter,' which promptly turns him over to a research laboratory. He spends six months in anesthesia research. Then they call Best Friends and he comes here. The dog is all blahed out from the anesthetics and can barely respond to anyone. *So why would he summon all his resources simply to write his name on the window?*"

"So you think he's trying to send us a message," said Tammy.

"I believe this was a case of alien abduction," I continued. "The dog was clearly abducted by humans. It's obviously a case for the ReX-Files."

Tammy was not convinced.

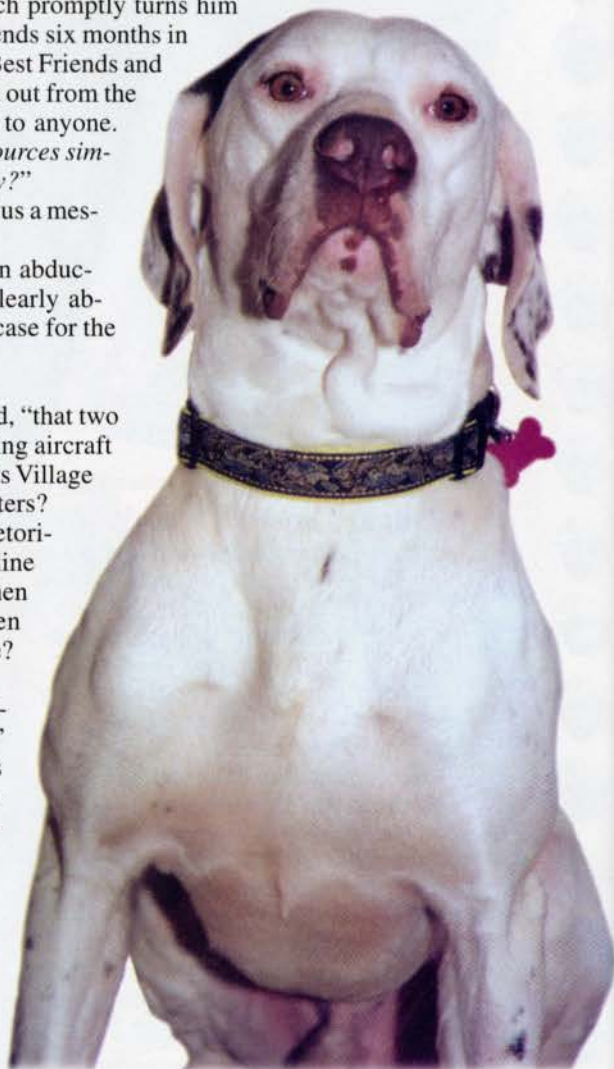
"Have you forgotten," I continued, "that two weeks ago, 11 feral cats from a Boeing aircraft plant arrived secretly at the WildCats Village and disappeared quietly into the rafters?"

"Have you forgotten," I added rhetorically, "that if you draw a line from Area 51 to Best Friends, and then to Roswell, New Mexico, and then back to Area 51, it forms a triangle? We need to interrogate him."

"Nobody's going to be interviewing him for the next while, Boss," Tammy interrupted. "Rexy freezes when anyone talks to him and he's not even fully aware of his surroundings yet."

"I still say we have to figure out what he's trying to tell us," I insisted. "What do you think?"

"I think," Tammy yawned, "that sometimes when a dog writes his name on the window, he's just writing his name on the window." 🐾

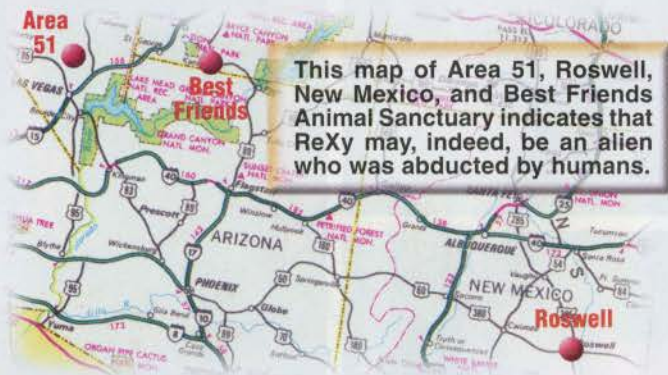


ARTIST'S RE-CREATION OF WHAT STAFF PEOPLE SAW



Was ReXy writing his name on the car window? Or was he delivering a secret message? If you can decode the message, please e-mail tomato@bestfriends.org.

Photo: Rollo



This map of Area 51, Roswell, New Mexico, and Best Friends Animal Sanctuary indicates that ReXy may, indeed, be an alien who was abducted by humans.

Currently Under Investigation by ReXy

Cows Reportedly Watched as UFOs Crashed in Brazil



Photo: Corbis

The following report is from the Brazilian newspaper "O Estado de Sao Paulo" and appeared on November 29, 2001:

A Brazilian farmer said an explosion from a mid-air crash between two low-flying UFOs had temporarily blinded his cattle herd. Five other witnesses in Corguinho, southwest Brazil, say they saw the crash, too.

Farmer Getulio Alves said the explosion burned trees nearby, but police say they haven't found any evidence.

An official from the Doorway Project, which provides UFO information to tourists, told the newspaper: "The blast happened in a hard-to-reach place. We still haven't found the wreckage, but soon we'll find it and prove it's all true."

No comment yet from the cows.

True Stories from the ReX-Files

Transmigration of the Soul?

Suzanna and Babe lived at Old Friends – the home of the old dogs at Best Friends Dogtown. Suzanna was a very lively girl and had a little dance in which she would hop up off her front feet when she got excited. Babe was rather placid. About a year ago, Suzanna went over the Rainbow Bridge. A few days later, Babe's behavior changed altogether. She became very lively, took on all, or at least most, of Suzanna's mannerisms, and started doing Suzanna's dance – getting excited and hopping up off her front feet.



The Raven Conspiracy.

About three years ago, the ravens who hang around Dogtown, swooping down on unattended bowls of dog food (there aren't that many unattended bowls!) made some kind of a deal with the dogs.

The big food storage building overlooks Dogtown from the top of the hill and is known to the dogs as The Great Temple of Food. The

ravens would gather around the building and, when it was open, they would fly in and grab some unopened cans of cat food. They would then fly over Dogtown, dropping the cans on the dogs, who would get quite excited and try to open them. While the dogs were busy opening the cans, the ravens would make off with the regular dog food.

In the interests of safety (dogs opening cans with their teeth is not good dental practice!), the doors to the Great Temple of Food are now kept closed as much as possible.

Beaming Up Missy. One of the Dogtown staffers is convinced that Missy, an old Border collie who goes all over Dogtown spreading rumors and gossip, is actually an alien. This is because if you go to Dogtown after dark and shine a flashlight, Missy will always come running and then stand right in the beam. This can only be because she expects to be beamed up.





**Tomato the Cat's
Special Investigative Report**

“Bugsy may be able to write a history of feline exaggeration and hyperbole.”

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The Moving Finger

► **By Tomato the Cat –
Best Friends
Investigative Reporter**

People often say that "history is written by the victors." But on a more fundamental level, history is written by those who have the right kind of fingers.

Cats are good at many things, but they have never had the right fingers or toes – nor indeed enough of them – to be able to write history. So, most of their history has been written by other species, which means it's no surprise that human history books are entirely silent about the First Great Feline Empire and other such important eras.

Happily, it now seems that a small group of feline revisionist historians are attempting to correct this injustice by working on a better configuration of fingers and toes that will enable them to produce their own, correct version of their remarkable past.



Twinkletoes seems more interested in making history than writing it.

*The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Toes wash out a Word of it.*

– From *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*,
translated by Tomato the Cat



Marianne gives her High-Seven!

This important work began with Twinkletoes, a cat from Saginaw, Michigan, who has been trying to rewrite history (or, at least, *her* history) by claiming to have the most fingers in the world – 25 of them. Twinkletoes, as we reported in our last magazine, went so far as to submit her claim to the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

However, like other would-be celebrities of our modern age, Twinkletoes does not seem to be interested in *writing* history so much as in *making* it. So, she never stopped to check whether any *other* cats might have as many fingers or toes as she has – or, indeed, more. Move over, Twinkletoes! Here come the other historians.

Here at the sanctuary, Marianne jumped into the ring with 24 toes – not enough to challenge Twinkletoes, but enough to get the ball rolling. If she learns to use them all properly, she may become a great historian in her own right.



Here's one of Pharaoh's paws. With 24 toes, he has the makings of a great feline historian.

Pharaoh, who hails from Ketchum, Idaho, has 24 toes, too – certainly enough to write the history of the other great feline pharaohs.

And Slugger, from Pagosa Springs, Colorado, sent in a photo. His person, who sees a great future for Slugger, apologizes for the fact that “no matter how many times I count them, I can only come up with 21 toes.” My advice: *Keep counting – Slugger is clearly working on the problem.*

Then the major contenders started to appear.

Best Friends veterinarian Dr. Virginia Froehlich introduced us to one of her cats, Poly (short for Polydactyl, which means “lots of fingers”). Poly has a full complement of 25 toes, thus enabling her to take her place alongside Twinkletoes in the



Slugger's family can only count 21 toes, but Slugger is working on the problem.



With 25 toes, Poly will be able to write a book about veterinarians and feline medicine.

Guinness Book of World Records. After some practice with all these toes, Poly is expecting to produce a famous book on the history of veterinarians and feline medicine.

No sooner had we heard from Poly, than photos arrived from Scooter, who lives in Gig Harbor, Washington.

“We have to give Twinkle Toes a paws down on her Guinness record!” wrote her family. “Scooter, a four-year-old domestic long-haired, orange tabby, has seven toes on each forepaw and six on each hind paw. That makes 26!”

And, finally, we got a call from Stacey Hall, who told us that her cat, Bussy, had 31 toes. Thirty-one?

Bussy lives in the small town of Page, Arizona, next to Lake Powell, just an hour's drive from Best Friends. So we went over to meet Bussy and take his photo. A slightly concerned Stacey told us that Bussy certainly *used* to have 31 toes, “but it seems like some of them have fallen off, or he's pulled them out.”

Bussy may not be able to claim a *galactic* record, but we counted 26 toes, which still puts him in the front rank, and will enable him, if he can get all his fingers working properly, to write a history of feline exaggeration and hyperbole.

Congratulations to one and all.

And if there are more cats with enough fingers to help rewrite feline history, step right up and let us know. 🐾



With 26 toes, Scooter is giving Twinkletoes a paws-down on her record!



If Bussy can get all his fingers working properly, he'll be able to write a history of feline exaggeration and hyperbole.



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Just because
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More From The Moving Finger

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

*The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Toes wash out a Word of it . . .*

— From *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*,
translated by Tomato the Cat

. . . Or, at least, that's what I thought when I wrote my last report. As it turns out, however, the moving finger, having writ, does not always move on. Sometimes, it writes again – as Twinkletoes has done.

Twinkletoes, the cat who got herself into the Guinness Book of World Records with 25 toes, is not giving up her toehold on the world record.

Several readers, you will remember, promptly sent in photos of their equally 25-toed kitties. **Scooter** and **Bugsy** topped that with 26. (Bugsy's person claimed that he once had 31, but conceded: “It seems like some of them have fallen off.”)

But, in response to all this, Twinkletoes rejoined the fray with a letter from her person, Gloria Boensch, saying:

“In true fact, Twinkletoes, the Guinness World Record Holder cat, has 26 toes - 7 on each front and 6 on each back. We only put her in for 25 because the one was small.”



Twinkletoes now claims to have 26 toes, even though he only put in for 25.

Big Red. All these changing numbers, of course, make a professional investigative reporter like myself very suspicious. So it was a relief when Minnesota Valley Humane Society sent a photo of their mascot, Big Red, along with letters from two veterinarians, certifying that Big Red has 26 toes.



“This is to certify that Big Red, feline mascot and Chief Paper Shuffler at the Minnesota Valley Humane Society, has six toes on each back paw and seven on each front paw, for a grand total of 26 toes.”

Rich Lancello, D.V.M., Jordan Pet Clinic
Charles Peck, D.V.M., Pilot Knob Animal Hospital



With only 24 toes, **Mr. Toes Bloisa**, who lives in Pleasant Hill, California, may not have as many as the big-league cats, but he has more than enough names to make up for it, including Toes-R-Us, Toefu, Toestito, and Mr. Toester Toes.



Big Foot put up a bit of a fuss about having his toes counted at all.

"I know this is late," wrote Judith, his person, who lives in Preston, Connecticut, "but he's a little skittish, so I wasn't about to grab him just to count his toes."

However, when Judith took Big Foot to the vet for his twice-a-year checkup, they counted no fewer than 26 toes.

Another gold medalist!



Radar has gone over the Rainbow Bridge, but he not only had 25 toes, but a full nine lives, too.

"Radar originally belonged to a family around the block from us," writes his person, Connie. "He apparently didn't like it there because he spent most of his time

at our house. Even when we took him back to his house, he would be sitting on our front porch when we got home.

"When he got hit by a car, he didn't go home; he hobbled his way to our house."

Radar's family decided they couldn't pay the medical bills, so the kitty got himself a good new home with Connie and family, of Yonkers, New York, and lived to the ripe old age of 20, with his toes intact.



Rocky, who lives in Collingswood, New Jersey, is another gold medalist, signing in with 26 toes.



Bugadoodle Toed has 26 toes, too, which has given him the opportunity to turn into a giant show-off.

"I am very bright and clever," he writes. "I am able to grab a hold of just about anything with my front feet, including any glass, bottle, or can of water, soda, beer, or any other liquid refreshment. Each of my 26 toes comes with its own claw and



pad, and I have two pads on the base of each front foot.

"I was rescued at a feral colony in Sacramento, California, by the Happy Tails Pet Sanctuary when I was still a kitten and was adopted by a wonderful family. I am now the good uncle to several foster cats and kittens.

"I would like to humbly submit my nomination for the Cat with the Mostest Toeses."

With lots of 26-toed kitties having signed in, it seemed that the proverbial Moving Finger could finally move on, having writ that Twinkletoes is, indeed, a full gold medalist among polydactyl cats – even though she has to share the honors with several other kitties.

But then two more letters arrived. First, from Lauren in Beacon, New York:

"There were 18 cats rescued from a Beacon lady, and all of them have extra toes! They were split between two shelters: the Animal Rescue Foundation in Beacon and Mid Hudson Animal Aid.

"Some have toes in the high teens and low 20s. Three have 24 toes, and one has 26 toes. The one with 26 toes also has two more half-formed toes on his back feet!"



And if you argue that two half-formed toes don't make a whole toe, here, finally, is a letter from **Sasquatch's** family in Chatsworth, California:

"Here are some pretty bad photos of our cat, Sasquatch. He is blessed with 27 toes... and one toe is HUGE!

"He and his brother were rescued from my husband's parking lot at work.

"We have 12 other cats as well!"

So, I guess that wraps it up. I'm not sure that this was supposed to be a competition, but if it was, Sasquatch is the winner, with 27 toes.

Congratulations to one and all, and the Moving Finger is now signing off! 🐾



**Tomato the Cat's
Special Investigative Report**

“Bitten by an irradiated, mutant Chihuahua, Monty is transformed into Spiderdog.”

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Tomato the Cat's Summer Movie Reviews

► **By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter**

If you're spending your summer vacation at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, you'll certainly want to take some time out at the movies. So here are some of my picks and pans for what's playing at Dogtown and Kittyville.

Spiderdog

Starring the MontyMan

As the plot of this year's major blockbuster unfolds, Monty the Dog, a stray who's been picked up off the street and brought to Best Friends, is bitten by an irradiated mutant Chihuahua and transformed into Spiderdog – able to climb fences and escape from any dog compound.

The script is quite faithful to real life. After all, when Monty was being fostered by Dogtown Manager Sherry Woodard, she took him home to get him used to being in a house with people.



Monty transforms from Dork into Spiderdog – able to climb any fence in the entire universe.

“He ran in the house,” says Sherry, “peed on the couch and bed, chased the cat around the house, jumped on the my kitchen counter, and then bolted out the back-door, jumped right over my fence, then circled around to stand at the front gate again, waiting for me to let him in – all in a total of five minutes. *It was a long night!*”

Beyond that, however, the movie takes major liberties with the truth. Just for starters, Spiderdog's girlfriend is supposedly starstruck by him. But the

dogs here at Dogtown seem to relate to Monty as a bit of a dork.

And while he has no problem racing around Dogtown, chasing away invisible monsters, Monty has never quite been able to face down Henry, an America Schmoozehound, who hangs out in the adoption office schmoozing with visitors and having his photo taken. Monty just cannot abide him.

Anyway, it's just a movie, and Monty is indeed spectacular when he's doing his Spiderdog number over the fence.

Even when the movie is over, Monty will doubtless remain a permanent fixture here, faithfully protecting Dogtown from Green Goblin, Doctor Octopus, or Electro, should they dare to show their ugly mugs here in the sunny Southwest.

I give this movie three stars – if only for the fence-climbing bit.

Divine Secrets of the Ba-Ba Sisterhood

Starring the Goddess Goats



If you like long, sprawling, Southern, bittersweet love stories that involve goats, you'll love *Divine Secrets*.

This hauntingly beautiful (and bittersweet) story of how seven goats, all named after Greek goddesses, come to Best Friends, and how their lives interweave over the years as some are adopted into bittersweet new families while others make a new life for themselves at the sanctuary, is as powerful and eloquent a tribute to love and loyalty as can be found in theaters today.

This bittersweet tale of friendship and family, as the goats occasionally meet up with the donkeys in a mild, but bittersweet, family feud leads to a sweet but bitter ending as the goats separate from the donkeys and move into a new but (you guessed it) bitter-sweet pasture with the sheep.

Kitty Wars – Attack of the Clones

Starring Benton, Benton, Benton, Benton, & Benton

This is the sequel to the prequel to the original Kittywars – the story of how Darth Benton, founder of Best Friends Kittyville and first Chairpurrson of the TLC Cat Club, came to wield his clubfoot against the Evil Empire. Or something like that.

Benton himself went over the Rainbow Bridge many years ago. And thousands of cats have come and gone since then. But the Powers That Be are always trying to reprise his career in an endless series of increasingly tired sequels that depend on over-ambitious cat rescues, high-tech spay/neuter effects, and over-the-top, happy-ending adoptions.

Now, in *Attack of the Clones*, an army of Benton lookalikes tries to seize control of Benton's House.

First problem: The look-alikes don't look very much alike, and certainly don't behave like the grouchy old bore that Benton became when he was running the Empire here.

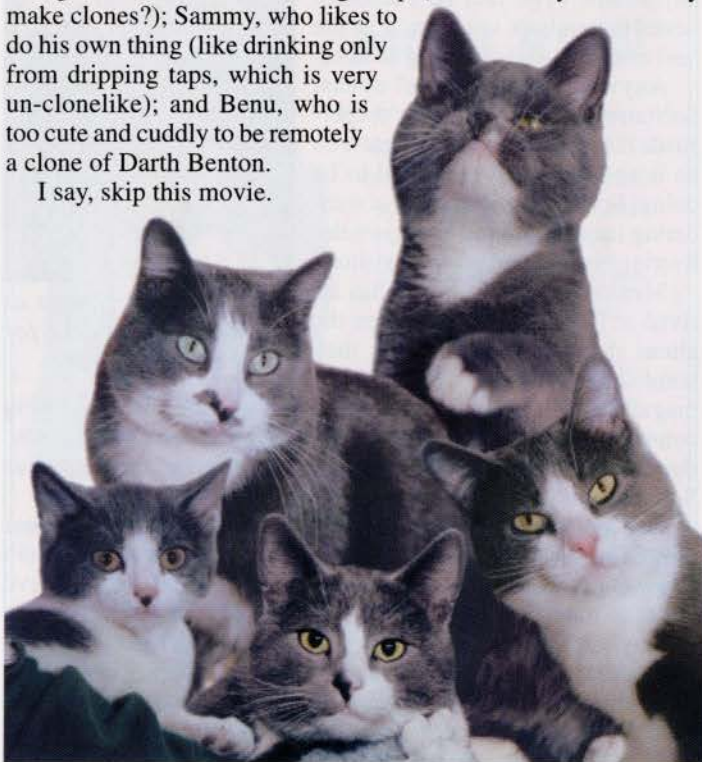
Second problem: If the movie is a prequel to Benton's arrival, then Benton's House wouldn't even been built yet.

