

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

by Kenneth A. Kuhn
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PC a few days after he came to live with me in May, 2005.

This story chronicles the life of a very dear cat who spent the last twenty-eight months of his life with me. It is amazing how the many unique traits of a cat are enjoyed but taken for granted while the cat is living. It is only after they die that one really appreciates those things and looks back with fond memories wishing that it never could have ended. The story is structured around some key events and times. The gaps in between represent a continuum of good and normal times when nothing of exceptional note occurred.

PC was about a sixteen year old cat when he came to live with me on the evening of May 26, 2005. He desperately needed a new home because the new son of his owners was extremely allergic to cats. It seemed that no one was interested in an elderly cat. Through a friend of a friend of a friend connection, I was made aware of the cat and agreed to take him in. Interestingly, the owners lived only about a mile up the road from me.

He was born around mid 1989 and was given the name PC which is short for Perfect Cat by Maggie Dix who took care of and adopted out many stray cats in Birmingham, Alabama. With an obvious play on words one could also refer to PC as Purrfect Cat. PC had blue eyes and appeared to have some Siamese in him. His previous owners adopted

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

him in early 1990 when he was about eight months old. A few years later PC got a feline companion named Sam. After two weeks they became very close friends for nearly the next ten years until Sam died of an illness a few years before PC came to live with me.

Bringing a new cat into a house with six cats can be traumatic. To ease the transition, I set up my 29" x 47" cage. I bought a cat hut (I am not sure exactly what to call it) where PC could hide and sleep in when he wanted to. Cats need to be able to hide. Otherwise they can become very stressed. I figured PC would mostly stay in the cage for about a week while he and the other cats got used to each other. Then he would be able to move out of the cage.



Replication of cage set up when PC moved in. PC loved the cat hut.

When PC arrived, I put him in the cage. I used the stainless steel food and water dishes PC was used to at his previous home so that he would have something familiar. He was not happy with everything being new to him. He immediately went into the cat hut and settled down. The other cats came around to check him out and PC hissed and growled at them from inside his hut. He wanted nothing to do with them. My other cats only showed curiosity and never showed any hostile signs. PC ate some dinner and slept comfortably in the cat hut that night. The cat hut was the one thing he liked. I could easily see that he was happy being in there.

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

The next evening I experimented with letting PC out for a brief while to become accustomed to the house and to see how things would go with the other cats. It went very well. There was the usual hissing and growling by all the cats but no aggression. For a few days I kept PC in the cage at night and when I was away from the house. I would let PC out anytime I was at the house to supervise. Things went so well the first few days that the cage was no longer necessary so I took it down after less than a week. PC did not like the other cats and would hiss and swat at them if they came too close. The other cats were only curious.

I had only had PC for about a week when he had a minor illness and had to go to the vet. I can not remember if it was that he had stopped eating or was lethargic. He might have been a bit dehydrated. I picked him up that evening and he was fine.

PC kept away from the other cats for several months. He would hiss and swat at any cat that got too close. He would only go near them to eat and that would sometimes result in PC swatting a close cat. PC gradually accepted the other cats and seemed at ease with them.

PC quickly adopted the top of the refrigerator as his primary sleeping spot. I am sure this was to be away from the other cats. I bought a cat bed for him so he would have something soft to sleep in. After about nine months as he got a little older he was unable to make the hop from the kitchen counter to the top of the refrigerator. He then adopted his other sleeping spots around the house – the living room sofa, the den sofa, and the bed. I often called him Mr. PC. I would ask him, “How’s Mr. PC doing?”

PC very quickly recognized me as the one who took care of him. PC developed a lot of affection for me. He would often sit or sleep next to me on the sofa as I read the paper or watched something on television. PC would follow me around the house. Wherever I was at that is where PC wanted to be. PC loved attention. Each morning PC would climb all over me as I ate breakfast – he wanted the milk in my cereal. I used to joke with him that his name should be Pesky Cat. I would leave some milk in the bowl when I was finished and put it on the floor and PC loved to drink that. He did that up until around Sept. 2006.

For the first year PC was very active and loved to play. He would play with and swat various cat toys I got out. He would run through the house at top speed jumping up on the kitchen counter and then on top of the refrigerator and then jumping down and running to the other end of the house sometimes meowing loudly when he was on top of something. He had a small coordination problem with his back legs so his running had an odd appearance. This may have been a symptom of things to come with his later neurological problems.

