



## SERENDIPITY

Newsletter of The Recovery Group Community  
Springtime Pet Edition

SERENDIPITY'S	TABLE OF CONTENTS	APRIL 2010
Dedication	Dodee's Charlie	How Pets Help Recovery
From the Editor	Gerri's Snickerdoodle & Poohbear	April Announcements
From the Administration	Karen's Cindy	WTS Begins
From the Meetings	Linda's Aspen, Pepe & Rudiger	Big Book Study Begins
Founder's Corner	Shannon's Beanie	TRG Youth Program
Nancy's Blair	Deb's Miko	New Christian Meetings
Patt's Glory Cat	Clara's Goldie & Tootsie	Pet Recipe of the Month
Robert's Takya	Cate's Destiny	OA Podcast
Mari's Tiger	Barbara's Martha	The Serenity Prayer
Nancy A's Angel	Jewel's Boog	Trusted Servants of TRG

### DEDICATION

This issue of Serendipity is dedicated to the memory of Dodee's Sushi, who crossed the Rainbow Bridge on March 22, 2010 after a long and happy life.



Dear Little (((Sushi)))



*I sit and try to write the words, I want your heart to hear.  
Hoping to find some comfort, in the fact that you're not here.  
I do believe with all my heart, that your soul has gone to be,  
With all the other angel dogs, that you were meant to see.*

### **FROM THE EDITOR**

Serendipity is going to the dogs! And cats!! And TRG members have a lot of those ~ so this issue may be longer than normal. We hope you enjoy it all month long.

What fun it has been putting together this issue of Serendipity! After a long, cold and snowy winter for many of us in the Recovery Group community, we find that Springtime is almost here. As warm weather approaches, getting outside is uppermost in our minds. Flowers, birds, nice breezes and long wonderful walks come to mind and for those of us who have them, especially walking our dogs. I began to think about all our loopies and wondered who had pets, what their names were, what breeds they were and, most of all, how they interacted with them. I had read an article about how much pets helped recovery from illnesses including obesity. At first I pooh-poohed it but decided that it might be fun to do an issue of Serendipity with our pets as the focus especially in regard to our recovery.

Someone remarked to me a couple of weeks ago that it seemed sort of silly to devote an issue of Serendipity to pets since we're struggling with a serious disease and some are even dying from it! One can't roam around this community very long without seeing evidence of the pain and suffering that compulsive eating has on us. Day in and day out we watch while COE takes its toll on the quality of lives. So why is this issue littered with dogs and cats? You will find the answer just by reading the stories below. We hope you enjoy this special issue.

### **FROM THE ADMINISTRATION**

The Recovery Group is unique in many different ways. Being unique, however, doesn't mean that one cannot find the same resources, support loops, sponsors and meetings that we find all over the world in our face-to-face meetings. The fact that we don't just offer one meeting .. or one group or one study doesn't mean that we can't expect each and every group we have to work hard to provide to compulsive eaters the same thing they find anywhere --- a Fellowship that offers a way to combat and recover from the disease of compulsive eating. It just requires a lot more organization and working together than one might expect. It also requires a lot of good

hearts and energetic volunteers who are willing to give service to the thousands who come to us for help.

The Recovery Group is not a "professional" organization and, even with permission granted by Tradition Eight, we do not have service centers that employ special workers. From every corner of our international community, each and every position is handled by a volunteer. The skills required vary widely and those who come to us to give service are put to work in positions they enjoy. This requires training and dedication. First we have the Coordinators and Meeting Leaders who work with the members of their support groups to provide the needs of their members. Those appointed to these positions rely and are helped by the Recovery Administrators who work with the Director of Administrators daily. The hub of our group is TRGAdm, a public office where anyone can write and be directed to the right division, group or person for help. Our Intergroup serves in much the same way as any Intergroup. Responding to each of these Administrative groups is Recovery Tech, another public address anyone can use to ask for and receive personal help. Finally, all of these have a loving, experienced and fair-minded group coming together known as TRG's Executive Committee made up of members who work around the clock on any issue that reaches them until, after a full discussion, they reach a conclusion fair to all.

The Recovery Group cannot exist without team work on every level. We are very blessed to have men and women who are team players and who give of themselves daily to make sure that no stone is left unturned when it comes to serving our members. Coordinators, Administrators and Meeting Leaders are not gurus ... they are here for you as administrators and to provide you with everything necessary to enable you to work the OA 12 Step Program effectively.

## **FROM THE MEETINGS**

### ***CRAVINGS AND ONLINE MEETINGS***

I once did a search of the AA BIG Book for the word(s) related to craving. I was so surprised. I thought I would find an endless list of references but I only found a few!

The first was in the Dr's Opinion where it talks about the physical craving we can have for substances. Another reference I found on page 164 in the closing of the chapter "A Vision for You." In this paragraph it talks about developing the fellowship you crave.

Interestingly, online meetings and chat actually help with both of these issues! We can go to a meeting every three hours around the clock when we are going to any length to remain abstinent and are experiencing cravings.

We can also attend the online meetings and chat to connect with others and build a network of fellowship and support.

