

On the Positive Side: November is Adopt-A-Senior Pet Month November 1, 2009

November is "Adopt-A-Senior Pet Month", the second annual observance sponsored by the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. In honor of this declaration with emphasis on adopting senior animals from shelters and rescue centers, a couple stories are highlighted about special cats:

Astro is my rescue kitty (wasn't that the Jetsons' dog?). He was part of a hoarding case involving lots of animals and one of the few who survived. What a tough life for this kitty, who at first estimate was considered about 12 years old. I saw him at PetSmart about a year ago and immediately felt sorry for him, for who would want to adopt a 12-year old cat?

As the weeks went on, and I saw him at PetSmart, his condition improved, and his age dropped to between 8 and 10. But still there waiting, it seemed no one wanted him. After talking with my wife, we agreed to give him a home even though we had other pets. We brought "Teddy", aka Theodore ("gift from God") home in December and it worked out. He's my cat, on my lap, at my computer, on my chest at bedtime, and follows me around the house. He's recovered from his previous life, but sad to say, only has his four front canine teeth left.

I guess animals are a lot like children. Everyone seems to want kitties and puppies, just like babies. But who is there to care for the older ones? Don't they deserve a chance? Next time you want to adopt an animal, consider taking an older one. Give it a great home, out of a cage. I know there will be a time when Teddy won't be on my lap or on my chest, but I know with certainty that his years with us are precious to all of us.

Tom Goodman is a Las Cruces resident and a dedicated pet parent.

"Pet of the Week: Camille, 22 years old" - so said the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley weekly ad of June 12, 2009. My wife thought surely that was a mistake. "They wouldn't put a cat that old up for adoption." After some moments of reflection, she continued "I'm going to call and find out. If that isn't a mistake, we can't leave her at the shelter."

As it turned out, it wasn't and we didn't.

We were at the animal shelter shortly after it opened that afternoon and asked to see Camille. The previous owner could no longer manage care for the cat who came accompanied only by a cryptic note that read: "The cat's name is Camille. She is twenty-two years old." When we saw her in the cage she looked much older than that. She was limp and didn't even raise her head when we picked her up. But the decision had been made before we even got to the shelter. We adopted Camille on the spot, not sure that she would survive the ride home.

Now, four months later, Camille is bright and alert, firmly entrenched as a member of the household that includes two senior dogs, both shelter rescues. And if she has not quite made her peace with them, she at least has come to an uneasy truce.

Why adopt a senior pet? Well, when you're finally eligible for AARP membership and other senior perks, you become more reluctant to take on a rambunctious puppy or kitten with a lifespan that may outlast yours. And life is just as precious to a senior animal as it is for a puppy or kitten. All critters need love including senior humans and their companion animals.

Bill Smith is a Las Cruces resident and a fortunate guardian of senior pets.

You can find senior animals for adoption at these websites & others:

Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley www.ascmv.org

Safe Haven www.safehavenanimalsanctuary.net

Humane Society of Southern NM www.hssnm.org

ACTion Programs for Animals www.actionprogramsforanimals.org

Pals4Pets www.pals4pets.info

Las Cruces Clicks (Dog Cruces & Paw Post) www.lascrucesclicks.com