

A Lost Dog Finds Cat Paradise

Tails of Love and Mischief

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Bob Walker Photography



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For Sadie,
the purr-fect dog that
we didn't know we needed.





Sadie, the Purr-fect Puppy

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Arriving home from a filling Mexican dinner, we were greeted in the driveway by a starving chihuahua puppy; it jumped up and down at our legs, seeking food and shelter. Just the day before, Frances and I had adopted two neighborhood kittens, Willow and Zander, increasing our family to ten felines. We didn't need another critter to feed or try to train, especially a dog! After an unsuccessful search to find the lost puppy's home, we adopted adorable Sadie.

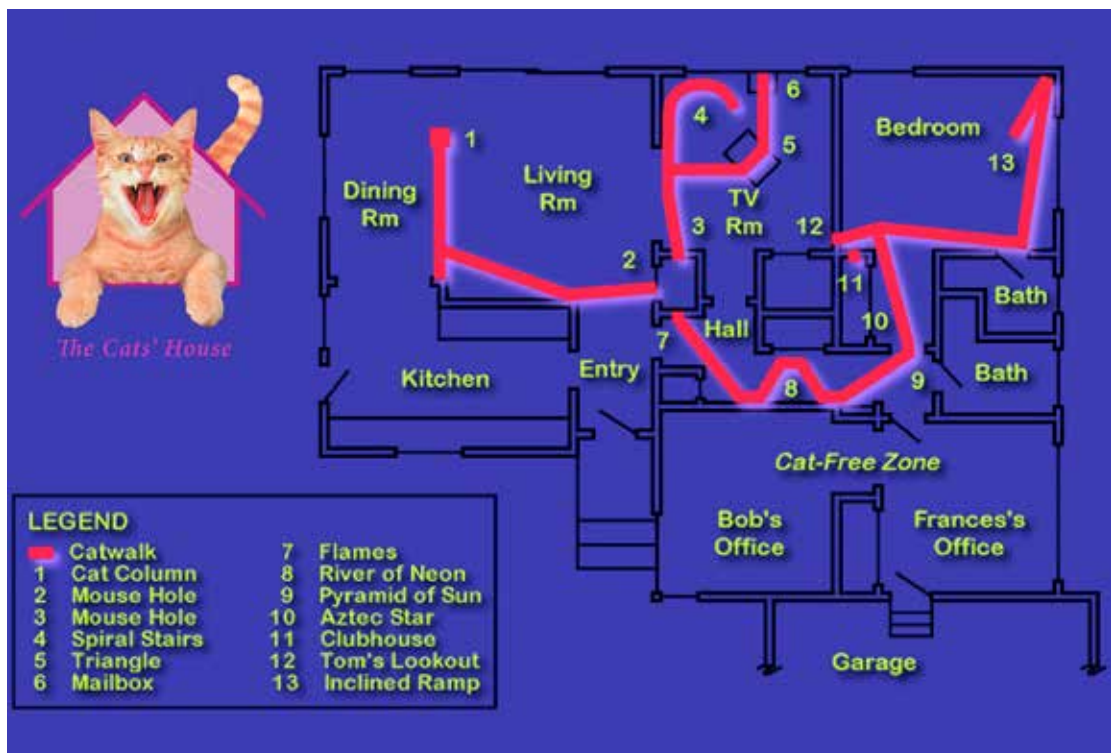
We hadn't expected that introducing a dog smaller than our cats would have such an outsized effect on The Cats' House. Our cat paradise had become a media attraction for crews because of its trendsetting, room-to-room overhead catwalk that we had personally constructed and installed. Sadie immediately made an impact on all inhabitants, claiming cat toys as dog toys, and gathering all playthings into her custody for safekeeping. The cats could have the ceiling. Sadie owned the floor and toys.

