

Aggie's Story

A Year of Love & Lessons on Planning for Pets

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Chevy, Stella, and Aggie. Photos courtesy of Jessie White.

In November of 2023, I visited my brother's house. He had two cats, but then he pulled back a curtain and revealed a frail, beautiful, big-eyed calico sitting in a little box, staring out the window. The moment she saw me, she let out the biggest meow and immediately let me love all over her.

Curious, I asked where she had come from. My brother explained that a friend of his had a grandmother who had recently passed away. The friend had tried to take the cat in, wanting to do right by her grandmother, but unfortunately, she was allergic. Not knowing what else to do, she reached out to my brother — who, to a fault, has never said no to anyone in need. And so, the cat came to stay with him.

When I visited, it was clear my brother was overwhelmed with three cats, especially since he worked long hours and was rarely home. Without hesitation, I texted my husband: We're getting another cat. That would make us a family of two cats and a dog. I worked from home, so I knew I could keep a close eye on her. When I got home, I talked it over with my husband, and he agreed. We'd prep our home and bring her home after Thanksgiving.

Preparing for Aggie

In the days leading up to her arrival, we made sure everything was ready. We scheduled a vet visit, set up a litter box, bought wet and dry food, toys, a ramp for her to get onto the spare bed to see out the window, and rugs to help her get a good grip when walking. We even created a separate area just for her, knowing that female cats can be especially territorial. It wasn't cheap, but we knew it was worth it. After all, she was 17 years old — would you want to be cheaped out on in your senior years? Lol.

After Thanksgiving dinner, we drove to my brother's house with a carrier in tow. That's when we officially met Agatha — a name we found hilariously fitting for a little old lady cat. Lol. My husband sat with her in the back seat for the long hour-long drive home. When we arrived, we introduced her to her new room, and her eyes lit up.

For the first month, she barely left that room. She had spent 17 years as, we assumed, a singular lap cat, and she was hesitant to venture beyond her comfort zone.

Life with Aggie

Fast forward a year: Aggie and my other cat, Stella, never became friends. In fact, it was quite hostile between them. Before anyone judges, we did everything we could. We had multiple vet visits, discussed it with professionals, and tried every method — room swapping, calming collars, pheromone diffusers, treats, gradual introductions—but nothing worked. Stella, to this day, is an absolute diva with only-child syndrome.

For that year, we kept them separated — one on one side of the house, the other on the opposite side. We still made sure Aggie got plenty of lap time with both of us, swapping spaces so she never felt isolated. She spent hours in my office while I worked, got zoomies like a kitten, and played until her little body just gave out. She was so funny, and we always joked that the only brain cells she had were love cells — because that's all she knew. She was happiest in a lap, rubbing against our feet, or making the biggest biscuits in the most painful spots on our bodies. Lol.

We loved her, and we truly believe she loved us back.

The Hardest Goodbye

This is where the story still tears me up.

We had the opportunity to sell our house and move into a cabin on my parents' property — a dream we'd had for years, wanting to be closer to family. We don't have many friends as we've gotten older, and our real friends have always been our families. We're both a little antisocial in our own ways (lol), so this move felt right.

But what started as a dream quickly turned into a nightmare.

Our house sold much faster than expected, forcing us to move in a rush. We had everything packed and moved — except for the cats. They were still (what we thought) safely separated in the house while we spent the night setting up the cabin for them. It was late, and we decided not to go back for them that night, wanting to make sure everything was perfect for their transition the next morning.

When we arrived at the old house the next day, the separation had been broken — likely by Stella knocking over the gate. She was cowered behind a curtain in the window, looking petrified. I picked her up, apologizing over and over for leaving her overnight. Meanwhile, my husband searched for Aggie. He found her under the bathroom sink, trembling, with one of Stella's claws stuck in her nose.

He scooped her up, showering her with love, while I carefully removed the claw. There was no blood, but I sobbed. I couldn't imagine how scared they had been. My husband tried to comfort me, reminding me that at least they hadn't been at the cabin yet — where they could have gotten lost or run outside in fear. He was probably right, but it still felt awful.

When we got to the cabin, both cats hid. Stella eventually emerged throughout the night to explore, but Aggie stayed under the couch, unmoving. I told my husband we needed to at least get her to eat. We slid some food under the couch, and she took a few bites, which gave me a small sense of relief.

Then, finally, she came out.

She used the litter box and, on her way back to hide under the couch, she let out a meow. But it wasn't a meow I'd ever heard from her before. I immediately told my husband to flip the couch — I needed to check on her.

When I reached for her, she screamed.

I froze, panicked, running through my mind to figure out what could have happened. But nothing had. Nothing had changed. Still, I carefully picked her up despite the screaming, and once she was in my arms, she started purring. Maybe she was just hurting from being curled up in fear for so long. She was nearly 18.

We laid her on the bed, but through her purring, I noticed she was panting. My stomach dropped. That's never a good sign.

We called the emergency vet, who told us they'd be on standby. We spent 30 agonizing minutes debating what to do. Finally, we made the 40-minute drive. The moment we arrived, they took us into a room. We discussed all options, but ultimately, we made the hardest decision — we let her cross the Rainbow Bridge.

She had an amazing year with us. She didn't deserve pain, stress, or yet another transition. We've often wished she had gone to a quiet home with a little old lady who had no other pets, the perfect lap to call home. But, selfishly, we also didn't want anyone else taking care of her.

She was cremated, and her ashes will always be with us, watching over us — a constant reminder of how much love can endure.

A Final Plea: Make a Plan for Your Pets

Long story short: always have a plan for your pets, no matter their age.

We have a plan for Stella. I suffer from depression, and as morbid as it sounds, she keeps me going because I always think, Who will take care of her the way I do? If you don't have a plan, make one. If you already have one, update it as life changes. Treat it like a will for your pets. Set aside money for their care — vet visits, food, medications, anything they might need.

I've had a will for years, and after Aggie, I updated it to ensure Stella will be cared for if something happens to me. It might seem morbid, but pets are family, and they deserve the same consideration.

We love and miss you, Aggie. Always.