







HOMER



# HOMER

THE OLDEST CAT IN THE WORLD

709 B.C. - 1994



BY NANCY & RICHARD PETTIBONE





Dedicated to  
PETER J INGRAHAM D.V.M. P.C.  
if he wants it




Charlotteville  
February 26, 1991  
10° F

A horrible looking Tom-Cat walked across the porch this afternoon, I chased him away, I think he lives at the farm next door.

February 27  
0° F

Our neighbor, Margaret, came over this morning to show us a letter from her daughter who was serving in the Persian Gulf. I opened the kitchen door to let her in, and there was that cat, crying. I'd never heard such a sound. I stamped my foot, and he backed off, but didn't leave. Margaret looked at him, and said, "Nancy, you have to feed him, he's starving to death."

when Homer first appeared he had a large wound on his face and it was around 10° at night. Margnet said, "you've got to feed him, he's starving"



H O M E R



DEC 12 1893

ΟΑΥΕΚΙΑ

ΙΑΙΑΔΟΣ



HOMER

For ~~at night~~ about a year after  
he arrived, Homer would sort of  
hunker down & back away when you  
pet ~~him~~ him. He had obviously  
been abused. He eventually forgot  
and looked forward to a pat on the  
head. .

Homer came during the Gulf war & I was reading the 'Iliad' so he was named after Homer, the Greek epic poet. ~~Richard~~ After he'd been with us a while, we realized <sup>that</sup> he <sup>really</sup> was Homer, the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey.



Nancy... "Can we keep him?"

Richard... "Of course we can keep him - We've already named him."

I walked over, and touched his hind quarter, my fingers met in the middle of his spine. There was nothing but bone and hair. We gave him food, and milk. He purred as he ate. Where had he come from? Which direction? We live in a very sparsely populated area, and from the looks of him, this old guy had been on his own for a long time. He didn't smell like barn cat, and he didn't look like a house cat. He had long matted black hair, his face had a wide white triangle coming up the center between his eyes, setting off a tiny black nose. His eyes were yellow green, and he had lots of thick, white whiskers, a white chest, and four dirty white paws. A large wound covered one side of his head, it looked awful. I asked Richard if we could keep him, "of course, he already has a name. HOMER."

We already had two cats, so Homer couldn't come into the house until our Vet. checked him out. We put the carrier on the porch and he entered it on his own. He let me pet him, but each time my hand came near, he cowered.


Homer had been abused.



## HOMER MEETS PETER

The car ride to the Vets. was actually fun. Most cats we've had scream, and try to destroy the carrier, which can really get on your nerves on icy mountain roads. But not this one, he purred. I'm sure it was not his first car ride.

When we first took Homer to the vets for a tune up, Peter said he was the oldest, ugliest cat he had ever seen. " He could be the poster cat for the A.S.P.C.A. "



Peter made an awful face when we took Homer from the carrier. He picked him up, and announced that this was the ugliest cat he had ever seen. He thought we were there to put the old stray to sleep. When he realized we wanted to save him, I could tell he was pleased. We wanted a test for Feline cancer, and all the regular shots. Peter then told us that Homer hadn't been neutered. We left and the deed was done.