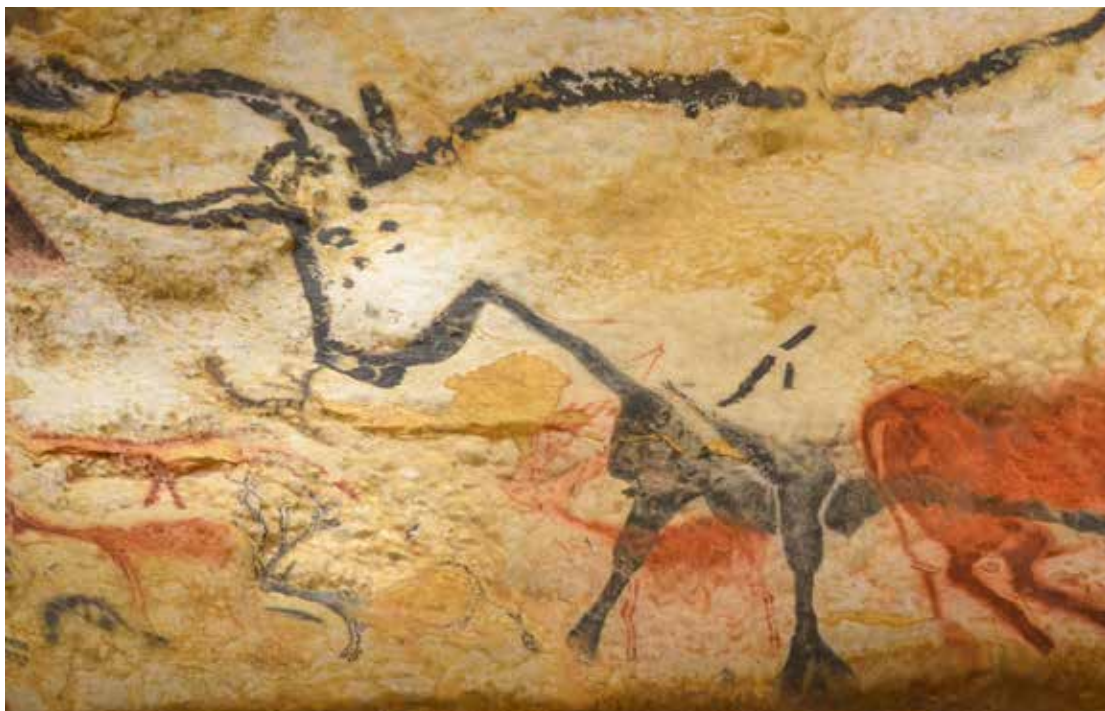
Three and a half years of photo-hounding Sadie, Willow, Zander, and our resident felines created this chronicle of their growth, joyful play, pesky mischief, countless nips and dreamy naps. Frances and I learned to embrace the unexpected and enjoy the ride, barks and all.

Cat Paradise

In 1987, Frances and I realized that we went to work each day leaving the house to our large family of felines. “If possession was nine-tenths of the law,” then our house truly belonged to the cats! They spent far more time in it than we did. The least that we could do for them was to cut giant cat-sized holes through the walls and connect the rooms with one hundred and forty feet of overhead feline highway. Our frisky felines loved using the elevated walkway to frolic above us, rest for peaceful naps, and escape from potential harm (trash trucks, wild children, humans trying to capture them for vet visits). The catwalk soon became their ultimate play center and sanctuary.

Our cats thought all cats lived this way. We thought all cats should. So, we made our private space public, in the hope that fellow cat lovers would be encouraged to make cat-friendly improvements for their companions. Our first book, *The Cats' House*, attracted countless film and print crews and journalists to our “feline fantasyland,” becoming an inspiration for the pet environmental enrichment movement, a worldwide effort by animal lovers to provide solutions in homes and shelters for the physical and emotional needs of their pets.





Frances and I were inspired by early cave owners who decorated their walls with animals, so we put our cats on our walls—and overhead!

