

I am just trying to write down everything so I never ever forget. It's done as an open letter to you Sunny, to just get to talk to you again. Maybe I'll put it roughly in order someday, dunno. God Sunny, I miss you so much.

- From the beginning you were my special boy. I wanted a cat at college for so long and was so excited when I moved into the trailer with Robin so I could get one. About that first week we went to the shelter and found you. You and your brother were little orange furballs we had found along our road, and I just had to go and get you. Best guess was you were about 12 weeks old. I was trying to be "responsible" and only get one cat, so I could be sure I could care for them, so I only took you. Do you have any idea how many times, after I realized what a wonderful cat you were, that I wished I had taken your brother too, and named him Pumkin? I would have had orange look alikes in you and him. I hope he found a one true home too. Anyway, it took almost no time to realize your name was Sunshine, Sunny for short. I'm sure our trailer was a little intimidating for you at first, What with Simba (bean-dog) and Micky the bunny and Robin's 2 cats, Sprite and Amber. Poor baby, those big cats would just HISS at you and refuse to play.
- Probably because the cats wouldn't play, you seemed to think you were a bunny for that 1st 3 months or so. You would play chase with Mickey, and even started to learn to jump up on things like him! The 2 of you were SO cute. I wish I had had a camera then, but I didn't get one until later that year. SO I don't have too many baby pics of you <wah>.
- Robin's menagerie all slept with her at night (except Mickey, who had a cage in the kitchen). So you, at first, were shut in my room and bathroom, with all of your stuff like dirt box and water in the bathroom too. You slept with me from the beginning. In fact, for some reason, you wanted to sleep on my face! Nothing like a fuzzy orange wad of fur in the mouth to wake you up. Or in the nose and eyes to make the allergies act up. It took several months to break you of this habit! I would shove you off and pull the sheet over my face so you couldn't get back there. Hard sleeping, but still..... Eventually you moved to along my stomach, with your head on my shoulder. That was always your special spot, even after the other cats joined our lives. I miss having you there, it seems unnatural somehow.
- When you outgrew Mickey (we became afraid you'd hurt him), you started playing with Bean-dog. The two of you were a matching colored set. You'd RACE from one end of the trailer to the other, switch the chaser and chasee, and come back the other way, over and over. You had fun, and we had tons of orange fur to vacuum up!
- It took you only about 2 days to learn about dinnertime, and wet food and Tender Vittles. I probably shouldn't have started you on that, and on cheaper dry food, but I was poor and didn't know that at the time. And you loved everything, especially wet food. I don't think there ever was a flavor you didn't like. And you learned to beg for food in the morning and evening very quickly! A trait that remained until your dying day. Galaxy's trying, but it isn't quite the same as having you start in 2 hours before mealtime, head bumping my leg, meowing,

twining beneath my feet. Even pretending to be interested in whatever I was doing, hoping for the opportunity to run for the kitchen and eat.

- Speaking of which, I don't think I can ever remember a time when I went into the kitchen and you didn't, except for in one of your "hurk bouts". (which, by the way, scared me to death the first time. You not eating I thought for sure must be fatal. Luckily, it turned out to not be serious and I became able to predict the course and not drag you to TEDs). You always were afraid I might put something down that you would miss. And you always came in when you heard a can opener. Even if I was opening kidney beans, you wanted to lick the can! And if it was something you liked, like chicken noodle soup, you were in heaven. You'd lick off the lid, and then as much of the can as you could. You never perfected using the paw to scoop out the can though, as Galaxy did. Now I am having to teach myself to rinse the cans out right away, and sometimes I cry when I open one and no one comes running.
- The kitchen always made you half crazy. In the winter (especially in MN) I liked to leave the hot oven open to help heat up the house. But I always had to be so careful, with you rubbing around. You practically put your tail or face in it many times and scared me to death.
- Speaking of heat and scared to death, you did that once to me in our apartment while I was in grad school. It was shortly after I got the kittens, and we had never had a problem before. You know I always have loved candles and had them around, and you mostly ignored them. That day I had one on the coffee table, a little votive, I think in the green glass holder. For some reason, you decided to not only walk across the coffee table (not unusual at that time) but to go directly across the candle. I was sitting there on the couch. Your lovely, fuzzy light orange belly furs caught fire! I freaked out! You ran, I ran and grabbed a wet washcloth from the sink and ran after you, and put out the little remaining burning furs with the wet cloth. I'm so glad you didn't get more burned, just a little smelly singed colored furs. I think I used up about 4 of MY lives that night, I was so frightened that you would be aflame before I could get the cloth and get it out, and how do you tell a cat to "drop and roll"? I hugged you for a long time afterward.
- Funny thing though, we went home to mom and dad's place in Corpus that first Christmas (actually for a weekend or 2 earlier, but Christmas was for a couple weeks). You found out that Peggy fed the cats in that house in about a day! You would sleep in my room, but scream to be let out as soon as you heard her get up, so you didn't miss HER feeding time. And you would rub around her every time we went home after that. A bit of a food hypocrite actually there, Sunny.
- You sure did love visiting them though! You were good on the car trips. When you were little you always spent most of the trip sitting on my shoulders between my neck and the seat and looking out the window (I wasn't smart about carriers then either). Good thing we had quit being world travelers by the time I got whiplash last year, or you would have hurt me doing that. We sure got LOTS of double takes in all those little towns on the 5 hour ride home. Funny, you'd sleep when we got going, but as soon as I slowed for a town, you'd wake up and holler again for a bit. Usually the first half hour of the trip and then for 5-10 minutes in the towns. Weirdo ☺

