



the Blue Bell  
FOUNDATION FOR CATS  
ENSURING YOUR CAT'S FUTURE

Blue Bell  
MEWS

WINTER 2019

## OUR HISTORY, MISSION, AND VISION



Bertha Yergat

*It all started 40 years ago with a woman's devotion to*

*cats*—this special place that exists tucked among eucalyptus trees in the Laguna Canyon area of Laguna Beach—where thousands of cats have found shelter and kindness.

Born in Pennsylvania then moving to California, **Bertha Yergat** was the original resident of Blue Bell, and in the 1960's opened her home as a boarding facility. It was then known as "**The Blue Bell Country Club for Cats**" which she named after her favorite cat "Blue Bell" who wore a blue bell on her collar. Those who knew Bertha recall that she would reprimand any cat owner who would not send postcards to their cat while such "negligent" owner was away. Sadly, sometimes people never reclaimed their cats. So Bertha kept them, and it was the birth of a sanctuary for homeless and relinquished cats.

This is our story in a retrospective on the 30th anniversary of Bertha's death in 1989 at age 80.

Bertha was extremely dedicated to her cats and worried about their fate upon her death. In 1987 in declining health and about 200 cats under her care, she wanted to ensure that her legacy of cat caring would continue. So she established a trust and a Board of Directors, and the Blue Bell Foundation was officially established. Ahead of her time and inspired by her own circumstances, Bertha generously left her property for others so that when they died or could no longer care for their cats, were reassured there would be a place for them.

A myriad of cats have entered our doors, housing as many as 150 at a time—strays, Mama cats and their kittens, and relinquished pets. Of these, numerous were adopted into loving homes but the majority have happily lived their whole lives here and ended their days in comfort and peace. We now limit our population to approximately 50 cats—aged 10 and up—to ensure quality care.

### **TRAGEDY STRIKES!**

Through the years we have endured despite quakes, fires, and floods. Some believe Bertha's "protective arms" surround the property. However, on a stormy February night in 1998, an all-night downpour caused a devastating mudslide, severely damaging both buildings and grounds. Miraculously no cats perished—but the event was traumatic resulting in the evacuation and relocation of almost 100 cats.

It took four years to renovate, so the displaced cats resided in a building generously provided by the City of Laguna Beach. In 2002, with the help of our supporters, we returned to the canyon. Many kitties remembered their former spots! The property was redesigned to prevent future flooding, and the last several years re-landscaped into a thriving magnificent garden that attracts local wildlife and provides serenity to our residents and visitors alike.

### **OUR MISSION:**

Our focus is a retirement haven for senior kitties who have been placed for life. Be it a former guardian or (as funds allow) unadoptable cat(s) from a local shelter, we honor our commitment of excellent care by providing clean, healthy surroundings, a program of personal attention and proactive health care, and when the inevitable happens, compassionate hospice care.

### **OUR VISION:**

To become the leading cat retirement sanctuary, promising total peace of mind to cat owners and home-like, personalized care to the cats entrusted to us.

**Our thanks to Bertha, to all those who have served us in staff and volunteer service, and to all you wonderful supporters who enable us to continue Bertha's goal of a refuge where cats can roam freely in their own bungalow and courtyards, amidst the beauty and tranquility of the canyon—a home where our cats are safe and sound, comfortable, and truly loved.**

## NEW RESIDENTS

**September was a busy month. We welcomed four new residents!**



We welcomed **Jack, 17**, a precious black & white kitty and **Tiny, 13**, a gorgeous Siamese. Their owner who loved them dearly passed away and his sister placed them. They arrived September 16 and were comfortable straight away in the Anderson-Wentzel acclimation house. They did so well, they moved to the upper house by week's end. They also settled in immediately there, roaming the house and patios and captivating everyone with their gregariousness. At 17, alert-faced Jack still acts

like a kitten. We were shocked and saddened to lose Tiny just 2 months later, especially since his admission lab work was good and he was on no medication. See memorial below.