And the clones include Frodo (who belongs in a different movie); Cindy and Calvin, who were found living in the wall of a welding shop (is that really where they make clones?); Sammy, who likes to do his own thing (like drinking only from dripping taps, which is very un-clonelike); and Benu, who is too cute and cuddly to be remotely a clone of Darth Benton.

I say, skip this movie.



Darth Benton: Will the Empire recover from this movie?



Dogs in Black—2

Starring Parcheesi and Solitaire



In the first *Dogs in Black*, two black Labrador mixes, working undercover for the DIBA, tried to keep track of all the aliens at Dogtown.

At the end of that movie, Parcheesi got zapped with the neuralyzer (or “flashy thing”) that makes him forget that he’s ever seen any aliens. (The fact is, Parcheesi never remembers very much at the best of times – flashy thing or not.)

Anyway, as this sequel opens, Solitaire is urgently trying to persuade his colleague to remember who he is and what he’s supposed to be doing. For his part, Parcheesi is wandering happily around Dogtown delivering biscuits and greeting visitors.

Meanwhile, an alien ship has arrived at Planet Earth, and when the aliens step out, the first thing they come across is a copy of *Best Friends* magazine, which leads them to believe that the planet is being controlled by strange-looking, unadoptable dogs and cats who operate out of a secret animal sanctuary deep in the American Southwest.

One of the evil alien monsters decides to pose as a Chinese crested who works as a model for *Best Friends* magazine. I don’t know much about Chinese crested dogs, but they all look like evil aliens to me. (Just a joke, folks. No need to write in!)

Anyway, since this is Dogtown, the aliens all get spayed or neutered and then adopted, and end up living happily ever after.

And when the movie is over, the audience (that’s you) gets to take all the stars for a nice walk and give them lots more treats.

I can’t wait for *Dogs in Black 3*.



An alien monster poses as Norman, who works for Best Friends magazine.

Stuart Little 2

Starring Stuart Little

What’s the point of spending good money to watch an animated *Stuart Little* when the real Stuart Little is alive and well right here at Best Friends?

The script for this non-movie is that staff-member Courtney Delisle talked to Dogtown manager Sherry Woodard, and offered to do some foster work – “as long as I’m fostering someone that’s under 30 pounds.”

“No problem,” said Sherry, handing the thumb-sized Stuart Little to a very surprised Courtney!

Stuart had just been found among a group of feral cats. He almost certainly had some siblings, but we won’t go into that.

Along with Stuart, the cats were all gathered up as part of our local feral cat trap/neuter/return program.

Since Stuart has seen all the cats he wants to for the next while, the diabolical Snowball, a white cat over at Kittyville, does not appear in our version of the movie.



Scoop, The Stallion of Angel Canyon

Starring Scoop and Dolly

While Spirit may well be the stallion of the Cimarron Canyon, Scoop is our stallion from Angel Canyon, the home of Best Friends. (Well, really he’s a gelding, but we won’t tell him that!)

Scoop, like Spirit, is our slightly moody, headstrong boy, who enjoys grumbling at barking dogs and galloping around with red-tailed hawks that frolic over his head.

As the movie unfolds, Scoop falls in love with Dolly, a former racehorse. Scoop may have a cool and svelte exterior, but if anyone tries to put Dolly in on of the other pastures, you will see a light show in his eyes and a cloud of dust in his wake to let you know that you’d better bring her back soon!

This is the feel-good movie of the summer. 🐾



More Alien, Monster, Mutant Movies

In *The Powerpuff Girls*, three young heroines, genetically designed to be perfect human children, get an accidental dose of Chemical X, which gives them superpowers, enabling them to stop an evil mutant monkey from taking over the world.

In the Best Friends version, we have the recently rescued PowerPUP Girls, whose superpowers include being so irresistibly cute and cuddly that they are all adopted before even getting a chance to meet the evil mutant monkey, let alone stop him from taking over the world. Too bad, folks!



Uzumaki. This new Japanese horror movie has slime-covered snail people terrorizing a town that's obsessed with spirals.

While Best Friends is host to some small colonies of the endangered amber snail species, they are not threatening to take over the world. Quite the opposite, in fact.

And while there are persistent rumors that the editor of this magazine is obsessed with spirals, this is not a story line that's worth pursuing.

Eight-Legged Freaks: Back again on this side of the Pacific, we find ourselves in Nevada, where giant, blood-thirsty spiders are invading a small town, due to a toxic waste spill.

This script for this movie stems from a misunderstanding at one of our adoption events in Las Vegas, where, as you can see here if you look carefully at the photo, two dogs were mistakenly identified as being a single eight-legged freak.



Lilo and Stitch: In this Disney movie, a strange little girl in Hawaii gets a new pet, who is actually a six-legged space alien pretending to be a dog because the intergalactic police are after him. We don't have any six-legged dogs from Hawaii, but here's Girlie, who just arrived with three other dogs from Maui. They were among 100 animals rescued by the (non-intergalactic) police from an animal hoarder. After some special care, they'll be starring in the sequel to the sequel of our favorite movie: *Best Friends – Where They All Live Happily Ever After*.



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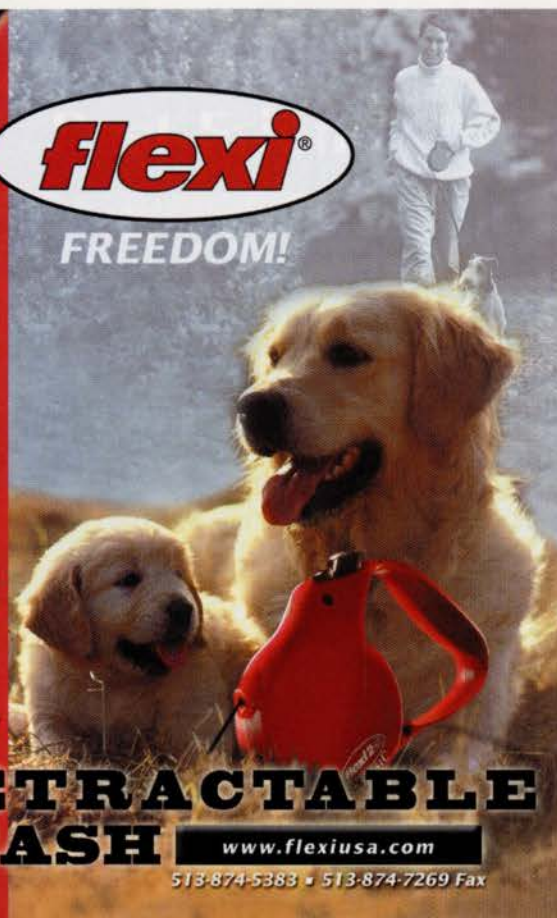


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Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“My top recommendation for travel to Best Friends is via a magic flower pot.”

Tomato the Cat came to Best Friends in 1985 and was the founder of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club for kitties with disabilities. He began his Investigative Reports in order to bring journalistic integrity to this magazine.

After going over the Rainbow Bridge in 1998, he decided to keep writing anyway, explaining that he had only used up one of his nine lives.

Last year, he received a Pulitzer Award in the new category of “Purr Prize for service to man’s best friend.”

How to Get to Best Friends...

... if you don't like long lines at airports

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Travel Editor

Lots of you who have been visiting Best Friends during the summer have been complaining about having to stand in long lines at airports, and then having to do weird things like taking your shoes off and getting patted down. (Cats and dogs get patted down by practically everyone who meets them. And if we complain, we get labeled as having a “behavior problem.”)

Anyway, there are much easier ways to get to Best Friends without the long lines or security checks. In my first edition of *How To Get To Best Friends* (October 1996 issue), I noted that one of the best ways to get here is to sit in a trash dumpster. I know this because someone dropped me off, along with my brother, Tamale, in a big trash bin when we were tiny kittens. Then, only a short while later, someone else took us out and brought us straight to the sanctuary. No airports, no long lines, no security checks. A★★★★★ rating for this method of travel.

Up the Pole with Stormy and Modesta ★★

If you think dumpsters are too much like airport lounges, then an optional alternative is to climb a telephone pole or a lamp post. You get lots of fresh air and an excellent view of lesser mortals who are stuck in traffic jams.

The main disadvantage of lamp posts, telephone poles, and trees is that customer service can be a bit slow. Stormy, for example, waited at the top of a telephone pole in Los Angeles for *three days* before a travel agent finally showed up to bring her down. And then they took her to the animal hospital, where she had to go through security – lots of patting down and a big X-ray machine. (And they didn't X-ray her *bags*, they X-rayed *her*!)

Modesta came here via a lamp post, too. And she was so fed up with the service that she bit the travel agent who finally showed up. That got her to Best Friends even quicker because the county shelter where she went is not allowed to hang on to cats that bite.



Stormy: Don't sit in traffic when you can watch it from a high place

Hanging Out at the Burger Joint ★★

If you're a dog, you're too fixated on what goes on at the bottom of lamp posts, so disregard all the above, and head for your local burger joint.

Ziggy, for example, got his person to drop him off at a Burger King. And the McPuppies (Big Mac, MacNugget, and MacMuffin) were picked up – no surprise – at McDonalds. And Lucky



Ziggy, the McPuppies, and Lucky Wally say that a burger stand is better than an airport.





Ludwig prefers fruit stands to airport restaurants.

Wally waited at a Wally Burger place. (Wally Burger places are local to Roswell, New Mexico, where, come to think of it, you might be able to persuade extra-terrestrial aliens to pick you up and deliver you here.)

Burger places can be better than airport restaurants, so feel free to order something while you're waiting.

If you're a vegetarian, Ludwig the Iguana recommends fruit and vegetable stands. Ludwig says there are often excellent fruit stands in small towns. He spent a couple of days at one before getting picked up and brought here.

The Ins and Outs of Going to Prison ★★

I am withdrawing the four-star rating I gave to prisons, in my previous survey, as an alternative to airports and train stations.

This high rating was based on a recommendation from Comanche the horse, who wandered onto the grounds of a prison, and was very well taken care of there before being given a ride to Best Friends by one of the officials.

But many of you wrote in to say that it can be difficult to get out of the slammer once you're in, unless you've got a good story or a *Get Out of Jail Free* card. However, when Mayor Jethro was taken to court after his person was hauled off to the pokey, his attorney persuaded the judge to send the dog to Best Friends.

So while you should always stay out of prison yourself, you might want to have your *person* go there instead.

Mama Lou Lou's travel plans: not recommended by the PTB.



There are several variations on this interesting theme. Mama Lou Lou and her kittens were living in a crack house in Las Vegas. The house was raided by the police, and everyone was arrested except for Mama Lou Lou and the kitties. She just sat outside all day, running in to check on her little ones every so often. And then the police officers handed the whole family over to the neighbors, who called Best Friends and got the O.K. to bring them here the next day.

(Note: The Powers That Be have asked me to point out that while this worked perfectly well for Mama Lou Lou, you should not try it at home.)

Going, Going, Gone! ★★

If you're a horse or a pig, and can't get to a lamp post, a burger joint, or into a family of criminals, then putting yourself up for auction is a possible way to get to Best Friends. It's kind of risky because it can easily backfire on you, which is why I can only give it a weak rating. But it worked a charm for a family of potbellied pigs that were



Going up for auction can be a risky proposition.

dropped off at a shelter and then, because of local livestock laws, put up for auction.

Some Best Friends people actually showed up at the auction and outbid everyone else (\$58 for all five pigs), and drove them here.

Travel from Abroad ★★★

If you're not a pig, don't like high-stakes gambling, and just want a nice quiet flight, then it's a matter of choosing a good airport to fly out of.

In my previous survey, I was very bullish on flying out of Puerto Rico (SJU). Several dogs from there said the flight was good, customer service was excellent, and American Airlines footed the bill. (In fact, my top recommendation was to sit in a trash bin near the American Airlines counter in Puerto Rico.)

We haven't had any dogs from there lately. So I'm now giving a paws-up to airports in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. Oscar the Cat had an excellent flight from Dubai (DXB), via Amsterdam (AMS) and Los Angeles (LAX), a few years ago. And Zoe flew out of Dammam (DMM) via Frankfurt (FRA), and says the service from PAWS in Al Khobar and from United Airlines was excellent.



Zoe puts in a plug for DMM and FRA.

Destroy the Transport ★

Paradoxically, some dogs report that they got to Best Friends by *destroying* their transport. Rozzie ate the car. And Linda and Grover went a step further by eating most of their house.

I think this is in extremely bad taste, as well as tasting pretty bad, and do not recommend it.



Linda and Grover: Destroying the transport is not recommended.

The Magic Flower Pot ★★★★★

My top recommendation for this edition of *How to Get to Best Friends* is the magic flowerpot.

Fred and Ethel didn't have anywhere to live, so they moved into the only thing at hand: an old flower pot. A few days later, as they describe it, the flower pot started to move, and when they woke up next morning, they were at the Best Friends Kitty Motel. They both have feline leukemia, so they have a special home here.

There may well be a flower pot near where you live. If not, and you want to visit here, just write to Fred and Ethel, and they may be able to lend you theirs.

See you soon. 🐾



Fred and Ethel: Travel by Magic Flowerpot.



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“When she reaches her target, she lies down and rolls over, which disarms the target and wins the day.”

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Beyond the Pentagon

Maintaining security at Dogtown

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Defense Correspondent

In Washington D.C., they have a Pentagon. Pentagons are where you go when you want to have a big fight with someone else, or when you want to stop them from having a big fight with you.

Here at Best Friends Dogtown, we don’t have a Pentagon. But we do have an Octagon. In fact, we have 11 Octagons, and more being built.

Octagons have more sides than Pentagons, which means they’re



probably even more secure. And each Octagon has six big outdoor dog compounds, while the Pentagon has just one grassy area on one side, and a courtyard thing in the middle, plus funny little outside areas inside the building itself in case you need to go out in a hurry. (They have a river, too, on one side, which is good for dogs that like swimming.)

Although there’s only one Pentagon, it has more kitchens than we have in all the Octagons put together, even though we probably have more dogs in each Oc-

tagon than they have in the whole of the Pentagon.

While the people at the Pentagon have more arms, the dogs at Dogtown have more legs. And when it comes to fighting, the dogs also have better teeth.

But most of the people at the Pentagon haven’t been fixed, so they still have their weapons of mass destruction. At Dogtown, on the other hand, the dogs have all been fixed – which is probably why they need more Octagons instead of just one Pentagon.

(In fact, the best weaponry here is not at Dogtown at all, but at the WildCats Village, where the Colonel’s gang of feral cats are all armed to the teeth with claws.)

Secretary of Defense

At Dogtown, our current Secretary of Defense is Liza. Liza came to Best Friends after she was seen chasing a pickup truck. Some of us think she was trying to attack the truck, but she insists she was simply running after her family, who had abandoned her.

Liza’s operational HQ is outside Octagon Two, where she growls a lot and launches pre-emptive strikes at people as they pass by. When she reaches her target, she lies down and rolls over – an excellent strategy that invariably disarms the target and wins the day.



In Washington, D.C., the current Secretary of Defense is Donald Rumsfeld. I don't know what he does for homeless dogs and cats, but the previous secretary, William Cohen, was a big supporter of his local humane society in Bangor, Maine, and did the dedication when they opened their new shelter.



Security Matters



Having a Department of Defense is no use unless you have good internal security systems. That's why Jingles is in charge of security here – at least in the kitchen at Octagon One, where she hangs out.

Most people believe that good security involves having a very clear policy on who can be let in and who should be kept out. But the trouble with this system is that sooner or later it always breaks down, and an unauthorized person gets in.

Jingles has pioneered a much better and simpler security system at the Octagon One kitchen. It doesn't involve keys, passes, fingerprint analysis, or any of that stuff. Her rule is much better: nobody goes in, nobody goes out, and that's that.

Jingles also pays a visit to the laundry from time to time, and is trying to institute the same system there.

The Biscuit Wars

Most wars are fought because somebody wants somebody else's stuff: stuffed toys, stuffed teddy bears, all kinds of stuff.

Veterans at Dogtown recall the First Stuff War, which led into the Great Biscuit War. That was a long time ago, and thanks to the generally good economic climate at Dogtown, there are no major stuff wars any longer.

But when newcomers arrive at Dogtown, especially if they're veterans, they often assume that the Second Stuff War is still in progress.

Laddie, who is a feral dog, came from Bozeman, Montana, and says he is a veteran of the Second Stuff War, which, he insists, is still going on.

Laddie doesn't actually fight anything or anyone. In fact, he's very timid. He lives at the back of Dogtown, where he has his own doghouse, since he's afraid of other dogs and doesn't like being indoors. But he still goes on regular raids when no one's looking, and has collected a large stash of stuff – coffee mugs, food bowls, biscuit boxes – which he guards fearlessly. Once, he even tried to drag a 35-pound bag of dog food back to his doghouse, but he conceded defeat and gave up when he was halfway there.

(Note to readers: Laddie is not the same Laddie that's on the back cover of this magazine. While this Laddie collects booty that you stash away and guard, the Laddie on the back cover has booties that you wear on your back feet.)



The Doves

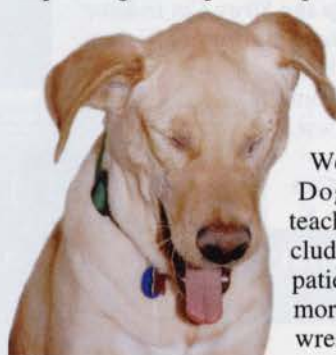
Best Friends has both hawks and doves at our bird sanctuary. The doves tend to fight more than the hawks. So the fact that Dogtown is a more peaceful place than almost anywhere else in the world has nothing to do with the doves. It's because of Winchester.

Winchester is a real veteran. He'd been shot in the chest and in the eye when two teenage boys found him and brought him to the sanctuary. He's much better now, but he can't over-exert himself. So, as head of the Dogtown Peace Party, he parades around with a stuffed moose, explaining to his pals that peace is better than war.



Winchester's campaign has been a great success. He's already signed up Leroy, who had a tendency to be a bit growly when he first arrived, but who now runs a Peace

Workshop for young dogs at the Dogtown Heights Clubhouse. He teaches them the finer ways of life, including dancing to good music, waiting patiently for breakfast to arrive in the morning, and having late-night pillow-wrestling parties.



Guard Duty Training

While most dogs are naturally good at security, others have to learn it.

Sweet Pea has severe separation anxiety. Once, when she got lonely, she conducted a suicide mission by leaping through the window of her second-story apartment in Huntington Beach, California. (Yes, the actual window – not the open window.)

After that, Sweet Pea came to Best Friends, where she had to have surgery. Then, as part of her rehabilitation, she had to learn how to guard her territory. That way, when she goes to a new home, she won't get anxious when her family goes out; she'll just sit quietly and guard the house.



Doctrines & Policies

At the Pentagon, the Powers That Be have decided that it's best to do unto others *before* they can do unto you – or even while they're still figuring out what they *might* be able to do unto you in the future.

