

Subject: The passing of Mr. Bear
From: Peter Rowell <peter@techbuddy.us>
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To: undisclosed-recipients;

To our friends --

Some of you knew him personally, others by way of some of my Mr. Bear stories. Late last month we had to say 'Goodbye' to a dear, old friend. Tigger (AKA Mr. Bear, PurrBear, & Mr. Tigger T. Tiggerbear) quietly moved on to the next chapter at 6pm April 30, 2009. He was 17 years old and still purring.

(Note: I started writing this letter shortly after his death, but then Life Happened: Maria's mom went into a decline and she passed away on May 7th at the age of 98. I somehow didn't feel it was right to continue with this letter at that time, and then we had two graduations (Cheryl from Berkeley, and Trinity from Sonoma State (with Honors)). But now it is time to finish acknowledging the life of a Great Bear.)

We first met Tigger at the Pets In Need animal shelter in the Fall of 1992. Maria remembers that we didn't so much pick him as he picked me. He was on a kitty condo and jumped right onto my shoulders and started purring like mad. His name at that time was Digger, but we didn't like that too much. We didn't want to confuse him with a radical name change, so we called him Tigger.

When he arrived at our house on Mark Twain in Palo Alto, he was our only cat. He would purr so loudly that you literally could be in the kitchen and hear him two rooms away. When Isis joined us a few weeks later, his purr volume went down a couple of notches. I mean, what right did this white, furry upstart have to be in *his* kingdom?

We soon learned just what life with an Abby-Tabby (Abyssinian-Tabby mix) was like. Mr. Bear was an agenda-driven pussycat with absolutely no understanding of personal boundaries (much to Isis's dismay). Once he focused on something, he simply couldn't be deterred. This could be charming, but it could also be irritating as hell. Ah, Mr. Bear, you were one of the sweetest Pains in the Ass I have ever known.



He was incredibly tolerant of being handled. If you picked him up and held him in the middle of his back he would stretch completely out and do a full-length, upside down Superman imitation. I used to call him the Longest Cat in the World. You could even put cheerful holiday socks on him and he wouldn't complain.





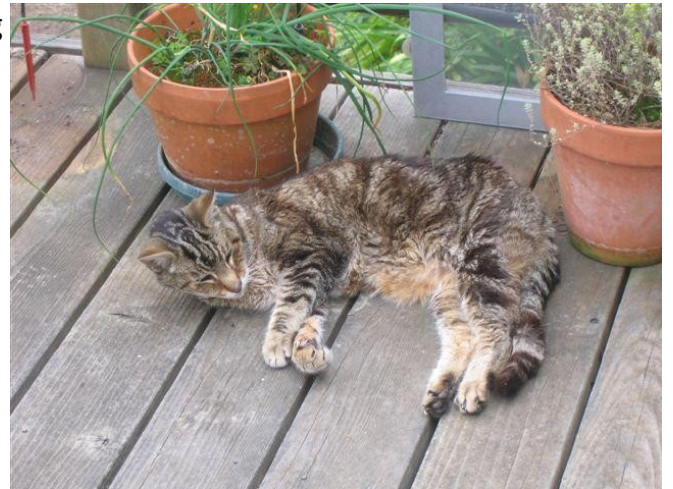
Tigger positively loved corn chips and pretzels, the saltier the better. In the late afternoon he would often wait for me at the top of the path from my office to the house and greet me with a cheery, chirping call. We would then go in and I would get a beer and he would lobby hard for his share of whatever People Krunchies I was eating. This was one of the high points of his day.

Another high point was at breakfast where he would sit patiently by my chair (sometimes with his ears back), waiting for me to finish my bagel. He was *totally* focused on getting the plate because he knew there was often a Butter Error on it (stuff which dripped through the hole in the bagel). He loved this ritual so much that if I had been overly neat in buttering my bagel I would have to *create* a Butter Error for him to lick up.



In February he had surgery to remove an aggressive tumor from his inner eyelid. We knew that there was a chance that it had already metastasized and we had to decide if we wanted to put all of us through the trauma of chemotherapy. I did this for 2 years with my cat Shermie and it was Hell. But Shermie was 4 years old when we started and he was in great shape. Mr. Bear was in good shape for a 17-year-old, but We decided to wait a couple of weeks and see.

Tigger soon experienced a dramatic weight loss, losing about 25% of his body weight in the last 4 weeks. He almost completely stopped eating and soon became quite weak. He would wobble a little when he walked, and it was obvious that just lying down was a real effort for him. It was painful to watch a friend, who had been fine just 2 months before, go downhill so quickly. The picture at right was taken only a few hours before the end. (Note that his right front paw is doing a mid-air squeezezy paw -- one of his signature moves.)



Whenever we had a long spell of dry weather, the first big rain would have Tigger roaming around the house and howling mournfully. He would go from door to door, looking for some side of the house where it wasn't raining. His last day was cool but sunny, and so he spent most of it on the deck. The following two days we had 1.5" of rain -- Mr. Bear would have *hated* it.

We gave him a double dose of a pain killer (left over from his post-op care) and he was pretty mellow as I held him in my arms on the final trip to the vet -- he purred all the way there with only a couple of *meows*. (Normally he would have been complaining loudly for the entire trip.) All of the staff were very considerate, and Dr. Conn was very supportive of a difficult decision. He said that, given the weight loss and lack of eating, Tigger was basically starving to death. At his high point Mr. Bear was close to 14 lbs (a *big* pussycat), but at the end he was just 8 lbs.

The shot took effect very quickly. Even though I had read about it online, I was still stunned that it took only 5 or 6 seconds. Tigger was purring until the very last moment ... and then he was gone.

Several years ago, shortly after her own cat had passed away, a friend of ours made the observation that a cat fills up a house -- not because they *are* everywhere, but because they *could be* anywhere -- around the corner, under a lamp, in a chair, or lolling in the sunshine on the deck. I think that every time I open a bag of pretzels I'll look around to see if Mr. Bear is there, looking up at me with great expectations.

Although we still have Isis (who is also 17 and a skin cancer survivor (minus her ears)), there is now a Tigger-sized hole in our world.

Peace,

Peter and Maria

The Mr. Bear Song

(Sung to the tune of the Mickey Mouse Song, normally as I was preparing a bowl of krunchies for him.)

Who's the bear beyond compare?

His name is Mr. Bear.

M I S ... T E R ... B E A (a) R

Mr. Bear ... Mr. Bear,

Forever hold your tail up high (*high, high, high!*)

M I S ... (who's a good bear?) T E R (are *you* a good bear?)

B E A (a) R!

Mister Bear! Yea!