**Rocky, 12**, arrived September 21. He was an outdoor cat for 10 years. A kind woman fed him the whole time until one day she noticed he was sick. She brought him inside where he stayed for 10 months, but due to space restrictions—just one room—as well as being incompatible with a dog, she wanted him to be able to have a better life and access to the outdoors.. She was very sad when she brought him to us, but is com-

ported by being able to visit him. Rocky was very shy. Just like people, pets are consoled by familiar things in times of uncertainty. So we generally provide a memento from their prior home—in Rocky's case his carrier with his furry pillow inside. Our amazing staff and volunteers sat with him and finally he accepted being petted and is very receptive to our attention. We are confident he will continue to feel more at home with us and be let out of his enclosed suite soon.



**Alex, 12**, arrived September 26. He had had multiple traumas. He loved his former owner, whom he slept with every night. While his owner was in hospice, he escaped for a few months. He was returned but when his owner died, he escaped again, was caught, and

placed with us. The first day he was immobilized—terrified, and stoic. Clearly heartbroken, he was also contending with new smells, sounds, people, and other cats. As every cat is different, Alex will need extra patience. He is eating well and recently left his cat tree and ventured on the patio—an encouraging sign. We will continue to gently ease him in as he adjusts to his new home.

## MEMORIALS



**Fuzzy, 19**, with us a almost year since July 2018. Handsome Fuzzy was a mellow guy and mostly kept to himself but a scratch pad infused with catnip would energize this active senior. He often sunned himself on the suite screened porches and outdoor patio. He would look adorable in his punked-out lion cuts of his long black fur. This picture was taken when we knew his time was coming. Several days before he died on June 19 of age-related illness, Joyce took him for a stroll

through the gardens. She didn't expect he would want to get down, and certainly was surprised to see him wander around, stop and smell the flowers, and sip the water in the fountains. Surely this took him back to when he was mostly an outdoor kitty. We were happy to see him enjoy himself in his remaining days.

**Sammy Palmer, 10**, passed on Wednesday, August 14. This gentleman enjoyed head butts and chicken. In the months before he passed, he grew more accommodating to sitting in people's laps. He amused us by carrying around his toys in his mouth while simultaneously meowing up a storm. An ultrasound in January diagnosed GI lymphoma. He had been relatively stable and despite continued weight loss, he was active and eating well. Rima and Jenna took him out into the gardens, and he enjoyed exploring. As his time neared, he had no interest in food and just wanted to quietly sit outside on the patio. When his breathing became labored, it was decided that the kindest thing for him, would be to let him go. Our wonderful kitty Adam came and spent time with him, which he had also done with Fuzzy at the end. Joyce met with Susan and Dr. Hamil where he passed peacefully.



We lost **Ruckus, 14** on Wednesday, August 21. He came in 2014 so gave us 5 pleasant years. Although a bit shy at first, he was always a friendly fellow. He became ill rather quickly with acute renal failure and stopped eating, his walk was very wobbly as he was very weak. He had lost that special spark in his eyes. Rima and Jenna took him out into the gardens and he sniffed the flowers and watched the butterflies. Christine and Michelle hugged and kissed him and said their goodbyes. He was then taken to Canyon Animal Hospital where he peacefully passed.



**Lucy** came in June of 2016. Sweet-natured Lucy, a beautiful tiger kitty, lived in our Anderson-Wentzel house and was always there on view as you walked in the door. Two days before she died, she was taken to the hospital with a fever. She was very anemic and her hind legs were weak, not a good sign. Unfortunately, Lucy never came back to Blue Bell. In kidney failure she continued to decline and we had to say goodbye and she crossed over the Rainbow Bridge on Friday afternoon, October 18.

**Tiny, 13**, As mentioned above, we lost our charming Tiny unexpectedly on Saturday, November 2. Caretaker Santiago arrived early in the morning and found him already gone. He immediately took him to Canyon Animal Hospital and the cause was hypertrophic cardiomyopathy—a heart condition in which the first symptom is often death. Ironically the day before he had an eye discharge and was squinting so Caregiver Jenna took him to the vet and returned to Blue Bell with just an eye ointment. The vet even remarked how good he looked. Tiny had a good time with volunteers on Friday and received lots of love and treats. We never dreamed we would lose him so suddenly and soon.



