

Our Cat with a Remarkable Homing Ability

By Liz Gibbons

One evening my parents went to a movie in downtown Lafayette. When they returned to their car there was a cat sitting on the hood. He was not full grown, and since it was a somewhat cold fall evening they decided to take him home. A few days later when the stores were open my father had asked around, but no one knew of anyone who had lost a cat. So that is how this yellowish tabby cat, which my parents named Topaz, came to live with us. I was five at that time. Oh, how my brother and I loved that cat.

The next August we were going on vacation for about a month when Purdue classes were adjourned between summer school and the fall semester. We needed someone to take care of Topaz while we were away. My paternal grandmother had inherited two large tracts of farmland in nearby Oxford, twenty miles from West Lafayette. My dad managed the farms for her. He checked with the Scott family, who were the tenant farmers for one of the farms, and they agreed to let Topaz stay with them while we were on vacation. We left Topaz with them the day before we left on our trip to South Dakota to see Mount Rushmore and other sights in the West. The day after we returned home we drove to Oxford to pick up Topaz. When we arrived Mr. Scott apologetically told us that as soon as we had left Topaz had taken off down the road, and they could not catch him. I was heartbroken.

Our home had a vestibule with a narrow recessed window on each side of the front door. One morning about six weeks later my mother went to the front door to bring in the milk that the milkman had left in the box on the front porch and there sitting in the recess of the window was Topaz. As soon as she opened the door he rushed inside and ran to the kitchen where his food bowls had been kept. We were overjoyed and yet dumbfounded on how Topaz had found his way home. He looked in pretty good shape. Perhaps along the way someone had taken care of him for awhile. We often wondered what special ability guided him those twenty miles back home.