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)



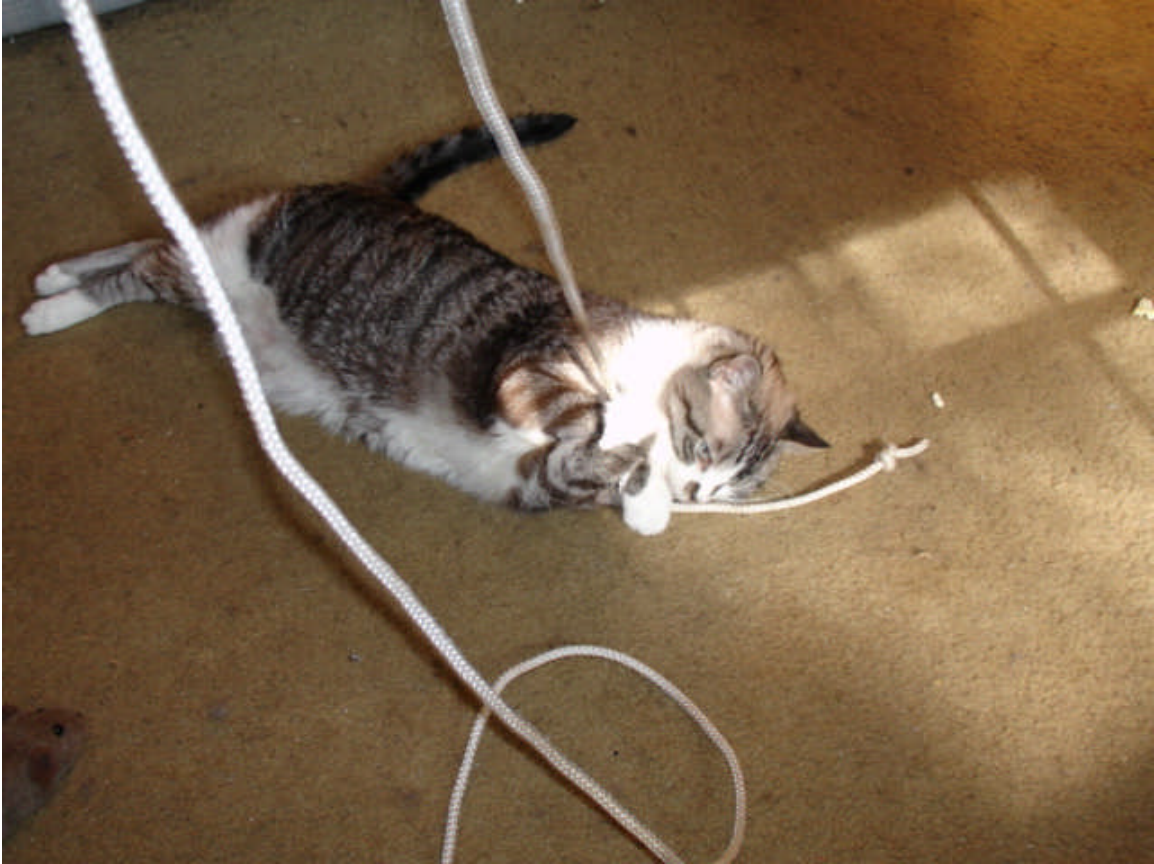
PC sleeping on top of the refrigerator

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)



PC sleeping on the den sofa

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)



PC playing with a rope.

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)



PC crossing his front paws

PC had an interesting way of sitting with his front paws crossed. He also had an “Elvis” look that I was never able to get a picture of. This look was primarily due to his having a number of his rear teeth removed some years earlier.

Slinky is a young and very strong black haired cat who is number one cat in the house. Slinky would often check PC out either sniffing at him or sometimes touching him with his paw. PC did not like this and would jump on Slinky, pin him to the floor, and beat him up. This was a sight to see an old de-clawed cat beating up a young and strong cat with claws. This happened many times. Slinky finally learned to leave PC alone. Later they would become friends and even slept together. PC must have been a real tough cat in his younger years. Some of the other cats would occasionally cross PC and PC would teach them a lesson too. Sometimes the offense was nothing more than just looking at PC. PC would never start anything but he would sure finish it. PC never lost an encounter.

There is one funny episode that I will always remember. I was sitting on the sofa reading the newspaper and PC was sitting beside me on the right as he often would do. PC was swishing his tail and Slinky took an interest in the motion and was swatting at his tail. PC gave him a stern look a couple of times but Slinky kept on. Finally, PC looked up at me with an expression on his face that said, “Excuse me a moment. I have to go do something. I will be right back.” PC then got up and commenced to give Slinky a

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

beating. Slinky was desperately trying to get away. PC then resumed sitting beside me as if nothing had happened.