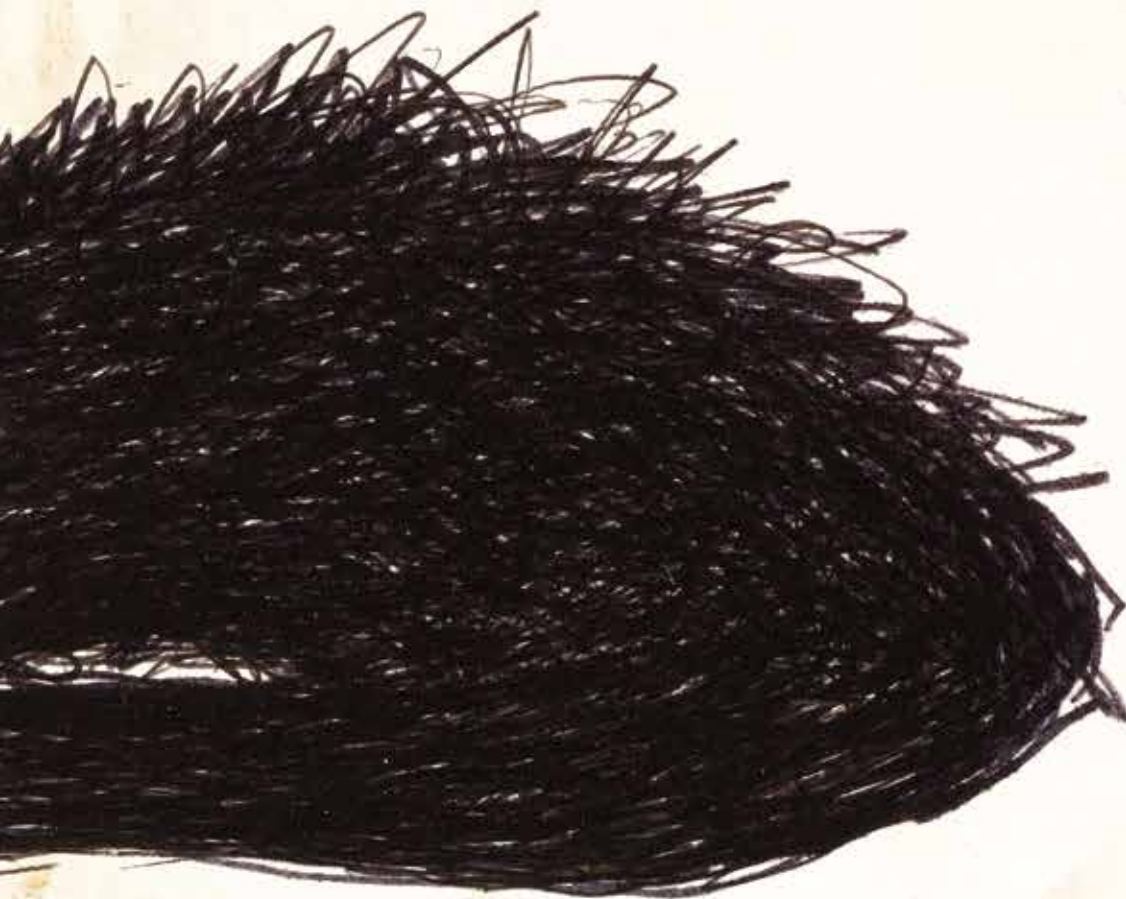
#### DEPLOYMENT WITH A GHOST

Our two cats Jessica and Legs, did not approve of their new house mate, and showed displeasure whenever possible. Homer didn't seem to care, he only wanted to eat, and sleep. I fixed a basket next to my worktable for him, and he hardly left it. His food needs were outrageous, three 6 oz. cans a day, since we were on a tight budget, I was a bit concerned. I called the Vets. office, and they said not to worry, that it would level out as soon as he built up his strength. They were right, and it did.

Soon he began to explore the house. He moved without a sound. Sometimes fur would brush against my leg as he passed, it was as if he could float. He was as light as a feather.

Jessica and Legs calmed down, and except for an occasional impasse in a doorway the battle for territory was over. By May it was clear to everyone that Homer was THE KING.





12-12-93

3 stages of Homers life  
with us.

1 Sleep - eat - litter - porch

2 sleep - eat - litter - porch - lawn - woods.

