

# What loving Rosie taught me

By MURIEL JENSEN  
For The Daily Astorian

Rosie was a tuxedo cat who was abandoned somewhere down the street, and joined the "tribe" of Spenser and Colby Jack, our neighbors cats.

Steve and Barb (neighbors and friends) live in a rehabbed Colonial that has no front porch, so no shelter for the cats.

Because everyone visits a lot in our neighborhood, sits on everyone else's steps or porch to chat, the cats probably figured they had the same rights. Spenser, a long-haired tuxedo, and Colby Jack (named after the cheeses for his colors) slept in a cozy pile on the wicker rocking chair on our front porch when it rained — or just when they needed a good rest.



Muriel Jensen

One day, I noticed a third cat in the pile. I put out another plate of food, another bowl of water. Barb said she thought the cat's name was Rosie, and that she'd been left when her people moved.

It was soon clear to see why she'd been left behind if her owners had adopted her for the love she would give them. Rosie was a total ingrate. We fed her for 12 years and she apparently never felt grateful, never learned to trust us, never gave us an inkling that she appreciated the care and concern. I kept thinking, "Tomorrow, she's going to respond to me."

Eventually, we concluded she probably wasn't in her right mind. But she loved Spenser and Colby Jack, and the tight little unit they made on the rocker.

## Rosie was a total ingrate.

Last year Colby died, followed fairly closely by Spenser. They were both in their late teen years — a good life for a cat. We mourned them and I felt fairly certain Rosie would just die of loneliness. But she lived on, though she began to look pretty frail. Taking her to the vet was not an option because she never, ever let me touch her. I was sure forcing her into a box would kill her before old age did. So I lined a box with fleece, covered it in plastic, and prepared her for the winter on our porch.



## Writer's Notebook

She lived out there until February, then one cold night I was going downstairs with laundry and found her curled up on the basement step. I made a bed for her inside, brought her food in, and she stayed there through the winter. At the end of May, she moved onto the rocker on the porch again, very thin but seeming to be comfortable.

As summer wore on, it became clear she was dying — whether it was from old age or illness, I'm not sure. We had no idea how old she was. I was determined to let her die on her own terms, but it became harder and harder to watch her become even thinner. Early in August, I decided we'd give her the rest of the summer because she really did seem to

love those puddles of sunshine on the porch, then I'd find a way to catch her and get her to the vet. Our vet will sedate the pet and let you hold it while he puts it to sleep. I made a mental deadline of Sept. 1.

That day was a Sunday. I came home from Mass, she was sitting in her chair, and I reached down to scratch her between the ears. And she let me! That had never happened. I was amazed and thought, "Finally! Progress!" I went in to get her food and when I came out she was gone. Sure she'd followed me into the house, I went back inside to look around for her. I never found her, and she never came home.

I cried for days. I wanted her loneliness and her suffering to be over, but I wanted to hold her while she went on her way. I felt gyped.

Then it occurred to me, that that was what I wanted, but it was Rosie's life. She'd found a way to survive when she'd been abandoned, and she'd become one tough cookie. It's hard to know what was going on in her mind, but

survival apparently involved depending on herself and no one else.

That made me think about love. Romantic love, of course, has to be reciprocal, or you couldn't live every moment with each other and raise children, unless you were getting back from the other person all the love you put into the relationship. But love of other people and love of animals, doesn't have to be returned to be effective. Often, we love because what we get back makes us feel good, appreciated. But in the cases where you don't get that, it doesn't really matter. Love does what it does anyway. We gave Rosie a home and kept her going until the last minute. If she related to me at all, it was that moment when she let me scratch her head.

Also, about love. In defiance of all science, love is the one thing that doesn't leave an empty space when you give it away. More love takes its place, fills you up, gives you more than you had before.

That's what loving Rosie taught me.  
Astoria resident Muriel Jensen has published more than 70 books and novellas

## Open forum

### Keep state money out

Regarding the recent debate about taxpayer dollars going to religious organizations in Warrenton: The Oregon constitution is clear on this issue ("Church and state," *The Daily Astorian*, July 24). Section 5 of the Bill of Rights reads "No money shall be drawn from the Treasury for the benefit of any religious or theological institution, nor shall any money be appropriated for the payment of any religious services in either house of the Legislative Assembly."

The reasoning behind this amendment is that the framers were aware that religion does best when it supports itself. They were aware that churches dependent on the state for funding become lethargic and run the risk of losing their prophetic voices.

