

WANK & SEV—126 years of JOY (1986 - 2006)

Wank and Sev were my 1987 Christmas presents from David, two years before we moved from Wisconsin to California. David said they were the friendliest kitties remaining when he returned to the Milwaukee County Humane Society after seeing them. He had left to contemplate the commitment of bringing two *living beings* into our home in Whitefish Bay.



It only took four days when we were awakened by eighteen-month-old Wank chasing eight-month-old Sev up the stairs, down the hall, and into our bedroom. Since our mattress was on the floor (*Don't ask!*), they chased across our bed—trampling over us. This became their routine and our morning wake-up call.

It took a while to get used to *kitty behavior*. Wank and Sev liked drinking water out of a slow-running faucet. All horizontal surfaces were accessible to them—kitchen counters, dressers, window sills, and even the top of the refrigerator. They loved crawling into small spaces and watching the world from their little *hiding spots*. This was a risk while we were remodeling. Wank must have liked her private accommodations, until she grew hungry and began meowing. Talk about searching high and low and in every nook and cranny. We had sealed Wank in the wall!

We learned *kitty-speak*. The *hungry* meow, the *angry* meow, the *I-wanna-get-that-bird-mouth-chattering* meow, the *puke* meow, the *I'm-scared* meow, ...

We learned that introducing a new cat to the family was a *no-no*. Since David and I were committed to honoring our adoptive responsibility we lived with ten years of *challenges*. Sev rebelled by marking her territory *inside* and outside the house. We combated the problem with enzyme and strategically placed electronic deterrent devices. The new kitty bit the hand that fed it, climbed drapes, sheared sheers, and launched off our antique grand piano scratching the wood finish. We felt sad when her life was cut short with advanced stomach cancer—*although, we did buy new drapes and got the piano refinished!*

We learned to be amateur cat doctors—when Sev developed Feline Urological Syndrome (FUS), we discovered distilled water stopped the problem. We learned to *pill a cat*—giving medicine orally to each of them. When Wank developed advanced kidney failure, we learned to give her subcutaneous injections of fluids, keeping her alive for an unprecedented four years!

People ask about our cats' names. I named the black kitty, Sev, which means black in Armenian. David named

the black and white one, Wank—a word he used at work and thought he made up. We looked up the word in an unabridged dictionary: 1930s British use for masturbation. *This* changed *everything* and surely gave us pause when we called her name outside. With a name like Wank, she was easily (laughingly) remembered during the sixteen years she was seen at the Palm Plaza Pet Hospital in Palmdale, CA.

During this time, Narene adopted us. Sev didn't like him. Wank seemed neutral. He has feline FIV/Aids and Leukemia. He's such a sweet lovable kitty, but we won't adopt any more animals until he passes.

Wank and Sev are the only kitties to have lived in all three of our homes, and to have known both sets of our parents, among whom only David's father survives.

Sev was one-year younger than Wank and a healthy feisty kitty. When she took a sudden turn for the worse in early December 2004, we were in shock. After a month of hospitalization (including ICU at the VCA West Los Angeles Animal Hospital), we brought her home. Her weakened body could not stave off liver and kidney failure. She stopped eating and even choked trying to swallow water from an eye dropper. When she began suffering we asked Dr. Vega, who had treated our babies over the years, to give her peace on 1 February 2005.

Knowing how painless this was for her (not for us!), we wonder why we insist on making humans suffer at the end of their lives. If we truly felt our loved ones' pain, more of us may view euthanasia as death with dignity and an opportunity to pass in peace.

When Wank's heart weakened due to thyroid medication) and intestinal blockage, and lymphoma (cancer) prevented her from eliminating, we called Dr. Vega again. She sedated Wank and then helped her to go in peace.

Wank and Sev gave us 126 *cat-years* of JOY. They lived long enough to join us at our final home overlooking the valley where they are now kissed by every sunrise.