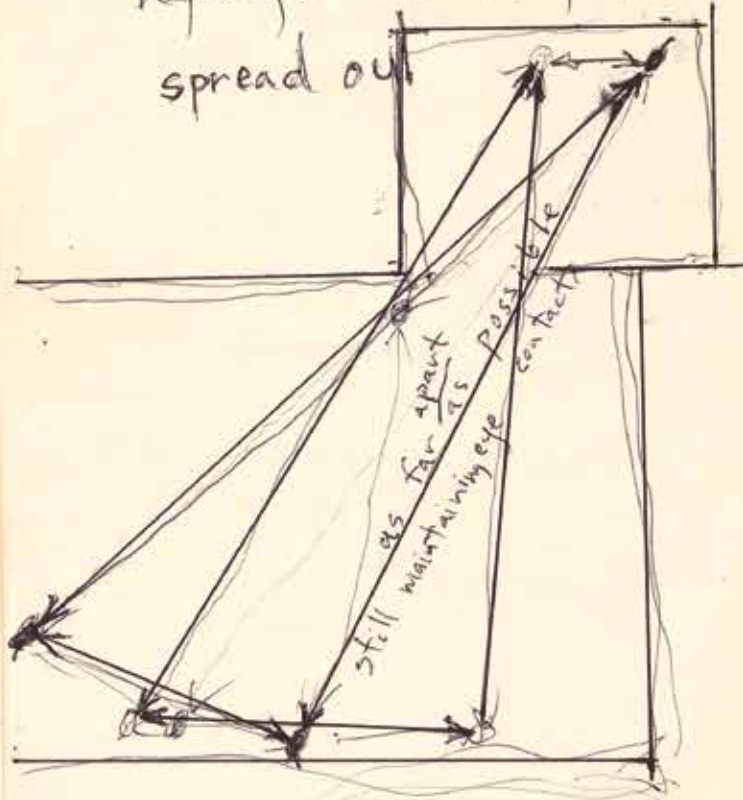
3 Sleep - eat - litter - porch - lawn<sup>woods</sup> - ditch -  
pond - road trip

I went back the next morning to get Homer. They brought him to me without the carrier, the girl didn't realize, I had never held him, that we were strangers. She put him in my arms, and he took his best shot at me. I had a five inch scratch on my cheek, blood everywhere. We put him in the carrier, I washed myself, and payed the bill. I started for home, but a mile from the clinic I pulled over, and started to cry.

Homer slept all the way.



Deploy - military term  
spread out













Steels daughter Kate laughed when <sup>she saw</sup> Homer walk ~~the~~. I could tell she felt guilty for laughing at someone for being so old, but everybody laughed when Homer walked. He didn't mind, walking was one of the ways he had of saying thanks for the great life.

Curtis said: "Homer is an amazement. you rub him and hope you get good luck.

Our friend Al Ordover, who hates cats, said of Homer; "If you hadn't told me, I wouldn't have known he was a cat at all."





"Take Pookie and Homer to  
Hollywood and there won't be  
a dry eye in the house."

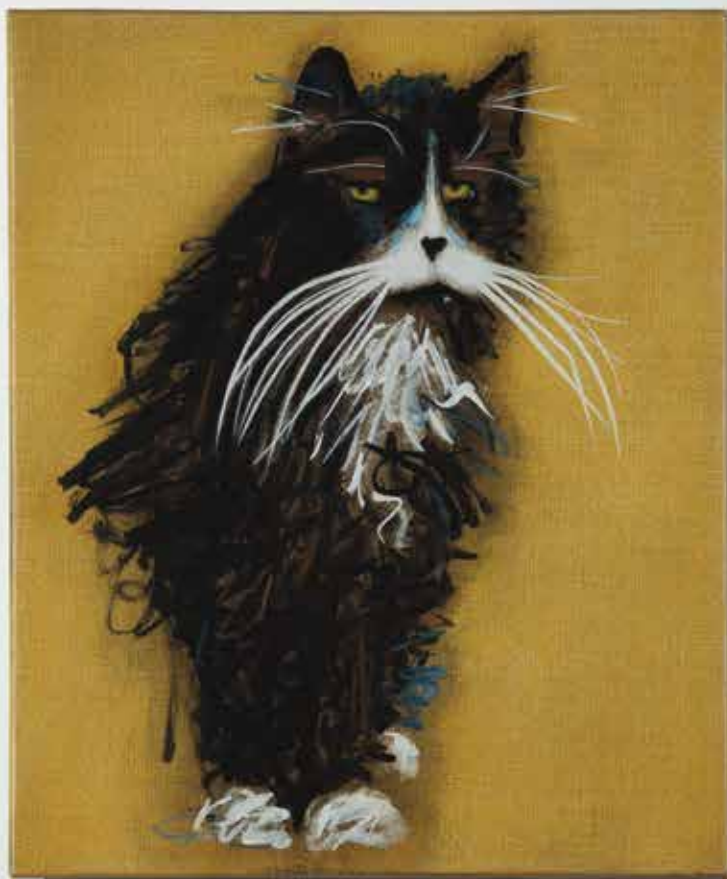
Pookie was Nancy Shavers old  
dog whose claim to fame was stealing  
a turkey from Martha