PC would often sleep around my chair in my office when I was working on the computer. He also liked to sleep in the corner of my office. Slinky would often come into my office not really intending to start anything with PC but almost invariably PC would end up giving Slinky a beating. I think Slinky just did not show PC the proper respect. Slinky and PC did become friends.



PC sitting with his friend, Slinky

PC would often walk around the house howling, even screaming. I would check on him and he would always be fine. There was no indication that he was in any pain. His previous owner told me that PC was very quiet prior to the death of his feline and very vocal friend of ten years, Sam. Then PC began being very vocal. In many ways he seemed to be calling out – perhaps for Sam?

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)



PC's 2005 Christmas card from his former owner

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)



PC enjoying one of his old cat beds

Around the end of March, 2006 his previous owner brought over two cat beds that PC and Sam had used. I put these on the living room sofa. PC immediately adopted one of them for long naps. The other cats used them too.

On Saturday April 15, 2006, PC was hiding under the bed – he never did that before. I got him out and he was feeling bad. He did not eat breakfast. His walk was very slow and a bit staggered. He slept on the sofa all day and seemed uncomfortable but responded positively every time I checked on him. He drank about two teaspoons of milk late in the afternoon – he likes milk and it does not seem to bother him. He seemed better around 7:00 that evening. He stayed either on or very close to the sofa all day and probably all night. I do not think he used the litter box all day. He looked like he has lost weight. On Sunday morning PC was slow but was clearly feeling better. He ate breakfast and drank water. He still stayed to himself on the sofa all day and had more energy and even groomed himself. He ate dinner that evening. I took PC to the vet on Monday and they did not find anything particularly wrong other than a little dehydration so they gave him fluids and sent him home that evening. For the next several months PC remained fine.

At the end of September, 2006, PC stopped eating and became very lethargic and I took him to the vet. They did some blood work and gave him fluids. Nothing wrong was found and PC began feeling better. This and his previous illness may have been

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

symptoms of the bladder stone problem that would soon be discovered. This date marks a change in the life of PC. Prior to this date PC had been an active cat. After this date PC was more of an elderly cat. Except for a few occasions PC felt well and was happy. He slept a lot more – that is normal for an elderly cat. He still got around the house fine but had lower strength. He could still swat any of the other cats that might inadvertently cross him though – the other cats had to remain respectful. PC still adored me and continued to stay by my side. He now preferred sleeping on the floor beside me rather than on the sofa.

In the middle of November, PC was unable to urinate. I took him to the vet and they put a catheter in him and kept him hospitalized for a few days. They did not find a specific cause and suspected that the problem was a muscle spasm or weak bladder tone. They prescribed Cisapride pills. No cat likes taking pills but PC was the easiest cat I have ever given pills to. If he got the chance, he was very good at jabbing my fingers with his front paw to knock the pill out of my hand. I had to learn to hold him so that he did not get that chance. I gave PC the pills until about the middle of December. PC was doing fine. The first suspicion was that the pills were working since his problem seemed to be gone but it would be determined later that that had nothing to do with it. PC discovered a good place to sleep in the corner of my office by the vent. He loved the heat.



PC sleeping in the corner of my office by the heat vent with Bitsy

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

In late December I saw PC circling a little for the first time. He would walk in a tight circle to the left a few times and then be normal. This happened only a few times a day.

PC was my shadow – even more now than before. He would follow wherever I went in the house and sit near me. He would walk up and look at me and let out a sequence of meows as if he was trying to tell me something. He remained friends with all the other cats and seemed to be very happy.



PC's 2006 Christmas card from his former owner

In January, 2007 PC was diagnosed with a mild case of hyperthyroid condition. The treatment for this consisted of PC taking a small pill every morning for the rest of his life. At first I gave him the pill each morning. Later I crushed the pill in his breakfast. Unlike many cats, PC would actually eat food that contained medicine. That made things a lot easier.

In the middle of January PC again had the problem of being unable to urinate. I first noticed this on a Sunday evening. I would see him trying hard in the litter box but with little success. He walked around the house making very pitiful and frustrated meows. I took him to the vet on Monday morning and he stayed there for a week. I visited him each afternoon after work. He was glad to see me each day and enjoyed being petted. They installed a catheter and did other checks but found nothing really wrong. By the

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

end of the week PC was better and came home. His circling increased but it was still not a lot.

