

Cheetah Cat

By Pete Clark

Once upon a time, in a shopping center, not so far away, an old and battered blue pickup pulled into the parking lot, chugging to a stop in one of the open ended yellow boxes that divided the tarmac surface. The driver's door opened and a man holding a gray tabby teenager exited the pickup's cab, walked over to an abandoned shopping cart and gently placed the cat in the basket. The man looked at me, with a combination of sadness and embarrassment on his face, returned to his truck and drove away.

I lifted the tabby from the shopping cart and a long relationship began. Initially, I carried the tabby to the sidewalk bordering a Laundromat, a Dollar Store and a Chinese Food take-out shop, where children were noisily playing, waiting for their mothers and sisters to finish washing clothes and linens. I had hoped someone would take a liking to the young feline and want to take him home. Fortunately, for me, everyone ignored the cat, so I called my wife and asked if we could take in a stray. She answered, "Yes, bring it on home."

After we arrived home, I closely examined the latest addition to our family. He had the markings of a tabby but his stripes were made up of spots and his young face had the shape of a cheetah's face, hence I named him Cheetah Cat. He grew into and remained a lean and hard, indoor and outdoor cat. If he was outside and heard my car coming down the street, he would run from wherever he was to be in the driveway when I opened the car door. Two months after Cheetah Cat's arrival, my wife passed away. He got me through the darkest period of my life. I owe him.

Nine years later, I gave in to pressure and had him fixed, even though he was not broken. After his surgery, he became very broken. He stopped roaming, stayed near home, gained weight and became diabetic. He must have special canned food and dry food, available only through the Veterinarian and insulin shots twice per day and have his blood sugar checked every three months. He is more than worth the expense.

I noticed a spot on his left hind paw that looked as if he had been licking the spot too much. I kept an eye on the anomaly and it did not go away. After two weeks, the sore was still there and appeared to be enlarging, so I boxed Cheetah Cat up and took him to visit the vet. The doctor said the growth was not one that is common to cats. He said he would remove the growth and send it out for a biopsy, so I left Cheetah Cat at the clinic for surgery the next morning. I picked him up that afternoon and waited for the biopsy results. The word is he does not have cancer.