

Betty Boop Rascal (2021-2023)

Betty Boop was a courageous Rascal Warrior who inspired and touched thousands of people during her very short life. This memorial to Betty is the most difficult thing I have ever had to write. I'm sorry it has taken me 24 days to be able to put this on paper, but her loss still leaves a huge hole in our everyday life.

Beverley caught Betty Boop on July 4, 2021 on the south patio of the Sites House. She was apparently part of an early-May litter who had recently been dumped nearby. Betty was drawn to the patio porch because of the food for our outside Rascals. When Beverley found her, she was sunning herself against the stone wall and put up no resistance to being picked up. We would later learn why.

After a quick adoption that did not work out, Betty was back at the Sites House on July 14 and I talked Beverley into making her our first Tuxedo Rascal. She quickly settled into day-to-day life with our other 17 fur babies, but we could tell she was not a typical kitten. Betty constantly wanted to perch on my shoulder, even when I was walking around the house. She also was not interested in going back outside and wanted to be near us at all times including between us in



bed. In addition, compared to our previous 50 kittens, her appetite was less and she did not purr as much.

We took her to the vet for her initial tests and shots and everything came back fine with the exception of her weight, which was not that of a normal kitten of her age. We figured she was just a different kitten who was going to be petite.

During Betty's spaying surgery in early September the vet explored further and discovered some fatty polyps were growing in her throat and said we needed to keep close watch on that. By the middle of October her eating was slowly decreasing and we got an appointment at Virginia Veterinary Specialists in

Charlottesville for an examination. They were able to verify the fatty polyps were causing Betty's difficulty in eating and beginning to affect her breathing. They also told us that the polyps had originally started growing in her ears, probably shortly after her birth and had caused both of her eardrums to rupture which resulted in Betty being deaf. This would explain how Beverley caught her so easily, and also why she always hung so close to us and looked intently and directly at our faces – that was the only way of communication she ever knew. We scheduled a consultation with Dr. Stiffler who had performed many surgeries to remove polyps from cats. He relayed that the procedure was not that rare in grown cats, but he had never performed one, or knew of one that had been done on a kitten this tiny; Betty weighed less than three pounds. As Betty's eating continued to decrease, it became obvious that no matter the risk, surgery was the only option. Because she was so small the doctor determined that he would have to do the surgery in two stages, one on each side. Her first operation was on November 22, 2021 and she came through with flying colors. After a little time to heal, they performed the second on December 7 without a hitch. Almost immediately Betty was eating voraciously and purring loudly. She put on weight quickly, became very active, and with the

exception of not being able to hear, turned into a normal seven-month old kitten. This included knocking things off the counters to get attention, destroying two Waterpiks, and occupying our bathroom sink every morning. Needless to say we were deeply thankful to Dr. Stiffler and his staff for saving Betty and giving her a chance at a normal life.

The first three months of 2022 saw Betty blossom, but in early April she stopped eating again, so we immediately took her to the vet. We assumed the polyps had grown back, which we knew was a possibility, and there would be another surgery needed. Instead, we were informed that Betty had feline infectious peritonitis (FIP) and there was nothing the vet could do. We learned that many cats carry the virus that causes FIP, but it remains dormant, normally only triggered by a traumatic experience, which Betty's polyp surgeries would certainly qualify as. We were stunned, but had third-hand experience with the virus. A year earlier two of our adopted kittens in Connecticut had developed FIP and survived with medications from outside the United States through the wonderful FIP Warriors 5.0 group on Facebook. We immediately contacted the group for guidance and our friend in Connecticut who had some doses of the medicine left over and overnighted them to us so we could start Betty's treatment immediately.

Luckily we had caught Betty's FIP early and she responded quickly to the 84-day treatment which began with daily injections. After about ten days she started eating again so we could transition her to the newly developed daily pill which was a blessing. She was such a trooper again through this whole ordeal. On June 24, 2022, at just a little over a year of age, Betty took her final FIP

treatment and the next week her blood work showed that her FIP was no longer active. She was one of the first cats to be cured using the pill instead of the standard injection. We were deeply indebted to the FIP Warriors for giving Betty another new lease on life.

The next seven months sweet Betty didn't have a care in the world. She started going outside regularly, although only when we were with her to make sure she didn't venture towards the road since she was still 90% deaf. She climbed trees, stalked birds, and did all the things that a normal young, rambunctious cat can do. She also developed a very sassy personality, which she obviously earned. And of course daddy let her get away with just about anything. She was our Princess Trooper!

Everything changed again in early February of this year when Betty's eating began to slow down. We were afraid that the FIP had come back, which we knew happened in about 10% of cats, or that maybe the polyps had grown back. We got her back to the vet and they discovered



that her chest cavity had filled with fluid and blood tests showed she had incurable feline lymphoma. When they drained the fluid from her chest it was all blood, and revealed a tumor growing in her chest. We immediately took her back to Charlottesville and they drained more fluid and Dr. Mallett verified the diagnosis. We were devastated, but knowing Betty's fighting spirit to live, we did not give up hope. Dr. Mallett explained to us there was no cure, but chemotherapy was an option that could possibly give Betty six months to a year extra to be with us. The treatment usually does not adversely affect cats the way it can in humans, so we decided we would give it a try as long as it didn't make her sick. So on February 20, 2023 Betty started her first course of the 17-week chemo treatment. Once again, she was a total trooper and didn't show any effects. Almost immediately she started eating, her bloodwork showed normal cell counts, and over the next five weeks of treatment she appeared to be back to normal. We were very encouraged. Then all of a sudden she stopped eating again and her breathing was becoming laborious. We took her to the vet immediately expecting they would have to draw off more fluid, but instead were informed that the tumor had not responded to the chemo and had doubled in size causing her to not be able to eat and compressing her lungs. There was nothing they could do. After a quick consultation with her doctor in Charlottesville, it became obvious that Betty would not be able to overcome this, her third death sentence, so we made the decision to let her go. An hour later, with Betty in my arms, she took her last breath and crossed the rainbow bridge to be with our other dear fur babies who have passed. The loss of Betty Boop has been extremely difficult to accept because of all she had been through at such a young age, less than two years old. It is comforting to know that we were able to give her 20 months of love and life she would not otherwise have had, and that she inspired and was loved by so many followers. I just pray that all she had to go through was worth it to her; that worry will always linger in the back of my mind.

Rest in peace our dear, sweet Rascal Warrior,
Your loving parent Beverley and Jeffrey Evans