One of our goals at TRG is to have all meetings led by trained leaders whenever possible. This provides a much safer and positive environment for our members and newcomers. If you are interested in training as a meeting leader please contact [MtgAdm@TheRecoveryGroup.org](mailto:MtgAdm@TheRecoveryGroup.org).

Linda Silkwood, TRG Meetings Coordinator



## FOUNDERS CORNER

My little dog - a heartbeat at my feet.

~ Edith Wharton

To everything there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

~ Ecclesiastes

I believe pets come into people's lives for a season ... and a reason. The bonding that takes place with a pet seems to be based on someone's needs at that time in their life ... at least it has been that way with me. This doesn't mean that I loved one of my pets more or less than the other ... any more than I love one of my children more than another ... or my friends. It just means that I have had a greater need at certain times that my pet filled. And because of that greater need, I became more emotionally attached. I've never been able to quite figure out what causes me to bond so tightly with one person than I do another. Or more with one pet than another.

I also believe that the stage of recovery we're in plays a great part in our bonding. Pets do not judge us. We can do almost anything to them including ignore them and they come to us unabashedly with their love and their loyalty. I also know that when we suffer the loss of our pet, it can't be replaced anymore than a child or someone we love dearly can be replaced. When I met someone who became my dearest friend a long time ago, she had a Pomeranian named Sunny. She had lost her 19 year old son to leukemia and had spent quite a long time in deep grief until Sunny came into her life. She adored him. Over the years, I watched her adopt one Pomeranian after another trying to replace Sunny. It never happened ... she never bonded with an animal again, although she still has pets.

I had 13 cats when I was growing up. I was bonded to none of them. Instead I bonded to my chicken, Helen, and I grieved for that chicken far more than any of the cats when they died. After I left home, I had no pets until I married and had children. A black and white cocker spaniel we named Pepper came into our lives but the mailman ran over him and we were petless for a number of years. Then a miniature silver poodle became part of our family for 18 years. Her name was Noelle because we adopted her at Christmas time but she didn't feel like "mine." She was more my children's pet and I wasn't bonded ... I was just the one who fed her and gave her baths. Then I found God's most perfect creature, the cat, again and I became mother to Callie, the calico, for awhile until she broke her tail and died and then Ginger, a long haired beauty was mine until my daughter convinced me that Ginger really should be her cat. So they

moved away and after Ginger no more cats. No more pets of any kind ... until . . . .

I had suffered a significant emotional setback in my life and was in a state of grieving when a small 5 pound Pomeranian came into my life. He had been mistreated by his former owner and the day I looked into his eyes, he became mine. I am convinced that the years of emotional turmoil during the time I've been Tiger's Mom have caused me to wonder what I would have ever done without him. My Tiger's story is below with all of yours.

Have a happy April, my dear loopbuds.

Love in recovery,

Mari 🌹

## **SUPER PETS** **AND THOSE THEY OWN** *The Stories of TRG Members and How Their Pets Help Their Recovery*



### **NANCY T's BLAIR**



Blair At Tax Time

My granddog, Blair, is a Border Collie that was trained by my daughter-in-law, Sharon, and a professional trainer as a service dog. The things she could do were remarkable. As a service dog, Blair seemed to know when she was needed and she was loved by everyone. Blair went over the Rainbow Bridge this winter and the loss has been devastating for us.

Let me tell you how she came to be part of our family. One day Sharon and her daughter were traveling on the freeway when someone dumped 2 little puppies out of the car in front of them. Both are dog lovers so they stopped to save the puppies, but one was dead. They picked up the other one and took it to their veterinarian who managed to save it.

Even though we miss Blair terribly, there is another collie who is following in her footsteps. He also was a throw away dog. Sharon's daughter, Amanda, works for a veterinarian and someone dumped a bag with puppies into a dumpster behind the vet's office. Amanda heard the puppies crying when she was leaving the office for home and rescued them. The vet told her she could have one and she picked out Blaine who is now in his second year of training. He is a much smaller dog than Blair, but is already able to do many of the duties that Blair took such pleasure in performing.

*Nancy*



### **PATT'S GLORY CAT**

Glory Cat reminds me to "Relax and Take It Easy." Even on days when she doesn't do very much, she will take naps in between. :)

Purrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr =^;^=

Love and great JOY in recovery,

*Patt*

### **MARI'S TIGER**

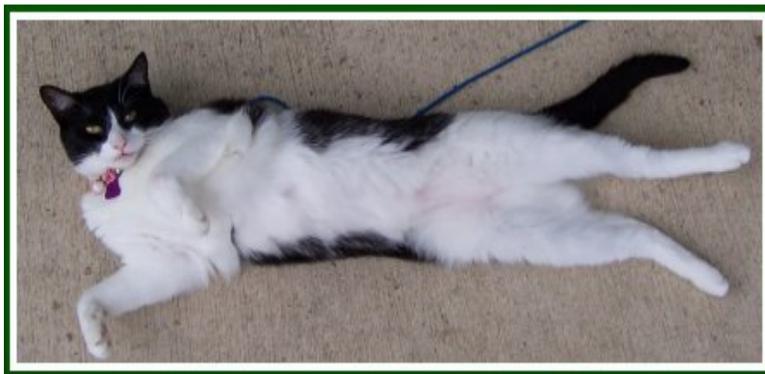




How can a little 5 pound fluffy, furry, funny bundle become the love of someone's life? My precious Tiger and I connected from the very first minute we looked into each other's eyes and my life was never the same after that. Powerlessness has been a big part of my OA program and my little dog's innocence and trust has made it possible for me to feel exactly the same way toward my Higher Power. Tiger relies on me to take care of him just as I finally learned that I am happiest when I can allow myself be taken care of by letting go and letting God. My sweet little guy is living proof that one does not have to verbalize in order to communicate. Out there somewhere is something spiritual that allows this to happen and it requires no guesswork, no magic and Tiger's unspoken words somehow find their way into my heart.