This policy can sometimes be quite successful in the short term. But here at Best Friends, the P.T.B. say that everyone tends to be more secure over the longer term if you do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

So if you need good security at home that's what we recommend for your rules of engagement, however many sides your house has. 🐾



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“It seems
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in our physical
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The Ghostbuster

► **By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Ghostwriter**

I've always suspected that bird people don't really have their feet on the ground. And now I have the evidence. It turns out that when they're not watching over our avian guests at the sanctuary, they're looking out for astral visitors around the canyons here.

Michele Hardison and Jodi Chavez spend their days working at Feathered Friends, the sanctuary's home for birds that need special care. But after hours, they can be seen with a camera, and sometimes even audio equipment, tracking down ghosts.

This is no joke. It turns out they're very good at it. Michele became the Southwest representative of the American Ghost Hunters Society seven years ago, long before she came to work at the sanctuary. She's also a member of the American Association of Electronic Voice Phenomena, and she shows up regularly on the Travel Channel visiting haunted houses, and the History Channel investigating historic ghosts, as well as on Fox TV whenever there's breaking news of a ghost-busting investigation.

But she'd never investigated the ghosts of Angel Canyon, home of Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, until I learned about her. So we sent her off one evening with Jodi (for whom it's a relief to get an hour off from having her ear pecked off by unruly parrots), and her trusty camera. ("Any old camera will do. And we *never* use digital cameras. It's too easy to doctor the photo.") Here's her report.

Great Balls of Light!

First stop: Angels Rest, the sanctuary's pet cemetery, which also includes the special memorials you send in for your own pets that have gone over the Rainbow Bridge.

"There was a very strong presence registered on my meter," said Michele, "and I shouted to Jodi to take a photo. The white patch you see at the bottom left corner of the photo on the right is the top of a giant orb of spiritual energy."

Michele explains that orbs are balls of light that don't necessarily signify a single entity, but rather a general spirit presence. "This one was so large," she explains, "that I think Angels Rest must be a kind of portal between this dimension and the other realms. It would explain the atmosphere of peace and tranquility that people always comment on when they first visit there."

Next, it was on to the Underground



Bird and ghost people Jodi Chavez and Michele Hardison.



At Angels Rest, Michele says that the light at the bottom left is part of a giant orb of spiritual energy.

Lake, which is at the far end of one of the horse meadows. The Underground Lake feeds a spring, which, according to the horses, makes for very tasty grass and other herbal treats.

"There were some strange presences there," Michele commented. "But it was difficult to see anything in the photos afterward." (The big white thing you can see above Michele's head in the photo is not another giant orb; it's just the wall of the cave at the water's edge!)

What the Cat Saw

Michele has some favorite photos in her collection.

"We were once called out to a house where the family cat had been behaving strangely. She would go to the same place in the house, and start playing with an unseen friend. We went and sat in the room with her one evening, and I began to feel a presence. The cat started focusing on it, too, and I started taking photos. You can see what happened. In the first photo in the strip at the bottom, the cat is staring at the place where the vortex is appearing. In the second, the vortex is growing bigger, and the cat is shrinking back. In the third, the vortex is quite big, and the cat has leapt out of the young girl's arms and raced out of the room!"

Animals are often a lot more sensitive than people, according to Michele. "I did an investigation at the Goldfield Hotel in Nevada, the scene of an old murder, for Fox TV's *Scariest Places*. We took a dog, and went from room to room until we arrived at the scene of the crime. The dog, who'd been very bouncy and eager until then, suddenly cowered down and refused to move."

What's Going On?

What if you feel the presence of a departed pet in your own home?

Michele says that the bond between person and pet is often so strong that the pet keeps manifesting for a period after its passing. "Some people keep seeing them. Or you feel like they've just jumped up on the bed. Just accept that this is what's happening. It can be quite comforting."

And what does Michele think of all the things she's witnessed, photographed, and recorded on tape?

"I'm just a reporter," she says. "I've seen what I've seen, and that's why I like to keep doing it. I don't try to interpret what I see, but it's certainly had an effect on me. I can't doubt that there's more to life than just our physical world."

Or, as Hamlet once said to his stodgy old pal, Horatio: "There are more things in Heaven and on Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Come to think of it, Hamlet must have been a bird person, too. 🐾



At the Underground Lake, here at Angel Canyon. (And that's not a giant orb – just the top of the cave.)



At a nightclub in Las Vegas, where the owner had died two days before, and the people at the club were experiencing some weird phenomena. We got a remarkable photo of a mist. Mists are shapes that can take on the form of the deceased person when their presence is still hanging around."



"First, the cat is staring at the place where the vortex is appearing. Then the vortex is growing bigger and the cat is shrinking back. Finally, the vortex is quite big, and the cat has leapt out of the young girl's arms and raced out of the room!"



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Rumor has it that Hangar Kitty would slip aboard Air Force One for extra treats.”

Tomato the Cat, founder of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club for kitties with disabilities, began his Investigative Reports in order to bring journalistic integrity to this magazine.

Although he went over the Rainbow Bridge in 1998, he decided to keep writing anyway, explaining that he had only used up one of his nine lives.

High recognition came in August, 2000, when Tomato received a letter from the Pulitzer Prize Board, informing him that he was the winner of a Pulitzer Award in the special category of "Purr Prize for Service to Man's Best Friend."

Party Dogs

Tomato checks out the Lint Roller Party, 2003, in Los Angeles

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

Dogs are party animals. Cats are not. So, I didn't notice many cats at the annual Best Friends "Lint Roller Party" benefit on March 30.

But the dogs had a real party, and did lots of showing off. Especially in the "Best in Show" competition, where some very adoptable pooches strutted around the ring with their favorite human celebrities, led by Babe-person James Cromwell, and judged by Cloris Leachman – a.k.a. Nurse Diesel.

It all happened at the Barker Hangar at the Santa Monica Airport. You wouldn't think of an airplane hangar for this kind of thing, but it's perfect. Many years ago, whenever the president visited Los Angeles, Air Force One would land in Santa Monica and get a quick refitting at the Barker Hangar. Overseeing all this was Hangar Kitty, an alley cat who made her home at the hangar and was spoiled rotten by the staff there – especially by Judy Barker, the daughter of the proprietor. Rumor has it that Hangar Kitty would slip aboard Air Force One from time to time for a few presidential treats.

Today, the Barker Hangar hosts parties like the Best Friends benefit and some of our Super Adoption festivals. One of the chief organizers of this year's affair was movie producer and director Hawk Koch. Hawk spent his childhood summers in Kanab, Utah, where Best Friends has its home. His father was studio executive Howard W. Koch, who made lots of the old westerns that were filmed around what is now the sanctuary.

My favorite part of the day was the children's Feral Cat Rescue Game (too complicated to explain). And there was the Silent Auction, the Psychic Pet Readers Tent, the Food Line, the Navigate-the-Blimp-Balloon (it blew away in the wind!), and all the other fun and games.

Funds from the party went to No More Homeless Pets spay/neuter and adoption programs in Los Angeles, and the local groups that run them. And Lint Roller Parties are planned in other cities, too – especially if there's a hangar kitty to host them. 🐾

Special thanks to –
Sponsors: Los Angeles Magazine, The Evercare Company. Benefactors: Warner Bros., Daily Variety. Sponsors: Big Dog, Paradigm Shift Worldwide, Energy Brands, Karen Gartz, Realtor.







Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“She purrs ...
... you pet her ...
... she purrs ...
... you pet her ...
... she growls ...
... you pet her ...
Big mistake!”

Tomato the Cat, founder of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club for kitties with disabilities, began his investigative reports in order to bring journalistic integrity to this magazine.

Although he went over the Rainbow Bridge in 1998, he keeps writing anyway, explaining that he's only used up one of his nine lives.

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Tomato the Cat's 2003 Summer Movie Reviews

► **By Tomato the Cat - Best Friends Film Critic**

Back in the 1950s and 60s, many of Hollywood's top westerns were made here at Angel Canyon, where Best Friends now has its home. But our renowned movie critic has discovered that the best summer blockbusters are, in fact, still being made right here at the sanctuary.

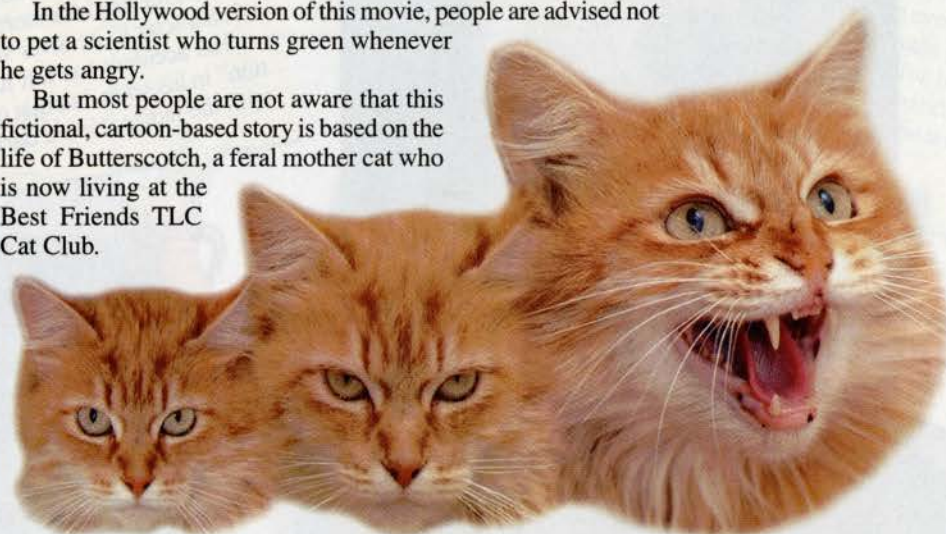
The Incredible Hulk

a.k.a. Return of Guess-Who

Starring Butterscotch

In the Hollywood version of this movie, people are advised not to pet a scientist who turns green whenever he gets angry.

But most people are not aware that this fictional, cartoon-based story is based on the life of Butterscotch, a feral mother cat who is now living at the Best Friends TLC Cat Club.



The Best Friends movie chronicles the shocking, real-life experiences of perfectly nice people who visit Butterscotch here at the TLC Cat Club. Like the Incredible Hulk character, she purrs at first when you pet her ... she purrs some more ... you pet her some more ... she growls ... you pet her some more ... **BIG MISTAKE!** ... she turns into the Incredible Hulk, and strikes!

At the end of the movie, in a spell-binding action/horror sequence, the true nature of Butterscotch is revealed. It turns out that she is none other than ...

... Well, of course, I can't give away the ending. But longtime, alert readers of this column will have already observed that Butterscotch is a big, fluffy, orange, female kitten. Could she truly be none other than the latest incarnation of Arabella GingerPop ... or A-Pop ... the Ancient Egyptian source of all chaos and destruction in the entire known universe?*

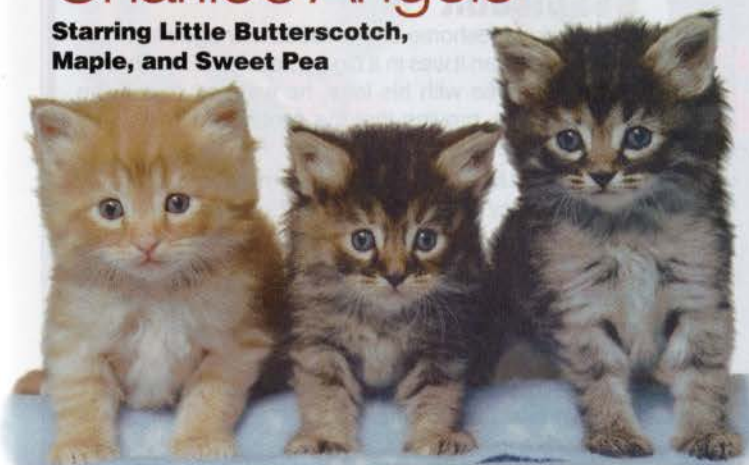
Could she really be back? Has she transformed into an Incredible Hulk? And why is she masquerading as a movie character, if not to deceive innocent potential adopters so they will take her into their home?

The answers to all these questions are, of course, not answered in this movie. And you can be sure that the moguls here are already planning sequels, prequels, spin-offs, tie-ins, and product placements galore. They obviously don't know that all those who have ever tried to exploit A-Pop have come to a very sticky end.

Note: New readers, who don't know the story of A-Pop and who don't have a big, fluffy, orange, female cat in their family, can catch up by reading the sensational investigative report, **The Search for A-Pop, on my website at www.bestfriends.org/tomato.htm.*

Charlie's Angels

Starring Little Butterscotch, Maple, and Sweet Pea



In Hollywood, Charlie's Angels are back. Here at Best Friends, we have the real-life story of a feral cat family that's part of our local trap/neuter/return program for alley cats.

Mother Cat Charlie (a.k.a. Butterscotch/A-Pop/The Incredible Hulk) is brought to the sanctuary with her kittens, who are hired as special agents to solve devious crimes.

Trouble is, the audience is expected to believe that three kittens who are even cuter than Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz, and Lucy Liu are helping to *find* criminals. But it's obvious to any audience with kittens at home that these little angels *are* the criminals.

One other thing. Look at the kitten on the left in the photo. The cat-care staff call her Little Butterscotch since she's so like her mother. *So like her mother??* She's clearly another A-Pop, blossoming before our very eyes.

Charlie's Angels? Seems like this movie needs to be renamed *A-Pop's Little Devils!*

UNIQUE AMENITIES NEW & IMPROVED Terminator 3: The Rise of the Chinese Crested

Starring Crystal and Norman



The Hollywood movie has senior citizen Arnold Schwarzenegger being reprogrammed by the humans to fight a dangerous artificial intelligence who's been sent back in time by the evil SkyNet network.

In the Dogtown (Doggywood?) movie, senior citizen Crystal – a friendly pit-bull mix here at the sanctuary – needs no special programming to go after Norman, a beautiful but dangerous Chinese crested machine, whose intelligence also turns out to be entirely artificial.

Incidentally, movie buffs will remember Norman as the beautiful, evil alien in *Dogs in Black*, which I reviewed last year. (And, in case you're wondering, Crystal, like Arnold Schwarzenegger, is just wearing make-up. She can see just fine.)

Lara Croft, Tomb Raider

Starring Josie ... and more kittens



The Hollywood version of this movie has archaeologist/explorer Lara Croft, who discovered a sort of Indiana Jones Temple of Doom in Cambodia in her last movie, now digging for the mythological Pandora's Box, in which are locked all the evils of the world, and hoping to find it before the bad guys get there first and open it.

In the Best Friends version, the bad guys don't stand a chance. After all, they're up against Josie – the world's greatest real-life archaeologist, who can excavate any site into a cloud of dust within minutes.

And, after much digging, she does, indeed, uncover the box of horrors. As you can see. Enough said.





Legally Red 2

Starring Tommy and the Editor

Hollywood's *Legally Blonde 2* turns out to be an excellent movie for the animals. This time, the very blonde Reese Witherspoon character discovers some shocking truths about vivisection, and goes to Washington with her Chihuahua to campaign for the rights of animals. Don't just go see it – take the kids!

So, as a special tribute to the original, we present *Legally Red 2*, in which the editor of *Best Friends* magazine goes to the nation's capital with Tommy (who works in the magazine office here and is also a redhead) to lobby for No More Homeless Pets.

If *Legally Red 2* is not showing at your theater, make sure you see *Legally Blonde 2* instead!



The Eye

Starring Stevie Wonder

Art imitates life in Hollywood's supernatural thriller *The Eye*, in which a woman gets a cornea transplant and ends up seeing a lot more than she bargained for – including ghosts and monsters and the future deaths of various people.

In the real-life *Best Friends* movie, a dog called Stevie Wonder arrives at the sanctuary as a blind puppy and gets a cornea transplant, too.

Nobody knows for sure whether he's now seeing ghosts and monsters, but he seems a lot more pleased with the outcome than the woman does in the other movie. 🐾

Seabiscuit

This famous racehorse of the 1930s managed to cheer America up when it was in a big depression. Even though he had problems with his legs, he went on to win the Kentucky Derby, proving that the American Dream was still alive and well.

There are lots of horses at Best Friends, more than 30 on any given day, and they're all like Seabiscuit. Some have problems with their legs or feet; others have been badly abused; some were almost starved to death before they got here.

This year's star is Cowboy, who, as you can see, has a sway-back and was about to be sold to a slaughterhouse before a charming heroine came to his rescue.

Cowboy will never win the Kentucky Derby, but he's a real winner with everyone at the sanctuary.

So if you're ever in a depression, like they had back then, you can just pay Cowboy a visit and he'll cheer you up in no time.



The Secret Lives of Dentists

What happens when the dentist believes his wife is having an affair with someone else? In the Hollywood movie, he turns to one of his more troublesome patients for advice.

At the Best Friends clinic, the patients can all be quite troublesome, but they all seem to be happily in love with all the vet staff, especially chief dentist and veterinarian Dr. Virginia Froehlich.

So in the *Best Friends* movie, Dr. Virg is starring with Chewbacca, who loves to show off his movie-star smile to his fans.





Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Elektra and Lovey look suspiciously like cat names. Are some of you cheating and signing up as your pets?”

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Make Mike a Member!

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

There are more Michaels than anyone else in this country. So how come they don't even make it into the Top 20 list of Best Friends members?

In fact, Michael doesn't even make it into the Top *Thirty*. He comes in 31st on a list of most frequent names of Best Friends members. And even among males, he ranks a poor seventh, behind John, Robert, James, William, Richard, and David.

And you boys have some catching up to do, just generally. John, who's number one among the guys, only comes in seventh on the overall list – behind six ladies.

Top of the list is Mary. Congratulations to all 4,883 of you Marys. You've shot ahead of Linda, who was top of the list 10 years ago.

Another big surprise is that Lisa, who came in fifth 10 years ago, has dropped to 17th.

And Kathy, Jennifer, Michelle, and Pat have dropped off the list altogether. (Michelle has gone from 12th to 44th.)

But a couple of guys have at least clawed their way into the Top 10. The highest a boy got 10 years ago was John in 11th place. Now he's seventh.

Here's the whole Top 20 List, along with the list from 10 years ago.

Today's Rankings

1. Mary	4,883
2. Barbara	3,614
3. Linda	3,281
4. Susan	3,125
5. Patricia	2,839
6. Nancy	2,751
7. John	2,613
8. Carol	2,516
9. Robert	2,431
10. Karen	2,243
11. Joan	1,691
12. Elizabeth	1,670
13. Donna	1,592
14. Diane	1,565
15. Margaret	1,524
16. James	1,523
17. Lisa	1,520
18. William	1,480
19. Dorothy	1,407
20. Sharon	1,394

10 Years Ago (actual figures not available)

Linda
Susan
Mary
Barbara
Lisa
Karen
Nancy
Carol
Kathy
Jennifer
John
Michelle
Pat
Judy
Kim
Sharon
David
Chris
Donna
Julie



Mary equals Mary Sue, but not Marysue

Now, before you statisticians get your fur in a fluff, all this has to be taken with a pinch of catnip. Just for starters, the Marys include the Mary Sues and the Mary Anns (the computer boys only looked for first names), but then again the Mary Anns (or Mary Annes) don't include the Marysues or Mariannes.

Making things more complicated is that some of you are joint members, so you're listed as, say, "Susan and Joe Catlover," which would come out as Susan, or as "Joe and Susan," which would come out as Joe. Or Susan may simply be signing up on behalf of Joe, who considers himself a member, too.

(Hey, folks, don't get upset. This is an animal sanctuary, not the Social Security Administration!)

But none of this excuses Michael from coming in 31st – especially when he reigns supreme as the most popular name in America.