Margaret's granddaughter Megan's  
little teeny voice ...

You know those little troll dolls that are so ugly but really cute?  
Well, Homer is like that, He's really ugly but he's really cute too.



What time do you paint?



K A R M A

**kar-ma** \ˈkär-mə, ˈkər-\ *n.*, *often cap* [Skt *karma* fate, work] (1827) **1**  
: the force generated by a person's actions held in Hinduism and Buddhism to perpetuate transmigration and in its ethical consequences to determine his destiny in his next existence **2**: VIBRATION 4 — **kar-mic**  
\-mik\ *adj.*, *often cap*



When Nancy asked Peter if he could tell how old  
Homer is ~~is~~ into a Karma  
beyond old age, beyond  
anything we can understand.  
He's like those monks  
on mountains.

Homer was 11  
Peter said



About every six weeks we had to take Homer to the vet to get his claws clipped. They grew so fast that they would actually cut into his paws. Peter called them the claws from hell.

On one occasion there was an emergency at the clinic and we had to wait about 20 minutes. Homer was furious and wouldn't allow us to

touch him + growl hiss snarl.

Peter said "That's it, he's out of control, I'm not getting scratched."

I said, "I guess Homer doesn't like to be kept waiting." Peter never kept Homer waiting again.







OUTLINE

THE COMB

GUY TALK

NIGHT STORIES

HOMER-ARTIST MODEL

WINTER-SPRING 1994

PRUNING

THE POND

HOMER'S NEW ADVENTURES  
THE FROG  
FALLING IN

HOMER'S THRONE

CELEBRATING HOMER

THE BOOK

## ONE MORE CHANCE

I found Homer asleep in the kindling basket, I had put an old woolen shawl at one end of it, and Legs had been using it for months. She was not pleased to see him there. By the end of the day, he was still asleep. I lifted him out, and it was clear that all was not well. He drank some water, but wouldn't eat, he climbed back into the basket, and went to sleep.

The next morning he insisted on going to the pond. I went with him, carrying him most of the way. He drank his fill, I looked around for the frog, but there was no sign of him. I left Homer at the pond, he wasn't ready to go home, and I knew he had to be independent. He came back on his own a couple of hours later, I helped him get on his throne. His body weight was dropping fast, we realized the end was closing in on us. I called Peter for an appointment. We dug a grave by the pond, and I bundled Homer up for a trip to the clinic.

I didn't want to go into the waiting room, the last thing Homer needed was a large dog barking at him. Peter came out to the car and looked at Homer, he saw something we were not aware of, a large swelling on the side of his face. Peter said, "He has quite an abscess there, bring him inside in a few minutes. I think he may have a chance." Another chance, we were confused. Another chance was the last thing we could have imagined. We drove home and closed the grave.

Homer was at the clinic for a week, and the abscess was getting better. We wanted to bring him home, but Peter wasn't sure if he was ready, and suggested we come visit. We found out that Peter would be gone for two hours so we took Homer outside, and spread his blanket on the grass. It was a great, warm, August day.