I've been Tiger's Mom for six years and he has never been without me a single day. He knows every move I make and can read my mind. I'm serious! I can also read his. Almost the minute I know I'm leaving the house, he knows and starts running around in tiny circles and heads for the purse I carry him in. His favorite thing is driving somewhere in the car and riding in the grocery store basket. His second favorite thing is being rocked right before he goes to sleep. When Tiger wants something, I know it. He comes to me and sits and looks at me with a certain look that says ... "I want something!" I usually know exactly what it is but we go through the routine anyway. I ask a litany of questions and he has a special look for each of them. Food? His ball? He's lost something? His dog, Ruff? Outside? His Daddy? Play? He will bark when I say the right word and scamper in the direction of whatever it is. If God made angels in the form of dogs, my Tiger is one of them.

### **ROBERT'S TAKYA**



Takya is my black and white cat with warm green eyes. She will be nine years old this summer. We have lived together since she was eight weeks old. A lot has happened in those nine years. We have walked in the field

behind the house. Chased chipmunks. Soaked up the sun. And her favorite [and mine] snuggled in and slept on 'her human.'

Several years ago she went from a happy, slightly pudgy girl to a drawn and underweight cat who wanted to be left alone to sleep on her heating pad. It turns out she had contracted heartworms and was trying to fight them off. Through research I discovered there was a 50-50 chance that she wouldn't live out the next two years [it takes that long for the heartworms to go through their lifecycle]. There was nothing I could do for her except love her and keep her comfortable. A year and one half later, she started to put on weight and started to act like her old self. Yeah! However, her kidneys were damaged by the heartworms. The vet put her on a special low protein diet and she did great.

I built a sunroom on the house and Takya thought it was built just for her. She soaked up more sun, watched the birds fly overhead and snuggled on 'her human.' She enjoys every minute of her life, as it happens. Life is not always serious. Enjoy the sunshine. Enjoy the process.

Last autumn, Takya lost some weight and was lethargic. A quick trip to the vet's and it was discovered that she had a bladder infection. Medication cleared up the infection but her damaged kidneys were failing further. In addition to the special diet, she now takes a liquid medication, best described as chalk in water, two times per day. Also, she receives 150 mg. of saline solution daily through an injection under her skin.

Through all this, Takya has been a trooper! Whether she has just received her injection or makes faces at me as I squirt her medication down her throat, with in a few minutes she is up on my lap demanding attention and love. Takya snuggles in deeply and falls asleep. Her love is unconditional, she does not hold my actions against me. She enjoys the sun when it shines, cleaning her fur till it glows. Her muscles have become weaker and she cannot jump up and visit her favorite sleeping spots anymore. Takya knows and accepts her limitations. I know her time with me is limited. I deal with my feelings by using the 12 Steps and Tools of Recovery. I might suffer from a disease, but I do not have to make myself and everyone around me miserable. I can choose to have a positive attitude and keep fighting my disease.

### NANCY A's ANGEL



This is my Bichon Frise, Angel. I got her one gloomy December, two days before Christmas. It was a most depressing year. No real plans for the Christmas season, nothing to do on Christmas day, no gifts to get, no gifts to give. I was very depressed and thought "what is something that I have wanted to do for myself for years and have denied myself thinking it was

too big to accomplish? A dog was the answer. . I had been corresponding with a breeder for a while, who just so happened, was driving a few puppies up that Friday afternoon. I picked her up during my lunch hour at work, from a van parked in a parking lot on the lower East side of Manhattan. I put her in my tote, brought her to work, propped her up on my computer (she was about 7 inches), finished the day and went home on the subway, with her in my tote, on my lap. That was the beginning of a new life for me!

Angel has been the key that has opened the door to the whole world for me. She gets me out of the house, attracts people on the street, brings me new friends, elicits smiles from everyone we see, and is a very friendly, loving presence in our community. Best of all – I can sleep at night! I had been under a doctor's care for anxiety for a year or so before I got her, but never really totally calmed down until Angel was snuggling with me on my bed at night. The unconditional adoration I get from her is unlike anything I've ever had. There is no sacrifice too great to make when it comes to the care of this spirit of love in my home. I bathe and groom her myself, a great pleasure, and a great way for us to bond. I feed her better than I feed myself! When she wants to eat things that I am eating that aren't exactly healthy, I say to her "do you think I would let you eat this stuff?!?!?". No – I prepare her food with whole grains, fresh meat, and fresh vegetables. She's virtually on grey sheet!

I don't know whether I would be here if I didn't get Angel, she has been my angel of mercy.