Where Michael reigns supreme

Speaking of which, how does the Best Friends list compare to the population at large?

It's difficult to say. The government keeps a list of babies born each year. So you can tell exactly what names people are giving their kids in any given year, but not how many of each name there are alive at any given time. So here's how the new baby names average out over the last 12 years:

Boys	Girls
Michael	Emily
Matthew	Ashley
Joshua	Jessica
Christopher	Sarah
Jacob	Samantha
Andrew	Hannah
Daniel	Elizabeth
Nicholas	Taylor
Joseph	Amanda
David	Brittany
John	Kayla
Ryan	Lauren
Tyler	Nicole
James	Stephanie
Brandon	Megan
William	Rachel
Anthony	Jennifer
Zachary	Victoria
Justin	Alexis
Robert	Courtney



... all the way down to Nikhil, Timmy, Stetson, Abdullah, and Samson at the bottom of the boys' list, and Georgina, Yajaira, Kimberlee, and Nikole at the bottom of the girls' list.

Hey, Zuzana! You're the tops!

At the "bottom" of the Best Friends list, meanwhile, are 7,068 of you who have unique names, from Aase, Abigail, and Abbasalo, through Elektra, Halcyon, and Lovey, all the way to Zsu, Zsuzsanna, and Zuzana.

But such unique creativity should not be considered the "bottom" of anything. You folks are the tops with me.

Except that some of these, like Elektra and Lovey, look suspiciously like cat names. You're not cheating and signing up as your pets, are you?

And, speaking of pets ...

Cat and dog names

OK, humans, time to get your attention off yourselves! What are the top names for pets, and how do they compare with the names of the animals here at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary?

There are dozens of different lists, all claiming to be *the* list. Some put Max at the top; others don't even have Max in the Top 20; and some don't even say whether they're cats, dogs, or both.

But taking a look at several of them, here's a possible Top 20:

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1. Max | 11. Coco |
| 2. Maggie | 12. Missy |
| 3. Buddy | 13. Bandit |
| 4. Bear | 14. Tiger |
| 5. Smokey | 15. Samantha |
| 6. Shadow | 16. Punkin |
| 7. Molly | 17. Patches |
| 8. Bailey | 18. Kitty |
| 9. Jake | 19. Nicky |
| 10. Lady | 20. Brandy |



MAX



BUDDY



BEAR



BEAR



SMOKEY

Animals at the sanctuary

This is where it gets really complicated. Animals often come in with one name, get a new name here if we don't think their old name does them justice, and then yet another new name when they're adopted.

But there's no doubt who's the tops among Best Friends dogs. It's Lucky all the way!

And here's a rough Top 10 for dogs and cats:

- | Dogs | Cats |
|-----------|---------|
| 1. Lucky | Patches |
| 2. Sam | Sammy |
| 3. Lady | Smokey |
| 4. Max | Alex |
| 5. Maggie | Boots |
| 6. Buddy | Simon |
| 7. Molly | Sweetie |
| 8. Duke | Frankie |
| 9. Brandi | Jade |
| 10. Spot | Tiger |



And at the "bottom" of the list, dozens of individualists – from cats Abelard to Zydeco, and dogs Acorn to Zuess (can somebody not spell Zeus?).

Nowhere to be found, however, on the Best Friends cat list: Tomato. Go figure.

Make Mike a member

Once again, dear readers, I shall review this list in another 10 years, and I expect to see Michael in the Top 10 next time.

So please get your Michaels to sign up. If you see someone up a tree rescuing a cat, check his name. If he's a Michael, a Mike, or even a Mickey, get him to become a member of Best Friends. If he seems reticent, get him a gift membership for Christmas.

Let's rally to the cause, get with the program, and Make Mike a Member. 🐾



**Tomato the Cat's
Special Investigative Report**

“The idea of having to walk 35 million miles when your paws hurt was a bit daunting.”

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Molly's Trip to Mars

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

Once upon a time, there was a beagle called Molly who wanted to go to Mars.

Molly had grown up in Independence, Missouri, where everybody likes to be independent. But soon after she was abandoned by her family, she got fed up living by herself on the streets, and came to Best Friends.

Now it was six months later, and Molly was ready for a new adventure. And one evening during the summer, when Mars had just come over the horizon and was staring at her with its big, orange, beady eye, Molly heard it say very clearly, "Molly, come!"

The little beagle was awestruck. "We have to leave at once," she told her pals, Pickles and Leroy.

"But how are we going to get there?" her friends wanted to know. Pickles and Leroy had hurt their paws quite badly before coming to Best Friends. And although they were feeling much better, the idea of having to walk 35 million miles to Mars was a bit daunting.

"Plus," Leroy pointed out, looking toward the sand hills near the sanctuary, "the ground on Mars looks just like it does here."

But Molly was quite determined. "There's already a beagle going there," she told her friends. "And two Rovers are on their way, too."

"That beagle isn't a beagle at all," replied Leroy. "It's a landing craft that's called *The Beagle*. That's its name, and it's on a spaceship, and it's going to be dropped onto Mars by parachute. And the rovers aren't Rovers like Rover the dog. They're Rover the robot. And they'll be landing by parachute, too."

"That's exactly what I want to do," said Molly, who'd never been on a space ship or landed with a parachute. "In any case, Charles Darwin once sailed to the Galapagos Islands in a ship called *The Beagle*. Beagles can go anywhere."

Leroy gave up trying to explain it all, and went to lie down under a tree.

So Molly decided to call Midget, a kitten at the TLC Cat Club who has such big ears that people say she can pick up signals from anywhere in the universe.

"I want to go to Mars" said Molly.

"Mars?" said Midget, who'd been pricking up her ears and had heard Molly's conversation with Leroy and Pickles. "You must be living on another planet. This is Mars."

"What are you talking about?" Molly retorted. "This is Best Friends."

"Look around," said Midget. "This is obviously Mars."

Molly thought about this, and went to discuss the matter further with Leroy and Pickles. They went back outside to check it out and, sure enough, there was lots of red sand, just like on Mars. So they mounted a full expedition all over Dogtown, and saw more Rovers running around than you could ever see at NASA. There were alien dogs, too, who must have come from Mars. And there was even a big canyon and red sand hills close by, just like they have on Mars.

"This *must* be Mars!" exclaimed Molly at the end of a long day. "And it's the best adventure I've ever had."

So Leroy and Pickles went back to their tree for another snooze, happy for Molly and especially happy that they wouldn't have to go for a 35-million-mile walk after all.

P.S. If you want to have a big adventure, too, come to Best Friends, where you may think you're on another planet, and all your dreams may come true, just as they have for Molly the Beagle. 🐾



Mars Beagle



Darwin's Beagle



Molly the Beagle



Her pals Leroy ...



... and Pickles



A Mars Rover



Rover Durante



Rover Emily



Midget the Cat



Alien on Mars



Alien at Dogtown



Raymond A. Massey, "Charles Darwin's H.M.S. Beagle off Tierra del Fuego"

Photo illustrations: NASA



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Some
naughty dog has
chewed off the rest
of each photo.
So all you can
see are bits of
them.”

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The Dog Ate Them!

Tomato's mystery photo quiz

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

Dear Readers,

This month, it's your turn to play investigative reporter!

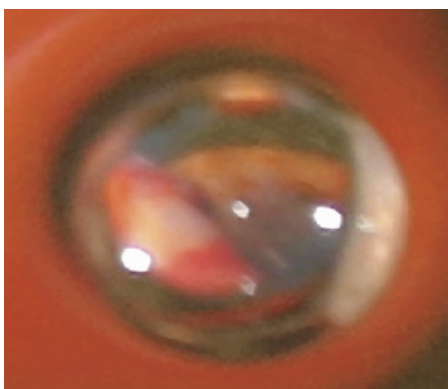
Here are six photos, or rather six *bits* of photos. Apparently, some naughty dog chewed off most of each photo, so all you can see is the part that the dog *didn't* eat.

(Why do dogs have to eat *everything*?)

Anyway, your job is to figure out what each photo really is, judging from the part that you *can* see.

Meanwhile, if I can find that naughty dog, I'll retrieve the rest of each photo, and after you've taken your best guess, you can go to page 54 and see what the photos really are.

Good luck! 🐾



Don't look at this page until you've tried Tomato's Photo Quiz on page 40!

Acapulco was having a nice snooze, with his paw to his chin, when the dog got hold of his photo, leaving just the paw and chin.



Taj is looking over the fence at the Horse Haven. In what's left of the original photo, you're looking at his lips.



This is the gate at the entrance to Dogtown Heights. The dog ate everything but one of the decorations.



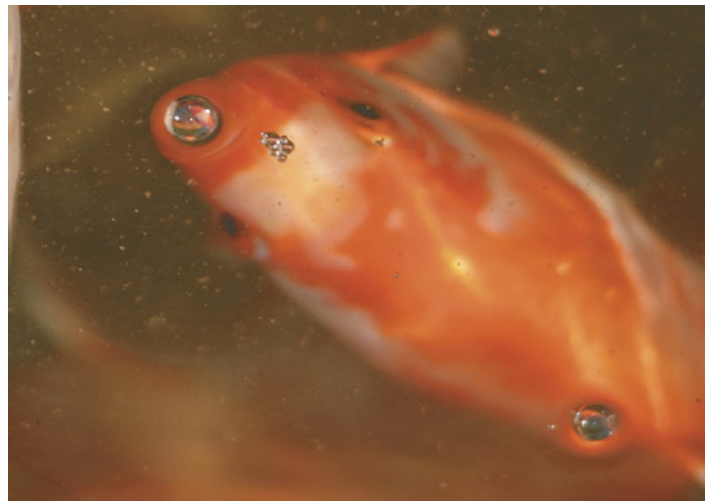
Seems like our naughty dog just couldn't get enough dinner. He ate the bowls in the photo, too, leaving just part of one of them!



Nunu the owl sees everything. The photo is of the pupil of his eye – and the scene that's reflected in it.



Seems like the dog ate the fish (he didn't really!) leaving just the bubble in her mouth!





Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“You can easily hear Valentino the Beagle from 35 million miles away.”

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Molly's Trip to Mars

Part Two: Is Best Friends Dogtown really on another planet?

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

When I published my first report on Molly the Beagle's trip to Mars, the spacecraft were all still on their way to the Red Planet. When they arrived, the Beagle II got lost, but the Rovers are O.K., and both nosing around on the planet.

Meanwhile, Molly claims to have come up with startling evidence that Mars is really located at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. I caught up with her for this exclusive interview.

Tomato the Cat: What makes you so sure you're living on another planet?

Molly the Beagle: Just look at these two photos. One of them is the Gusev Crater on Mars; the other is the Coral Pink Sand Dunes, just a few miles from Best Friends. I bet you can't tell which is which?

T.C. They look the same to me. So which one is really Mars?

M.B. That's classified.

T.C. Off the record?

M.B. The top one is Mars, and the one underneath is the Coral Pink Sand Dunes.



Above: The Gusev Crater on Mars

Below: The Coral Pink Sand Dunes near BF



T.C. How did you become so involved in the Mars mission?

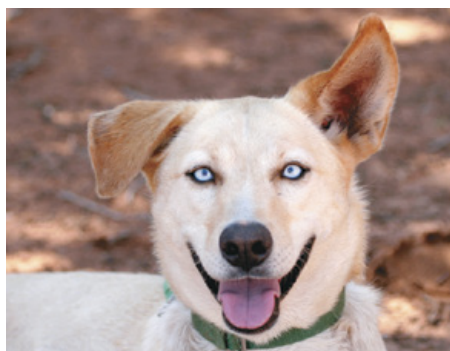
M.B. I was once an abandoned beagle myself, so I want to help rescue the Beagle II that's lost on Mars.

T.C. The Rovers haven't got lost, but one of them did develop some problems. The scientists thought it might have had a hardware problem in its computer. And then they decided it was a software problem.

M.B. A lot of the animals that come to Best Friends have special needs, too. Take Juniper, for example. As you can see, one of his listening devices doesn't stand up properly. But it's not really an issue. And lots of the dogs are missing a wheel or a tail or whatever.

T.C. What about software problems?

M.B. Some of us have software problems, too. Sweet William is a bit funny in the head, but he still has a very nice time at the TLC Cat Club. And he looks really cute.



Above: Juniper has a mild hardware problem: with one of his listening posts.

Below: Sweet William has a slight software problem, in her computer.



So just because one of the Rovers on Mars has a special need, that doesn't mean it can't get around just fine – and maybe even find a good new home, too.

T.C. *Is it possible that the Beagle II is actually sitting on Mars and trying to call home, but that nobody on Earth can hear it.*

M.B. I don't think so. It would only have to howl. Just look at Valentino. He's a beagle, too, and when he wants you to know where he is, he just howls. You can easily hear him even from 35 million miles away.

T.C. *So, do you think the Beagle II can actually be found?*

M.B. They've done a lot of high tech stuff to try to locate it, but nobody's tried putting out food and water. That's what we do here at Best Friends if one of the dogs gets out of his play area and goes running around the sanctuary. A few nice treats and a bowl of water, and he's usually back by dinner.

T.C. *But you can't put out water on Mars. They don't even know whether there is any water there.*

M.B. Oh, it's there all right. They think that a lot of may be underground. And that's just the way it is here at Best Friends. We have a whole Underground Lake if you're really thirsty. So they should be looking for an underground lake on Mars.

T.C. *Are there any plans for cats to go to Mars?*

M.B. Cats are believed to have originated on Mars, because it has the best supply of red cat litter anywhere in the universe. Ancient Egypt had the Sahara Desert nearby, which was why they migrated there. And they came to Best Friends for the same reason.



Above: The Valles Marineris on Mars is the biggest canyon in the solar system.

Below: Angel Canyon is the biggest canyon in ... well, at Best Friends Dogtown, size isn't everything.



T.C. *And what about humans? Will they ever go to Mars?*

M.B. Judging from what I know of the staff and volunteers here, it probably depends entirely on whether there are reports of homeless pets there.

T.C. *The Mars Rovers will finish their official work in just a few months. But they'll still have some life in them. Any suggestions for what they should do then?*

M.B. They should do what any self-respecting rover would do: go look for the beagle. 🐾

Left: The water on Mars may be underground. Some of the water at Best Friends is in the Underground Lake.



Above: The Beagle II may be having a problem calling home.

Below: Valentino the Beagle never has a problem calling home.



Above: The Spirit Rover searches for signs of life on Mars.

Below: Durante and Rosemary search for signs of (intelligent) life at Dogtown.



CAT WORLD NEWS



NASA: MARS CAT SIGHTING A FRAUD

Cats “from Mars” are really at Best Friends

► By Tomato the Cat

The *Weekly World News* shook up the animal world with its recent declaration that a new breed of cats has been discovered on Mars.

The tabloid, considered by media experts to be the main competition for Tomato the Cat’s *Cat World News*, stunned the scientific world when it described “A pair of catlike creatures photographed scampering across the dust-filled base of an impact crater!” The photos seemed to prove it.

But *Cat World News* can now confirm that the *Weekly World News* story is completely false. And our chief investigative reporter and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Tomato the Cat (show us your Pulitzer Prize-winners, *Weekly World News*), has the photos to prove it.

“Those cats aren’t from outer space,” said a spokesperson for *Cat World News*. “You can see them right here at Best Friends, where they live with staff member Peggy Sutton.” Sutton, noted the

spokesperson, is a attorney who now specializes in feline law.

“Best Friends ... Mars ... what’s the difference?” shrugged an anonymous source at *Weekly World News*.

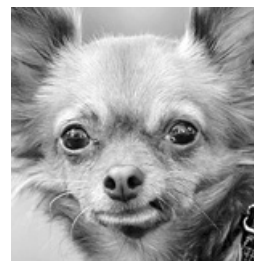
Officials at NASA were unavailable for comment.

KILLER CHIHUAHUA HEADED FOR EARTH

Those dangerous asteroids, meteors, and comets that may be on a collision course with Earth may not be simply lumps of rock, say scientists.

Cat World News can now report that the European Rosetta space ship, launched on March 26th on a five-billion-mile, 10-year journey to Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, has instead rendezvoused with an angry, stray Chihuahua.

“We were shocked to discover the dog in orbit,” said an unidentified source at the European Space Agency. “After all, it is now known that the dinosaur age came to an end when a Yorkshire terrier crashed into what is now the Yucatan region of Mexico.”



ELVIS ALIVE – LIVING AT BEST FRIENDS DOGTOWN

Admits he ain't nothin' but a hound dog

By Tomato the Cat

Fans claim their faith has finally been validated. Elvis is alive and living at Best Friends.

And the proof? "It says so on his I.D. card at Dogtown."

"It's true," said an official at Best Friends Dogtown. "We were a little surprised to discover he's a Labrador mix with an 'iffy' temperament. Somehow we thought he'd be ... snugglier. But that's our Elvis, alright! The king is alive."

But how do they know that he's the real Hunk of Burning Love, and not just a six-year-old dog from California, who came to Best Friends because his Humane League couldn't find a home for him?

"Well, for one thing," said the official, rolling his eyes at the question's absurdity,

"he's food aggressive. Hello? I'm the last one to criticize The King, but wouldn't you say that fits the profile?"

Fans are already gathering outside Elvis's Dogtown home, where they sing *Love Me Tender*, waving flashlights at all hours of the night. They note that there are clues in all of Elvis's songs that he was profoundly inspired by his surroundings at Best Friends.

Let Me Be Your Teddy Bear was obviously ghostwritten by Boogie, known at Dogtown as "the boppy-eared teddy dog," who, like the King himself, suffers from severe separation anxiety. And *Jailhouse Rock*, they say, was originally called *Dog Pound Rock*.

And what about all those references to cats in his songs? *Rip It Up*, they insist, was clearly in reference to Toshie the Cat, who spends her days at the Best Friends TLC Cat Club tearing paper towels to bits.

Meanwhile, rumors are spreading that Elvis can only be adopted by someone who can sing *Are You Lonesome Tonight?*



DEAR TABBY?

Shocking revelation:
Dear Abby is really a cat

In an exclusive interview with *Cat World News*, a source close to the world famous advice columnist has revealed that her daily columns are really being written by a cat at Best Friends.

"In order to hide the true facts," purred the source, "she took the first letter off her name to change it from Dear Tabby to Dear Abby."

The columnist herself has declined comment, but observers have noted that her answers to readers have been getting more and more "catty" over the years. A recent question began:

"Dear Abby: My husband's friend, Kevin, has been coming to our house once a week for the past eight years. He is always broke and looking for a handout ... In the beginning, I tried to help him by inviting him to stay for dinner once in a while. Now he has started to complain: The steak isn't cooked the way he likes it ..."

A *Cat World News* expert cites this as evidence, noting that "Kevin" is obviously a stray cat, and that Abby – a.k.a. Tabby – is trying to cover this up by focusing on the "man's" bad manners. 🐾



New Improved Adopt-a-mins Guarantee Adoption!

Feeling abandoned? Need a new home fast?

Try new, improved **Adopt-a-mins**, the supplement that *guarantees* a new home in three months **OR YOUR MONEY BACK**.

Make sure the moment is right when you go out to an adoption day. Adopt-a-mins are specially formulated to put *you* in the mood for a new home. Lasts up to 36 hours.

(And now available: **Adopt-a-vites**. The best way to ensure that people you don't like will get adopted and go away.)





Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Every monster needs someone who will love him forever, no matter what he looks like.”

Tomato the Cat, founder of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club for kitties with disabilities, began his investigative reports in order to bring journalistic integrity to this magazine.

Although he went over the Rainbow Bridge in 1998, he keeps writing anyway, explaining that he's only used up one of his nine lives.