A few days later PC again could not urinate. He spent another week in the hospital. I would go by to visit him every day. This time his circling increased dramatically and it shifted to the right. PC would circle for hours in his cage at the vet. There was also some doubt that he could hear or see but other indications were that he could. An x-ray discovered that he had a large bladder stone (I think I remember it being in the range of over 3 mm diameter) which was the cause of his urinary problems. A standard surgery could easily correct this problem but the vet was hesitant because she was afraid that the anesthesia might worsen PC's neurological problems. It would do PC no good to be able to urinate if his brain was a vegetable. They installed a semi permanent catheter so that PC could come home. The surgery would be done if PC's neurological condition improved. Because PC would be dripping all the time, he would have to stay in a cage until the surgery.

I brought PC home on Thursday, Feb. 1, and set up the cage which had been taken down in June of 2005. I put a large towel on the floor and bought a heating pad to put under the towel since this was winter and PC needed to stay warm. PC circled a lot in the cage but was otherwise very happy and ate well. He watched the other cats as they came close to his cage to check him out. He would stop circling when I opened the cage door. He did some good sleeping on the heating pad – he would be stretched out in real comfortable and happy positions. I would briefly let him out to roam the house as often as I could and PC liked that. He would check out most every room in the house.

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)



PC in his cage getting ready for surgery

The following Saturday was a very good day for PC. He circled very little and rested comfortably on his heating pad. I let him out of his cage several times and he walked all over the house. He began to meow more which was more like his normal self as he has always meowed a lot. He had been very quiet on Thursday evening and on Friday.

On Sunday morning he ate his breakfast and walked around the house and interacted more with the other cats. I saw him drink water from his bowl in the cage for the first time. On Sunday afternoon I took him outside. He walked continuously for the 45 minutes he was out. Most of the time he circled but some times he would walk straight for about twenty feet before circling again. He would follow me around for about half a minute several times after I got him started usually after I made a noise and he would look up at me rather than at the ground. In the evening he ate dinner and circled his cage for several hours. He finally settled down and slept for hours.

It seemed that when he was awake he had the urge to walk – either in circles in his cage or around the house when he was out. He never stopped walking. It is interesting that in the house he walked with the least circling. I saw him walk the big loop around the den and the living room without circling once. But he would walk that large loop repeatedly and then start circling again.

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

At times he seemed almost normal. He looked better than he did the night he came probably because he was gaining back some weight. Mentally, he seemed to have made progress. The good news was that he continued to eat well and showed more interest in what was going on around his cage. He was definitely not blind or deaf.

During the week PC had a little bout with feeling bad and was not eating as well. By the next weekend he was eating well and was more alert and seemed happy. His catheter was doing fine. He sometimes circled to the right but walked much straighter around the house. He meowed more like he used to before all this happened. Basically, I was very encouraged as PC was almost normal now. PC would circle in both directions but it was not as repetitive as before.

By the middle of February PC was doing fine – he was no better and no worse. He ate well and seemed to be happy. When he was in his cage he circled mostly to the left but sometimes to the right. He sat contently more and was alert to what was going on outside the cage. He would rub his head against my hand. Most of the time he seemed normal. There were occasions when he seemed lost and his head was tilted – mostly to the right. If I opened the cage and picked him up he snapped out of it and was normal again. I gave him the nick name, Circly. Often when I picked him up I would ask him, “What are we going to do with a Circly pussy cat that walks in circles all the time?”

Each weekend I would take him outside in the back yard for about an hour so that he could roam around and see how he would do in a large space. He mostly just walked in tight circles to the left. Once in a while he would walk in a straight line for about twenty feet before resuming circling.

When he was roaming the house briefly while I am cleaning his cage or getting his pills ready he circled very little. He would walk to every room in the house to check things out. He would sometimes circle once or twice as he walked from one place to another. He seemed the most normal when he was roaming the house. He would check out the other cats' food and water bowls and touch noses and sniff the other cats.

I took him outside the next Sunday afternoon and he circled very tightly. He finally settled down and soaked up some sun – he seemed to really like that. Since he could walk so straight through the house I did not understand why he circled so tightly when he was outside with lots of open space and not circle as much in the house. My only theory was that he had a lot of visual clues in the house.

On Saturday and Sunday of the third week in February I took PC outside and for the first time he walked mostly straight with only a little circling to the right. When a leaf would blow by he would track it with his head. In the house he was very alert and responded to catnip for the first time in a while – it was not a big response but he took note of it and sniffed at it for a while and slept on it. He was eating but not as well as he had been. Overall he was the best that I have seen since before this started in January. The only negative was that he seemed to stagger and trip a little more with his hind legs – but that might be because the catheter bothers him – he seemed to walk daintily. He only circled

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

for brief periods and it was now 95% to the right. He seemed to circle more when he was happy like when he knows I am preparing his dinner or calling his name.