*Nancy A. – New York*

### **DODEE'S CHARLIE**



I have many dog stories, but I have chosen Charlie, our adopted basset hound. Maybe because he was with me the day I decided to make the call to Overeaters Anonymous.

I had seen my primary care doctor to find a way to lose weight. I was 60 pounds overweight by the charts. I wasn't eligible for the gastric balloon because of previous intestinal surgery and didn't weigh enough to have bypass. My PC doc sent me to a GI specialist. He told me that the surgery wouldn't help if I continue to eat compulsively. I said I still wanted it and he said he would present it to the board.

He called me back with the results one day in April. He said it was as he thought -- my insurance would not pay for gastric bypass. I asked what I should do then. He answered with derision in his voice "go to Weight Watchers."

When I got off the phone, I felt awful. I really wanted to talk to someone who understood and I couldn't think of one person I could call. So I put Charlie on his leash and walked my three-mile walk, crying all the way. By the time I got back home, I was down to two options -- a hypnosis clinic that advertised a lot locally or OA. I figured I had better try the cheapest one first and as soon as I got home, I made the call.

Charlie was my companion as I did my daily walks and often helped me understand my relationship with my HP. Here's one:

We were walking on a slight incline and I saw another owner walking with a big dog. The two owners could see each other, but because of the incline, the dogs couldn't. I thought it best that we not meet up with the dog. I changed course and went to our right and the other owner changed course and went to his right. Charlie never knew that a change had been made. I realized that my HP does this for me all the time. I am being gently led down paths. I can't see the obstacles that I am steered around -- I just trust that my path is the correct one.

*Dodee*

### **GERRI'S SNICKERDOODLE AND POOHBEAR**



I'm Gerri, an abstinent food addict and "mom" to Snickerdoodle and Pooh Bear. These two little fur babies teach me about unconditional love. They think I'm the greatest. When we stay out a little longer than we should, we are still greeted enthusiastically, by wagging tails, jumping up and down so we'll pick them up and get some lick-kisses.

I wish I was half the person that my two dogs think I am. Perhaps by continuing to take the steps and look for opportunities to be of service to others, I might get a little closer. Perhaps by overlooking when others make me wait a little too long, I might get a little closer.

Pooh Bear is a little compulsive overeater and this creates problems for our new puppy, Snickerdoodle, who is not gaining weight as she should. I've got to watch them at meal time, so that Pooh doesn't eat Snick's food. I understand how she feels; I often would like to eat my husband's food! God must be watching over me at meal time too.

Love,

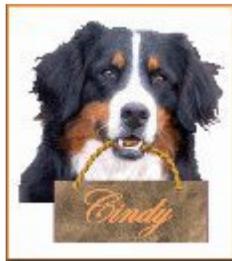
*Gerri*

Trust God and buy broccoli!

***KAREN'S CINDY***  
***How My Service Dog Helps Me Live My OA Program***



I have a disability and use a Service Dog that allows me to live a fairly normal life. Cindy, my dog, is very food motivated...just like me! She is easily trained with food. When I go somewhere with her, I always carry a little tin with her kibble in it and shake it to get her attention. I also keep mints in another tin. Yep, you guessed it, I made the mistake one day of grabbing the wrong tin and took her kibble on a walk with me!



Cindy is very sneaky. She will never let me go into my kitchen alone. She is trained to go no further than the dishwasher for safety reasons. So there she sits, by the dish washer, watching me do my thing in the kitchen. She makes it very difficult to sneak anything. She knows that good things come from crinkly foil or cellophane. I know my higher power has a sense of humor because he uses my Service Dog as his watch dog over me to ensure I am eating healthy. I never thought about it until recently how much she is also my OA Service Dog because she watches everything I eat and she acts as my conscience. I'm realizing more and more how she teaches me how to live the OA program and to be honest about what I eat. I've learned I can't cheat nor sneak food living with an OA Service dog in my home!

Karen A.

### LINDA'S ASPEN, PEPE AND RUDIGER



Pets have been a big part of my life almost from the beginning. When I was three, our cat, Fuzzy, had a seizure right in front of me and died. I had never seen anything die before. I gained my understanding of death there and then. My cats were my best friends. They meant the world to me when I was growing up. In my life thus far, I have probably had hundreds of pets: cats, dogs, mice, guinea pigs and Joyce, The Gerbil. They have greatly enriched my life and that of my family. Even though I am sixty years old, our pets are still part of the family. I put their names on our Christmas cards right along with my husband's and mine!

