

More on cats and people

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Many of you have terrific stories about your cats. That was clear after last week's column, which described the death of Tiger, one of our family's cats.

Here are three.

If you have one, please send it to jnathan@hhh.umn.edu. We will post them at www.centerforschoolchange.org

#1: Our last cat was named Shawnee. She actually was our daughter's cat that our daughter got in 1994. Our daughter died in 1995 after her second liver transplant. She was 22. We still had her cat and kept her as a living memory. We also came to the time when we had to take her away. It's a tough time but during her time with us she showed us her own personality and constantly reminded us of our daughter.

#2 A thousand times driving home, from two blocks away, Callahan, our tabby cat (and actual ruler of our one-cat, three-dog, and now with the kids gone two-person domain), would hear the diesel engine, start his routine of crawling out of the bushes or from under one of the cars parked in front of the garage, trot down the long drive, and greet me as I drove in.

A thousand times Callie would walk past my incoming car, turn to follow it, stop when I stopped, then walk with me from the car, up the back steps, on to the porch, and into the house for the evening.

A thousand times until a week ago Friday.

Callie must have stopped and turned before I passed and was hit by the right rear wheel of my 4,000 pound (car). I

barely felt the bump, but my heart sank and as I rolled to a stop, I quickly got out to see if he was lying on the drive behind me. He was not; relief. But as I turned toward the porch, I saw that in his last few moments he would try to continue the path he had taken a thousand times, toward the steps, up to the porch.

(A friend) helped me as I dug a small grave in the yard and we put Callie in the ground. I thanked her, and went inside; by then my wife was home and I described what had happened. She tried to comfort me as I bawled like a baby.

#3 Every time it happens in our family we vow we will never get another pet. And then, of course, we get another pet and get hooked again. When one of our pair of cats died a few years ago the surviving cat promptly lost all its fur. So, we had this depressed, bald, little creature wandering the house looking for the other one for weeks. Considering all the love pets provide us there must be some eternal provision for them, right? So, I leave you with this philosophical thought. If there were no cats in heaven then it wouldn't really be heaven would it?