- You were happy to get there and play in their house. They had found Steve who was nearly exactly your age that fall. Boy how you 2 played! You were so excited to have someone your age to play with. You chased ribbons and papers and decorations. You climbed dad's ladder when he was putting up tree lights. You watched their fireplace. You played chase up their staircase, having discovered stairs for the first time (in fact, I think you may have scratched the banister). You always loved those stairs for visit after visit. Greg got a compound bow case for Christmas that year, and you and Steve spent hours playing "in and out" in that box. So many different things to see and do there!
- That was also the Christmas you discovered scrubbies, those little nylon net things mom and I use to do the dishes. Lightweight, tossable, neat texture, what more could a half grown lover cat want in a toy, right? You stole the ones I got mom for Christmas. Heck, you stole a nylon net bow too, or chewed it up, one or the other. Every year you would take those if you could find a new one. You (lucky for me) never showed interested in the dirty used ones on the sink though. Smart cat!
- One of the things you liked best there (at mom & dad's) was the backyard. I would let you out, supervised by me. We let you out with Bean occasionally at school, but I really wanted you to be an IN kitty, as I couldn't have stood to see you tangle with a metal monster. It would have killed me even more than losing you now has. But in mom and dad's yard you could roam (and I hoped to be quick enough if you ever tried "over the fence" as a game). You would shove through her "jungle" garden in the back yard. Under the honeysuckle and the jasmine. Sniffing the plants (and perhaps her cats markings) along the way. You climbed your first tree there, I remember. A live oak just off the patio. You followed Steve up and thought you were on top of the world! Funny thing though, you couldn't figure out how to get down! I thought I was going to have to get a ladder and rescue you. Steve looked at you like you were nuts, saying "come down already dummy". Of course, slowly, awkwardly, you DID make your way down. And you climbed it fairly often on our visits after that. I was sorry when we moved away and you didn't get to visit anymore, though visits had slowed down after we got the baby cats anyway, since Pixel got carsick.
- Another thing you loved to do in their yard was explore Scamp's area and torment her. That first year, she had never had a cat not run away from her when she "jumped" at them. But you were used to Simba, and wouldn't run. In fact, you walked right up to and in and around her house! I have never seen a dog look more astounded in my life! It's a lasting memory baby. And you knew exactly how long her chain was, and would stand in the garden just out of reach and tease her and make her bark. Little brat!
- As I said, you used to sleep in my room with me, as mom and dad did not have "IN" cats at that time – they were in the garage. Mostly you slept on the bed with me. You were not afraid of the ceiling fan then and there. I don't really know what happened in the later years to change that, but I know you hated them then poor baby. In fact, you wouldn't even come into Mike's and my bedroom for fear of the one in there. And when we picked you up in the kitchen, I swear you thought we were going to feed you to that ceiling fan. How I wished I could

reassure you that ceiling fans don't eat cats! Sometimes when we were at mom and dad's you would sprawl out on the bookshelf in the desk dad had made me. Maybe it was cooler or something. You looked so cute guarding those books!

- Another place you constantly got into, much to mom's dismay, was the pot that held the Norfolk Island pine tree. We chased you out a ton of times, but you thought you belonged there. You thought you belonged in the big pot I had for the banana tree later on, too, until I put foil around it to discourage that and other bad kitty behavior (not all necessarily on your part)
- Back at school that year, we had a great time learning about what you liked to play with. As a little guy, you really liked to get into Robin's "bone box" (she was a vet student and had to learn all the bones and attachment points etc). You would dig the bones out and get in the box. I have a cute picture of you in there on one of my photoboards – one of the earliest, if not the earliest (well, there is one other but the film was at the end of the roll and it is half cut off), I have of you. Why couldn't you stay that age forever and with me!
- You also liked pens and pencils. In fact, it was quite a problem at times. We were both students, and had to do homework and stuff. But if we left a pen on the table, couch, floor, it seemed to disappear. You would batbatbat them to somewhere. Usually we would have to get another because we couldn't find them. It became something we had to do, to take the pen or pencil with us (or put in in the backpack or book bag) when we got up for a snack, a bathroom run, anything! I found quite a few under my furniture when I moved out, and I bet Robin founds a veritable treasure trove when she finally left!
- Usually when we came back from getting the new pen or pencil, you had sprawled across the book. From practically your first day, you were convinced the best way to help me study was to sprawl on my books or papers. Or maybe you just wanted me to pay attention to you and not them. I know I sure was gone a lot over the years, with work or school or whatever. Believe me when I say if I could have stayed home and held you as much as you wanted and waitressed for you and played with you all the time, I would have. I'd give anything to have been able to, but that isn't the way the world works, and I'm sure you understood that. But we had quite the ritual, especially in the years I did most of my work on the coffee table. You'd climb up, on the book, or papers. I'd push you off, pet you, move you to the side. You'd lay on the table, and slowly sneak back, until my attention was turned away and you'd be back on the book. I bet it took me twice as long to do my homework and study for tests as it "should" have. Half of the time this was done after midnight, after I got home from my late intramurals shifts. I think you looked forward to our "playing" like this, at least until you wanted me to give up and go to bed and sleep. For all those years of school, you always knew you'd get to sleep with me at night, even if I was gone all day. I was very sorry to have to take that away when I got married.
- If I put the book in my lap to read, you'd climb on there too. You lied that lap anyway, particularly if I sat cross-legged. I bet spent weeks with you there all in all. In our apartments, you would crawl in the lap in the computer chair if I crossed my legs. You'd stay there until my feet fell asleep and I HAD to move you. Since I got married, you would still do this whenever I sat like that upstairs.

Anytime, but I particularly remember how if I was clipping coupons from the Sunday fliers you would ALWAYS be there. That and sorting out the catalog crate. Sometimes I got so annoyed because I couldn't reach the recycle bin for the trash. Most times I was in the process of cleaning the house, and I finished and got up to get on with the chores, dumping you out of my lap before you were ready to leave. I'm sorry baby, sometimes human's priorities get all screwed up when we are busy and feel we have obligations. I know I should have stayed a few minutes more each time.