On Thursday morning, March 1, I brought PC to the vet for his operation. He had been doing very well the last week. Mentally he seemed to be almost like he was prior to all of this. He could now stand on his hind legs to reach or paw at something he was interested in. He ate well. He still circled from time to time. His operation went very well and I picked him up on March 5. They had to shave a lot of PC's fur off so PC looked very odd. PC was glad to be home and PC and ate very well and seemed very happy and alert. He circled (mostly to the right) a bit more. He circled like crazy (spins in place like a top) when he was happy and excited such as when I was bringing him his dinner.

As of the end of March PC was doing fine. He always cleaned his plate when I fed him and he gained weight and strength. His shaved fur was growing back. His howling in the litter box (which had started about a month earlier) was about the same but he also howled randomly around the house as he had done before all of this began. The only negative was that he circled a lot to the right. But he also walked straight around the house. He seemed to be very happy.

PC had a tendency to take a nap in the middle of the hallway and other high traffic areas where he could not be seen in the dark. So that he did not get stepped on, I kept him in his cage most of the time at night. He slept most of the time anyway. Even when I let him out he would roam the house for a while and then go back into the cage and stay there. He loved the heating pad in the cage and would get in all kinds of comfortable and happy positions on it.

When I would open the cage door to put his food plate in, PC would look hard to the right. He could not look left. His response to anything was to look hard to the right. He loved to eat so much that he would literally attack anything that moved where he knew his food plate was. It was kind of funny. He would literally dive at the food dish with his mouth wide open as I was putting it down. On a few occasions he bit the plate and even my hand – although that was very minor. I learned to hold him with my other hand as I put the plate down and then let him go. He would then commence to clean the plate. I fed him warmed canned food. He would eat most anything but his favorite seemed to be Fancy Feast Grilled Seafood Feast in Gravy. He also liked Friskies Shredded Chicken & Salmon Dinner in Gravy. He would also eat the other cats' dry food when he was roaming the house.

Up until Friday morning, April 13, PC had been eating very well (always cleaned his plate). He had been gaining weight and looking better. His spirit was high. The only negative was that his circling had gradually become worse although he still could go anywhere he wanted to in the house. In the last two weeks his head had taken on more of a tilt to the right and he would sit with his whole body tilted. The issue with him howling in the litter box showed improvement in the last two weeks. That Friday afternoon a little before 5:00 he apparently had some kind of brain malfunction. I had just come home from work and was preparing his dinner. He stood very still looking straight ahead for

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

several minutes. He then let out a loud and unusual scream that ended in a very high pitch. He did not make a sound for a long time afterwards. He did not eat or drink at all. Around 6:00 he began circling constantly to the right. I could not get him to stop. He circled non-stop until late in the night.

By Saturday morning he had stopped circling. He sat looking around the whole day and moved very little. He could not walk well as his hind legs would not move much – they may have been tired from all the circling. He showed some interest in food (would lick at it) but did not eat or drink. I had him on my lap Saturday night while watching TV and he seemed to like that a lot. When I would set him on the floor he would hobble over to the other cats' food dishes and check them out but not eat.

On Sunday morning I found him sleeping in a more contorted position with his left paw spread way out as he seemed to want to twist to the right. He was not looking very well so I did not try to feed him. He was growling a bit as I approached him – that is unusual – he must have been feeling bad. I used a syringe and made him slowly drink about 10 cc of water. He actually drank it and seemed to perk up a bit afterwards. I set him back in his cage and he moved around a little from one contorted position to another. I took him to the vet and they gave him fluids but found nothing wrong. This was the first time that I was concerned that he might be going down permanently but PC continued his history of making comebacks.

By the end of April PC was doing fine. He cleaned his plate morning and evening. His circling was less severe. About the only negative was that he had not been very good about the litter box so he had to stay in his cage more – at least that confined the mess. He slept a lot. He increasingly turned sharply to the right at any sound such as when I opened his cage door or there was some noise in the house even if the sound came from his left. This was part of his circling to the right. When I let him out of his cage he would walk about twenty feet and take a nap. Then he would go a ways further and take another nap. He really slept after eating. He would finish about half his food and lay down with his head resting on the edge of the food dish and take a nap and then finish his food later.