Homer had a large wick coming from the side of his cheek, and half of his face had been shaved. He was not a sight for the faint of heart. We were told that he was eating, so we asked for a can of food, which he quickly polished off. It was our lunchtime, so Richard went to Burger King a mile away, and came back with a picnic. Homer ate half the chicken from my sandwich, took a poop, and was very social. People came and went, everyone was very supportive. The girls from the clinic were outside for lunch break, enjoying the spectacle. Peter drove up, and Richard started to chant. "Free Homer." "Oh my God," said Peter, "it's a sit-in."

The sit in

FREE HOMER!

F R E E H O M E R !

Its a sit in

Free Hower!

Its really a sit in

FREE HOMER!

sit in

~~FREE HOMER!~~

F R E E H O M E R !

its a sit in

FREE HOMER!

## HOME AGAIN

It was really fun to have Homer back, he looked awful, we loved him more than ever. Richard was having ice cream one afternoon, he gave Homer a spoonful, Ben & Jerry's-Chocolate Mocha Fudge, a new high. That week, I let Homer spend a lot of time on top of my worktable, he had a habit of sitting on top of whatever I was reading, I didn't mind. He even let me do some minor grooming, at this point however, it hardly made a difference.

Homer insisted on staying out at night, sleeping on his throne. One morning he wasn't around when I got up, I went to the pond to see if he was there. He was sleeping within a few feet of the grave we had covered over. He woke up, and we sat together for a while, he got up, took a pee on the loose dirt, and we went home.



He stopped eating again, then stopped drinking. I could feel a dark change coming. I prayed to all the Gods I could think of, I knew Homer was dying. WE were soon to say our last good-bye.



August 14, 1994  
3 A.M.

Why can't I help him? I just don't know how to help him. Homer and I are sitting on the kitchen floor. I keep thinking that Death will take over, and Homer will stop breathing, but it just doesn't happen. He hasn't eaten for two days, but he still has boundless energy to pace. I keep hoping he will have the wisdom to stop breathing, but of course it doesn't work like that. HOMER is the ultimate survivor. He climbs into my lap and licks my hand, his tongue is soft, like velvet.

4 A.M.

It's raining a fine mist, we're going for another walk, first to the picnic table, then to the road. He showed an interest that week to go to the middle of the dirt road. Then to the bottom of the hill where dirt meets pavement. We did this over and over with him, but of course we'd get to the bottom and carry him back. What was he thinking? Why did he want to go there? Since it was Fair Week, we joked about it to each other, Homer simply wanted to go to the Fair. So here I am in my nightgown, with this ancient cat, walking down the road, one last time, going to the Sunshine Fair.



Sunday Morning

When Richard got up, I told him about my night with Homer. We both knew the time had come, to call Peter for help. Even if Homer could last another day, I wasn't sure that I could. We had coffee, and put Homer on a blanket on the table in front of us. I can't believe that I'm still trying to groom him. One last mat is really bothering me, but he won't let me cut it off. I know that by the time afternoon falls he won't care anymore.

Peter will meet us in an hour.

The car ride was very peaceful, Homer slept in my arms. I felt as if I was holding air, he was becoming the ghost cat, that adopted us three and a half years before. He was as light as a feather, his slow steady heart, was beating in my hand. We were early and had a cigarette, we had quit some time ago, but got a pack that morning. It helped. Homer slept.

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By the time Homer left he was so thin you could airmail him anywhere in the country with one stamp.

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I will always be grateful that Peter was Homer's Vet. He is a real take charge guy, and at this moment we are all in need of that. There was little to say, and what had to be done was done, with a kindness I won't forget. Thanks Dr. Ingraham.

WE drove home, relieved and sad. I put Homer on the table, cut off the last mat, and chose a cloth to bury him in. A bright red terry towel, that he used to sleep on. My beautiful friend was gone, I sewed the bundle closed.





Richard and I walked over to the pond, I carried Homer for the last time. We reopened the grave, and gently put him in the ground. It was starting to rain, we slowly walked home.

*Homer. The Oldest Cat in the World. 709 B.C. – 1994, 1994*  
by Nancy and Richard Pettibone

"You don't even know what a good book looks like  
till you've read Homer."

Ezra Pound

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