- Back to toys...Almost forever one of your favorites, perhaps your absolute favorite (though only you know that for sure) was the ping pong ball! You loved the noise they made, all I had to do was drop one bouncing on a hard floor and you'd come running. You'd LEAP up in the air and whap them with your paw. Your timing was great, and even when you were a big heavy cat, you'd get them quickly and accurately. You basically never missed. I can remember tossing it against the cupboards and it bouncing back towards us, with you being fascinated and "ambushing" that ball. Sometimes you'd ambush it so much I had to get up and retrieve it from somewhere (often the water bowl) and we'd start up all over again.
- You were always "sneaky fast". I can remember how surprised Mike was the first time we played with the birdie toy. You were heavy (16 lbs+) and older and reserved and cuddly most of the time. You watched at first while Gally and Pixel played, but then, from off to the side you whooooooshed in and grabbed it, very fast. You always probably were the fastest of all the kitties who shared the house with you, when you wanted to be, like for a few minutes with a toy, or when chasing a squirrel. In fact, you'd often make crashing noises running into the floor or other objects, your momentum got up so high.
- Remember only last summer when I had you in the backyard coming away some loose fur and letting you snack on the grass? You saw that squirrel on the bird feeder and took off like a shot of lightening! Even your doting mama didn't know you could still move like that. You had him treed and were starting to climb the tree that the other bird feeder hangs on to chase him before I could even react. Luckily, you got up about 4' and decided that maybe this tree climbing was too much work for a DOC.
- Well Sunny, where were we? Back in your first year? Well, do you remember that year when Greg and Bob came up, and there were "extra" doggies in the trailer we were babysitting, and we had the ice storm? Maybe not, you didn't go out in it, but I can remember you in the kitchen window, looking at us idiots as we tried to thaw our pipes with our hairdryers! We hadn't thought it would ever get that cold in College Station.
- Or, do you remember that you learned how to use the answering machine? Or at least made it difficult for us humans to use properly. It seems even as a little baby cat, or maybe a teenaged cat, you were momma's baby boy, and you got lonely with everyone being gone all day. And somehow, probably by accident, you discovered if you walked on that little machine and its buttons, people would talk to you – sometimes even your MOM would talk to you (if ya hit that outgoing message button). And you remembered and did it whenever you got lonely. We

missed LOTS of messages before we figured out what was going on – there was no flashing light many times because YOU had already played the message. Ya little imp! Machines were too primitive in those days to deal with a precocious orange fuzzball. Finally we got a little shelf to “cover” the machine and keep it from being played. I hope that didn’t leave you too lonely. We came home every night, and you had all the other animals to play with all the time.

- Another toy we had great fun with back then, and for years later, were milk rings – the little plastic rings that held the lid on a gallon of milk. You wouldn’t quite fetch them, but you would bat them everywhere, and practically get tangled up doing so. Every place we moved out of had quite a collection of those milk rings under the refrigerator, stove and other appliances and furniture.
- You must have been pretty surprised when we went to visit the kittens born under the trailer next door that spring when you were almost one. You were probably even more surprised when mom brought one home! Why did I need another cat? Weren’t you MY boy, all the cat for you? Yes, Sunny, you were always my boy, always will be. Tribble seemed to know it from day one, and while she loved me, she always knew you had first shot at everything with me. Food dish, sleeping spot, lap time, whatever. She made up by making best friends with our roommates. But Sunny, you know I got her for you. I knew you had been lonely when I was gone, and then you had all the other animals around. But we would be moving to San Antonio for the summer, for my co-op job, and there were no other animals there. I wanted you to have company when I had to work all day. That was Tribble.
- You 2 quickly loved each other that summer, almost immediately after we made the 3-4 hour drive down there (and yes, you still had the neck spot, she curled up on a seat, or batted at your tail from the console). You were so cute sleeping together! You had grown into just about your full grown, large, fluffy size. Your furs and face were gorgeous then baby, just stunning. And your large orange self, curled around the little tiny black and white Tribble mite, or curled up beside each other in matching poses, was just adorable. And at night, you were still sleeping using my shoulder as a pillow, while she quickly went for the spot behind my bent knees. I was SO in LUV.
- You got one of your favorite toys that you used for years that summer. It was a stuffed baby Shamu. I think there were 2 of them, and they came with cases of video tapes (which I needed to tape Star Trek and Spenser) due to a promotion with Sea World of Texas, which opened that year. You and Tribble just loved them. You’d drag them around, or I would tie them to a string and we’d play chase. I often found you sleeping on it, or with it. For years Shamu would appear here and there, though he seemed to get retired to the toy tin the last few years.
- Of course, you two also auditioned for chief destructo-team of the universe together. If I remember correctly, you climbed the curtains. You knocked my ever-present junk off the kitchen table. You pulled the laundry out of the laundry basket. You tumped (tipped, whatever) the laundry basket over. You had one cat inside the basket and the other outside batting through the weave (on rare occasions, the 2 of you even just sat in said laundry basket). On one particularly memorable day, I came home to find what had formerly been a potted mini-rose

dumped all over the floor. Or at least the pot and dirt were, I only ever found a stem of the rose. I'm pretty sure Tribble was the instigator in that one though, she was always the plant eater, more than you.