Around the third week of May my wife found a stray six week old kitten behind the building where she worked in downtown Birmingham. The kitten received the name of Tiger. I kept Tiger in a room separate from the other cats but would let him out when I was there to supervise. My initial thought was to keep PC in his cage when Tiger was out because PC might not put up with a hyperactive kitten. Interestingly, Tiger would go to PC's cage and spend a bit of time trying to figure out a way in. He would paw at PC when in reach. PC would watch Tiger with interest and would watch Tiger all over the room. In June I let PC out to be with Tiger and they were immediate friends. Tiger adored PC and PC took an interest in Tiger. Tiger wanted to play rough and tumble games with PC but PC could not do that. Tiger would often jump on PC and tackle him. Interestingly, PC never swatted at Tiger. If Slinky or one of the other cats did something like that PC would have beaten them. Tiger and PC would often eat together. When I fed PC his canned food in his cage (to keep the other cats from stealing it) Tiger would extend his paw into the cage and drag the plate to the edge where he would steal some of

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

the food. PC did not mind. I tried to take pictures of PC and Tiger but it was hard as they moved around a lot. I think Tiger invigorated PC as he made a number of improvements since Tiger came.



PC eating dinner with the new kitten, Tiger, looking on

During the summer PC became increasing worse about having litter box accidents around the house so he had to spend more time in his cage. He ate well, gained weight, looked good, and was more alert. At times his head was very tilted to the right. His circling had actually improved. By the end of July PC had slowed down a bit but was still active for an elderly cat. He enjoyed watching the other cat's antics for entertainment. He would often steal food from their dishes.

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)



*PC eating with the other cats
Back: Bitsy, Stubby, Squeaky
Front: Orbit, Slinky, Tiger*

In August, PC began having seizures. These continued about one a day and sometimes skipping several days until he died about two months later. He may have had a couple of seizures earlier in the year. One time in late Spring I saw him suddenly flip up in the air. The seizures mostly occurred between around 11 PM to 2 AM although there were other times. I would wake up in the night hearing an odd banging noise and then I would hear PC howling. I would get up to check on and comfort PC. I was concerned that he might hurt himself but he never did. I would usually find Slinky watching PC with a “What the heck is that cat doing?” look. The hair on PC’s tail would be puffed up and he would be very confused and frightened – I think that is why he would howl. I would rub him and pet him and talk to him and he would relax and be fine. The seizures would only last a very short time – much less than a minute. The usual was for him to flop around and then howl. I would wake up and get to him as fast as I could. That was usually around the time he stopped flopping and began howling. I never could see exactly what was happening but one of the last times I found him with his right leg kicking and his head synchronously jerking to the right. I held him on the floor and rubbed and petted him and he soon calmed down. He then seemed alright. After a seizure PC would typically rest for a brief while and then walk around and eat something from the food dishes. I took PC to the vet to see what could be done about the seizures and the vet told me that he could prescribe anti-seizure medication but that it would make PC drunk all the time. His

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

advice was that if the seizures were not too serious or too frequent then it was best not to do anything. The seizures lasted much less than a minute and on average probably only occurred once every other day. I think medication would have been the wrong thing to do. The good news was that PC's blood work was very good and he had gained over a pound of needed weight since last spring. For the most part PC was doing great.



PC eating with Tiger and Teensy

Things went very normally for PC during September. He ate well and roamed the house as usual. He would check out the other cat's food and steal some. He was slower about cleaning his plate and sometimes he left a little that the other cats, particularly Tiger, and sometimes Slinky, stole. The seizures were neither better nor worse. The only negative was that he was having more litter box accidents around the house so I had to keep him in his cage more. PC did not really mind the cage as he slept most of the time anyway. Whether inside or outside the cage he seemed happy and did some very good sleeping – he could really get into some comfortable positions. I gave him attention and he liked being petted and having his chin rubbed. When roaming the house he would deliberately brush past me in my office so I would be sure to know he was there. He would then walk around the house and come back and brush past me again. Each time I would pet him. I figured he would probably live a long time – perhaps reaching nineteen or twenty. I did see one unusual thing on the last weekend in September. PC seemed to be sleeping with his eyes wide open. I also saw him circle to the left a few times.

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)



Tiger stealing part of PC's dinner in Sept. 2007. PC is looking older but doing fine.

The end began unexpectedly. I arrived home from teaching very late on the following Wednesday night – actually it was early Thursday morning around 1:30. This was October 4. At about 2:30 that morning I heard PC having a seizure – it was more minor than previous seizures. I would have gotten up to check on and comfort him but I was too tired. If I could only have known what was going to happen to him later that day I would have gotten up.