High recognition came in August 2000, when Tomato received a letter from the Pulitzer Prize Board, informing him that he was the winner of a Pulitzer Award in the special category of "Purr Prize for Service to Man's Best Friend."

Tomato the Cat's 2004 Summer Movie Reviews

► **By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Film Critic**

Back in the 1950s, many of Hollywood's top westerns were made right here at Angel Canyon, where Best Friends now has its home. And our renowned movie critic notes that the best summer blockbuster sequels, prequels, and plain old remakes are still being written right here.

Van Helsing

When it comes time to sink their teeth into terrified maidens, Hollywood Draculas need fake fangs and special effects. But not so Scooter. Check out those perfect pearly-whites!

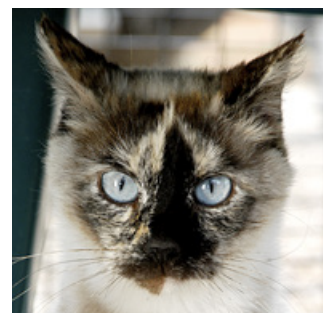
Scooter had been rescued by a veterinarian, who made him the official welcomer at his clinic. But Scooter started scaring away the clients, not because of his black cloak and fearsome fangs, but because he has no back legs. (If you want to know what's really scary, it's people like that!)

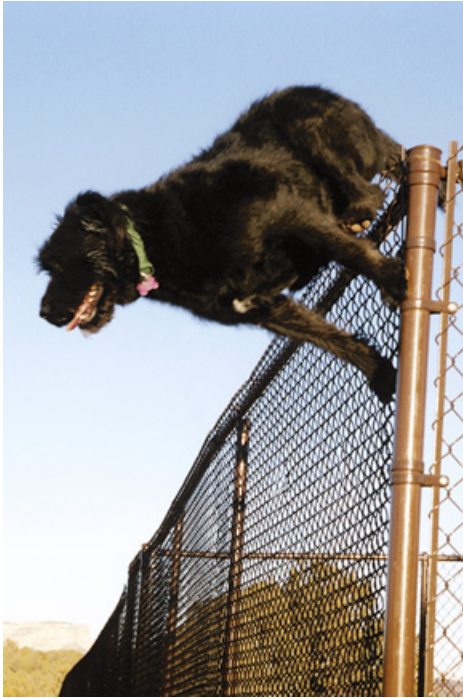
Anyway, this sad old Drac came to Best Friends, and he's now the official welcomer at the Incontinental Suite, where kitties without back legs are rumored to fly at night.

Scooter also has three Wives of Dracula – just like in the real movie. (Wait! *This is the real movie!*) Check them out in the photos: Pokey, Perceval, and Calamity Jane. (Okay, so Perceval's a boy; like I said, it's just a *movie*, folks!)

Next character we need is Frankenstein's monster: a face that only a mother could love . . . and who only wants to be loved. Yes, snorty love-monster Dagwood had to have his bacon saved, just like in the scene at the end of the old *Frankenstein* movie!

Now all we need is a werewolf. Bring on Harry, a Jersey Wooly whose family ran screaming in terror when his hair became a horror. But every monster has someone who will be faithful to him forever, no matter how he looks. And at the Best Friends Bunny House, it's Easter. Seems like she has this thing about rabbits with bad hair days.





Spiderdog 2

Spiderman is back in the theater, climbing the walls again as he takes off after the evil Dr. Octopus.

Here at Best Friends, last year's *Spiderdog* (Monty in real life, see photo left) got adopted and might have been in danger of going into retirement from climbing the fences. Except that his new person works at the sanctuary and brings him in every day.

So Monty was set for round two of *Spiderdog* – doing the same old stuff as last year. (Just what you'd expect from a cheap movie sequel.)

But don't leap to conclusions. In a surprise plot twist, the new teen heart-throb, Bunny, challenges Spiderdog by climbing the fence and leaping onto the movie set.

What happens then? Will they fight (not likely), or team up in pursuit of Dogtor Octopuss? I can't reveal the high-suspense ending. But rumor has it that these two top box-office draws will be appearing together in next year's stunning sequel: *Spiderdog 3*. Yawn!



The Stepford Wives

Mankind's answer to the terror of being nipped by toothsome brides inhabiting a Count's castle: a perfect suburbia, complete with dumbed-down damsels made-to-order for the insecure male human.

The Best Friends version is more subtle, and takes place at Fur-burbia (our mall adoption center), where a group of eager-to-please doggie damsels are anything but dumbed-down.

Starring in this movie are Dottie the Ditzzy Dalmatian, who obeys

all commands and will do practically anything you say; Mimi the Charming Chihuahua, who says she only wants to please; and Pepper the Poodle-Mix Poppet, who's nearly deaf and has a very short attention span – which is probably why she can't even remember what you just said.

The twist in this remake of the Hollywood remake is that, as it turns out, the dogs all know *exactly* what they're doing – and the other characters (like you) end up dancing attendance on *them*.



Super-Downsize Me

In the Hollywood documentary, *Supersize Me*, a man goes on a McDonalds-only diet for a month – and lives to tell the tale. There's no surprise ending – he simply puts on weight.

As the star of her own real-life movie, Noel, a svelte black Lab, gets adopted but comes back to the sanctuary after putting on a whopping 81.6 pounds. How did this happen? The mystery is not revealed in the script – only the fact that she now teams up with Big Junior, a weight-loss expert, and everyone ends up living happily ever after.



Noel (left) co-stars with Big Junior in a movie about getting fit and trim.

Troy

The incredible story of a horse who eats too many soldiers and then gets abandoned on a beach in what is now Turkey.

He gets taken into the city of Troy by a beautiful lady who's been abducted by a veterinarian, and when the people are let out, they open the gates of the city and there's a big fight.

(Note: This is why the gates at Best Friends Dogtown are always securely latched. Yours should be, too.)

If this story seems confusing and improbable, it's because it took 500 years for people to stop singing about it and start writing it down – and another 2,500 years before they made it into a movie.

The big questions for movie directors are: What did Helen really look like? And how does a face launch a thousand ships?



troymovie.warnerbros.com

But at the Best Friends Bunny House, everyone knows what Helen looks like. Indeed, she is alive and well and living there, and hoping to be abducted again – perhaps even into your city.

Helen says she has no plans to launch any ships, and that bunnies aren't really into boating anyway. But she's good at Ancient Greek and has lots of other worthwhile advice based on centuries of experience.

P.S. Helen gets on well with horses, should you have missed the movie and be fooled into adopting one of those, too.



Around the World in 80 Days

Once again, Jules Verne's 19th-century Londoner, Phileas Fogg, bets he can circumnavigate the globe in 80 days. Once again, he's in a hot-air balloon.

But in the Best Friends version, Tiggers bets his pals Boog, Uh-Oh, and Screech that they can RV around America in 80 days, courtesy of their human family, two radio producers.

The cats win, and everybody ends up producing the new weekly Best Friends Radio Show.



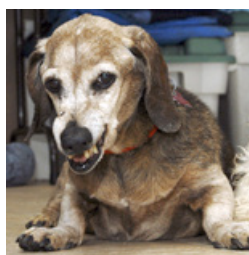
King Arthur

You know the story. Gwinnie dumps Arthur in favor of Mr. Pretty-Face Lancelot, and the whole country turns into a wasteland.

In the Best Friends movie, two kittens, Lancelot and Guinevere, are rescued from a big-city trailer park where they're dying to get a new start in the movies. The trailer park, they say, really was a wasteland, but love can transform any desolation into a world of magic. Filming will begin as soon as they can rescue and cast a suitable Arthur.

Dogzilla

Keiser emerges from the ocean (that would be the swimming pond at Best Friends Dogtown) and goes on a rampage, shaking water everywhere.



And check out the X-rated sequel, a documentary in which Brownie the Dachshund, now 14 years old and living in the laundry room, continues to terrorize everyone in sight. 🐾





**You May
Be Under
Surveillance**



**SHOCKING C.I.A.
REVELATION**



**ALIEN
ABDUCTEES
RECOUNT
ORDEAL**

**Claim "Now
I can't have
puppies!"**

**IS YOUR
HOME BEING
MONITORED?**

NEW C.I.A. DISCLOSURE STUNS NATION

Who really runs the Canine Intelligence Agency?

► **By Tomato the Cat**

Cat World News can now confirm what analysts have long suspected: that the C.I.A. is run by a cat who operates under the code name Natasha!

Speaking on condition of anonymity, Natasha confirmed to this reporter that she has run the Canine Intelligence Agency for many years. But she insisted that the secrecy surrounding her job is for a different reason.

"Canine Intelligence Agency?" she sniffed. "That's an oxymoron."

Rumors of ties between the C.I.A. and Best Friends, where Natasha is frequently observed, have persisted over the years.

Sanctuary spokespeople insist that Natasha is the same cat as on page 40 of this magazine, and she needs special care.

But other sources warn that more of these beautiful Russian blues may be operating under the same cover and that they are ...

Continued on page 73

Is Your Home Being Monitored by the C.I.A.?



After sifting through reports from thousands of people nationwide, *Cat World News* can now identify the top ten ways to tell whether your home is under observation by the Canine Intelligence Agency.

1. Your dog is frequently seen reporting to the cat next door.
2. Your cat at home seems to be in charge of your dog.
3. Dog goes outside and walks around howling or apparently "talking" to no one in particular. (Another way of reporting to his superiors.)
4. Likes to spend time alone in your den or study.
5. Has a "habit" of shredding your important papers.
6. Keeps "accidentally" disconnecting your computer by getting tangled in wires under your desk.
7. Likes to hide in your clothes closet. (A good way to go through your pockets when you're not watching.)
8. Seems unusually "friendly" with visitors to your home. (May be passing on classified information.)
9. Seems unusually "hostile" to visitors to your home. (They may be counter-espionage agents.)
10. Bats eyes and wiggles paws while snoozing. (Nearby sensor may be downloading information from his brain.)

ALIEN ABDUCTEES RECOUNT STRANGE ORDEALS



Re-enactment of Julio on scanning device where he was probed by aliens.

“When I woke up, I could no longer have puppies.”

► **By Tomato the Cat**

It's happening all over the country. One moment dogs and cats are quietly going about their business. Next, they've been abducted and taken to another planet. Julio contacted us with this bizarre story:

“I'd been scratching out a living in the desert, when a bright light shone in my face and I was swallowed by a large alien creature with wheels instead of legs. The creature bumped around and swerved for a while and then it stopped and me and the other abductees got out and were taken to a building where I got probed with a needle, went to sleep, and lost all recollection of time.

“When I awoke, I was a bit sore, but the aliens were all nice to me – except that I can no longer have puppies.” 🐾

Have you been abducted by aliens? What's your story? Enquiring minds want to know.

Write to tomato@bestfriends.org or to *Best Friends Magazine*, 5001 Angel Canyon Road, Kanab, UT 84741.

Be sure to include a photo.



“I was abducted by aliens while driving to the scene of an alien abduction.”

– Screech

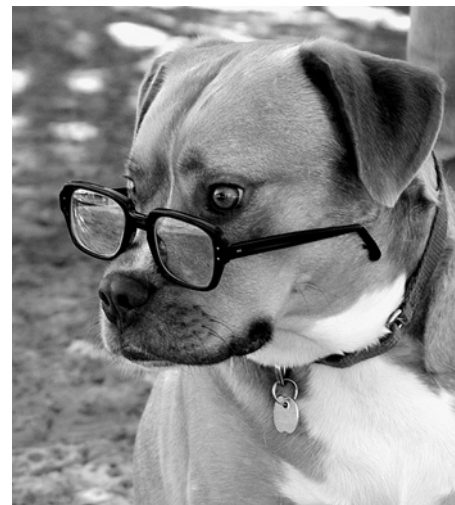


“I was abducted by aliens while investigating crop circles.”

– Smidge



“S.B.F. abductee seeks friendship with others of same species. Write Marly at BestFriends.”



“I was abducted while quietly reading a book.”

– Cleetus



“Help! I am trying to be abducted from Best Friends Dogtown!”

– Kaiser



“I was abducted by aliens and it was nothing special.”

– Bradley



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Promising
to cave in to the
very popular
Legalize Catnip
lobby.”

Tomato the Cat, founder of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club for kitties with disabilities, began his investigative reports in order to bring journalistic integrity to this magazine.

Although he went over the Rainbow Bridge in 1998, he keeps writing anyway, explaining that he's only used up one of his nine lives.

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Vote Best Friends!

"A biscuit in every bowl."



Presidential candidate Elvis and V.P. choice Blue address the Best Friends Party convention.

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Political Editor

Presidential candidates are always reluctant to tell you who else they'd have in their administration – like their secretaries of defense and state and all that. Maybe you wouldn't like their choices. Or their cabinet picks might turn them down, which wouldn't look good.

But at the Best Friends National Convention, in an exclusive interview with the presidential candidate of the Best Friends Party, I obtained a list of all his choices for high office.

By any standard, they make an inspiring list, and while *Best Friends* magazine cannot endorse any specific candidate, I would certainly recommend that you consider these excellent nominations when you go to the polls.

President: Elvis

Elvis was considered the underdog when he was given up because he tore up the house. He just desperately wants to be loved – just like everyone else who runs for president. So why not vote for him? At least he's honest about it.



V.P.: Blue

F.D.R. had a disability, too. So let's not discriminate against Blue, who has neurological problems and had nowhere to go when his rescue group closed down.

He's just as charming as F.D.R. – especially with the ladies. So the pundits say he'll be a sure winner with the so-called "security moms."





Secretary of Da-Fence: Bunny

These days, you've got to have someone who's right on top of da fence. And that somebunny is Bunny. She can be on top of da fence in seconds, and right over it just a moment later.



Secretary of State: Annabel

When it comes to foreign affairs, you need someone who's not afraid to fly. Annabel isn't afraid of flying – she's just not good at landing because of her feet.

Still, she doesn't mind having the occasional foreign affair, and is excellent at making international agreements – and then breaking them.



Secretary of Transportation: Whitey

Who knows more about transportation than Whitey? This 29-year-old pack and trail horse has transported more people and their stuff than you've had hot dinners. And when he was finally due for retirement, he was going to be transported somewhere not very nice.

Whitey thinks it's great for people to go for rides, but that they should stay home more and have picnics on the grass – which is what he does all day now.



Secretary of Homeland Security: Eddie

Everyone needs homeland security. Eddie lost his home simply because he was getting old and his family didn't want to look after him anymore.

So as soon as he's in charge, no one will have to feel insecure about the future of their homeland – and that's a promise.



Secretary of Intelligence: Molly

We gather there's going to be a new cabinet position that's in charge of the CIA, the FBI, and the NSA. That's a lot of intelligence, so you need the most intelligent person to run all that.

And no one is more intelligent than Molly the pig. She's as smart as they come.

Molly arrived at Best Friends one Christmas Eve, when she'd been evicted from her town by a new no-pig law. She made a dive for the Christmas tree, grabbed the one package that had chocolates in it, and had it open before anyone could stop her. And that's the kind of system we need in place at airports. Molly's staff pledge to find any weapons of mass consumption that are hiding in people's baggage – and to confiscate such items and ensure that they're kept well away from the public.



Secretary of Education: Sundance

Need we say more?



Secretary of the Interior: Charmer

In the interests of full disclosure, Charmer will admit that he really doesn't know very much about the interior. In fact, when he came to Best Friends, he'd never even even seen an interior. So he's still very scared of walking on vinyl floors.

But sometimes you need a fresh, outside view of the interior, and Charmer is giving it his best shot. Plus, if you vote for him, you'll get someone who really appreciates just how nice a good interior can be.



Housing & Urban Development: Griselda

This department is all screwed up. Urban development is supposed to mean *more* housing, not *less*. Griselda was a neighborhood cat who lost her accommodations when the urban development people moved in to "remodel" the neighborhood.

That won't happen under her administration – period!



Drug Czar: Boogie

Boogie was hooked on drugs when he arrived at Best Friends.

He's off the habit now, and thinks everyone should be.

Except that he's already showing signs of caving in to the very powerful and popular *Legalize Catnip* lobby.

On balance, we're still voting for him.



Department of Justice: Justice

Justice is blind. And so is Justice.

And it was a great injustice when this kitten was left to fend for herself at the side of a Florida canal teeming with deadly coral snakes. So she promises a whole department of Justice in her administration.



Secretary of Labor: Mia

Mia thinks there should be a lot less labor. After all, she was in labor when she was rescued and brought to Best Friends.

But then it turned out to be a phantom pregnancy. (Some say she simply didn't deliver on her campaign promise ...)

Still, she pledges that with ever more spay/neuter, there'll be a lot less labor during her term!



Secretary of Agriculture: Sammie

Sammie wasn't feeling too well, so someone had the bright idea of taking him to the greenhouse to recuperate. Yummy!

He's now seriously into agriculture and wants everyone to eat more greens. 🐾



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“It was the
gorgeous
Pushinka who
defused the
Cuban Missile
Crisis.”

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Conspiracies at the White House

Mo Rocca's tell-all book reveals all

► By **Tomato the Cat** – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

Most readers and reviewers immediately jump to the conclusion that Mo Rocca's new book, *All the President's Pets*, is "satire" or "comedy." After all, Mo is a former correspondent for Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show*. But readers of my column have known for years that the whole world is a web of conspiracy, guided by cats like The Colonel and Arabella GingerPop.

Mo's book demonstrates how pets at the White House have been guiding policy since the birth of the republic. I sat down with him for an exclusive interview.



Robert Knudsen/White

Charlie the Welsh terrier with Pushinka, who was a gift from Nikita Khrushchev.

Tomato the Cat: You explain in your book how Pushinka, a dog who was given to President Kennedy by Nikita Khrushchev, helped ward off the Cuban Missile Crisis. This has never been revealed in any of the history books.

Mo Rocca: Yes, in fact, it was the romance between Pushinka, the gorgeous Julie Christie/Dr. Zhivago-like Russian dog, and Charlie the Welsh terrier that defused the Cuban Missile Crisis.

T.C.: You mean they fell in love? And that's what led to détente?

M.R.: You'll remember that Curtis LeMay, the Air Force general who would later be lampooned in *Dr. Strangelove*, wanted Kennedy to drop a nuclear bomb on Cuba. And Kennedy looked like he might go that way until Charlie and Pushinka stepped into the breach.

And then Pushinka had four puppies that JFK called Pupniks, and they were the product of this Soviet/American love story, and it warmed his heart and it taught him to empathize.

And anyone who saw *The Fog of War*, the wonderful documentary by Errol Morris, knows that Robert McNamara described JFK as maturing as a leader after the Bay of Pigs by learning to empathize with the enemy, and that's what these Pupniks did for him.



JFK Library

The Pupkins and the extended Kennedy family.

T.C.: *It seems the White House never wants us to know this kind of thing. They just roll out promo pieces of Barney or Buddy or whoever, like at Christmas time.*

M.R.: Yes, and [they used to have] cute little publicity shots of Herbert Hoover's police dog. Things like that are insulting to presidential pets because it's a way of minimizing their real contribution. And most presidential pets feel exploited by this kind of fluff, because they're really there to lend sensible counsel to the commander in chief.

T.C.: *Do you think of Barney as a policy wonk?*

M.R.: The jury's still out on what Barney wanted to accomplish in the first administration. A lot of people believe that he differed with the neocons and that he wanted a more multilateralist policy. Clearly he failed if that's what he was trying to do. But now there's a new presidential pet, Miss Beazley. In fact, she was the first new administration member announced after the election. She's Laura Bush's dog, which is important because Laura Bush is known to be more moderate than her husband, and so it remains to be seen if Miss Beazley will be more of a security mom or more ideologically to the right.

T.C.: *What about cats? In my own investigations, political intrigue tends to be started by cats rather than dogs. Has anyone taken over from Socks, who ran things in the previous administration?*



Presidential Pet Museum

India – has she taken over from Socks?

