

## **He's thinking Arby's...**

Our first home was an apartment. My husband and I are both dog lovers but an apartment wouldn't allow for dogs, so we decided on a cat. We headed down to the local humane society. I'm a softy and I know that everyone will adopt the kittens, so I headed straight back to the older cats. Unfortunately, my husband wasn't interested in an older cat. He chose this scraggly, skinny, black kitten that was probably about three months old. I argued with him for about half an hour to please not get this cat, but he was set.

We took ole blacky home with us and named him Oscar. It didn't take long for us to realize that Oscar was no ordinary cat—he was a super cat. Once he mastered the apartment itself he decided to start hanging out on the deck. We were on the third floor of the apartment complex so it never occurred to us the cat would try to escape. It should have. That was his plan all along.

Six months into our family of three, we were posting up signs of this curious solid black cat all over the complex hoping to find him. Lucky for him he had a collar and was returned several days later.

Our time in college flew by and my husband graduated Reserved Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and we were headed to our first duty station, Fort Hood, TX. We were lucky in that we found a wonderful little rental house (with a cat door) on a cul-de-sac. Oscar fit right in. He immediately claimed the entire cul-de-sac as his territory and started visiting the neighbors. It wasn't long before all the children knew his name. He took up a perch in the neighbor's tree with a bird's eye view of the neighborhood. It was in this tree that he caused most of his mischief. You see the birds loved this tree and he loved the birds. It was the perfect set-up. Maggie, our neighbor, put birdseed in the feeder that was in the tree; Oscar waited for the hungry birds and then brought the ultimate prize to our doorstep. Maggie wasn't appreciative.

There were times we would go for days and never see Oscar. We'd ask around to see if anyone had seen him, just to find him next door all curled up on the back of Jennifer and Tim's couch. "Oh he's been here for two days, what a sweet cat." Boy did he have them fooled!

Then, there was Teresa and Patrick across the street that owned Oscar's two best friends, the Doberman Pinchers. Teresa used to call me all the time to tell me about how my cat was purposely walking across her fence and jumping down into the "pit" of dogs and running diagonally to see if they'd catch him causing her dogs to throw giant barking fits. She was always worried he'd be eaten until we decided they were all friends and this was a game they played.

So, at Fort Hood, Oscar survived the Dobermans, Maggie spraying him out of the tree with the water hose, the children burning his leg on the BBQ grill, and even a bout of kidney failure. The vet said we owned a miracle cat. Apparently by the time I brought

him in most cats would have been dead. We thought he'd seen all the adventure that a cat could see in its life. That is, until we made our next major PCS.

After leaving Fort Hood we spent eight months at Captain's Career Course in Fort Sill, OK followed by a year of an unaccompanied tour to Korea when Wrena and I moved to Springfield, MO. After returning from Korea Kevin had orders to report to Fort Stewart, GA. We went through all of the motions and played the PCS game: the movers, the partial DITY move, the goodbyes to the family, and the packing of the plants, pets, and kid.

Off we headed down the sixteen hour trip to Georgia, one car, one truck, and a UHaul trailer. We stopped in Alabama at an Arby's to have lunch. Since Oscar had been riding in his cage the entire way we decided it would be nice to let him out in the back of the Durango. We left the windows barely—and I do mean barely—cracked for air. Upon returning to the vehicle, I opened the door. I looked around No cat. I started to freak out. No cat? How could there be no cat? We combed that truck from one end to the other. He was gone. I was beside myself. We spent the next hour driving around the parking lots of adjacent restaurants calling for him. Kevin said we had to go on. "You never leave a soldier behind," I told him. I cried as we drove away.

I started thinking of ways to rescue him. Did he have a collar on? Yes! What was on it? I don't know. It could have been TX, OK, or MO. I couldn't remember. I did remember slipping it on him right before we left, so that if in the event he did get lost someone would know his name and he would have a family. I don't know how, but I recalled the vet name and number from TX, and from MO, and our old phone number from OK. I called all the numbers and told them my story.

Two days after we arrived at Fort Stewart, we were meeting the movers at our rental house. My cell phone rang. "Hello?" "Hello, are you missing a member of your family?" The lady went on to explain she was in Leeds, AL. Our Oscar had been found! She said that her daughter found him at the Cracker Barrel and the only reason she took him home is because he had a collar. Once she got him home it took her two days to figure out why the cat was in Alabama, with a Missouri and Texas vet tag, and an Oklahoma phone number. Only in a military household! She had called the vet in Texas who had given her my number. She kept him until the weekend and we drove twelve hours to rescue the little booger.

I don't know how he is so lucky. Since he's been back we purchased a nice home in Richmond Hill, GA. He has taken to our street and our neighbors just like he did in Texas. He no longer has a litter box--he functions as a dog. He scratches when he needs to go out, he utilizes his cat door, and even has a self-feeding cat bowl. He is thirteen years old now. He is so low maintenance but still very loving and he has turned out to be the best cat anyone could ever imagine. He still goes on his adventures though. We lost him around New Years last year and some lady called from a neighborhood about ten miles away, ironically right down the street from the local Arby's.