PC seemed alright as usual when I got up Thursday morning at six. I let PC out of his cage and he wandered around normally with the other cats and seemed happy that breakfast was coming soon. I fed him his usual warmed canned food and he cleaned the plate. I went to work expecting this to be another normal day for PC. When I arrived home from work that day I found PC head pressing against the side of the cage. I opened the cage door and he did not make any attempt to leave. Normally PC would leave the cage and walk around the house. I picked PC up and set him on the floor and he began walking around but something was wrong – he seemed to be blind. PC would walk into things and stand there and head press. He would walk into the other cats as if they were not there. He seemed to seek out tight places to squeeze into and then twitch his tail. I did not try to feed him that evening as I did not think he would be able to eat. I checked on PC from time to time that evening hoping to see some improvement but there was none. He was a bit dirty so I gave him a quick bath. He did not like the bath but he enjoyed being dried with the hair dryer. That would scare a lot of cats but not PC. I

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

brushed him as I dried him and he looked pretty good. Except for the new problem he really seemed fine.

On Friday morning I took him to the vet and other than the neurological problem the only thing they found wrong was that he was very dehydrated so they put him on fluids. They noticed that he had both a left and right heart murmur. Some of the blood work indicated that he had lost some muscle mass. That was kind of a surprise as he got around the house very well and had strength. They gave him subcutaneous fluids a number of times throughout the day because they were afraid that an IV would become tangled with him circling. PC ate a little food at the vet. They probably should have given IV fluids as it may have taken too much time for PC to absorb the subcutaneous fluids. But, if he had been given IV fluids that would probably have only prolonged the agony as the likelihood of any recovery from the new neurological problem was low. One way or another it was just about inevitable that PC was going to die – I did not know it would be so soon.

I picked him up at the vet that evening and he seemed all right except for the neurological issue and he was still blind. It was conceivable that the blindness might go away in a day or so as it had done in the past. They told me to give him subcutaneous fluids several times each day over the weekend. There was no concern that he was in danger of dying. I put him in his cage when we got back to the house and PC immediately began head pressing the side of the cage while twitching his tail. I was hoping he would settle down and be able to eat dinner later.

At around eight that evening I gave him about 130 cc of fluids and put him back in his cage. He seemed alright except for the neurological problem. It never occurred to me that he would die soon – there was just no reason to think so. My only thoughts were how I was going to take care of him with the new setback in his brain condition.

I watched a movie that evening in the den and during that time PC moved around a little in his cage (which was near to me in the den) but was constantly head pressing something – either the side of the cage or the side of the litter box and twitching his tail. At around 11:00 I warmed the remaining half can of food I fed him on Thursday morning and put the plate into his cage. I picked PC up and set him by the food dish and that is when I noticed that he was in much worse shape. He fell into the food dish. I held him up and he licked at the food but did not eat. I wiped off his face and set him down and let the other cats have his food as there was no way he would be able to eat. PC was responsive but very weak.

I did some work on the computer and checked on PC around 11:30 and he was minimally responsive if at all. For the first time I was having thoughts that he might not live the night – he looked bad. I set him in one of his cat beds and made him as comfortable as I could. I was hoping that he was just very tired after a long day but I had a feeling that he might not live the night. I took some pictures of him and Tiger came in to check on him and sniffed and gently pawed PC. I then worked on an email to his previous owner describing PC's condition and then went to bed.

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)



Tiger checking on PC, now in a coma. PC died five and a half hours later.

I woke up a little after 5 AM on Saturday morning. That was unusual as there had been no noise and I normally do not wake up until well after 6 AM. I had also gone to bed very late that night so I really should have slept in. My first thought was that I should check on PC but I was very sleepy and just laid there for a while. I finally got up around 5:20 and checked on PC. PC had very recently died. His body was still warm. PC had never moved from the position I left him in earlier in his cat bed. I figure that I woke up at about the same moment PC died. I will always wonder if there was some connection. It reminded me of years ago that at the same time when my beloved cat, Itsy, died unexpectedly at the vet during the day that an odd message went through my head at work that said, "Itsy die." I had dismissed that but learned of her death a few hours later.

I think that dehydration may have been a factor in PC's death but his deteriorating brain condition may have been the significant factor – he may have had a fatal brain failure that night. Subcutaneous fluids are slow to be absorbed and the fluids the vet and I gave may have been in the category of too little, too late. But I never saw any of the usual signs of dehydration such as lethargy. We were never sure exactly what was wrong with PC but it was probably a brain tumor. Perhaps it had progressed to the point where PC could not live anymore.

The good news was that PC lived very well right up to the end. There was no sign of any problem even the Thursday morning before his death. In recent months he did not circle

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

as much but would have to make a series of right circles to make left turns – he could not turn left. He could get to everywhere in the house and would make his usual rounds checking on wherever I was at – before all of this happened he would follow me around the house – he was my shadow. Until Thursday he seemed to be much better. Earlier in the week he even meowed normally for the first time in nearly a year. That gave me hope for him.

