

Shortly after we moved to our home on Spaulding Drive in 1990, several “feral” cats began to come to our back door, hoping for food and wanting to

drive our male cat, Kissy, to distraction. Those cats included “Julius” (so called because he was orange), “Sophie” (a large, medium hair cat that was white with large tan spots, and “Mikey” (a tabby male so named because, like the Life cereal commercial kid, he’ll eat anything). Shophie and Julius were sometimes visitors, and we suspect that they were “owned” by their residents in the development. But Mikey—ah, he was a truly feral cat who preferred it that way. 🐾

Typical of unaltered males, Mikey frequently showed his battle scars and wounds. His ears were ragged, and he occasionally had an eye swollen-shut, like a black street brawler. But he seemed, in those earlier years, to be possessed of a certain dignity. He would come to the edge of our deck and wait to see if we put food out. He seemed ambivalent about physical contact; he’d occasionally suffer himself to be petted, but always on his guard while he purred and rubbed our legs. And next evening when no food had been put out yet, he would wait for our arrival crouched under our bay window.

In the winter it was possible to follow his tracks in the snow. He would always approach from the Pacer’s yard, feed on our deck, then go over the edge on the Triggles’ side. Sometimes his tracks would lead underneath the deck. We suspect he found a warm spot next to our hot tub. But other times, we could see his tracks going down our drive, across the street, around the Bandelian’s house, disappearing up the hillside towards the Mapel’s. We always wondered if he had another family up there.

One winter we had several days of sub-zero temperatures. We grew fearful that Mikey wouldn’t survive, and so we coaxed him into the house and put him in our downstairs half bath. He got along all right the first night, but the cold continued the next day and we had to go to work. So we left him there, with his own food, water, and litter box for the day. That evening when we opened the bathroom, he

The Life & Times Of Mikey the Cat

by Richard & Elaine Hull



streaked out to the back door. 🐾 The curtains were shredded, and there was other evidence that he had decided we intended to imprison him; he’d have no more of it, and we were no longer able to coax him back into the house or even

to be petted on the deck.

Mikey continued to feed at the back door, growing more furtive each year. For a while it seemed that a son of his, looking very much like a junior edition, was coming around for handouts. But Mikey persisted while the other cats drifted on or were adopted by other families. 🐾

Mikey had a very mixed relationship with our cats. Kissy loathed him and would throw a fit whenever Mikey came onto the deck, despite the fact that Kissy always had plenty of food to eat inside and disdained the coarser food we put out for Mikey. Twinkletoes, on the other hand, seemed socialably inclined towards him; we would often see her sitting on the deck with several proper feet between them but clearly intrigued. He was always the gentleman with her, helped, no doubt, by her declaration of celibacy.

We left Spaulding Lake for Austin, Texas, in 1998-2000, during which time our male cat, Kissy, passed away. The family that rented our house didn’t have pets and didn’t continue to feed Mikey. When we returned, we didn’t see him for several weeks. Then, one day, that old familiar face turned up under the bay window again; Mikey was back.

He had a large cataract obscuring the vision of one of his eyes. That made him even more furtive and more cautious. We would put food out for him on the deck, and he would slink up after a few moments and gobble it down quickly. But if he caught our movement in the house with his good eye, he would fee, not to be seen for the rest of the evening. 🐾

At some time this past summer, Mikey quit coming around. We hadn’t see him for a couple of months. We fear one of the dogs in the neighborhood blindsided him and caught him off guard, although we have seen no trace of his remains.

We’ll always remember Mikey for his independence, his trust, and his own kind of fellowship. He was as much a part of our family, in his own way, as our in-house cats.

Originally published in the Spaulding Lake Club Newsletter, Vol. 7, Issue 1, Spring 2002.