

## HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

### SPECIAL EDITION

### BUCKEY TELLS ALL

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We honor Buckley on his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, with this special edition newsletter of old articles and new reminiscences.



#### Buckley's Corner

(interview by Allen Balderson)

I have a new roomie at Hartford Street. His name is Jim and he's really swell for letting me stay with him. I actually have my own little corner in his room, complete with a fence and everything I need, kind of my own little kitty condo.

This is a big change for me. I don't go outside anymore and don't even roam around the house now. I'm almost always in my space in Jim's room. That's because I'm old, 20 or 794 in human years. No, that can't be right. [Cats aren't known for math ability.]

Now that I'm an ancient cat, my legs don't work as well, my body is sore, my reflexes are poor, I'm deaf and it appears I can't control when and where I go. There is a litter box for me in my little fenced-in condo, but I don't even think about using it (except for an occasional snack). I just let it fly wherever!

"Ahhh, poor Buck," you're probably saying. Hey, I'm a cat. I don't think about any of this. In fact, I don't reflect

on anything ever, nothing, nada. Things happen when they happen, and then they are kind of gone from my head. Is that what Buddhists are like?

Some days are pretty good, honest. I can stand and look around, and on a good day maybe even stroll out of my condo a little. Just last week I was feeling particularly frisky. Everyone was off somewhere sitting with their eyes closed and counting numbers, I think. They do that a lot here. Anyway, I squeezed out of my condo fence, made it out of the room and all the way down the stairs. I know, quite daring. Caused a little commotion in the house. Great fun. If cats could only giggle.

I know my human friends are worried. I can't hear, but I can see their lips moving. Lips. Why do humans have them and cats don't? Anyway, these human lips go up and down and around and close and open. This morning I saw someone's lips forming into "He's looking good today." Another pair of lips added, "Yes, he is. But he looks really confused." Well, that's because I am confused! I know people, but I probably just give them a dumb stare. I want attention, but beyond a little scratch on my head or chin, I'm way too sore to handle it. I don't even like the taste of kibble anymore. Shame really.

As you know, I'm old, probably living the last of my nine lives, and that's just the way it is. So, for now I wake up and think, "Well, at least I have my own condo, which is pretty cool for San Francisco. I have a precious life, been able to practice, and I am grateful to all my friends along the way."

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My Side of the Story

(by Jim Shalkham)

My roommate is pretty swell too and I've really enjoyed getting to know him. I've been telling everyone I have a 20-year-old boy living with me!

Buckley and I weren't particularly close before this. Of course, we'd seen each other and were polite but that was about it. Now we talk all the time and share our views about what's going on here and on old age.

Someone recently asked me what I would do when Buckley passed and I had this sharp pain in my heart. I realized how much I've grown to love this sweet little guy.

He talks a lot and we've learned to understand each other. He says he's hungry; turn up the heater; let me out; I want a butter-ball; I'm wet, please change my towel; and aren't you going to get up now (that usually around 4am, especially on Sundays)?

I often open his condo door; he strolls about the room and sometimes if the hall door is open, he checks out Michael's pad or even goes down the stairs.

He snores you know and he makes funny noises when he's dreaming like he's chasing around after something in the backyard. And he has a piercing cry which sometimes can't be explained.

I know he's in pain when I try to comb his hair and even just pet him or pick him up. But he says I'm still glad to be here and I'm so happy to have him.

**My Friend Buckley By Mary O'Toole**

I have known Buckley a long time. I always liked Buckley, but I was never sure if Buckley liked me. He's a creature of few words, often in a state of non-doing, and will brook no interaction with those who treat him as though he's a dog. Buckley is a cat, in zazen black, with buddhist minimalism in behavior and manners, unless of course he needs to immediately become a fierce warrior. But he is not a cat who howls out in the backyard at 2 o'clock in the morning. No, indeed. Why he has to be up for zazen at 6:00 a.m.

I tried to be affectionate with Buckley, but he really did not seem interested. One day though, there was a special celebration at the house. There was a lot of wonderful food around, and I noticed his dish was empty. There was some salmon to be had; so I placed a small portion in his bowl. He loved it. He was obviously very hungry because he cleaned out the bowl and looked at me as though I was the waiter and he needed a refill please. I gave him a little more until I knew he must be full. You could tell he was very grateful, as he looked up at me, licking his chops. I went home that day happy that I had a very warm encounter with him. And, you know, thereafter, whenever I went there, and we happened to run into each other, he was friendly and sometimes rubbed against my leg. So I was pretty sure I was now on his A-list. I must say, I was quite flattered.

My best and greatest wishes to you, Buckley, on your 20th birthday! You don't look a day over 19!