As a compulsive overeater and a person in program, cats both show me how I act and show me how I should act. They are probably my best teachers! We currently have two cats, Rudiger and Aspen. Aspen was a declawed cat who appeared, nearly starved, on a farm. The farmer took her to the Humane Society and they worked long and hard to save her. Probably because of her previous shortage of food, Aspen loves to eat! She and Rudiger are not friends. Whenever Rudiger annoys or frightens her, I have observed Aspen going up to her food dish and gobbling up her food as if there is no tomorrow. The first time I saw this, I said, right out loud, "Aspen is a compulsive overeater!" I mentioned this on one of my loops and quite a few other people responded that their pets are compulsive overeaters too. In Aspen's case, I don't think she is

mimicking us. I think it is largely a reaction to having a lack of food and in having little else that she can control in her life. We have to measure her

food and chart it or she would be enormous! She's over ten pounds and has a small frame. We had another cat, Juliette, who appeared on our farm quite a few years ago. She had gotten too cold and her ears and part of her tail fell off. She was one of the most motherly, loving, animals I have ever known. Having also nearly died, she was full of gratitude and love. However, I noticed that she really packed on the weight. It was probably a case of considering having enough food the height of prosperity. The first time she walked into

our house, she found the double bowled food dish and laid across the top of it. She had a look on her face that showed complete satisfaction. I could almost hear her say, "I have arrived!" I think that having enough food is also a measure of success and satisfaction for me as well.

We have all had bad days in which lots of people snipe at us and things go wrong. We come home and bark at our spouse and the kids. Maybe they are sharp with the pets. Then, I have observed that the pets hiss or bat at one another. The bad will just moves all through the home. When I see this, I know it is time to stop and calm down. It isn't fun watching the pets mirroring the worst aspects of myself!

In times of stress or sorrow, our pets have been soothing. Their love is unconditional. Juliette and Dutchess both had purrs so soothing that I wanted to record them! Those darling cats have been gone for years but I will never forget them. Rudiger, our eight year old female that we adopted in October, has a really odd purr. It is not particularly

rhythmic. It is as if she is playing it by ear. We can feel it in her side rather than in her throat where purrs are usually apparent. Yet, it is special to think that she is playing this sound just for me.

Of the four cats who moved to Saskatchewan with us, the final one, Pepe, died in October. He was nineteen and he had been ours for most of his life. My husband and I planned not to get any more pets. We thought we had paid our dues to animal society. We thought it would be nice not to have to hire pet sitters prior to taking a trip. We thought we'd save a great deal of money on vet bills. However, we didn't even last a week before we adopted Rudiger! One hour less than a week since Pepe died, I was down at the vets' bringing Rudiger home. Life without pets wasn't life. It was mere existence. I suspect that we will have pets as long as possible. They are family members to us and we love them dearly.

*Linda*

### SHANNON'S BEANIE



I met Beanie about 14 years ago. She was a shelter puppy, a shepherd mix with floppy ears and one white paw. I adopted her with my soon to be

ex-boyfriend. She was our attempt at family and settling down. Two months into dog ownership, our pack of three, turned into a pack of two, and both Beanie and I were the better for it. I cried every night into my glass of chianti, but I found loving a dog is far superior to loving a boy and slowly, oh so slowly, I began my journey into recovery. My drinking and partying slowed down a lot. I stopped staying out all night. It's really hard to stay out all night when you have a puppy at home. Because I was single, my diet was mostly vegetarian. Having a dog meant, I walked a lot so I lost weight our first few years together. It was easy to tell myself that since weight had stopped being such an issue, I was okay. I met another boy, we got married, and I put on 40 pounds and started drinking myself into early middle age.

At 32, my dog Bean was 5 years old. We were joined that year by another shelter dog, a little Pomeranian named "Frankie Pom-Pom." Loving animals, slowly teaches you to love yourself, and after 20 years of drinking and doing drugs I decided to get sober and I went to AA. I gained an additional 10 pounds my first year of sobriety. I was 5-5 and close to 210 pounds, but I was sober. I would take my dogs to the park. I would go to meetings, and for about a year, I ate whatever I wanted.

Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> came, and I ate an entire cheesecake. Shortly after, I again started dieting and lost about 40 pounds. My first husband hated that I quit the bar scene and resented the new healthy me. He wanted his party girl back. At two and a half years into sobriety, I put on my girl pants and I left him. The hardest part was the two weeks in between apartments when I had to leave my dogs with him. I moved in with husband 2, and we settled in to a life a domesticity. Long walks in the park, and lots of ice cream at night. I quickly gained back the 40 pounds I had lost.

From 2003- 2009, I have gained and lost 600 pounds. Every year would start with good intentions. January- April I would lose, September-December I would gain. Long walks with my dear Bean stopped being an option about 2 years ago, her arthritis has gotten too bad. For the last six months, I have had to come to terms with the fact that the best friend I have ever had is going to leave me soon. In early January, after a season of bingeing, I laid down next to my dear dog, and I cried. "You can't leave me yet, I'm still broken."

About a week later, I got into OA. Beanie's bed is set up near my yoga mat, and a few times a week she hangs out with me while I slowly ease my body back into my yoga practice. I don't do yoga every day. I don't work out every day. I don't eat ONLY vegetables (although I seem to be eating a lot of them lately). I don't starve myself. I don't promise myself that I will lose 40 pounds by bikini season. Instead, I pray every day, I eat three moderate meals a day, with no snacking in between. I avoid my trigger foods. I email my sponsor my food, and I check in when I am unsure what to do. I go to meetings, and I share with my recovery loops.

I thank God for every day I have with my dear dogs, especially Beanie. She has been my guardian angel for almost 15 years now, and she has loved me both fat and thin. Every day with her is a gift, and although I pray she will stay with me a little longer, I know that I am no longer broken.

