

## *A Loving Tribute to Tabatha*

*A kitten from KARE*

by Carol Rose

*Tabatha was one of a litter that was dropped off at KARE in the spring of 2002, and this is her story.*

The holding room at the KARE orphanage was already full, but Terry, my husband, and I were planning to trap some feral cats from a near-by correctional camp, that would add to the population. To free up some room at KARE for the ferals, Terry and I decided to put a couple of cages of KARE kittens in our garage and foster them for a while. We settled in and I began the task of caring for them. Besides feeding, I would let them out of the cages a couple times a day to play and exercise their little legs. They loved the freedom of exploring every nook and cranny in the garage, especially climbing up into the loft. That is, all except one, a little calico, the runt of the litter. She wanted absolutely nothing to do with climbing and pretty much stayed to herself. She was perfectly content playing with a little purple yarn ball.

After a few days I decided to name the kittens. I named them after characters in one of my favorite old sitcoms, Bewitched. That's how Tabatha became Tabatha; Her brother was Darren and her sister Samantha. Before long the kitties had to go back to KARE. It was hard to part with them, as we had become so attached to them, especially Tabatha.

Every time I went over to KARE to do my usual cage cleaning, I noticed that Tabatha was still there, and she would always follow me around. As I cleaned the top row of cages she would rub up against my leg trying to get my attention. When I kneeled down to do the lower cages she would jump up on my back, rub against the back of my head till Barb took her down. But I loved it.

To this day I believe it was part of her plan to get me to adopt her. In early 2003 it worked. Tabatha came back home with us, for good. Of course Terry was an easy sell. She joined our little family of eight cats and a dog. There was no problem with the other cats or our dog. She was smaller than her stepbrothers and sisters but didn't let that phase her. It soon became clear that she was in charge, not only of the other cats, but also of Terry and me. Tabatha chose a little ball of red yarn as her only toy and that was all she ever played with. She proudly carried that thing around the house and when she wanted us to play would drop it at our feet. We would throw it and she would run, pick it up, and bring it back. She loved to do this. I have never known a cat that would 'fetch'. When Terry would go down into the basement to his workshop, Tabatha would sometimes follow him, and when he looked down she'd be starring up at him with her big eyes. It was hard to ignore her. He would say "Tabatha, go get your ball", and she would disappear and would soon be sitting there looking up at him with her red ball in her mouth. He couldn't resist, and would stop whatever he was doing to play with her. Another little trick she used to get our attention, would be to first rub up against our legs, if that didn't work she would gently reach up and pull on our pant leg and once again those eyes would be starring up at us. She had it down to a science.

Tabatha loved us so much that when we left the house she would sit in the bow living room window until she saw us pull up in the driveway. Then we would see her jump down from the window. By the time we opened the kitchen door she would be sitting on the counter near the door. When we came in we had to give her a kiss on her head, then she would jump down, run over to the pantry door, sit, and look up at me telling me to open it. It was her special place where she ate her dry food.

We were enjoying her antics until early August of 2008. Tabatha was having bladder problems, that we thought were treatable. The vet drew blood and put her on antibiotics. A couple of days later we got the test results; Tabatha's kidneys were shutting down, and she had lost weight. The vet put her on more medicine and wanted her back in two weeks. When we took her back, we found that she had lost even more weight. He drew blood again and the next day we got even more devastating news; Tabatha had feline aids. My heart sank. We tried a couple of different treatments, but by the end of August our little Tabatha was losing the battle. She was getting very weak. She was walking very slowly, and even having to stop and rest. She couldn't jump up to her bed on the living room window, where she loved to sleep. We would gently pick her up and place her there. By Aug. 30<sup>th</sup> little Tabatha was getting weaker. She tried to pick up her red ball like she always did and jump up into her daddy's lap, but she couldn't, I had to help her. Once in Terry's lap she curled up and went to sleep. On Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> Labor Day our little girl was struggling. With our hearts breaking we called the vet. He advised us that the kindest thing would be to put her gently to sleep. By now we had cried a river of tears, but we had no other choice. Terry held her in his lap as we headed to the vets. He told her that she was daddys little girl as he had done so many times before. At the vet we held her and both of us hugged and kissed her and said goodbye.

We still have our eight other cats and a dog, but the house still seems a lot emptier. No one is sitting in the window anxiously watching for us to come home, and no one greets us at the door when we come in. She tugged on our hearts as gently as she tugged on our pant legs. That was our little Tabatha.



We love all our cats, but they are a little more independent, like their own space, and don't seem to need us the way she did. They come and go at their own pleasure. Our little Tabatha lived only for us, to be near, and entertain us. She left a void that will never be filled.

When I think about it, she had the perfect name. Tabatha, from the TV show 'Bewitched', could cast a spell. Our Tabatha certainly cast a spell on us that will last forever.

Thank you Barb & Richard for doing what you do. We would of never been blessed with such a special kitty if not for you two. You open your hearts and door to so many unwanted ones.

*From the memorials that we have received at KARE, we know that many of our readers have experienced much the same heartbreak as Terry and I, and are left with only precious memories. But all of us share some comfort in knowing that one day we will be together in Paradise with our beloved little friends.*