- You, OTOH, were the nip fiend and lover of cat grass. The poor cat grass you usually pulled up by the roots, trying to inhale the whole thing at once! (this would be consistent with your gulping all the rest of what you ate – I don't think you ever chewed anything, except maybe some occasional dry food. So, how does a cat who never used his teeth get them dirty enough to have cleaning suggested? I know I never go it done though, I was too afraid something would go wrong with anesthesia. I don't think that ended up being what caused you to have to leave though, at least nothing I have read indicates a link to cancer and dirty teeth)
- Now, back to nip. You went bonkers over the stuff. You'd sniff, then you'd roll around in it, starting to get all glazy eyed. Then you'd roll harder, sometimes even making a "twumping" noise on the floor if the nip was in the kitchen. Then you defend the nip from the other cats, getting as mean and swatty as you ever got (which wasn't too much, really, you were the MOST good natured guy, until the last year you got a bit grouchy by your standards, which was ok, right of age, and maybe you were starting to be a little stiff and sore). Finally you'd lay there and look worn out. Like it was better than sex or something (ok, so I KNOW I never gave you the chance to compare, but I had ta do that, you were happier that way, trust me). And if this nip was part of a secret pals or secret santa or gift package, you would just DIVE into it. And tell the other cats it was YOUR package, not theirs, no way. And whap their paw or nose if they tried to horn in on it. Until you told them they could anyway.
- OK, mom's lost again in her so-called timeline. Where were we? That's right, San Antonio. In the summer time. During a very HOT summer. It's a wonder I could bear 2 kitties crawling on me. (aren't we all lucky for that utilities paid apartment?) I can still remember lying on the living room floor after a run, trying to cool down, only to have an orange kitty crawl on top of me, or look at me oddly wondering what I was up too. Your little feet could sure carry a lot of force, and you were hot! How did you stand getting all that sweat on your furs anyway?
- Because it was so hot, I had to get up VERY early (ok, later than I get up now, but I was a college student then, early had totally different meaning) to get in a run at the base before work, and I started early anyway. One problem with this early thing was I was half asleep. Another is that a bratty orange cat (coincidentally named Sunny) developed a new game for his amusement (yes, you know you did). This game was not so fondly named by the sleepy human as "chase the orange brat around the golf course before work". It consisted of you darting past me out the front door and running into the bushes. When I called you, hollered etc you would ignore it. When I put down my stuff and tried to catch you and put you back in, you'd run. In fact, you'd run all the way around to the back of the building onto the golf course. And as our building backed on the driving range, you'd generally run around there for a while too. One time I resorted to trickery and opened some cat food on the back porch to lure you over so I could grab you. Another I ruined my work clothes (think heavy dew, nice green golf course grass and white slacks) diving after you to grab you before you went into a bush. And

yet another we chased until you became tired of this game. You will remember that you enjoyed the game much more than I did.

- Due to these various renditions of your new favorite game (the neighbors and Tribble were no doubt impressed at the under the breath vocabulary) I resorted to a new technique which utilized your already obvious love for food. Immediately before leaving for work each morning, I fed you 2 Tender Vittles. Now, we both know how you loved Tender Vittles. I think you even loved hearing the bag torn open. You didn't get a lot, just enough to keep you eating while I grabbed my stuff and sneaked out the door. Amazingly this little technique worked. Apparently you liked Tender Vittles more than the "lead mom around the golf course" game.
- Unfortunately, for every little thing I thought I solved, you determined to show once again that cats are smarter than humans. Using your stomach clock, which seemed to dictate how you thought every moment should be spent throughout your life, you decided that this meant Tender Vittles time was 5 am. Unfortunately, your stomach clock didn't understand the concept of "weekends". At 5 am, without fail, you would get up, walk on me, meow, walk on me etc until I was awake. Then you would get down and scratch at a random closed door. You KNEW that would get me up, in search of saving my security deposit. And you'd keep at it until I fed you. But I could react to, remember. I decided we were going to break this habit. If you woke me up, I would get up (to prevent you from vandalizing the place) but you would NOT get any Tender Vittles, only your normal dry food and evening food. Now, it took 4-5 weeks, but you REALLY wanted those Tender Vittles. And you eventually made the connection between getting me up before I was ready and not getting Tender Vittles. Once you figured it out, we all slept peacefully ever after (at least until you had to get banned from the bedroom years later). I got to sleep late, WITH my huggable cats, and you got your Tender Vittles every morning for years.
- Speaking of foods you loved, I don't remember when I discovered it (I know it was after Tribble was on the scene), but you loved breads! Especially biscuits, the kind that came in the little cans and I baked up for breakfast sometimes on the weekends. I thought at first you wouldn't like them, but when I gave you a bite you glommed right through it. After that, you demanded at LEAST one entire biscuit for you each time I had them. I tore it up in little pieces and tried to gulp mine while you worked on them. Then you taught Tribble and, later on, the other cats to beg and eat bread too. By then I ended up needing to vacuum up the crumbs after breakfast. You also liked the Jiffy muffins, cakes and cookies, but nothing as much as biscuits or home made bread. You really were a sweetie.
- Even on those weekends I didn't have biscuits, you were always there. I think you and I both particularly liked weekend mornings. I stayed home, fed the cat, and then usually sat and drank my coffee (well after I started drinking coffee that summer in San Antonio anyway) and read the paper. And generally smurfed with the cat. You would crawl in under the paper and curl up. And oftentimes you would crawl up my chest and give me a kiss or noserub (those were one of my favorite things in the world, you know) and we would both be so happy. Sometimes you would just lie there, others you would curl back up. And you

would always get perturbed if I got up for a refill of the coffee. In fact, that's one reason I got a giant mug that could almost hold a whole pot, so I wouldn't have to get up. When I used to talk to mom and dad on every Sunday morning, you weren't always excited about that taking time away from our sessions – especially if I had to get up to get the phone. So I also started keeping a phone nearby. You had me trained! These last few years I thought you seemed especially happy on “our” weekend mornings, like you loved having me home even more. I'm sorry if I wasn't enough, you can't know how much I wanted to be, sometimes. I'm sorry you had that seizure before I got up that Saturday, it would have been nice to have “our” morning one last time, but I guess you had to have it with your Bridge friends that day. You can bet when I join you I will have you show me where the coffee and paper section is! The only thing that's too bad is in this house you didn't really like to go on the deck and sit with me out there to read the paper on spring mornings. That would have been pure bliss for me! Instead though, you usually kept an eye on me through the screen and meowed when I had “wasted” enough time. Or you begged to be let out and then ran for the grass down the stairs.