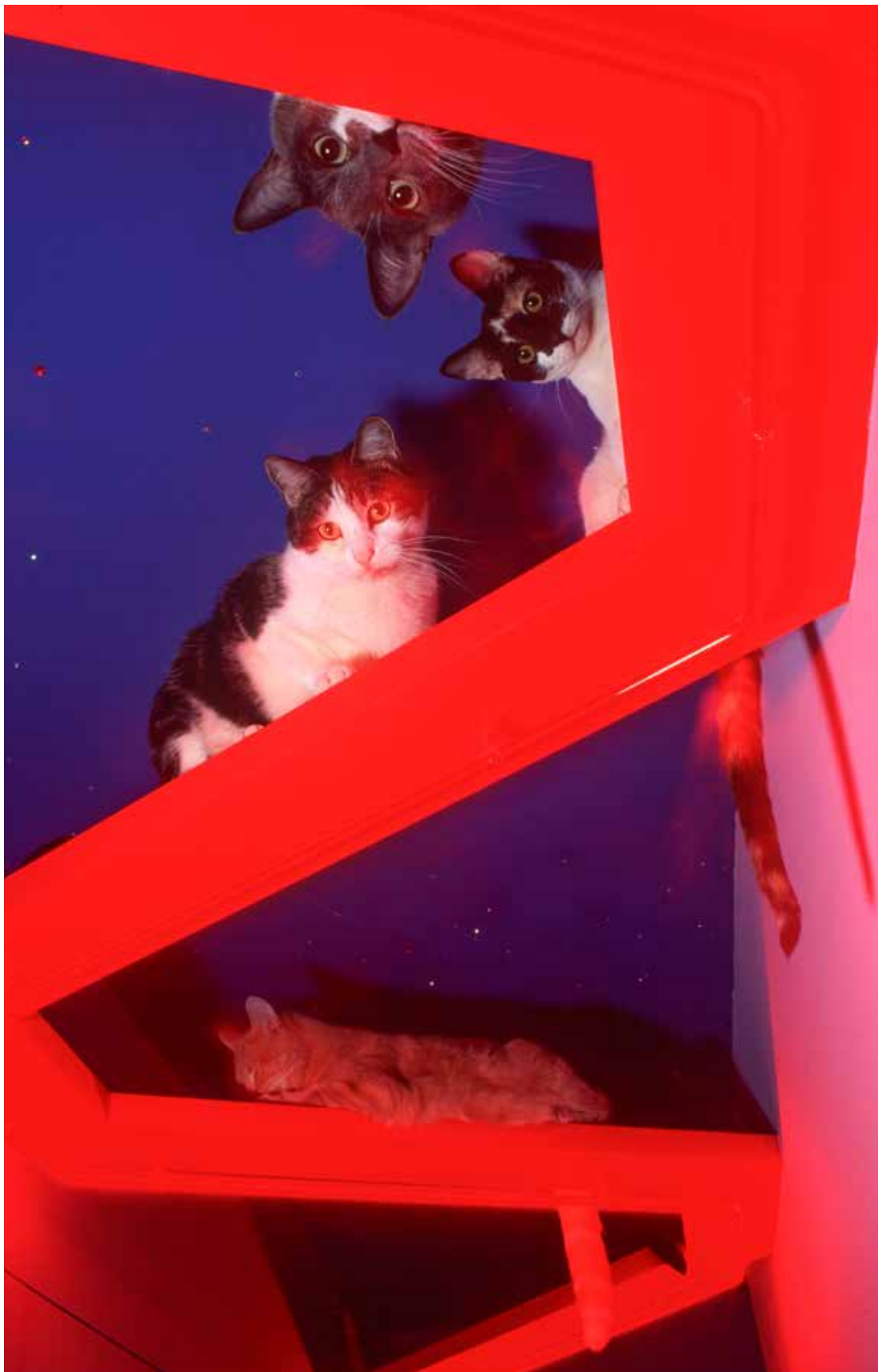






TomCat was delighted to have the cat face opening modeled from a photograph of him.

Like a secret observer peering through the cut-out eye holes of artwork hanging on a wall, black cat Joseph invisibly views all in our TV room.



Kittens Again!

Our neighbors, Pam and Helen, trapped Eleanor, a pregnant feral who gave birth to eight lovable kittens. In a casual conversation, we confided that long-haired kittens with a good purr were impossible to resist. Be careful what you reveal to neighbors! We yielded to temptation and adopted silky tabby Willow at ten weeks of age as well as her gray fluff brother Zander.

As we always do when introducing new family members, Willow and Zander were plopped on the living room floor in a carrier for our eight cats to adjust to the new arrivals—more kittens! The cats' initial reaction is always the same “How could you do this to us, again”? It shouldn't be a surprise anymore. Frances and I have adopted twenty-five cats over fifty-plus years of marriage.

Plenty of time is allowed for the newbies and resident felines (those not in hiding) to safely sniff and hiss at each other. Then, the undisciplined intruders are released. We jiggle feather toys and attempt to distract the kittens, so that the two brave welcoming cats (Sam and Dave) can observe and interact somewhat safely apart from the new arrivals.



Six of Eleanor's eight rescued kittens are visible. They were all lovingly nurtured to become playful and irresistible: Zander in foreground, Willow at back, Blue at far left, Jeannie with paw in the air, Jeff to Jeannie's right, and Toby to Zander's right. Not seen: Hannah and Tess.