### **CATE'S DESTINY**



I named him Destiny, and quickly realized that he had already adopted me. He taught me again how to have fun, to relax, to play and to laugh. My quiet empty home became one filled with love and chatter. There were no more empty lost moments. Destiny called me to the present moment again and again, and together we passed the next fifteen years as partners in mischief and delight and unconditional love. In the midst of it all, I found my new directions without seeking and struggling. The paths were laid out before me simply by living life on its own terms and in its own present moments.

If ever again I begin to wonder if God is truly going to provide me with what I need to live and give life fully, I remember the miracle of Destiny, brought to me twice before I knew enough to say yes; bringing with him more gifts than I ever could have thought to seek. The generosity, gratitude and joy of life, all wrapped up in one little gray bundle with a head bigger than his body and eyes that reflected the light of the divine.

*Cate*

### **DEB'S MIKO**



This is Miko, my 5-year old Shitzu. She is my constant companion. All of my dogs play a huge part in my life and my recovery. When my husband and I became empty nesters, I bought her to cheer him up. The first time I saw her picture on the internet, I fell in love with her eyes. She bonded with me much more than my husband, so he kept saying, "you stole my dog". A year later I bought him a Shitzu also.

Miko sleeps between us in bed and gets really mad if you try to move her. Her favorite daytime place is on the back of the couch. She often tries to get up behind my head when I am in a lawn chair and doesn't get why that won't work like the couch. Her favorite thing is kissing my husband or me. Her favorite food is crackers and her favorite toy is a stuffed beaver. When I am sad, Miko kisses me. When I am happy, Miko kisses me. So, unconditional love abounds. As I consider all the wonderful blessings in my life, I always include my Miko.

*Deb*

### CLARA'S GOLDIE AND TOOTSIE



### ONE GREEN BEAN AT A TIME

#### *A Parable For Sponsors & Sponsees*

Goldie, the cutest little long-haired chihuahua is a new gift from my friend, Ruth. We've spent the whole holiday vacation bonding and just enjoying each other's warmth. But the honest truth is that she's learned to "go" outside via my front door and the resulting hidden time bombs are embarrassing not to mention hard on my grass. So... my task this vacation time was to get a doggie door put into my sliding patio door (check), get a little fence put up for her in the back (check) and train her to go outside in the back. She used a doggie door at Ruth's house so I felt like it would be a piece of cake.

I carried Goldie outside and down the steps and got the fence all secure. Then it was time to teach her to come back in the same way she went out - via the back door and the steps. She'd climbed them before with no

problem so I thought, hey, this will be easy. Well, Goldie balked at the first step. Nope. Don't recognize that. I want to come in the front door (aka the easier, softer way). Nope. Not going to let you in that way. I wheedled and I pleaded and I praised when she approached the first step. But she is shy and bashful and it was new and unknown. So I pulled out the can of French Style Green Beans. She loves green beans. Oh she wanted that green bean SO badly but just couldn't make first step. She'd approach it and then run away, looking all around for another way. "Maybe there are some green beans here on the ground. I know I found one here before." Nope. But there's that one. Ew. Okayyyy. She eased up to that first step, grabbed that green bean and ran. It took a long time but she finally got up that first step, grabbed a bean off the second step and acckk (yeah that's a sponsor word... acckk) was back on the ground again. Well I kept playing with green beans... it's attraction not promotion after all, right? ONE Step up....run back down.. Step two... then three... patiently I fed little pieces of green beans to Goldie. I found out pretty quickly that I had to keep her attention or she wouldn't see the green bean "land" to get it. She spent a fair amount of time at each step sniffing the step itself. Trying to figure out what it was. And always she'd go up a step or two. Before long she wasn't even aware she was climbing steps anymore, but what she did know was that it was all new and she didn't like that!



Finally, finally she made her way all the way up to the lower deck. WOW. Good girl! Then the last 4 steps to the screened porch, she was getting full. Green beans not so attractive anymore. "This is strange. I don't know this way. I think I need to go find a different way." So more patience. More trying not to scare her off. More trying to show her the way. Finally when she was just not going to climb that last step, and I was tired and my feet were wet from putting the fence up in my slippers (yeah dumb I know) I gave up and went inside. I thought well she's so close... maybe if I turn on the microwave she'll hear the ding. I had just turned back to the dining room when in Miss Golden Girl prissed right through the dining room into the kitchen like she knew exactly what she was doing. As soon as my back was turned and I had given up for the third time... she just decided to come on in. Sigh.

So the next time you're ready to give up on yourself, or if your sponsee seems to go up a step or two but then right back down... be patient. God wins in the end. Happy Spring to all and many blessings as you find your own life's delight one step at a time.

*Clara T.*

### **DAWN'S HARRY AND SET**



In March of 2008 I was asked to foster 2 cats for a friend in recovery who was going into treatment. Harry and Milly came to me flea bitten, disease ridden and, as I found out later, 3 weeks pregnant. They were my first pets on my own. I had owned animals before but with my ex-husband and I was never really present for them. I was always rushing off to do one thing or another.

On April the 22nd a litter of 4 kittens were born into my life. Isis, Aten Ra, Set and Osris were the most beautiful bundles of fun ever. I watched them grow and with 6 cats it was soon apparent I needed to find homes for them. Osris and Set soon found homes with the parents of a friend of mine and I kept the parents and the two girls. I loved and cared for them as best as I could. They had a loving and happy home.