- Before we moved here, the pooter lap was also one of your favorite spots. Though in that case you had to compete with Tribble for it. I missed having that more than anything when I got married, that having the computers in the “fur free” zone meant no more computing and cat petting at once. I'm sure more than one night when I played with the computer you felt ignored. I wish I had a laptop! And I wish I had blown off the things I “had to do” on the computer more often and just held you. My sense of having to be productive betrayed you, didn't it? But you loved me anyway, I could tell. You were always my bestest boy.
- Well, lets see, what else? Oh, I know, in those early years, besides the coffee table, which you loved and sat on even when I wasn't studying (another thing mean old Mike didn't like and discouraged after mom ruined your happy home), you also loved the card table we kept out as a desk. On those, and even on the floor, in the summer time you were often upside down, keeping your belly cool, I guess. Poor old fuzzy, large cat got HOT in the summers, especially when we were in Texas, but even up here after you adapted. It was so hard not to RUB that lovely fuzzy belly sticking up every time I passed you. I'm glad you trusted me enough to feel comfortable showing it to me, and sleeping that way for hours, all stretched out and upside down. You could cover that whole card table it seemed! In fact, I have lots of gorgeous pictures of you sleeping with your belly in the air. It was so cute and rubbable. I loved to bury my fingers in it.
- I did worry about you getting too hot. Sometimes you panted so much I worried. Probably just trying to cool yourself, but I'd run around filling up new water, giving you ice cubes etc (which you didn't like, BTW). You'd also sprawl out on the kitchen or bathroom floors, whatever was cool.
- Thinking of this kind of leads me to thinking of your favorite spots. I think of you any time I look at them, and wish you were in them. When you were little, one of these spots was on the couch. Next to the stuffed bears, next to Tribble, it didn't really matter. You always had your head either on them or on the throw pillow – or maybe the arm of the couch. You liked to have something as a pillow! In fact,

oftentimes that something was a shoe. You had a positive shoe fetish, I swear! What you saw in my smelly old sneakers I don't know. I'd like to think it was my scent, but I know all too well you liked Greg's and Mike's too, so I guess it must have just been shoe smell. You could always find one somewhere (of course, it helped that I am good about leaving them around) and use it as you pillow.

- Another favorite spot these last few years was your little, cheapo, Purrrpad basket. While you would sometimes use the heated basket the others loved, you liked this one better. I'm not entirely sure why, as it seemed almost too little for a big old cat like yourself. But especially in the winter, you loved to curl yourself into it. It didn't matter that it was on the floor, or that it was dirty (you got them ridiculously filthy and I had to replace it every 6 months or so), you just loved it. No one has slept in it at all since you left for the Bridge. Maybe you are coming back to use it and the other cats know, since I know they used to use it (especially Galaxy) when you were here.
- Speaking of that, Galaxy not only wanted to use it when you did, he'd try to get in when you were in it! I know that had to annoy you – you were so long suffering with him. I think he knew you were mom's boy, and the alpha cat from day one, and he wanted you to be his idolized "big brother". Either that or you were his love interest ☺ He definitely has acted like he desperately misses you since you have gone. He's much more clingy to me. Thanks for being so patient with him. I know 2 cats didn't fit in that basket! There is one memorable picture of him on top of you. But usually me or Mike would feel sorry for you and try to chase him off. Either that or you would just leave, leaving him the spot. But often he would follow you! Being idolized had to be hard, but you were the greatest at it.
- This "I want to sit with Sunny" trend on Galaxy's part continued in some of your other spots. On the guest bed I always saw you 2 next to each other. On the gold chair, you would be seated, sleeping happily, and he would get up and stretch out inside you, along your belly. You'd be so annoyed. Sometimes you would wrap him up with your paws. In fact, sometimes it looked like you wanted to choke him, and maybe you did. Sometimes you'd give him gentle "kitty bites" and licks in the neck and try and get him to leave. Once in a while you'd bite harder, but usually when you got fed up you would leave. You often came to me for lap time then, which you know I loved.
- Another spot you loved after we got the pink cat tree (now lovingly shredded) was the "oven". As you know it really was the closed in box on the bottom. I think you liked the lower part because you were heavy and didn't like to jump too far (in fact, this last year, you didn't even jump on it much. I should have known something was wrong, but I thought you were just slowing down some). It looked so funny with the big old cat squished in the box! You especially liked it when I had recently tossed some nip in there. You must have been toasty warm in there. When it was warmer, you liked the top of that "oven". You could see out the window one way, or into the living room another way, basically keep an eye on your whole domain. I cleaned up so much fur from that pink carpet! Long, soft, orangey and beige Sunny fur. I wish I had saved some of it, just so I could feel it again. But like many humans, I failed to see (or accept) that one day it wouldn't be there to vacuum up, because we had to spend time in different places.

