

hoffmag

A CUTTY FAPAZINE

There were five of us, who'd ridden down to Chinatown in Dick's Volkswagon and were sitting around a table in a basement where good food is served at reasonable prices, and we were a motley crew. Ray and Aaron are semi-professional photographers -- Aaron with a strong side interest in electronics. Dick is a chemist and sports car fan who has a speaking acquaintance with almost everything. His wife, Kiki, is a dancer, and together they folksing. Jock is a NY fan who somehow got involved in this folk music mess. And you all know me.

So there we were discussing cats, the proper technique for Occidentals who are using chopsticks, and go-cars, when suddenly Jock asked me, "Whst does the N3F do?"

Unable to supply a satisfactory answer to this, we moved on to the next question, which proved to be, "What about FAPA?"

Which reminded me that my dues were due and that I wasn't really ready to give up my bones yet, so...

SWEET WILLIAM DIED FOR ME TODAY...

Sweet William was the most recent of my cats. Cats are a part of the ethnos of NYC. Not all New Yorkers have cats, but those that do usually have a very specific relationship with the animals. It isn't the same as that of a cowboy toward his horse, or a socialite toward her miniature poodle. The cat in NYC is partly a work animal. His specific jobs are to help keep down the urban wildlife and to provide endless conversation for cat owners and admirers.

I got Sweet William last summer. I'd seen him in the window of an animal shelter, an almost-grown fuzzy white beast with pale blue eyes, and I adopted him. Shortly thereafter he took very sick and I carried him to a vet. The animal shelter paid his medical expenses, as he'd obviously contracted his illness -- a virus -- while there. The vet, after asking whether I wouldn't rather have him put to sleep, clipped a lock of fur from his rump and gave him a penicillin shot. He instructed me to feed the cat milk laced with brandy and otherwise just to leave him alone.

So the cat and I enjoyed a drop of brandy together now and then and eventually he recuperated. He turned into an ill-tempered large lump of cat. He was stone deaf -- a congenital deficiency in blue-eyed white cats, I am told -- and wandered about the house muttering

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to himself and being anti-social. He bit people.

It was early this spring when he first got out of the apartment. This place is a basement, with a large window onto the street, and I suppose that's how he got out. He came back a week later, covered with dirt and auto chassis drippings, with some wads of hair missing. He ate voraciously and slept for two days. When he woke up, he was ready to go again. I made some efforts to keep him in, but they failed, so I gave up and left the window open in a way that provided him an exit. He would leave when he pleased, vaulting onto a bookshelf and then through the window. He couldn't find his way back in though, so in the mornings, he'd come crying at the door.

It was only about a week ago that he learned to get himself in. I discovered his knowledge when, one morning, I was awakened by a white-ish streak soaring through the window. From then on he came and went as he pleased, coming home filthy and happy, covered with the marks of battle. One of these was a torn ear. Another was a large wound in his shoulder, which he kept very clean, offering quite a contrast to the rest of his coat.

He stopped being a lump. The fat wore away, and was replaced by muscle. He got long and lean, with a thick neck and alert eyes. Being deaf, he came to depend strongly on his sense of smell, and would sit twitching his nose at the world. And he even became affectionate, possibly because the dirt in his fur made him itch.

Anyway, he turned into a respectable tomcat, young and strong, in the prime of his life. And to judge from the scars, capable of holding his own with the street cats. He had a way of life that must have been ideal to a cat. He'd come home in the morning, be fed, sleep within the protection of the apartment, and range at night.

Then one morning he didn't come home. Instead I was awaked by a knock at the door and when I opened it, the building super told me, "Somebody killed your cat."

He led me out to the street, where William lay in the gutter. The little body was stiff, but there were no marks on it. No sign of having been hit by a car, which is the usual cause of death in street cats. Unlike other dead cats I've seen, he did not look stringy and wrung-out. His fur was soft, and cleaner than usual these days. Only the fact that he looked too stiff for a relaxed cat showed that he was dead, not sleeping.

Mike, the super, put the body in a carton, and then took me in to his place and showed me another carton. In this one, a happy momma cat was contentedly feeding a half dozen bleary eyed kittens of assorted colors.

For all I know, they're William's children.

SPUTNIK was undoubtedly studying to be a hydraulic engineer. He was the second of my NY cats, one of two kittens born to a she-cat named Iron Head whom we were boarding for her owner. He got the name of Sputnik long before we knew that we'd be keeping him, but it stuck. His primary interest in life, at least as a young cat, was the john. As soon as he was big enough to climb up on the seat, he took great delight in watching it flush. It was one of the direct-plumbing type with no water-closet and once he stepped on the handle and caused it to flush by itself. From then on, he spent many hours gazing into the water waiting for thing to happen. Frequently he fell in.

He liked the bathtub, too, and enjoyed watching it empty. Occasionally, he fell into it.

Once he leaped under the shower, but came out again almost immediately.

His attempt to cross the surface of a tub filled with bubble-bath proved unsuccessful.

When he was very young he set out to learn the ways of cathood from Dilly, a she-cat whom we owned at the time. She was particularly fond of racing around the large living room, careening off walls by jumping as high as she could and shoving the wall with her hind feet. This left catfootprints all over the walls, at astonishing heights and amazed Sputnik, who decided to try it himself. He had the idea, but he lacked the technique. He would race madly, headlong at the wall, leap as high as he could, bang against the wall, and flop.

One day, when he was about a year and a half old he got out a window and never came back.

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The eating habits of cats are odd and varied. Every true cat admirer knows of a cat with some unique taste. Sweet William particularly fancied Ovaltine or Tide soapsuds. Dick and Kiki have a cat that fancies raw lettuce. Roger and Jaime, on the other hand, have (besides a quantity of cats) a rabbit that likes catfood.

Dilly would eat nothing but a particular brand of catfood. But she was neurotic.

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Dick and Kiki's cats are a pair of magnificent Toms, one of whom (Rufus) hasn't yet caught on to the fact that there is a point at which a cat is supposed to stop growing. The other (Palmer) is very fond of being held, supported at either end, but loose at the middle. He will lie like this, purring loudly and can be played like an accordian.



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It seems very curious to me that so few FAPAns are interested in cultural anthropology. I had a notion that FAPAns, of all people, would be particularly interested in people.

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Note to Boyd Raeburn: I met Woody Guthrie last Sunday. He's been hospitalized for several years now, and lately some of his friends have been taking him out of the hospital on weekends. The last couple of weekends they brought him over to Washington Square, which is where I met him. He is no longer physically capable of playing or of singing much.

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SO I PUT ON MY PITH HELMET AND PUTTEES AND WENT TO THE BRONX:

To a provincialist like myself, the Bronx is a mysterious and far-away place notable solely for several people I know who come from there. But some quirk of fate had scheduled me for an appointment with a dentist in that never-neverland north of the river. So away I went and it was an experience that hardly endeared the Bronx to me.

The defective tooth was a jaw tooth and turned out to be well rooted, so that the only way the dentist could get it out was by surgery. I chose to go under gas, which is itself an extremely unpleasant thing.

When I woke up, the tooth was out, there was a gaping hole in my gum, and I was sick as a dog. I stayed sick for days.

A pox on the Bronx and teeth.

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Tom Paley, who once did a cover illustrating THE GREEN HILLS OF IARTH for the fanzine, AD INFINITUM, is now singing at the ASH GROVE in Los Angeles.

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THIS HAS BEEN A PARTICULARLY SHORT FAPAZINE FROM LEE HOFFMAN. Just what mailing it is appearing in, I am not yet able to ascertain.

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