

## Evolution

*By Pete Clark*

In early April, 2014, Judie's cat, Sassy, twenty-two years old, passed away. In human years, the tortoiseshell was one hundred four. Judie had gotten Sassy and her sister Missy when they were kittens. Missy passed away in the early spring of 2008. Judie was very distraught by the passing of her last feline, but vowed to wait at least a month before beginning the search for a new companion. Less than a week later we were combing through the cages of pet stores that featured cats for adoption.

We roamed from East Aurora to Parker, checking out the cages of needy cats in several stores and saw nothing, even close, to a furball that would match its catanality with Judie's personality. We were almost home when we decided to check out the cat-food store near Alameda and Colorado Boulevard. We went to the rear of the store where several cats were living in glass-enclosed habitats. Some of the felines were sleeping, some were bathing and some were up against the glass begging for attention. A small tortoiseshell cat, listed as a female, just sat there, staring out into the world beyond the walls of her prison. The card attached to her cage said her name was Ella and she was eleven years old. Except for the large fake eyes near her ears, the cat's face was black. Judie's interest in the animal was piqued, so I asked an employee to introduce her to us.

We were taken to a small room behind the cages and the cat was brought in and placed on the floor. I reached down to her and put her onto my lap. She immediately melted onto my legs, lying with her chin between her front paws. I petted Ella. Then Judie petted Ella and said she liked the cat but wanted to look at more abandoned souls. Several times I repeated, "This is the cat." I finally convinced Judie that Ella was the treasure that would fill the void in her life and the three of us headed for home.

At home, Judie held Ella on her lap for a while. Then Ella jumped down and came to sit on my lap. I reached for a book and Ella jumped to the floor. She refused to have anything to do with me for almost six years. In January, this year, Judie became ill and was hospitalized and in rehab for six weeks. Ella discovered she was suddenly dependent on me for her food and water. Harry, my cat, drinks his water out of a bowl. Ella has to have hers in a glass. The first thing I would hear early in the mornings, was Ella in the hallway, yowling for her food. Every two or three hours throughout the day she would stalk me, demanding food. As my reward, she finally she began to let me pet her. Now she comes into my bedroom at 6:00am demanding breakfast. She has become *Simone Legree*, a dreadful slave driver, in a small, but very loud, package.