## Pet Parade and Chili Cook-Off a Great Success

The 23rd Annual Pet Parade and Chili Cook-Off was held Sunday, September 29 on the Seven7Seven grounds, sponsored by the Laguna Beach Board of Realtors Charitable Assistance Fund

Families and pets alike had great fun competing in the pet parade and costume contest.

There were artists, balloons, popcorn, and of course chili! Proceeds go to local animal organizations and we are honored to be one.



The highlight for us was our own 14-year old **Cody** (pictured) won 1st prize as "Most Gorgeous Senior Pet"!

Thanks to **Pamela Knudsen**, Event Coordinator, and Volunteers **Sandy** and **Susan** who manned the booth. Also in attendance were staffers **Rima** and **Jenna** and Volunteers **Kat** and **Ken**.



Immense gratitude to the Laguna Board of Realtors for the ongoing charity work on behalf of animals.

On Sunday, October 6, **Girl Scout Daisy Troop 7570** visited.

As **Troop Leader Melanie Brown** relates "These first grade girls are working on a Journey called "Welcome to the Daisy Flower Garden". A Journey lets the girls explore new things, connect with the community and take action to make a difference. In this Journey the girls learn about gardens, pollinators and how plants grow. A tour of the beautiful Blue Bell gardens was a perfect fit for this! The girls planted their own individual pots of cat grass and tended to them for two weeks. This project teaches them to be responsible for what they say and do. Donating the grass is their way of giving back to the community. The girls were so proud and happy with their plants and excited to see the cats munching on the grass. We had so much fun learning about the facility and visiting with the cats.

Thank you for your hospitality and accommodating our large

group! We all really enjoyed our time at the Blue Bell! It is a gem and all the cats there are so lucky to have loving volunteers like you to take care of them."

We were thrilled to have been the beneficiary of this delightful project.

Our Blue Bell Staff had such positive comments about the girls and how sweet and loving they were toward the cats. A big thank you to our Blue Bell Garden Supervisor and Horticulturist, **Sue Brown** for presenting our Garden Program to the troop and to **Caregiver Joyce** and **Volunteers Kat and Katherine** who guided the girls on their tour.



FAMILY ALBUM



MEOWLOWEEN AT BLUE BELL

Bootiful Onxy peers out of a "hide and eek" scratcher house!

Tiger Weeks Takes a Peek



Orange Tiger Discovers his Inner Lion



*Cat's Meow Fundraiser  
Plans are still pending for our 2020  
Annual Cat's Meow Brunch.  
Please refer to our website for  
updates.*

*Wishing you a joyous and  
peaceful holiday and best  
wishes for a wonderful  
New Year!*



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**Our Mission:**  
 The Blue Bell Foundation for Cats offers loving and compassionate lifetime care for senior cats whose owners can no longer care for them.

Remember: Use [www.goodsearch.org](http://www.goodsearch.org) as your search engine, and [www.goodshop.com](http://www.goodshop.com) for your online shopping. Simply name us as your charity

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Enclosed is a "Gift of Love" in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
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 For: (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Anniversary  Birthday  Holiday  In Memory Of  
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 Send a card announcing the donation to:  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Your Name and address:  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Make checks payable to: **The Blue Bell Foundation for Cats**  
 Donations are tax-deductible THANK YOU!

**YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK**

*Cats are sponsored to ensure their continuing lifetime care. However, costs rise and cash donations help augment our budget immensely. This includes food, medications, fluid treatments, vet visits, and facility utilities.*

*Your monetary support is vital to the ongoing direct care of the cats as well as ongoing operational expenses.*

*Donations received from the newsletter (including Gifts of Love) go specifically to the "Community Cat Fund". Please refer to our website for information on the "Campaign for Blue Bell" and a detailed description of all giving opportunities. You may arrange for your donation to be applied toward one of them.*

*A huge **thank you** to all our compassionate supporters who understand our mission and the need for our existence.*

Registered Non-Profit 501( C )(3)

**OR DONATE ONLINE!**  
<http://www.bluebellcats.org/donate/index.php>