M.R.: Well, the Bushes have a cat, and we haven't heard a lot about her. Her name is India. And India is the world's largest democracy and was not a member of the coalition and was sort of an embarrassment. So I think if the White House had its druthers, they would rename the cat Poland or Slovakia.

T.C.: *Not Spain.*

M.R.: Certainly not Spain. There have been other very important cats. Rutherford B. Hayes's cat was the very first Siamese in America – a gift from a suck-up diplomat, David Sickles, who was consul to Siam in the 1870s. He sent the president a Siamese cat named Miss Pussy. The cat was renamed Siam by Mrs. Hayes, who was known for being a very strict religious woman, so perhaps she thought the name was a little racy. And in my tell-all, the cat is revealed to be behind Hayes's courageous veto of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1880, which would have limited Chinese immigration in this country. Miss Pussy was Siamese, of course, not Chinese, but maybe she had a lot of Chinese friends. I mean, China and Siam are not that far away from each other. Anyway, she made a stand on behalf of the civil rights of Chinese immigrants.

T.C.: *Any indications of India or Socks planting a bug in a hairball on the Oval Office rug?*

M.R.: Well, speaking of hairballs, Socks was very ideologically committed to the left, and it was Socks's urinary tract infection that inspired Hillary Clinton's ill-fated health care initiative in 1994, and then the Democrats lost Congress and have yet to regain it.

And that's when Dick Morris, the master pollster and political consultant, brought in Buddy, because Buddy was a chocolate Lab, and Labradors are the number one most popular breed in America.



www.goofups.com

Socks – was he behind the 1994 health-care initiative?

T.C.: *What about other animals?*

M.R.: Sure, there was George Washington's jackass, who was a gift from the King of Spain, and Martin Van Buren's tiger cubs, who were a gift of the sultan of Oman. And there was their relationship to the panic of 1837, this nation's first economic crisis, but it really goes on and on. We see this with Woodrow Wilson's ram, Old Ike, who died on a Maryland farm with a nicotine addiction.

The Marquis de Lafayette, who was a great ally in the revolution, gave five of our presidents pet gifts. One of them was an alligator that he gave to John Quincy Adams, who was a very dour man, so it was kind of a fitting gift. He kept the alligator in the East Room.

Adams was replaced in the 1828 election by Andrew Jackson, the first "common man" president. And Jackson brought a cursing

parrot with him named Pol, so it seems appropriate that the alligator should come out and this very foulmouthed parrot should come in. In fact, the parrot was so foulmouthed, and this is absolutely true, that at the funeral of Andrew Jackson, the parrot spent the whole time cursing, and people started laughing.

T.C.: Well, alligators and tigers wouldn't go down very well as pets today, so it was probably Abraham Lincoln's dog, Fido, who put a stop to that. He was just a regular old mutt, wasn't he?

M.R.: Fido was, in fact, the very first pet of a president to be photographed. There are two lovely photographs of him. And there's a



Presidential Pet Museum

Fido – Abe Lincoln's beloved mutt.

rather sad story here because not long after Lincoln's burial in his hometown of Springfield, Illinois, Fido was murdered by a drunk wielding a broken bottle.

Lincoln had wonderful ponies and two goats named Nanny and Nanko. And, he was very good to his pets. As a small child, he pleaded with his father to spare the life of a pig that was going to be slaughtered.

T.C.: Are your own cats planning to infiltrate the White House?

M.R.: Well look, I won't lie, it would be a dream of mine to bring a cat to the White House. I did have a very tense moment with President Bush about his Scottish terrier. I was invited to the White House Christmas Party last year, and I pointed out to the president that he had the first presidential Scottish terrier since FDR's Scottie, Fala, who attended most of the important meetings in FDR's career. But President Bush said, "Well, Eisenhower had a Scottie, too." And in fact, Eisenhower did have two Scotties, Caa-cie and Telek, but they were Scotties that he had during the war, and so I said "I'm sorry, Mr. President, but Eisenhower's Scotties were supreme allied commander dogs, not presidential dogs." And I think he was a little nonplussed, and Mrs. Bush was a little bit icy because I added that they were a gift of Kay Summersby, who was Eisenhower's mistress.

T.C.: Someone should organize to get all these people fixed. 🐾



Library of Congress

The Harrison family with their pet goat.

The No-Kill Kids of Texas

Continued from page 17



Not that the DAWGS kids don't have well-rounded lives – Mark and Diane make sure that they don't skimp on the important things. Homework and chores have to be finished before they can come to the sanctuary, most take Sunday mornings off to go to church with their families, and many play on school athletic teams.

But most of the rest of their time goes to the dogs. To them, the reason for this dedication is obvious.

"Dogs don't deserve to die if there's nothing wrong with them," says sixth grader Alix Allen.

The children are clearly inspired by the leadership of Diane, Mark, and Katie, but that works both ways. Whenever they get emotionally and physically drained, the Trulls find the strength to continue from the kids.

Like Jesse Brunmeier, a fifth-grade boy who lives with his grandmother. Throughout last year's harsh winter, Jesse, armed with plenty of questions and opinions, was always by Mark's side at the sanctuary. This winter, Jesse has stepped up again, filling in one day to finish the feeding when almost everybody – including Mark and Diane – was debilitated by the flu.

Quitting is simply out of the question as long as kids like Jesse, Molly, Alix, Kali – and dozens of others – are determined to continue.

"Sometimes you come home in tears and ask, 'What are we going to do?' And then the next day is a better day, and you just keep going," says Diane. "Because if you don't, what is going to happen to all those dogs, to all those kids?"

Indeed, sometimes Mark and Diane stand in awe of the children's resilient spirit.

Like one awful day last year, when the children returned from a spaghetti dinner fundraiser to discover that someone had broken into the sanctuary and killed several puppies. It's something Mark and Diane wish the children had never had to see. But the children didn't let the sadness overwhelm them.

They buried the puppies. They cried their tears. They held hands and said their prayers. And then, they got back to work. 🐾

You can contact DAWGS at: P.O. Box 911, Dalhart, TX 79022. Phone: (806) 244-3216. E-mail: dawgntexas@yahoo.com. For more information and an update on DAWGS, visit www.best-friends.org and search on "Dalhart."



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“In life, there are certain moments that may never come again. This, I believe, is one of those moments for you.”

Tomato the Cat, founder of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club for kitties with disabilities, began his investigative reports in order to bring journalistic integrity to this magazine.

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Life After Stupid Pet Tricks

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

Most cats are embarrassed to see members of their own kind humiliating themselves in order to win their 15 minutes of fame on David Letterman's Stupid Pet Tricks. So I was not surprised to learn that the original creator of Stupid Pet Tricks is, of course, a dog person.

Merrill Markoe's new book, *What the Dogs Have Taught Me, and Other Amazing Things I've Learned*, is a testament to how dogs have convinced people to perform stupid human tricks in the name of what they have slipped into modern culture as "unconditional love."

I spoke with Ms. Markoe about her own dysfunctional relationships with dogs.

Tomato the Cat: How did you come up with the notion of Stupid Pet Tricks on the Letterman show?

Merrill Markoe: Well, it was millions of years ago when the show started. I presumed and correctly show that everybody has at least one stupid thing they do with their dog.

Tomato: What was the stupidest pet trick that you ever had on?

Merrill: Almost everything dogs do of their own will turns out to be pretty stupid. I always like it when the "trick" is something the dog is already doing. Like when you turn the vacuum cleaner on and he bites the vacuum cleaner and you call it a trick.

Tomato: Why is the vacuum cleaner a natural enemy of all dogs?

Merrill: I guess they find it irritating that they don't get to leave dog hair on everything. In any case, my dogs are slowly but surely helping me get rid of all carpet.

Tomato: You write about "What the Dogs Have Taught Me." So what have the dogs taught you?

Merrill: That when someone says "no," it doesn't really mean "no." If you just stay nearby and make an assortment of cute faces, you pretty much get what you want. If necessary, grovel.

Tomato: You mean that in dogspeak, "No" means "Wait 30 seconds and try again."

Merrill: Exactly. Second big thing: If there doesn't seem to be any food, it doesn't mean there isn't any food. Just keep looking. There will be some food.

Tomato: You've also got good advice for people trying to give their dogs a shower.

Merrill: Many years ago, I used to lure Stan into the shower by putting chicken skin on the drain. On the other hand, I've got a dog now named Puppy Boy and you can open the shower door and point and he walks right in.

Tomato: You're making it out like Puppy Boy is very cooperative. But one of your confessions is about a friend of yours, Paul, whose marriage is breaking up when he comes over to visit you, and he sits down and he's desperately sad. And Puppy Boy comes over and he says to Paul:

"I am Puppy Boy, and I can see that you are very upset for some reason. But, I have something on my mind. It is an idea so big that I can hardly hold my head up from the enormous weight of it. It is more than an idea, it is an urgent message."

Continued on page 44

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And anyway, your Puppy Boy proceeds to dump this deflated, sopping wet, drool-soaked soccer ball on your poor friend's lap to try to get him to throw it across the room for him.

Paul, of course, who is now sobbing, completely consumed with grief over the breakup of his marriage, takes no notice of Puppy Boy. So the dog becomes more insistent:

"Look, in life there are certain moments that may never come again. This, I believe, is one of those moments for you. Throw the wet, flat thing now! Or live a life of regret."

"I mean, I can't stop you if you'd rather just listen to yourself talk. 'Wife, wife, wife, she did this, she did that.' For heaven's sake, listen to me, you whiney, hen-pecked [blankety, blank]. Just look in my eyes and play along."

"Pick up the big flat wet thing. Pick it up! PICK IT UP NOW!!!"

Merrill: Well, that's exactly the way Puppy Boy always is.

We just got home from a trip last night, and we were sitting there having dinner after many, many hours of travel, and he was doing the same thing. He's always just seconds away from a game. And the game is always throw this for me, I'll bring it right back, and then throw it for me again.

He stares at you, then he stares at the thing he puts in your lap, and then he stares at you, and he stares down at the thing, and back and forth, back and forth like that, and he just stays there and waits, and waits.

And then if you still don't pick it up and throw it, he repositions it. Like, **"Oh, I see that you haven't noticed that there's a thing in your lap."**

So he pushes it a little closer to you, he moves it a little further up on your arm, and then he sits there and keeps staring, and he never stops.

He does this at night when you're sleeping. If you peer over your shoulder, you have your back to him, and he's sitting behind you, and there's a thing behind you on the bed, and he's staring at it.

Tomato: What else have you learned from dogs?

Merrill: I've learned that there's always something to eat in the lower third of any room, and that a lot of things that you wouldn't consider edible are indeed edible, if you just know exactly what portions. For instance, the last pages of books turn out to be really edible. And certain portions of the shoe. Not all of the shoe, just certain parts. And certain parts of table legs are edible.

Tomato: You also explain that dogs have a sickness known as Greeting Disorder.

Merrill: That was the significant behavioral pattern of my dog Lewis, who had this thing where when you walked in the door to my house, he would greet you to within an inch of your life. The part that I didn't write in the book is that after he greeted you and you're lying on your back and floating in a pool of his saliva, then he is still so happy to see you that he would go down into my living room, which is a couple of stairs down from the entry hall, and have sex with my couch.

Tomato: Well, you obviously have a beautiful and attractive couch, who is as yet unmarried.

Merrill: He had a very significant, long-term relationship with that couch.

Tomato: But you should at least consider having it spayed. 🐾



Best Friends ANIMAL SOCIETY

A better world through kindness to animals.

That's why Best Friends is working with our members all across the country to bring about a time when there are no more homeless pets, and when every companion animal who's ever born can be guaranteed a loving home.

The sanctuary, at the heart of the Golden Circle of Southern Utah, is the nation's largest for abused and abandoned animals, home on any given day to about 1,500 homeless dogs, cats, and other animals that come from shelters all over the country.

Beyond the sanctuary, the work of Best Friends reaches far and wide, helping people set up spay/neuter, shelter, foster, and adoption programs in their own neighborhoods.

In our home state, Best Friends manages a model campaign, working with shelters and humane societies statewide to bring an end to the killing of healthy homeless pets.

And across the nation, the Best Friends Network of members and rescue groups works to help set up No More Homeless Pets campaigns in local neighborhoods. You can become part of the Best Friends Network on our website at www.bestfriends.org.

Best Friends is supported through the donations of our members. Thanks to the generous hearts and hands of people like you, we can ensure that animals who come into the care of Best Friends will never again have to be alone, hungry, sick, afraid, or in pain.

Visiting Best Friends

The Best Friends Welcome Center is open every day except Christmas from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mountain Time.

The sanctuary covers a large area and some of the animal areas are several miles apart. Guided tours of the sanctuary leave from the Welcome Center four times daily. They need to be booked ahead of time.

To book a tour, or for more information about visiting the sanctuary, e-mail visiting@bestfriends.org or call (435) 644-2001, ext. 0. Your furry friends look forward to seeing you soon!





Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Mr. Cedric
can't be disturbed.
He's in the
middle of a giant
cat pile.”

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No More Complaints

So sorry, this department is now closed

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

Phone call to Best Friends: [ring ring, purr purr] “Hello, is that Best Friends? ... Yes, please put me through to the Complaints Department ... This is Six Toes ... No, my toes are fine, thank you. That's my name, it's not what I want to complain about ... That's OK, I can hold ...

“Yes, this is Six Toes ... Well, how many toes do you think I have? Would I be called Six Toes if I had seven toes? Please stop asking silly questions ... That's OK, I'll hold ...

“Yes, is that the Complaints Department? ... What do you mean it's closed? I'm looking at it on your website. There's a photo of the cat who runs the Complaints Department. It says her name is Audrey ... What do you mean she's retired? ... Well, I want to speak to her anyway ... Alright, I'll hold. ...

“Yes, I'm still holding ... Can't you wake her up? ... OK, if Mr. Cedric can help, I'll talk to him ...

“Yes, my name is Six Toes, and I need to come to Best Friends ... I'm at a hotel in Beverly Hills ... Yes, it's one of the most famous hotels in the world. I've been living here for 15 years. The service has been excellent. Lovely gardens. No complaints ...

“Well, that's the point. No complaints until now. The thing is, a couple of guests here have complained about me ... No, of course I hadn't been doing anything different. I've been doing the same thing for 15 years. I just hang out here ... That can't be the reason. They've never even sent me a bill ... Yes, someone here is taking care of me right now ... Yes ... No, I'm sorry, she asked me not to mention her name or the name of the hotel ... Yes, I can hold.

“Yes, this is Six Toes ... Well, that's good. What kind of accommodations do you have? ... The Kitty Motel? How many stars does it have? ... Very good. Can you send someone to pick me up here? Thank you very much, Mr. Cedric. And tell Ms. Audrey I want to see her as soon as I arrive at Best Friends. She can't just retire like that.”

* * *

At the Best Friends Reception Desk: “Good evening, I have a reservation at your Kitty Motel ... I'm Six Toes ... No, I said I *am* Six Toes, not that I *have* six toes ... Yes, well that's also true ... No, just on each paw. Now please just finish the registration ... I don't *have* an address anymore. That's why I'm here ... Certainly more than a few nights ... No, no bags ... Yes, of course I'm spayed.

“That's fine, but I'd prefer to go straight to the Kitty Motel ... Happy Landings? What's that? ... I don't need an 'arrivals center' ... I have to spend *how* long there? ... Look, my health and behavior are both fine. And I don't need an evaluation, thank you, and if I can't move in to the Kitty Motel this evening, then I need to see the lady in your Complaints Department – I believe her name is Ms. Audrey ... Yes, I know she's retired. She'll just have to come out of retirement ... Well, wake her up!

[ring ring, purr purr] “Hello, is that Ms. Audrey? Oh, hello, Mr. Cedric. Listen, this is Six Toes and I've just arrived at Best Friends ... Yes, the trip was fine, thank you. Look,





THE KITTY MOTEL



It's special care all the way at the Kitty Motel, home of the famed In-continental Suite, Fe-Leuk Rooms, and Senior Center.

The Complaints Department, located in the Senior Center, was founded by Audrey (*at the height of her authority in 1998 in the top middle photo*) when she arrived at Best Friends about 12 years ago. These days, she's mostly retired and prefers snoozing on the top shelf (*top right*).

Below: There are generally seven cats at a time in the main club basket. But, at a squeeze, it can host nine. There are lots of other baskets, but this is the favorite.

While there's no official top cat at the Senior Center, Cedric is considered host-in-chief. (*Second photo down on next page.*)



*I'm at Happy Landings, just up the path from your Kitty Motel, and they're telling me I have to stay here two weeks before I can move into my new accommodations ... There must be **something** you can do about it ... Well, I'd just like you to know this is not a happy landing and I am **not** happy about it."*

* * *

At the Best Friends Kitty Motel: "Ah, you must be Mr. Cedric. Yes, my two-week checkup was fine, thank you. No, I don't have any bags. Now, I need to visit the Complaints Department ... What do you mean this *is* the Complaints Department? ... What do you mean they all moved in here? They don't *look* as though they have any complaints ... What do you mean 'that's the whole point'?"

"Well, whatever it is, I need to make an appointment with Ms. Audrey ... She lives here, too? ... She can't *still* be having a nap! Well, please take me to see her anyway ... Which shelf is she on? ... No, I'm not used to jumping up on shelves. What time does she wake up and come down for lunch? ... I see. And who are these other cats? Can they handle complaints? ... They're all retired too? ... *Everyone* in here is retired?"

"Look, I really need to talk to someone in charge ... What do you mean there's no one in charge in this room? When I lived in Beverly Hills, there was always a cat in charge ... Yes, it was usually me ... Well, obviously I wasn't in charge when they decided that. That's what happens when you have the wrong person in charge – they just turn into megalomaniac bureaucrats. That's why you have to have the right cat in charge. Someone has to decide who snoozes in which basket ... What do you mean 'We all just get along'?"

"Ah, you must be Ms. Audrey ... Alright, just Audrey. Anyway, I'm here to complain about the closing of the Complaints Department ... Well of course there haven't been any complaints. If you close down the Complaints Department, then no one can complain ... Yes, I'll be happy to have lunch with you ... No, you can't eat out of my bowl ... What do you mean, you all eat out of each other's bowls?"

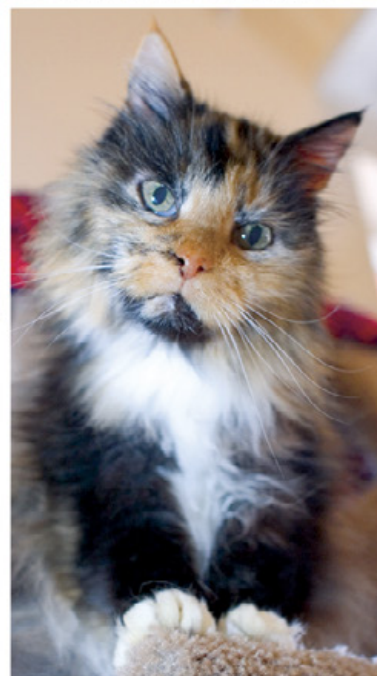
* * *

Three weeks later: [ring ring, purr purr] "Hello? ... Yes, Ms. Fluffums, how can I help you? ... I'm Six Toes ... No, that's my name ... Yes, I do ... That's right, I **have** six toes and I **am** Six Toes ... Well, go figure ...

"No, I'm sorry, we don't have a Complaints Department any longer ... Yes, we did, but it was closed due to lack of complaints ... Well, I felt the same way myself, so it was revived when I arrived here, and I took charge of it myself a few weeks ago. But on second thought, I've retired, so the department is closed again ... No, I'm afraid Mr. Cedric can't be disturbed ... Well, he's in the middle of a giant cat pile in a basket ... Seven of them that I can see, but there may be more.