When I brought him home from the vet Friday evening I was concerned that his new neurological problem might mean that he could not live. Since his body was in good shape I did not think he would die soon but would probably have to have his life ended since if he did not make a quick recovery he would not be able to do anything, even eat or drink. Perhaps PC's final gift was to die quickly on his own to save the trouble and expense of caring for him in his now pathetic condition and the decision that would probably have to be made. What a perfect cat.

That Saturday morning I notified PC's former owners of his death. They had wanted to bury him next to Sam but that was not possible right now. We decided that I would bury PC with my other cats' graves in the back yard. I dug PC's grave around 2:30 on Saturday afternoon. I then took PC out of his cat bed and placed his body on top of a plastic trash bag in the den beside his cage. It was time to say goodbye. Tiger came up and checked him out. Tiger went all around him sniffing and seemed to be puzzled. I brought Slinky to him to say goodbye. Slinky looked at him a bit and sniffed a little and then walked away. Then I brought Squeaky and he sat down close to PC for about a minute and just looked at him. He sniffed just a little. I then placed PC in the bag and sealed it tight. I carried PC to his grave at about 3 PM. He is lying on his right side exactly as he died in his cat bed. He is facing the house that was his home for the last twenty-eight months of his life. PC began his new life in my cage and finished his life in the cage. The months in between were filled with many happy moments that I will always remember.

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)



PC's grave in my backyard with the other cats.

That evening I began the process of cleaning up PC's cage. I washed the towel that had been like a rug on the cage floor. I washed his cat bed that he spent his last night in – the other cats will use that now (they all have used it at one time or another). I moved his litter box out for the other cats to use – they can always use one more.

On Saturday and Sunday mornings about 9 when I get up I feed all the cats a special treat with warmed 3 oz cans of Fancy Feast. All the cats look forward to this every weekend. I would feed PC in his cage so that the other cats would not steal his share. This was one of PC's favorite foods and he always eagerly cleaned his plate. It seemed so strange this Saturday and Sunday mornings using one less plate and can than before. The previous weekend PC had really enjoyed this as he always did. I could not have known that would be his last.

Tiger, Squeaky, and Slinky would occasionally go up to the empty cage and seemed to look for PC. Squeaky sat by the door to the basement where I carried PC out for a while and then sat in some other unusual places in the den. On Sunday evening, Squeaky sat by the empty cage for a long time. I think Squeaky misses PC the most. Slinky sat across the den and watched the empty cage intently several times on Saturday and Sunday. Bitsy has also spent time just looking at the empty cage. About a week later, on several occasions I heard Slinky walking around the house making repeated mournful meows similar to like PC used to do. Slinky has never done this before.

Remembering PC (Perfect Cat)

No doubt that PC's feline friend, Sam, from an earlier life was waiting to greet his spirit into the afterlife. They are together again and this time it is forever and there will be no more physical ailments for either to put up with ever again. I am sure they are catching up on old times.

PC will be missed. In the last year of his life he could no longer be perfect but he certainly tried his best. The vets and vet techs often commented on what an easy patient PC was. He was the easiest cat I ever gave pills to. He never ran and hid when it was time to go to the vet. He always cleaned his plate. He was never aggressive towards the other cats but he would immediately set them straight if they did not show him the proper respect. In his last months he showed remarkable tolerance for the young kitten, Tiger, who adored PC and loved to jump on and tackle him although PC could not play rough and tumble games anymore. PC never swatted at him as he would definitely do if any of the other cats even looked at him wrong. In a way PC was like a grandfather humoring a grandson.

PC lived to the age of eighteen years and four months – very good for a cat. The last ten months of PC's life were an extra burden (though of love) for me as I had to keep him in the cage a lot and feed him there while the other cats were doing their best to steal his food as I was getting it ready. I also had to add medications to his food. I would let him out of his cage as much as possible but because of his brain condition he was no longer very good at using the litter box and had many accidents I had to clean up. During the last two months he would often wake me up in the middle of the night while he was having a seizure. Even though his death has eased a burden on me I miss PC a lot. I did not mind the burden – I wanted PC to be happy – happy cats make for a happy house. The house seems incredibly empty now that I no longer see PC circling and patrolling the house. It is as if there are no other cats in the house. PC was visible all the time. PC accepted his handicap and dealt with it very well. PC did not make excuses – he just did the best that he could. PC really tried hard to not let his handicap prevent him from getting around and being as normal as possible. He remained in high spirit throughout. That is quite an inspiration for all of us. PC truly lived up to his name to his last day. I will always remember Perfect Cat.