- Another spot you really liked, when you could get me to cooperate, was the quilt hoop, preferably with a nice, stretched out quilt in it. Galaxy liked the quilts itself, as did the other cats, but you liked to be IN the hoop. There were many times when we were working on that first quilt, the one that was great grams top and that we were putting little hand done quilts in the centers, when I had to wrestle a large orange furball out of the hoop and off to one side so I could work on the thing. When I could achieve this, you did a great job purring your soft little purr and keeping my feet and legs warm. That 14" hoop must have been the perfect size, and you thought the quilt in it was your little hammock. Many, many days I came home to find you sleeping in the hoop. That quilt was nearly all fur before I got done! Antique top or not, I had to wash it. It made it through ok. You spent time in the hoop of several others, but I got to where the fur made my allergies so bad that I didn't leave them around any more, just got them out while I was working on them. Did you feel ripped off? You know I never made you leave when I was actually working on a quilt!
- When I first started doing quilts, you checked out everything. You made hadn sewing and tie-ing the corduroy quilt quite an adventure (as in "stay AWAY from this needle Sunny, it pokes curious cats"). You wanted to bat at the needle in the machine too, despite the noise, but a certain human wasn't as much fun. Not to mention the rickety little table the machine was on then probably wasn't up to holding a 16 lb cat! By the time I got the table you seemed to have lost interest in the actual sewing. You preferred to help with layering then, by sitting on the layers before they were arranged or during pinning, and most especially by crawling in my lap every time I was on my knees or sitting down. Such help! (yes, I know you just loved me and wanted me to sit with you) Quilting help got even more interesting when I was rotary cutting. You'd always crawl in my lap, which I soon found was safer than the alternative – if I made you move you'd sit on the fabric at one edge of the mat! Either way, I lived in dire fear I would somehow slip with the rotary blade and cut your paw, like I did my finger once (ouch).
- Where else were your favorite spots? Oh yes, windowsills! Especially at the College Station apartment and the duplex I had when we first moved hear. I remember how excited you would be in the spring (even besides the ram around the house banshees you would get). You would sit in the window and sniff the air. You seemed very impressed that in Minnesota we could have those windows open (and thus a great sitting sill) all summer. Mike didn't much like you to do this once we got married, but I still let you get up in the one in the guest room, until it got too hard for you. Then you would go to one of the screen doors and sit there and sniff and watch the out go by. I can still see you on those wide dark sills in the duplex. High up, in the back bedroom, with your fluffy tail (which was still fluffy then, though it got straggly these last few years) hanging down over the bed, clashing with the pink curtains. Those curtains were another thing that I thought were going to be transformed into an alternate orange cat at any time, with all the fur I would rub off of them onto the fur grabbers. No wonder I couldn't breathe at night, between all of you sleeping with me, and the fur you left in the room.

- Now, thinking of windows, as much as you loved them, you didn't participate in any of the great escapes through them. I am absolutely sure you were the one who pushed out the screen in College Station, even though I was out of town that weekend and Greg was watching you. You hated that outside "trooder kitty" and were always trying to get to him. However, I believe Greg found you inside (or at least by the door). Tribble was gone for 3 days and I was panicked! Needless to say, those screens were more cat proofed after that, no matter how much you wanted to discuss things with that outside cat!
- And in Minnesota when I foolishly thought cats could not go through a ½" window crack, even if the screen was not put back up for the summer yet, you were the only one not either out or attempting to leave. Tribble and Pixel were long gone, and Galaxy was in the window when I came upstairs. I looked frantically for you, and found you, where else, coming into the kitchen. You probably thought there was a new 2 am cat feeding! But I was oh so relieved you weren't out, since you COULD be a dickens about being recaptured when you wanted to. That couple of times a year you would take it upon yourself to dash out the door past me with your sneaky speed, you could be a royal pain to catch if you wanted to be. Its amazing how fast you could get down the stairs, out into the yard and off around the side of the house or into the woods. Lucky for me, at some point you usually decided you wanted a grass snack (since the cat grass you used to kill by ripping it up from its roots, I'd guess you were addicted) and I could catch you then, while you tried to stuff that big old cat way down in the dirt, thinking I couldn't see you (I guess the theory worked kind of like the one for shoeboxes, right?). I could pretend to be your momcat and grab you behind the nape of the neck, and then you'd let me pick you up and carry you, without fighting too badly.
- That reminds me of one time you did fight, and I think I nearly lost you. It was when we were moving to Minnesota, after that first long days ride in the car (and the adventure of trying to free Pixel from the electric seat adjuster in dad's blue wagon). You had been good all day, not even singing too much. You had also been riding free in the car, with just your leash to grab at stops. Well, when we stopped for the night, I should have put you back in your carrier before carrying you into that hotel (the Holiday Inn in Emporia, Kansas I believe). But you had been so good, and I was tired and wanted to hold you, so I decided to carry you in my arms to the room. Now, this might have actually worked except I forgot to calculate one thing – our room was located beyond the pool. The indoor pool. Where a bunch of kids were having a birthday party and screaming and yelling. Poor baby, all that echoing noise freaked you out completely, and you made a desperate attempt to escape my arms. You usually were cooperative and I sometimes forgot how strong you were. I fought with all my strength and did manage to hold on to you, barely. Good thing, because in that strange place you probably were so afraid that you would have run away where I could not catch you, and we would have missed out on nearly 9 more great years together. I did managed to lose a bit of blood and a nearly brand new purple t-shirt and red jacket (that were very shredded – I think I still have the shirt at least). And I think there

is still a light scar on my breast – a souvenir of you, your strength, size, power and more.