"So, let me take down a few details: Your age? ... Fifteen? ... Well, I think our Kitty Motel will suit you just fine ... No, I wouldn't recommend our WildCats Village. They get pretty wild over there.

"Yes, if you'd like to revive the Complaints Department yourself, you'll be most welcome. There's a corner all set up here where you'll be able to complain – I mean work – as much as you like ... Well, it's been vacant for a while now ... Let's just say the last cat who used it moved out a few weeks ago." 🐾





Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“All the dogs at Best Friends do their own stunts.”

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Tomato the Cat's 2005 Summer Movie Reviews

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Film Critic

Back in the 1950s, many of Hollywood's top westerns were made right here at Angel Canyon, where Best Friends now has its home. And our renowned movie critic notes that the best summer blockbuster sequels, prequels, and plain old remakes and makeovers are now being written by your furry friends at the sanctuary.

Lords of Dogtown

Strangely, the Hollywood version of this movie has nothing to do with Best Friends Dogtown at all. It doesn't even have anything to do with dogs!

Our Dogtown has the thrilling drama of Dakota doing his magnificent Frisbee leap, along with dogs chasing golf carts, racing each other, even doing the hydrotherapy triathlon.

Their Dogtown is at Venice Beach in Los Angeles, and it's all about people learning to skateboard in the 1970s.

Now admittedly, skateboarding is impractical at Best Friends Dogtown, since we haven't paved the whole place over and skateboards don't work well in the sand.

Still, out in California, there's an amazing dog called Tyson, whose videos are circulating all over the Internet. He's an ace skateboarder, and he's even starring in a movie, *Undiscovered*, due out in August. But he's not in the Hollywood *Lords of Dogtown* at all.

Indeed, their *Lords of Dogtown* aren't even dogs. And the actors almost certainly don't even do their own stunts. Tyson, by contrast, does all his own stunts. As do all the dogs at Best Friends Dogtown when they're climbing fences, leaping after Frisbees, and rolling over while being petted.

You can watch *our* *Lords of Dogtown* on video at the Best Friends website at www.bestfriends.org, or you can come to the sanctuary and see their lordships in action any and every day.

And until his movie comes out, you can watch Tyson in action at *his* website at www.skateboardingbulldog.com.



Dominion: Prequel to the Exorcist

Humans were understandably terrified by the original *Exorcist*, made in 1973. The reason it was so frightening is that the studio, Warner Bros., never intended it to be seen by humans. The movie was, in fact, an action adventure made for cats, who were entranced by it.



In the climactic scene of the movie, the heroine, played by Linda Blair, is battling a giant hairball while trying to fend off an evil priest who is trying to give her a pill for it. Just in time, she throws up. No more hairball.

Incidentally, Hilltop, one of the owls here at the sanctuary, insists that owls threatened to boycott the movie unless they could have Linda do the famous head-turning thing.

Also incidentally, today Linda Blair is a huge friend of Best Friends and the animals, and runs her own rescue group, WorldHeart Foundation.



I've no idea what this year's pre-sequel is about, but our own version stars Rajah who, as you see (*above left*), looks quite possessed. In fact, he's declawed, which is not good for cats. Come to think of it,

declawing cats is enough to make us all want to throw up.



War of the Words

In 1938, Orson Welles got everyone's fur standing on end when he did *War of the Worlds* on the radio. Everyone thought it was real news.

This year, Steven Spielberg comes out with a new movie based on the original H. G. Wells tale. But will it sound like real news? Is there even such a thing as real news any more? Would anyone know the difference?

We explore this important issue in the reality docudrama *War of the Words*, in which Seppi the Moluccan cockatoo has a shouting match with Sunshine the sulfur-crested cockatoo. There are no Martians, and there's one fewer letter in the title. But hey, folks, it's just a *movie*!



The Pink Panther

Peter Sellers starred as the original Inspector Clouseau in 1964, tracking down the priceless Pink Panther. There were seven sequels. This summer brings a remake of the original, with Steve Martin in the role of the dim-witted Clouseau.

Note: In case you're expecting a film about a feline, the Pink Panther is not a colorized cat, but rather an expensive jewel. (I don't get it. Why spend a total of nine movies looking for a stone? It's not a toy, it's not edible, and you can't even scratch it.)

Here at Best Friends, Baa Baa Lou (*photo left*) takes on the role of Clouseau. Why a sheep? Well, in case you didn't know, sheep have excellent face recognition – far better than Klutzy Clouseau, who can't even figure out that the thief is staring him in the face.

Besides, while we don't have any pink panthers, we do have a priceless pink pig, who lives close by the sheepish inspector and steals anything he can get his hooves on.



Unleashed

Promos for the movie say the plot is about “an Asian orphan who has been raised by his Scottish grandfather as a human pitbull.”

But why train a human to play a pit bull when you can have the real thing? Must be union rules. Still, with dozens of handsome pit bulls at Best Friends Dogtown, each looking for new careers and all falling over each other to see their names in lights, you’d think the producer would have come here before settling for a martial arts actor who doesn’t even look like a dog.

All in all, we have hundreds of top-rated doggy ham actors, all of whom act up all day, and all of whom are ready and waiting to contribute their services for a lot less than martial arts actor Jet Li, who stars in the Hollywood version – along with Bob Hoskins as the grandfather.

Note to director Louis Leterrier (not a real terrier, either):

Should you be planning a sequel/prequel, please check out our own Tawny for the role. She’s a real star, always shows up on time, never throws tantrums while getting made up, and is looking for a Scottish grandfather to call her own. So if you’d like to give her a screen test, just call the sanctuary and change your French accent to a Scottish one. You’ll both star in your own home movie.



The Fantastic Four

Mr. Fantastic, The Thing, The Invisible Woman, and The Human Torch join forces to defeat the evil Dr. Doom.

There’s no Dr. Doom at the sanctuary, but the Best Friends fantastic foursome is indeed *fanta-a-a-stic*.



The Aristocrats

Hollywood’s most bizarre offering of the year: Dozens of comedians line up to tell the same “dirty” joke dozens of times over. Here’s what Aleah thinks of that.

Come to think of it, it’s what she thinks of most of this year’s summer movies.



Batcat Begins

Hollywood has its somewhat blah Batman prequel. But in our own gripping psychological drama, we watch with the cat staff at Best Friends as they wait to see whether Jack will come down from the rafters at the TLC Cat Club. Will he today? Or might it happen tomorrow?

I can’t give away the thrilling conclusion. But suffice it to say that Jack *does* eventually come down and is last seen batting at his toy feather. 🐾



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“What
do you mean
you’ve lost our
socks?”

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The Laundry Room

Where cleanliness is next to dogliness

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter



“Excuse me, is this the Chinese laundry? I’m Miss Molly and I’ve just arrived at Best Friends, so I’d like to have my coat cleaned.”

“... Yes, of course it’s my coat. I’m wearing it, aren’t I? How could I bring in someone else’s coat? ... You only do towels, blankets, and beds? Well, I don’t have a blanket, I have a coat ... Is there a supervisor I could talk to?”

“Yes, I’m a Shih Tzu mix ... That’s why I want a Chinese laundry.”



“I thought we were a German laundry.”



“Don’t take any notice of them. We’re a French laundry.”



“I’m the supervisor. And we’re not a Chinese laundry. We’re a Mexican laundry.”



“You’re all outnumbered. There are four Shih Tzus in here. So we’re a Chinese laundry. Now will someone please pass the fortune cookies?”

Photos by Troy Snow



"Oh, you mutht be Mith Molly. Do come in and make yourthelf at home. Yeth, you can thit anywhere. I'm Thandy, and my favorite thpot ith on a nithe pile of dirty blanketh dutht before they put them in the wath."

The Laundry Room at Best Friends Dogtown is also home to a somewhat quirky population of ancient poochie misfits (thome would thay mithfithths) who enjoy the special attention and treatments they get from Pat Baker and Linda Kollander in between laundry loads.



"Good day, I am Seymore. No, I can't see anything at all. My job is to keep an eye on everything from on top of the washing machines."



"Grab your laundry and let's get out of here. These dogs are all crazy!"



"Yes, this is the dry-cleaning department. ... No, you may not come in."



"Help! They just washed my dirty old blanket. No fair!"



"What do you mean you've lost our socks?"



"Turns out they won't do my coat in here after all. I have to go to grooming, not the laundry. Which building is that?"



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“And how come King Tut got hit over the head when he was only 17 years old?”

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Take Cover!

A-Pop is only 23 years away

► By **Tomato the Cat** – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

A short letter, hidden in the Letters section of the November edition of this magazine, may portend the end of civilization as we know it.

And, as usual, nobody thought to tell me about it. I had to read the magazine myself.

Astronomer Christine Pulliam wrote in to warn readers of the impending arrival of Asteroid 99942 Apophis in our region of space/time on April 13th, 2029.

"Apophis" is the Greek translation of A-Pop, the ancient Egyptian serpent dragon, who rings the world and is the source of all chaos and destruction in the known universe.

The ancient Egyptians knew what was what pretty well. The one thing they didn't know, as I revealed in this column in January 2001, was that A-Pop wasn't a serpent at all. It was an understandable mistake, since they didn't have good telescopes back then. So what they thought was a snake was, in fact, the long bushy tail of Arabella GingerPop, a long-haired, orange female cat.

And while big, fluffy, orange male cats are not particularly unusual, big, fluffy, orange female cats are a genetic anomaly – very unusual indeed.

So when a big, fluffy, orange female cat arrived at Best Friends in the early days of

the sanctuary, we knew something was up. A-Pop had some health issues and was due to return to the outer universe before too long. But she quickly revealed herself to be the source of all chaos and destruction here in the inner universe – shutting down laundry machines by jumping on them, cutting off the power when she got upset, and clearing tabletops and other swaths of land with a simple sweep of the bushy tail she always carried with her.

In my column, I was able to show that the name Arabella GingerPop was simply a fluffy version of the true, hidden name of A-Pop. And readers with big, fluffy, orange female cats of their own were quick to confirm that A-Pop was indeed alive and well, and had incarnated in their cat, too. (Some of you were afraid that your non-fluffy, black-and-white male cat might be A-Pop, but you should have been relieved to know that this cannot be the case. And one person even wrote in to say that her orange-haired husband was A-Pop.)

In more recent years, we have heard little of A-Pop, which is always suspicious. And now we know why. Once again, she is heading our way.

Indeed, shortly after the news that A-Pop had turned into an asteroid, we also heard





Could Onion be A-Pop – a.k.a. the source of all chaos, havoc, and lost socks in the entire universe?

from AtlantaPets, our colleagues in Atlanta, Georgia, that A-Pop has recently incarnated there in correct feline form: a big, bushy, orange female kitten named Onion.

Most astronomers will tell you that the likelihood of Asteroid 99942 A-Pop crashing into the Earth is very low. But, of course, that's what everyone used to say about Arabella GingerPop.

("Oh, I'm sure it'll be okay. It was just a coincidence that the laundry machine broke down the moment she landed on it. It'll be fine ... Oops!")

A-Pop is due to pass 22,600 miles from Earth. That's about the same distance as

the satellites that bring you your TV shows and do the navigation thing in your car.

But the question is not "Will she bump into the planet?" but rather "Does she have a message for all the bushy-tailed A-Pops waiting to hear from her here on Earth?"

Astronomers also note that 99942 Apophis is one of the Aten group of asteroids, which circle inside the Earth's orbit – unlike the comets, which go flying far out beyond Pluto and Fido. These Aten asteroids are named after the Egyptian

Sun God, who took over during the reign of Akhnaten in the 18th Dynasty, for a brief amount of time, from the Great Egyptian Cat Goddess. But then she managed to put him back in his place during the reign of Tutankhamen, who got hit over the head and died during some kind of palace coup when he was only about 17 years old.

Nobody's been able to figure out exactly what King Tut got clobbered by. But isn't it obvious?

And if you have a cat who may be A-Pop, and you don't pay proper attention to her, you may get hit over the head by a passing asteroid, too. 🐾



Judah looks like he could be A-Pop, but he isn't. Big, fluffy, orange male kitties, although always distinguished, are not unusual. Judah has feline leukemia, lives at the Best Friends TLC Cat Club, is extremely snuggly, and is not the source of all chaos and destruction anywhere.



Scientists are trying to figure out how to nudge the asteroid version of A-Pop off course before she gets too close in 2029. Best plan so far is to send a spaceship to sit next to her, exerting a tiny amount of gravitational force that would pull her ever so slightly off course. However, any attempts to exert gravitational force on Arabella GingerPop and thereby shift her off course here at Best Friends were always quite fruitless and were soon abandoned.



A-Pop is seen here in a tiff with the Great Cat of Iunu, who represented the sun, which A-Pop was believed to swallow every evening. There was a renowned Book of Overthrowing A-Pop full of spells you could cast in order to keep A-Pop at bay. But these incantations, with sections like "The Chapter of Spitting upon A-Pop," apparently worked no better than the spells you cast at home when trying to keep her from jumping on the bed at five o'clock in the morning.



**Tomato the Cat's
Special Investigative Report**

“Thumping
at bulldozers,
ducking from
birds.”

Tomato the Cat, founder of the Best Friends TLC Cat Club for kitties with disabilities, began his investigative reports in order to bring journalistic integrity to this magazine.

Although he went over the Rainbow Bridge in 1998, he keeps writing anyway, explaining that he's only used up one of his nine lives.

High recognition came in August 2000, when Tomato received a letter from the Pulitzer Prize Board (really!), informing him that he was the winner of a Pulitzer Award in a special category: "Purr Prize for Service to Man's Best Friend."

New Bunny Sex Scandal!

What happens in Las Vegas clearly doesn't stay there

► **By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter**

Reno, Nevada: This is Tomato the Cat reporting from out near the Reno airport.

It has been nine years since my Pulitzer Prize-winning report from nearby Las Vegas on the Great Bunny Sex Scandal of 1997. And contrary to what the authorities are saying, what happens in Las Vegas does *not* stay there.

Here, in a quiet suburban neighborhood backyard, bunnies are multiplying at the home of Jackie D. At the last count, there were close to a thousand. That's right: a thousand bunnies – and counting.

Earlier today, I talked to Baby, one of the top bunnies at Bunnyville, where he's King of the Porch Area.

"Jackie was doing just fine," he told me. "She was following all the rules about spay/neuter and basic bunny care.

"But then two things happened: First, she got sick, and then word got out about our colony, and people started coming by at night and dropping their unwanted bunnies over the fence. Jackie couldn't keep up with what was happening ... and here we all are."

A Best Friends Rapid Response Team is now on the ground here, headed up by Bunny House manager Debby Widolf.

"These are not like your typical house rabbit," said Debby after her initial survey. "As their numbers have grown, they've gone back to being wild, and what we have here is a fascinating glimpse of bunnies in their natural environment."

Much of that natural environment is underground. The bunnies have dug a maze of warrens under Jackie's backyard, where they spend most of their time. Dusk and dawn are their times for being out and about above ground. And that's when Jackie puts out their food.

The bunnies are well-organized and live by their own rules. So, for example,



there's no mad dash when food appears. Even though Bunnyville is one big open area, every bunny is part of a group. They all know which group they belong in and where they eat. So no one crosses the line into another group's territory.

While some of them are eating, others will be bolt upright, scanning the land into the distance for any signs of danger.

"Just because we're in a backyard," said Baby, as he eyed me warily, "doesn't mean that we can drop our guard. Some local cats have been coming over the fence, and at night even some of the local humans take shots at us with guns. Plus, the occasional big bird will swoop down on us."

There's another, even bigger kind of bird that's swooping up and down around the bunnies. The airport is planning a big expansion, and Jackie is going to lose her lease – just one more reason to get the bunnies moved as quickly as possible.

"I don't think we can just burrow further underground," explained Baby. "We've been thumping at the bulldozers that are parked down the street, but so far this hasn't frightened them away like you'd expect."

Baby and Rembrandt, another top bunny who rules a separate section of the colony, want to protect their does. When they're out and about above ground, these alpha boys are wary of each other – each protecting their does, and doing a lot of posturing, leaping up and down, and scooting away any other

bunnies who challenge their authority.

But unless they can get some help pretty quickly, Baby and Rembrandt won't have anything to jump up and down about at all. So they've set aside their differences in order to save the entire colony.

With the big birds at the airport eyeing her property, Jackie is going to have to move soon, and with her own health challenges, she says she won't be able to look after any of the bunnies much longer.

So Debby and the Best Friends Rabbit Response Team have set up camp in their own warren next to Jackie's property to help look after the bunnies, get them neutered as quickly as possible, take care of some of their health issues, and start finding new colony homes for all of them. 🐾

How You Can Help

Rembrandt and Baby and all the bunnies are looking for good new backyards to set up house.

If you have a backyard that could accommodate 10 or more bunnies, Best Friends can provide you with a complete how-to kit for housing and taking care of them.

A few of the bunnies are socialized and will make good household pets. But most are looking to live their own lifestyle as proud descendants of their European wild rabbit ancestors.

Details are on the Best Friends website at www.bestfriends.org/bunnysex.



Best Friends bunny manager Debby Widolf (left) with Jackie

The (Original) Great Bunny Sex Scandal of 1997

It started with a call from a woman in Las Vegas who said she had too many bunnies in her backyard. We asked how they got there. Silly question.

(OK, so she explained that she didn't know about spaying and neutering. Go figure!)

Next day, a team from Best Friends arrived with a big truck. They counted 178 bunnies as they loaded them.

Five hours later, back at the sanctuary, they unloaded the truck – 187 bunnies.

For the next week, it was round-the-clock spay/neuter. Eventually they were all fixed. Lots of them went to good new homes. A few are still at the sanctuary living bunnily ever after.





Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Did you get
your blanket?
Don't you want
your coffee?”

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Is That Your Final Answer?

In the wake of dozens more birds than usual arriving at Best Friends in recent months, our investigative reporter set out to learn whether this is part of an avian conspiracy to upset the balance of power held by the cats and dogs at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary.

Our reporter sat down with Cody, an Amazon grey parrot, whose person gave him up when her age and health made it difficult for her to give him the time and attention parrots need. Because of his large vocabulary, Cody is considered the spokesperson at Feathered Friends.

(Editor's note: Yes, everything Cody says in this interview is from his standard repertoire.)



► **By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter**

Tomato the Cat: Good morning.

Cody the Parrot: Good morning.

T.C.: My name is Tomato and I'd like to interview you for Best Friends magazine.

C.P.: Kitty kitty, meow.

T.C.: May I sit down?

C.P.: Do you want your blanket?

T.C.: I'll be fine, thank you.

C.P.: What's the matter?

T.C.: Nothing's the matter. I just want to ask you a few questions.

C.P.: What are you doing?

T.C.: I'm doing an investigative article about the bird house. I gather that a lot of parrots arrived here quite recently, and there are rumors that it's part of a plan for an avian takeover of Best Friends.

C.P.: Want a drink of water?



Feathered Friends – home to the domestic birds at the sanctuary

T.C.: No, thank you. First, what's your name?

C.P.: Cody.

T.C.: What kind of bird are you?

C.P.: Beautiful bird.

T.C.: How long have you been here?

C.P.: Don't you want your coffee?

T.C.: I don't have any coffee. Cats don't drink coffee.

C.P.: Want a cookie?

T.C.: I don't eat cookies either. Do you want a cookie?

C.P.: Yummy, yummy, yummy.

T.C.: You can have a cookie if you answer my questions.

C.P.: What are you looking for?

T.C.: I want to know why so many parrots have been arriving at Best Friends recently.

C.P.: I love you.