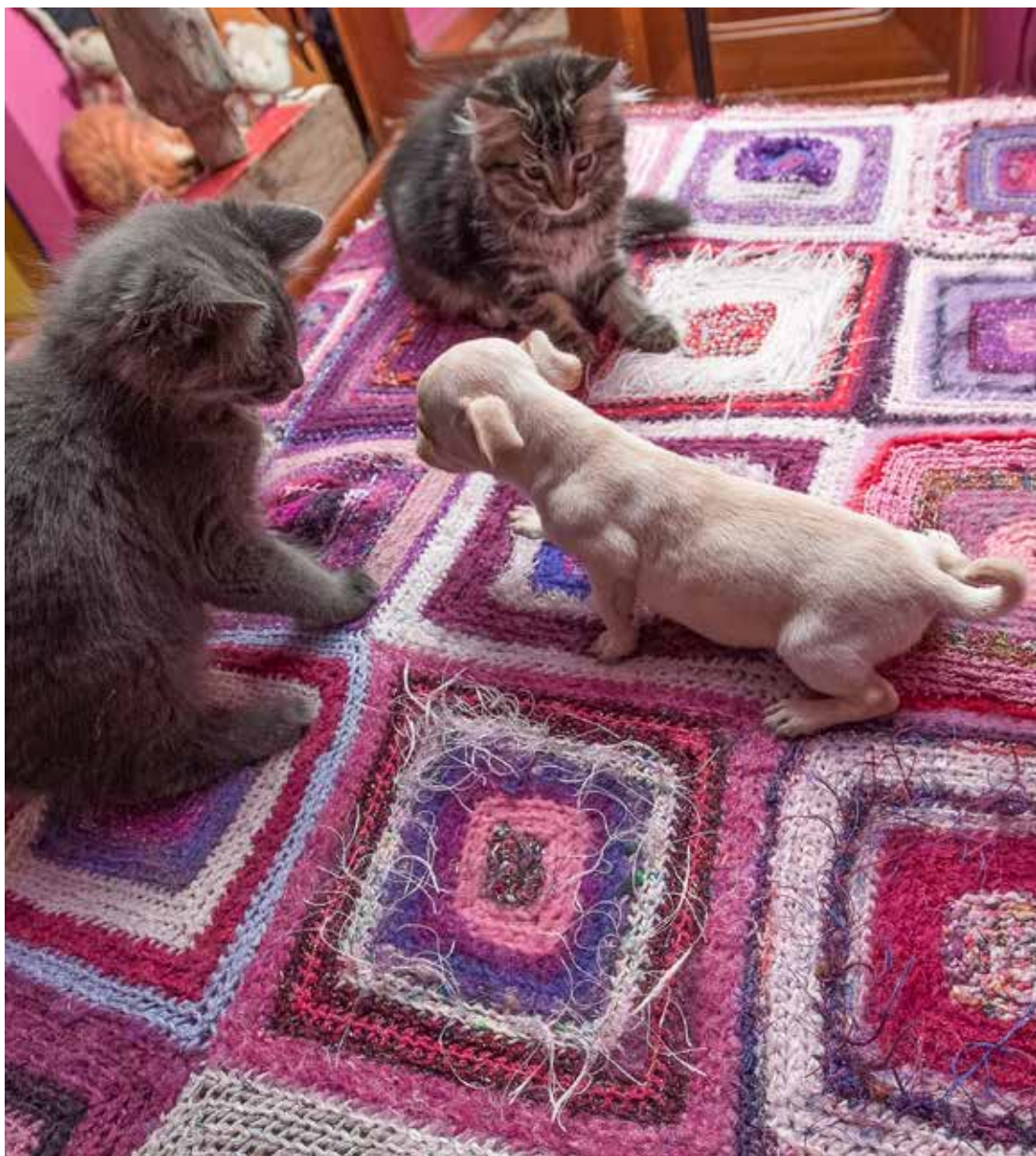
Now, a Puppy?

The day after adopting Willow and Zander, we came home from a Mexican dinner, and a starving puppy greeted us on the driveway, repeatedly jumping up and down at our feet. After an exhaustive search to find its home, we adopted adorable Sadie.

She was brave beyond her size. Sadie instantly became the games leader, a fearless defender of her space (all areas that she had access to), and protective caretaker of all cat and dog toys.













Lap Naps

Our fur family sticks to us through hot and cold. In winter, they keep us warm when nighttime San Diego temperatures plummet to the mid-forties, and in summer they dutifully warm our already warm laps. They're not about to allow variations in the weather to disturb their creature comfort.













A Paw Note



In fifty-plus years together, Frances and I have shared countless paws-itive experiences with our twenty-seven fur family companions, each unique and special. Selecting a favorite would be impossible and unfair. Each was beloved in their own way.

I must admit, however, that I fell head-over-tail in love with Sadie. Her joyful barks and spins each time that I came home, the endless belly rubs she offered to soothe my daily nerves, and our nightly bed cuddles created a lasting bond of wholehearted best friendship.

A Lost Dog Finds Cat Paradise is my visual homage to Sadie's discovery, growth, and camaraderie with our Cats' House family.



Special Appreciation: Frances Mooney, best human friend/partner, lover and collector of all things cat (and infinite other stuff); Laurie Fox, Linda Chester Literary Agency, forever friend who inspired and made my author path possible.