- I should have remembered that incident and a couple others over the years this last year when I had to start giving you baths because of Mike's asthma. I know you had to hate them – you probably wouldn't have put up with it if you were in your younger days. But you were always SO good about it. You let me dip you in the tub and rinse you over twice and rub you with the washcloth. And I would kiss you on top of the nose (even though you would smell like wet cat) and tell you what a good boy you were, and how momma LOVED her boy more than anything else in the world. Then I would wrap you in the towel and dry you off, and give you more kisses. God I bawled so hard the week after you left for the Bridge when I had to bathe the other 3 cats. No kisses, no chance to tell you again how much I loved and adored you and how good and patient you were. There were the wrong number of towels too, to wash afterwards. And worst of all, when I offered treats (Pouncies or Whiskas) afterwards, no one came for them, thought Tribble ate a couple when I took them to her. You were always GREAT about all being forgiven when I offered up the treats. I stocked up on Pouncies this year, so I could give you lots and lots on bath day. You forgave so fast. Several times you would come and try to curl in my lap even while you were still damp. Maybe you were chilly, maybe you were just loving me as usual, maybe you were telling me you understood I didn't give you baths to be mean, I don't know. I DO know I am oh so glad I let you sit there the last couple of weeks (not just because it kept wet fur off the new leather couch), and got my sweatpants soaked (so what's another set of clothes to go with the ones that got soaked during the bath process?) I'd totally kick myself if I hadn't; because I want to hold you again ever time I sit "Indian style". Sometimes another cat comes, but it isn't the same, because it's not their thing like it was yours.
- Another thing, the baths didn't turn you off on the bathroom. You'd come in whenever I would take a bath or shower. Usually you'd lie on the towels on the floor, or on my dirty clothes. You'd sit and watch me bathe. Once in a while, you'd crawl up and explore the edge of the tub, but not too often. Usually just sit on the towel, and chase off the other cats.
- That was a bit different than one of your hobbies back in the days we lived with Greg in College Station. Then you'd help him practice his fencing! You'd generally lie down to do it (well, you can be active and lazy right?) and he would practice tip control while you tried to whap the foil tip with your paw. You were much more interested in that game than you ever were in the red dot we obtained in later years. You didn't think it was real for very long, maybe a couple play sessions.
- Sunny, it is unbelievable to me how awful not having you here makes me feel when I come home. You ALWAYS greeted me. You could hear the car engine and know it was time. Time for me, and time to EAT. Some days, if the storm door was open, you'd be sitting there watching for me. In other places, you'd be in the window watching. Then when I put the key in the lock you were right by the door, tripping me, meowing loudly, saying FEED ME. In fact, you thought ANY time I came home was dinner time. It didn't matter if it was 10 am on a

Saturday, you'd beg. You were well conditioned. Its amazing how different it is now. Galaxy sometimes greets me and begs for dinner, but half the time doesn't eat it. Pixel and Tribble don't even come over, or come in and eat. You'd be amazed how long the can of wet food lasts! (were you actually eating EVERYONE'S serving?) It's lonely though, and weird.

- In fact, the weekends are even worse. You reliably would start begging 2+ hours before the actual mealtime. And it was our routine for you to beg and follow me to the kitchen and me to say "it's not time yet Sunny" until the time was reached. Then I'd say "Sunny, are you hungry?" and you knew and ran into the kitchen even before I'd get up. And you'd beg and twine until the food got put down. You got kicked an uncountable number of times, when you'd trip me. I feel bad, because I think I tripped on you and kicked you too hard a couple times recently. One time you didn't come right back and it must have hurt your back or leg, since it was so unlike you not to come right back and to act afraid of my feet. I'm sorry I didn't realize that was a sign of a problem (even if TED does say we couldn't have done anything about it). I can remember how when you'd get bored any time, you'd go have a bite to eat, if there was dry food out. In fact, a lot of the time you'd lie down and nibble – talk about lazy, or maybe just wanting to eat more at one time without getting tired.
- Dinnertime is different now, really different. On several occasions the wet food and even dry has been completely forgotten, because no kitty reminded forgetful old mom. I'm not used to having to remember on my own! Its so bad I started free feeding again. I feel a bit guilty about that, as I was doing that to try and help you maintain weight. I know you loved to nibble whenever you were bored and if I had known you would be stolen away so soon I'd have let you eat all you want. Tribble has lost 2 pounds in 2 years too, so I have no reason not to put the dry food out again. Oh Sunny, what I wouldn't do over again to make your life with me even better. If only you knew!
- One of the things I would do over is your last night with me. I'm very glad I decided not to vacuum and instead decided to watch hockey (the Wild I think) on TV. You sat up with me on the couch and watched the game. But I was so tired, and it was the end of the week, that I kept falling asleep. It also seemed you couldn't get totally comfortable in your normal spot alongside me, because you kept getting up and turning around and adjusting your position. That was one more little sign that something was a bit off with you (like your pupils that did not adjust a couple nights previously), but I never thought it was bringing the end so soon! So I decided to go to bed after the second period. What a huge mistake! You were upset when I said I had to go to bed and put you down into your basket. I said "I'm sorry Sunny, mom has to go to bed" and kissed you and put you there. Little did I know that was the last time we would have to sleep together with me hugging you. I would have stayed up all night! I wish I could do it over again so badly. I nearly died myself when I found myself telling Tribble the exact same thing a couple weeks later. I kept getting up and checking on her all night.
- I hope you only had that seizure right before Mike got up that morning. I really do. I can't stand to think you laid on the cold floor in the entryway, scared and not knowing what was happening to you, for very long. You seemed so much better

when I pulled you into your spot in my lap the best I could (I was afraid I'd hurt you). I hope to Bast that you were fine all night and just came down when you heard Mike and thought it might be me and therefore time for breakfast. I hope it was true, because you normally weren't down there until someone got up, as you slept in your basket or on the bed or the chair. I hope you could hear mom telling you it was ok, not to be afraid and felt comforted. I prayed so hard you would be coming back that morning. But it wasn't to be, and my life will never be the same again. I am glad you didn't suffer a prolonged agony from all the tumors I found out you had, but I was not ready to share you with Bast again. I still need you in so many ways. I am also glad it was not a month earlier, when you would have been alone. I could not have lived with myself if you had been alone that morning. I love you, love you, love you, always will.