Last year in about June Harry, the father, started to disappear all day. I was distraught. By December he was hardly ever around and it was apparent that he had found another home. I met the lady who he had adopted and agreed that it would be best for Harry to live with her. I grieved for Harry for months before he left and afterwards. I see him now in the shadows of my garden sometimes. A little reminder of the love he had for me and I for him.

These things seem unrelated to OA recovery but for me they are intrinsically linked. I had to learn to let go of the things that comforted me in my trigger foods. I had to be strong and learn to let go of control of Harry and of my food with a food plan. I had to learn to love myself and have responsibility for my recovery in very much the same way I had to learn to open my heart and show up for my cats. Letting go of the old life of rushing and running around has allowed me to eat abstintently and also be present for my girls when they want a cuddle on my lap. They can tell, and do tell me, when I am frantic, rushing or irritable. They are my lifeline to sanity. They teach me calmness, serenity and acceptance.

Most of all they have taught me healthy boundaries and love for myself. They are incredibly good at telling me when they have had enough. They eat when they are hungry and leave it when they are not.

I am grateful for the lessons they teach and to my Higher Power for bringing them into my life.

Walking with you,

*Dawn W*

### **BARBARA'S MARTHA\***



There is not a sweeter little dog in the whole world. She is a 7 year old white miniature poodle whose total purpose in life is to protect and love me as much as she can. She jumps on my lap, looks at me with her big dog eyes and implores that I adore her 24 hours a day.

She has helped my recovery enormously. Martha is constant, dependable, loving, supportive and always excited to see me. I certainly do see HP in her because those are qualities I need in HP for my continuing recovery. She is such a great listener and another stellar quality is that she is not a compulsive overeater! Simply amazing! Kibble will stay in her dish for 3 days before it's gone. But she is a wonderful pre-rinser before I put the dishes in the dishwasher. She's also a great snuggler in the morning under the covers.

She gets me out and about for a walk and has even talked me into longer walks these days. You see, body movement outside of dancing has somehow remained my greatest challenge in recovery. In all the years in this program I've always been able to take off the weight without exercising. Not a good idea. How could one little 15 pound dog be so persuasive?! Well ... she continues to be even in a misty rain. I live in Seattle (rain city) so cannot use that as an excuse. I have learned from extensive experience that weight loss for me without exercise guarantees a thrown-out back. Have done it many times. Sigh .... Will I ever learn?

With my dear little counselor, psychiatrist, 4-legged sponsor, best friend I am learning to be a kinder gentler me. I have shown more compassion, concern, and genuine kindness plus a sincere loving heart than I ever have in my entire life. The other bonus is that her "advice" doesn't cost me a penny, except for kibble! My angel dog has helped me have 22 months of continuous abstinence and maintaining a healthy weight for a year now.

So I do love both my 2-legged & 4-legged sponsors! Woof Woof!!

*Barbara W.*

Editor's Note: Transmission difficulty with Barbara's Martha. Above is a stuffed poodle. :-)

### **JEWEL'S BOOG**



My dog's name is Boog. He's my helper and in April of 2009, he weighed a whopping 11.6 pounds. My veterinarian was angry. She had pulled 9 teeth from his head as his previous owners must have fed this red Min-Pin sweets. I adopted him from the pound the year before as a Valentine's gift for my husband. He has bad knees and the vet says he must be ten pounds tops. My commitment to another open hearted OA member to walk him each day has paid off. Today Boog is a svelte 9.6 pounds of muscles.

And guess what? MY knees feel better too!!

*Jewel, COE, CUE, Bulimic in recovery*



## ARTICLES

### PETS AND RECOVERY

Web MD is a respectable and popular website devoted to health issues. They list 27 ways that pets can improve our health and among them are some that directly affect us as compulsive eaters emotionally and physically. Most of us pet owners don't really need to be told this because we already know it. Animals simply make us feel good. The article goes beyond that, however, and talks about more than just *feeling happy* that we have them. Our pets can make us healthy and help us stay that way!

Here are some of the ways ... and a slideshow that we think you'll enjoy that will show you others.

<http://pets.webmd.com/slideshow-pets-improve-your-health>

- PETS ARE NATURAL MOOD ENHANCERS

It only takes 15 to 30 minutes with a dog or cat or watching fish swim to

feel less anxious and less stressed. Your body actually goes through physical changes in that length of time that make a difference in your mood. The level of cortisol, a hormone associated with stress, is lowered. And the production of serotonin, an important chemical associated with well-being, is increased. Reducing stress saves your body a lot of wear and tear.

- BLOOD PRESSURE

You still have to watch your weight and exercise. But having a pet can help you manage your blood pressure. In one study of 240 married couples, pet owners had lower blood pressure and lower heart rates during rest than people who did not own a pet. That held true whether they were at rest or undergoing stress tests. And another study showed that children with hypertension actually lowered their blood pressure while petting their dog.