Religion does best when it is supported by voluntary contributions. Privately raised money preserves the independence of religious groups and increases congregational vitality. Government funding inevitably brings regulation and threatens the integrity of religion. None of this is in the best interest of faith groups or the taxpayers.

Government neutrality with respect to religion is the best policy. Let's stick with it.

ED JOYCE  
Astoria

### Accusations trump fairness

I have waited for the justice system to run its course before publicly commenting on the case of Mick Mitchell and the child abuse accusations leveled against him. From the beginning, I have been very disappointed in the unfairness of many of our local institutions.

The district attorney's office inflated the accusations at every opportunity, originally charging him with crimes that could have resulted in over 300 years of prison. Even after the most serious of the charges were dropped, they continued to use the blunt sledgehammer of a "choice" between the possibility of spending 180 years in prison with a trial, or taking a plea for 60 days of alternative sanctions.

The fact that the district attorney was willing to settle for a couple months over the original 300 years speaks to the weakness of their case. Not once was Mitchell given an opportunity in court to tell his side of the story.

The *Daily Astorian* was very happy to sensationalize his case on the front page, but as the charges were lessened, their interest waned. For the most part, *The Daily Astorian* served only as a one-sided narrative for the district attorney's office. To this day, they are deleting online comments in support of Mitchell on their website. They never once asked him for his side of the story.

His employer, the Astoria Co-Op, summarily fired him when the charges were filed and to add insult to injury, trespassed him from his workplace of over 16 years. He was never asked for his side of the story.

I completely understand the horrendous nature of the accusations that were made against him, and the sensitivity that must be exercised in child abuse cases, but these were accusations that Mitchell was never given a fair chance to defend himself against. Any honest attempt to get at the truth of the matter would have involved interviewing the alleged criminal, investigating his background, and speaking with character witnesses. This never happened.

It is the blatant unfairness of the process that

discourages me. Some will say he got off easy. If being bankrupted, losing your career, being officially labeled as a sex offender and having to spend nearly a year being an exile in your own town is getting off easy, then we all now know what 19 years of working and living in this community is worth once a finger is pointed at you.

I believe he is entirely innocent of the charges, but my point is about fairness. If he can be accused of this crime, and have his life and reputation destroyed, then any one of us is vulnerable. Is somebody going to stand up for fairness when the finger is pointing at you?

JACK HARRIS  
Astoria

### Support the festival

My dear and beloved Astorians: First, I want to tell you that my love to you, the people and the town of Astoria, hopefully, has proved itself over the years. It continues to grow, and the community of Astoria has a very special place in my heart, and my life, both personally and musically.

The recent events at the Astoria Music Festival are breaking my heart ("Music Festival directors resign in dispute," *The Daily Astorian*, July 21). The festival, our beautiful, amazing and incredible gem of art that was growing for 13 years, developing and embracing the community like I've never seen before — having traveled all over the world and having played hundreds of festivals — is shaken by unseen and unforeseen events.

Reading the recent article released in *The Daily Astorian*, I ask you, the people, the supporting force of the festival, the ground that the festival's

feet are standing, only one question: If the things are so bad behind the scenes, why do all of us, the musicians, keep coming back to Astoria? Why do we keep following Keith Clark's leadership? Why, according to the words of the president of the board, was this year's festival the most successful out of 13? Isn't it about the music? What do you want to get out of your tickets to the concert?

My long string of thoughts resulted in this small letter to all of you. I have too much to say to fit in any paper about this. I dearly love all of you and I dearly love the festival. It's yours. It's for all of you. I will support the festival and the direction of the festival as I have for all these years.

I will not make any comments on the recent article, since we are all free to express our opinions. I ask all of you to listen to your hearts, as we all do on stage for all of you. I've never felt so strongly about expressing my opinion, and making this opinion public.

I love all of you. We will continue bringing music to Astorians no matter what. Nobody, no way, can take it away from us. We will keep the festival going, but we need your support.

There's no court, there's no ball and no sides. We all want to make beautiful music and keep the festival going strong. We will not keep you waiting, and will be back in Astoria making beautiful music with the amazing artists from around the world.

The situation is bad, and I feel that I can speak up openly about people I care about and the festival I love. My life would not be the same without it.

With all my warmest wishes,

Always yours,

SERGEY ANTONOV  
New York

## Where to write

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