- It all happened so quickly I didn't have time to save things of you. I didn't think to get a clump of furs to keep to have your orangeness near me always. I did find one little clump of fur when I cleaned that afternoon, and one white Sunny whisker. I kept them. I always loved your interesting whiskers. Some were white, some were black, and some were orangey. Usually the right side of your face only had one white one, and when I first noticed it I'd call you "Sunny white whisker". One of your many nicknames, along with Sunnykins, Kin, Kinsy, Sunnybabe, Sunnybunny (and variations), momma's baby and heaven knows how many else. Mike rudely called you fatso or my fatso, but he was nearly as crushed as I was to find you gone. Maybe that was your final gift to me, that he would miss you so much he tried to be nicer to the other cats. That would be like you, to try and help me any way you could.
- I also got your ashes back. Right now they are right beside me in the nightstand. Someday I will get a nice urn and put you in a prominent space where you can be with me a lot again. I also couldn't wash the sweats and shirt I had on that morning, as they are covered with your fur. I have no idea what I am going to do with them, but it seemed wrong to wash them. I want to tell you that you sent one of the best days of spring to us that day you left. I felt very badly that you didn't get to see it, because we were able to open the storm door in front for the first time of the year and see the sun and sniff the melting snow. You always loved that fresh air, sun and scent of spring. That's how I know you sent it.
- Sunny, so many memories of you come back to me at all times of all days, and especially sitting here writing this. Things I hadn't thought of in years, like you looking at my first fish tank and trying to grab the red betta. And things like when we had the old RX-80 dot matrix printer, who you would try to catch both the carriage going back and forth and the paper running through it. It made printing thesis drafts a bit of an adventure! And about you knowing mom when she would come to visit and also Christy, but often hiding from others and running away when the doorbell rang. I remember at Halloween this year you were much braver, and sat on the steps with me quite a lot while I waited for the beggars to come by. You even looked out the screen at them a couple times. I remember you eating the ribbons on Christmas boxes, and eating plastic to the point I had to make sure and put all plastic things away (why in the world did you like plastic so much?). It makes me think of you every time I see a plastic bag I have to hold

something and it has teeth marks in it ☺ I remember you getting into the Tender Vittles cupboard while I was away and eating up an entire box (wonder how long it took to open them all?). I remember how happy you were in the nip Kate sent the week before you died after I spilled it in the kitchen. I remember how you loved even the envelopes her FSN came in. You'd act so happy.

- I remember how upset you were when I fostered Toby the Dog and how you would LEAP behind the baby fence to escape him, and how happy you would be at night when you could have me to yourself. You were very excited when he couldn't stay forever. I remember your clawing up carpet trying to get downstairs when we first moved here, because you were not used to being away from me even at night, maybe especially at night. That was odd, since you were always very good about scratching only your post and not other stuff (unlike most of the other cats here). You especially loved sisal and broke at least 2 of those pyramid shaped posts, you pulled on them so hard (not to mention the many times I had to restring it). But you adjusted, like you always did.
- I remember when Pixel and Galaxy first came to live with us. You were annoyed with those oh so tiny things in your house. But you were also curious and would watch their adventures diligently and only swat them occasionally when they bothered you. And you were patient, like you always were. You had seen mom move people and cats in and out before, and you were secure in your place as king of the house and alpha cat. The other cats knew that and that I would always stick up for you. Even in your later years, when Galaxy may have been able to challenge for alpha cat status, he didn't. He, like the rest of us, knew that was your spot, forever.
- I remember your lovely fuzzy, fuzzy toes and between the toes. They were SO cute. They did make it hard to trim your claws and for you to get traction when you'd be tearing around the house, especially on smooth surfaces. I loved those beige furs sticking out from your fuzzy toes *smootch*
- I remember how you always liked to be "in" things, mostly things that were too small for you. Like a shoe box, my dresser drawer in San Antonio, or the cabinet. Or like the laundry basket. You and Tribble had such fun with that double sized tan laundry basket! You'd take turns jumping in and out, and batting each other through the bars. The little round basket I once turned upside down on you, and we had a new game, while you worked to get out – which you finally did. It was fun watching you. And years later, when I got a different blue laundry basket to haul in clothes from the line, if I left it in the entryway or living room, sure enough, soon there would be an orange cat in it, checking it out for size.
- Sunny, another thing you used to like to sit in were the Easter baskets I put out for Easter decorations. Tomorrow's Easter again, and I can't help thinking of that. I didn't even get the baskets out this year – somehow it didn't seem worth it, and I have been so sad. Supposedly Easter is a day of rebirth, but I doubt I will get YOUR rebirth, which is what I would want most of all. We went out on the deck today, the other 3 cats grouped at the screen door just as you would as soon as it opened. But Pixel and Tribble were too scared to stay out. I wish you could have been out there with Galaxy and me, enjoying the sun, although I know you would

have tried (and maybe succeeded) to escape down onto the muddy ground to eat grass.

- It's also my birthday in a couple of days. It's the first birthday I won't have you with me for since what, 1989? Twelve years ago, when I was barely legal drinking age. How I wish I could have given you a few more birthdays, even if I had to trade mine for them. I'd gladly have done so, you know, if I could.
- Its funny Sunny baby, I still don't really know if you were happy with moving to Minnesota from Texas. I know you weren't as hot, but you really didn't like snow, and you'd try to get all 4 feet out of it at one time, if you could. And it seemed like I went and grew up and had even less time to spend with you. Until I got married, I didn't worry too much about that, because I always knew you would be there at night, right beside me. I'm very grateful that a few times this last fall and winter I couldn't sleep and was afraid I would keep Mike awake (either because I was sick or stressed etc, or because he was). I'm grateful, you see, because by trudging up to the guest bed, several times you got to sleep beside me again, though I know it wasn't super easy for you to get up on that high guest bed by then, you'd careful come over from the scratching post, to the bed frame, then on to the bed. And you would curl up along side one shoulder, or along my stomach, just where you always belonged. And where you will belong for always, someday, if there really is a heaven.

Well, I'm running out of things to say that I can get down coherently on paper. There are so many other memories that I will always cherish. And I want you to know that many, many other people cared greatly for you, even ones you never met. Orange cats like yourself are so very special, and me and all of your rpc(c) friends know it. Since I can't get much else down right now, I will just end with **I LOVE YOU**. I have since the day I met you, and I always will – Love, mom