- OBESITY

People who own dogs tend to be more physically active and less obese than people who don't. Taking your dog for a daily 30-minute walk will keep you moving and ensure that you meet the minimum recommendations for healthy physical activity. Two 15-minute walks, one in the morning and one in the evening, will do the same thing. And after that, just playing fetch in the back yard with your dog will earn you healthful dividends.

- CHOLESTEROL

To manage cholesterol, doctors still recommend that you follow guidelines regarding diet, exercise, and medication. But owning a pet has the potential of making it easier to avoid the dangers of cholesterol. Researchers have noted lower levels of cholesterol and triglycerides in people who own pets compared to people who don't.

- HEART

Cats and Dogs are good for your heart. Research has shown the long-term benefits of owning a cat include protection for your heart. Over the 20 years of one study, people who never owned a cat were 40% more likely to die of a heart attack than those who had. Another study showed that dog owners had a significantly better survival rate one year after a heart attack. Overall, pet owners have a lower risk of dying from any cardiac disease, including heart failure.

- ISOLATION

More Interaction, Less Isolation. One key to a healthy mind is staying engaged with others. And pet owners have a tendency to want to talk with other pet owners. A dog is a conversation waiting to happen. People, especially other people with dogs, will stop and talk with you when they see you walking your pet. Visiting a dog park lets you socialize with other owners while your dog socializes with their dogs.

- DEPRESSION

Therapists have been known to prescribe a pet as a way of dealing with and recovering from depression. No one loves you more unconditionally than your pet. And a pet will listen to you talk for as long as you want to talk. Petting a cat or dog has a calming effect. And taking care of a pet -- walking with it, grooming it, playing with it -- takes you out of yourself and helps you feel better about the way you spend your time.

- EXERCISE

Physical trainers advise their client to have an "exercise buddy." So why not make your pet your exercise buddy? If you exercise with your pet, you'll both benefit. Shine a flashlight on the wall or wave a string while you do a step aerobics routine. Your cat will get a healthy workout chasing the light, and you'll be thoroughly entertained. Some people like to use their cat rather than dumbbells when doing weight training. And nationwide, there are yoga classes for people and their dogs, called doga.

- STROKES

Researchers aren't sure why. But cat owners have fewer strokes than people who don't own cats. It's partly due to the effects owning a pet can have on a person's circulation. But researchers speculate that cats may have a more calming effect on their owners than other animals do. It may also have something to do with the personality of a cat owner. Cats often become the focus of their owner's interest, which diverts them from other stressful worries.

- DIABETES

For people with diabetes, a sudden drop in the level of blood glucose can be very serious. Some dogs can alert their owner to a dangerous drop before it actually happens. They may be responding to chemical changes in the body that give off a scent. The alarm gives the owner time to eat a snack to avoid the emergency. About one in three dogs living with people with diabetes have this ability. Dogs for Diabetics is training more dogs to help more people.

- THERAPY

Have you ever gone to your counselor and wondered why they brought their dog? Some mental health therapists use a dog in therapy. A dog in the office may help someone be more at ease. But that's not all. A remark to or about a dog may reveal what's really on a patient's mind. One therapist tells about a couple in his office who started bickering. The dog, which usually just slept during the session, got up and wanted out. He used that to help the couple see how their fighting affected others, especially their children.

The Slide show goes on to show us how our pets can help us deal with health issues in addition to the above like Cancer, ADHD, Autism, Arthritis, Strokes, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Fibromyalgia.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The WTS 12 Step Study begins today, April 1st. To join this 12

week study click [here](#).

- The new Traditions meetings are being held in #Recovery on IRC at 3:00 each Tuesday. A door is set up at [here](#).
- If you are a teen or the parent of a child who is having weight issues, join our new Youth Program by click [here](#).
- The Big Book Study begins today, April 1st. To join and interact with the BB leaders daily, click [here](#).
- Daily meetings for Christian COEs began recently. For a schedule and directions, contact [MtgAdm@TheRecoveryGroup.org](mailto:MtgAdm@TheRecoveryGroup.org)
- If you are interested in giving service, please join our Trusted Servant's Pool for information or job descriptions by clicking [here](#).
- The 2010 Recovery Group Trusted Servants can be found [here](#).

## PET RECIPE OF THE MONTH

### MICROWAVE EASY TREATS

3 Jars meat and vegetable baby food  
1/2 c Cream of wheat



Mix together and drop by teaspoon on paper plate.  
Cover with waxed paper and flatten with a fork.  
Cover with second plate and microwave on high 2-5 mins.

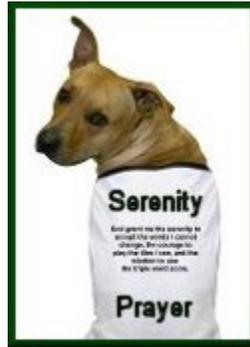


### OA PODCAST

#### OA Members Come in All Sizes

In this edition of the many wonderful Podcasts on the Overeaters Anonymous' website, we have a partial reading of the pamphlet "OA Members Come in All Sizes. For more information on Overeaters Anonymous, please go to [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org) or call the World Service Office in the United States at area code 505-891-2664. To hear this 24 minute podcast, please click the OA Logo above or this link:

<http://www.oa.org/podcasts/OEA-DEC09-final.mp3>



# SERENDIPITY



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