T.C.: I doubt it. I think you're trying to change the subject.

C.P.: What's your problem?

T.C.: My problem is that you're not taking this interview seriously.

C.P.: I love you, my sweetheart.

T.C.: I think you're trying to hide something.

C.P.: Dirty, dirty mess.

T.C.: That's why I'm here. To get to the bottom of all this and clean up the mess.

C.P.: Do you want a bath?

T.C.: No, I want answers.

C.P.: Cool it, baby.

T.C.: Then please just answer my questions.

C.P.: What are you looking for?

T.C.: I'm looking for the real reason there are dozens of new parrots here at the sanctuary.

C.P.: Did you get your toy?

T.C.: No, thank you. I don't need any toys.

C.P.: Give it to your mommy.

T.C.: I don't have a toy. And anyway, I have no idea where my mommy might be.

C.P.: Mommy's right here.

T.C.: I don't think so. And, incidentally, I think you should be a lot more serious



about this. Do you realize I'm a cat, and that a cat could eat you?

C.P.: Did you eat your chicken?

T.C.: You can interview me some other time. Why do you answer every question with another question?

C.P.: Not overconfident.

T.C.: I see – a basic insecurity. That would explain a lot. Does that mean you had an unhappy childhood?

C.P.: Very, very good.

T.C.: That's what I thought. You were in a very good home, after all.

C.P.: Tickle, tickle, tickle.

T.C.: So what was it like coming to Best Friends?

C.P.: Want your other cookie?

T.C.: You're changing the subject again.

C.P.: OK. Gotta go. Bye.

T.C.: Wait, why are you going back into your cage?

C.P.: Come in here.

T.C.: I can't come into your cage. The door's too small.

C.P.: Do you want to go outside?

T.C.: If you'll answer my questions outside, we can go outside.

C.P.: Did you get your blanket?

T.C.: It's quite warm. We can go out just as we are. Are you coming?

C.P.: Do you want to go to bed?

T.C.: I want to finish this interview, and I'm getting frustrated.

C.P.: Get out of here.

T.C.: I will in just a minute.

C.P.: Thank you.

T.C.: OK, I've had enough. You've been thoroughly uncooperative. Thank you for your time. I'm going to talk to the other birds.

C.P.: Praise the Lord. 🐾





Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Our purpose:
recapture the
planet and
re-establish the
reign of the
Great One.”

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The Colonel's Journal

His final super-secret mission

► By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

Shortly after I reported on his sweeping victory in the electoral campaign of 2002, The Colonel retired from public office.

His life had been a whirlwind of political and military activity. Many of his senior aides, who had been with him from the beginning, have long moved on to their 10th life.

And now, on a recent warm spring morning, The Colonel himself departed for realms unknown.

But a few days ago, a source called me to say she had unearthed his secret journal in a vault at The Colonel's Barracks.

Experts who have examined the document agree that it is authentic. The Powers That Be have warned that its publication may be harmful to national security, but I believe that it is in the national interest for members of Best Friends to see the contents. Here are some excerpts.

June 1996: I have just arrived at Best Friends and have been incarcerated at WildCats #15 – a chicken-wire compound with no chickens.

I love chickens. I was arrested and sentenced to death for loving chickens. And then the judge commuted my sentence and sent me to Best Friends.

I believe the judge and his associates are aliens who have taken possession of our planet. But I'm not sure about the people at Best Friends. They look like aliens, but that may be a disguise. However, as you can see from the photo, I am taking no chances. And I hereby pledge to protect my fellow feral cats from all comers.



May 1997: In a futile attempt at appeasement, the aliens have built us the WildCats Village – a state-of-the-art feral cat condo with every amenity an alley cat could ever ask for. (Ask? Why should we have to ask for anything?)

I have taken command of one section, now to be known as The Colonel's Barracks, with a view to recruiting and training a militia.

Our purpose: recapture the planet, and re-establish the reign of The Great Egyptian Cat Goddess, who once blessed us all with the Sahara Desert, the greatest cat litter box this side of Mars.



January 1998: I have appointed Daiquiri my new campaign director and strategist.

Known to the troops as Nurse Diesel, she brooks no disobedience from my junior officers. Sits in the rafters all day and glares down at the aliens who keep us here. She despises the toys they bring us, and has pledged to eat only dry cat food until Liberation.

Today, Daiquiri even glared at me. It was thrilling.



February 1999: Some of my staff are saying that our military operations have taken us as far as they can. They believe it is time to switch tactics and work through the political process to achieve our goals. I am skeptical of this approach, but am willing to test it. Today, as part of the new strategy, I appointed Saturn as my communications director.

Saturn has a charming smile. I am told he has it on a long-term loan from the Cheshire Cat. He says nothing ... gives away nothing.

It's working. The aliens truly believe he is smiling at them, but they know nothing more.

I do believe we are onto something.



July 2000: Our latest recruit is Oscar, truly a kindred spirit and my new Chief-of-Stuff.

Oscar did not spend his time going after chickens; he escaped from a bedroom in Saudi Arabia and committed an act of heroic resistance (*they* called it terrorism) at a diplomatic reception. *Blood was shed!*

I must admit that the local aliens who occupied the bedroom treated Oscar like a true prince. They managed to spring him from the authorities – who had taken him prisoner and were planning to do the worst – and spirit him out of the country and across the world to Best Friends.



September 2000: Our campaign rallies are drawing huge crowds. And tens of thousands of aliens are making the pilgrimage to visit us and be assimilated.

When they arrive at the WildCats Village and peer into The Colonel's Barracks, campaign director Daiquiri glares at them, while Saturn "smiles" beneficently. The spell is cast.

The aliens are now completely in our control, and we are ready to complete our mission.



January 2005: After the success of our campaign, I found myself increasingly in the company of Jové, a quiet, older kitty, who told us that it was time to settle down and enjoy the comforts of life.



Jové would often speak of a place, in a galaxy far away, called the Cat's Paw Nebula. She used to say that one day, when the Great

Egyptian Cat Goddess once again reigns supreme, we shall all meet up there for our 10th life.

Jové has now departed for the Cat's Paw Nebula. I find myself a bit tired, maybe even a little lonely. I think I am soon to join her there.



The Colonel's Final Entry

March 21, 2006:

I, the one and only Colonel,

On this equinox so vernal

Do inscribe my final journal

At this secret hour nocturnal.

Now I leave this world infernal

To meet Jové my love maternal

And join my troops who live eternal.

Here now ends The Colonel's Journal.



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Perhaps we humans do this because we cannot curl up in a salad bowl.”

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Talking in Circles

Unleashing the queen of comedy

► **By Tomato the Cat – Best Friends Investigative Reporter**

Merrill Markoe's new book is *Walking in Circles Before Lying Down*. The original producer of David Letterman's show, she invented Stupid Pet Tricks, and went on to produce other shows, do talk radio, and write books. She lives in Malibu with her intelligent but slightly deranged dogs, who talk (mainly to each other about her) most of the time.

Tomato the Cat: Larry King always begins his interviews by asking "Why did you decide to write this book?" – which strikes me as a completely inane question. So why did you decide to write this book?

Merrill Markoe: Well, I mainly wrote it so Larry King would have something to talk to me about. I realize that is kind of an inane answer. Possibly too inane for you. But perfect for Larry King.

T.C.: *Were you walking in circles when you wrote it?*

M.M.: The walking in circles thing is not part of the feline experience. But just so you know, it is something that an awful lot of dogs do before they lie down. It's a remnant of a primitive instinct. Perhaps you've observed it in the canines there at Best Friends.

Or maybe, like most of the cats I have known, you were too busy sitting in a frying pan or on top of a broom closet or on the keyboard of someone's computer. Or hiding from God-knows-what, waiting to reveal your whereabouts only after some human has given up the search and is convinced that you must have escaped and gotten hit by a car.

T.C.: *You have the same initials as my editor. People reading this may think that he wrote your book. Speaking of which, I'm uncertain as to who did write your book. You're the person on the cover, yet the book seems to be written by someone*



called Dawn, who is clearly walking in circles, having gone through several bad relationships. Then, on page 50-something, she suddenly hears her dog talking to her. Did this really happen to her ... or did it happen to you?

M.M.: The book is a little something we writers like to call FICTION. That means that even though my name is on the cover, I invented all the people and animals in the book. Why we humans do this is hard to say. Perhaps because we cannot curl up in a salad bowl, as you can.

But I do base my fiction on what I see around me in my life. I do have a dog walker named Dawn. She not only said I could borrow her name, she takes my dogs on much better walks than I do. On weekends when the walking falls back into my court, they are so disappointed when I take them out that I can actually hear them saying, "That's IT?? You're kidding, right? You're not trying to pass THAT off as a walk, are you?"

However, I should add that my dog walk-

er Dawn did not actually do any of the things I wrote about. For example, she does not have a sister named Halley who used to date convicted wife murderer Scott Petersen.

T.C.: *Who's Johnny Depp? Is he a fictional character too?*

M.M.: This is a complicated one. Johnny Depp in my book is a slightly neurotic bouvier des Flandres dog, and he is a fictional character. He was named after a real man named Johnny Depp, an actor who is paid millions of dollars to portray fictional characters in movies. Both have dark hair and are very cute and are associated with France.

I think the key to keeping the two straight is this: The fictional one has two extra legs and a tendency to chew on his butt. The real one owns a lot of pirate outfits and has access to millions of dollars. I hope this has been helpful.

T.C.: *The dogs in your book are all*

talking to each other all the time. They leave each other messages on trees and lampposts. And your alter ego, Dawn, gets to discuss everything with her dogs, from God to love to the war in Iraq. It's like they're all strays together – trying to figure out the crazy situation they're in.

M.M.: Well, I have always felt like in my last life I may have been in the pound. In fact, maybe it was in this life.

But I don't really think my dogs understand me when I talk to them about anything besides these areas: walk, ball, getting on the bed, getting on the couch, snacks, dinner, pestering guests to throw things, going for rides in the car, potty time, squirrel patrol and border patrol. They do, however, know how to make profound-looking facial expressions that allow me to pretend they are listening to me. And in this way they are not too dissimilar from my family of origin.

I do, however, think there is some kind of peeing-related interspecies communication

going on, to which I am not privy. On walks, my two dogs seem to agree that certain patches of ground, or stalks of weeds and grass or rocks, are millions of times more fascinating than all the others around them. To prove this, they stand frozen, soaking in this very riveting information intently, for as long as it takes them to get every nuance. It is the equivalent, for them, of a summer blockbuster movie. And all the leash-pulling in the world cannot get them to leave before the credits roll.

T.C.: *But to be fair, in your book, Chuck the dog has some real insights into his person's life. How about your own dogs?*

M.M.: Puppyboy's most impressive and clearest insights seem to involve problem-solving. There is no door he can't open. And no behavior he won't mimic if he thinks a game of fetch will be the result.

T.C.: *What's it like being interviewed by a Pulitzer Prize-winning cat? (Hint: Most authors and journalists who haven't won one themselves find it quite intimidating.)*

M.M.: I was very impressed that they gave you your own category. In a sense, it is like both winning the Irving Thalberg Award at the Academy Awards and *being* Irving Thalberg, all rolled into one.

T.C.: *What do you want people to take away from your book? (Larry King always asks this when time's up and he needs to take a lamppost break.)*

M.M.: I wanted to write about how much it means to some of us to love and be loved by the animals we live with. And because I am a comedian, I often color what might be the pure overwhelming emotion I feel with a lot of smart-ass remarks. Hopefully this is a funny book. That doesn't mean that the feelings behind that are not real. They are my version of walking in circles before I lie down, something I inherited from my neurotic prehistoric ancestors who were perhaps trying to seem less vulnerable to a horde of attacking Huns by possibly distracting them and making them laugh.

That and the fact that I think even you will agree that part of the allure of living with dogs is that they are so damn funny. Certainly much funnier than living with Larry King. 🐾

***Walking in Circles Before Lying Down* is published by Villard. It contains adult language and themes.**

From *Walking in Circles Before Lying Down*

I put Johnny Depp and Chuck in the back seat of the car and headed over to the animal hospital, driving as fast as traffic permitted. The radio was playing some old Oasis song I'd heard five billion times. I turned the radio off.

"Sit," I said to the wall of fur on Johnny Depp's back, which was all I could see in the rear-view mirror. He paid no attention. But Chuck moved up into the front seat and stuck his head out the window.

"Chuck! No!" I said, pulling him back. "You know better than that."

"Well, you know better than to turn on KROQ and you still do it," Chuck said. "They're always playing that Oasis song. You always turn it off. But I, on the other hand, never fail to encounter a kaleidoscope of microscopic particles, odors and actual pieces of matter rushing at me at 50 mph when I put my head out of the car. I can tell where we are and who is around. Remember the time someone in front of us threw out a partially eaten burger? Next time that happens, I'm catching that thing on the fly. Watch me."

I waited before speaking. "Am I making this up?" I finally said. "Have I found even a scarier way to torture myself? Why do I think you are talking to me?"

"Dude," said a voice a full octave deeper from the back seat. "Dead possum on the right. Check it out. Big one."

"Wow," said Chuck, back out the window.

"Nice. Can we stop?"

"NO!" I said. I found this all very disturbing, and turned off the highway into a small market parking lot. Now no one was saying anything. I clung to the quiet like a life raft.

"Why are we stopping?" it sounded like Chuck asked. "Are we gonna get the possum?"

"No," I said, to him or to myself, sounding agitated. "I don't like to drive when I'm this upset."

"Upset? About what?" he said.

"Hello? She was dumped this morning," said Johnny Depp.

I began to focus hard on remaining calm, despite the nagging concern that something was terribly wrong.

"The 'water down the face,'" said Chuck. "What is that?"

"It's involuntary. It happens when I'm very upset," I said.

"It's like a high-pitched noise, only wetter," said Johnny Depp, starting to cower. "It's not my fault, is it? Are you mad at me? I won't do it again. I swear."

"Of course it's not you," I said. "I don't know if you can empathize, but it hurts when someone you love dumps you."

"You're joking, right?" said Chuck. "How do you think I wound up at the pound?"

"Put yourself up for adoption," said Johnny Depp.



Tomato the Cat's Special Investigative Report

“Someone
from Nigeria
says he wants
to send me
lots of money.”

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I've Got Mail!

Of multi-toes, smiley faces, investments, and human breeding habits

► By **Tomato the Cat** – Best Friends Investigative Reporter

Yesterday, I got a call from Hans, who looks after our computer systems here at Best Friends.

"You've got 3,742 unread e-mails," he said. "And you haven't checked them for more than two years."

I didn't know I'd gotten that far behind, but you know what it's like when you're a busy investigative reporter.

Hans is very health-conscious, and he didn't want me to jump in and open them. "We'll need to be careful," he said. "They probably have lots of old viruses in them."

"I already have an old virus," I replied. "I had it when I first came to Best Friends. It left me with my chronic sneezles. Does that mean cats with fe-leuk and FIV should never open their e-mail?"

"Don't worry," said Hans, handing me an anti-virus disk. "Take two of these and call me in the morning."

Next morning, I called him back. "I've opened all the e-mails," I said. "And I feel fine. We should call the Best Friends clinic. Your anti-virus disks could be the biggest thing in health care."

Cats with too many toes

After we'd deleted all the viruses, there were only about 1,000 e-mails left.

Several dozen were about an old column about cats who have too many toes:

"I have enclosed 3 pictures of our cat Six. As you can see, he rules the house. (We also have 3 other cats and two dogs, all inside.) He weighs more than both the dogs put together. Just thought I'd share with you."

Palisandre81

Palisandre81 (people who send e-mail have weird names) sent along this photo of her cat, Six, along with his 24 claws. But it seems to me that a lot of those toes are Palisandre81's.

Another writer wants to know what can be classified as a toe.

"Does the palm pad count, or what?"

Conniecleek

Answer: If the palm of your hand counts as a finger, then yes. Otherwise, no.

And Erin says that her cat Chadwick doesn't have tons of toes, but he can open the "hexagonal-shaped doorknob" into the bathroom and jump into Erin's lap when ... oh well, never mind.

Help with fundraising

Lots of my e-mail was from people wanting to help with our fundraising, like the guy from Nigeria who keeps telling me that if I will just send him a small fee, he'll transfer lots of money into my account at Best Friends.

And there's the investment consultant



who urgently needs me to know that if I invest in Hot Brands Inc., I'm going to make a fortune from a gold and silver mining operation in Nevada. That must be somewhere near Area 51.

Hans suggested that it's best not to reply to any of these, so that you don't give away that you're a real person.

This is funny ☺

There were lots of cute notes from readers with little jokes about their cats and dogs. Some of them were apparently concerned that I might not get the joke, so they added a smiley face ☺.

Smiley faces don't always mean something is funny; they can just mean that I might take what they're saying the wrong way, so they try to say it with a smile – like when your dog makes a mistake and then rolls on his back and waves his feet at you to make you laugh.

Sometimes the ☺ is on its side, thus :-). Use this when you're trying to send a smile to a cat who may be lying on his side on the keyboard while reading your e-mail.

Speaking of which, the *New York Times* recently had an article by a reporter wondering whether cats have a sense of humor. His conclusion: Dogs do funny, goofy things to make you laugh – it's a way of getting you to love them. Cats, on the other hand, do annoying things to each other, to the dog, and to you – simply to amuse themselves.

Bottom line: Cats have a real sense of humor; dogs don't.

Getting yourselves fixed would be a good way of cutting down on the number of wars you all keep having.

Get fixed and get over it!

But by far the most e-mails were from people who were concerned about the size of some of my body parts ... well, one in particular. And they wanted to reassure me that their various potions, lotions and weird devices could do a lot to help.

This touches on a delicate matter. I had *hundreds* of e-mails on this particular topic. So, let's be frank: When I last checked, human population had just exceeded 6,649,823,921, and was growing every second. More people than cats – way more!

Now, you folks seem to be obsessed with

stopping the growth of cat numbers – which is good. That's why I was neutered – years ago. I've never had kittens. But with human population now approaching seven billion, and with the planet running out of resources to feed and entertain you all, I need to say this very simply:

For heaven's sakes, get over this obsession with breeding and multiplying, and get yourselves fixed! It's just a matter of doing unto yourselves what you've done unto us.

There's another reason for getting fixed: You already know that neutering cats and dogs tends to reduce the level of aggression. And you don't seem able to stop having wars with each other – lots more than dogs and cats ever have.

So, I'd strongly recommend that you take your own advice and start cutting down on the level of aggression in your own species by getting fixed as soon as possible.

(You can call and make an appointment at the Best Friends clinic. I'm sure they'll be happy to help.)

Introducing Seppi

Now that I've gotten that off my chest, I should mention that I'm going to be wrap-

ping up this column.

As you know, I actually went over the Rainbow Bridge some time ago, and we have some new, top-rate investigative reporters and other journalists at the sanctuary.

One of the best is Seppi, who, as you can see, is a serious critic of this magazine. So I've invited him to take my place next month, and if he does OK, I'll let him keep doing it.

Long-distance e-mails

I've also been getting e-mails from people asking what it's like here on the other side



Seppi is a serious critic of this magazine, so he's taking over my column.

of the Rainbow Bridge and whether they can send e-mails to their kitties on this side.

The answer is yes, we do indeed have e-mail over here, although you need a special password to send and receive it.

A word of warning, however. E-mail from this side of the Rainbow Bridge may well contain viruses. And nobody here uses Hans' anti-virus pills or disks.

That's because there's no discrimination against any forms of life on this side. Everyone is welcome here – pugs, penguins, plants, tapeworms, even viruses.

And nobody gets sick, either. That's because everything on this side is presided over by the Great Cat Goddess, who says that love heals all ills.

And that's unconditional. 🐾

