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Two Kinds of People

The humorist Robert Benchley said, "There are two kinds of people in the world: those who divide the world into two kinds of people and those who don't." Now, I'm not confessing to which kind I am, mind you, but for most of my life I considered myself a "dog lover," as opposed to a "cat lover." Until September of 2007 when Gabby Good Dog Anderson passed, I was also a dog owner. The death of a beloved pet is almost like losing a member of the family, which is to say *very* painful indeed. So I have not "replaced" Gabby, despite the urging of others. I choose not repeat that experience of grief.

Now, my neighborhood is populated with *many* cats, so on our morning walks Gabby and I encountered (and she desperately tried to pursue!) these feline denizens. But I kept her firmly on her leash while marveling at the sheer number of them. As I continued my morning walks after Gabby died, I still met many cats along the way. They were not as cautious, now that I was without my canine companion of many years.

I brushed up on my Cat Lingo and began to "meow" invitations to come to me for some stroking. A few cats responded. I was encouraged. Here were neighbors' pets I could enjoy without the responsibilities (and the vet bills!) of owner care. So, I began carrying "Feline Greenies," an excellent healthful cat treat, which I lavished on cats who responded to my meowed invitations. As

you might expect, business picked up considerably. Overly cautious and even just plain disdainful cats *can* be won over with *food*!

I began to learn the names of some cats and also to make up names for those whose owners I had yet to ask. Sammi and Stinker (aptly named, I must say) were regular "customers" until they mysteriously disappeared. The owners of "K.C." (Kitty Cat) tell me she is not friendly with strangers and that I should feel honored that she comes when I call. (I'm not sure how much of her response is due to my personal charm and how much because of the treats.) There were and are others, Heineken, Sweetie (who is certainly *not*!), and FantastiCat (my name for it), a good-looking cat if ever there was one.

FantastiCat was not feral but, according to neighbors, just temporarily homeless. She was skittish for a while but I eventually won her over and was even able to persuade my neighbor (a devoted cat owner) to adopt her. He converted her into a house cat and took great care of her until she died.

One of the friendliest and best kept cats in the neighborhood was called Mr. Anderson. (I do not lie). I was certainly surprised when its owner told me its name. He said he also had dog named Jack but it died. (I didn't know whether to feel pleased or peeved!) Anyway, it was a great cat.

Some might think, "How can this guy claim to be a dog lover but be on such good terms with *cats*?" I understand. My early experience with cats (Siamese!) was *not* pleasant. I quickly learned cats can be very "independent" (downright snooty!) and unpredictable, purring and cuddling one minute and clawing and biting the next, or just plain disregarding of you altogether. I think the old saw is true: You can't really *own* a cat. They simply temporarily consent to let you feed, shelter and otherwise care for them. Still, there *are* moments when cats can be, well, real *pets*.

My youngest daughter has suggested *I* get a cat! I of course explained to her that I am a dog lover. . . more or less.