

Rusty's retirement

Rusty was, at age 16, technically retired. He still hunted the occasional gopher and had a part time job as night watchcat on the front deck. Then there was the teaching position training little Dust Ball to one day take over as Chief Cat.

Rusty was sleeping more and hunting less. He thought the Cat & Cactus farm was the best place he'd ever lived--it beat that noisy Mountain View with all the cars and people making so much commotion.

On the negative side Rusty was becoming grouchy and demanding. If his outdoor water station was empty he'd howl until Verne refilled it. He'd screech at the top of his lungs when he wanted Verne to open a fresh can of cat food.



Rusty had become demanding in his 16th year. He would scream for Verne to refill his water, or open the front door for him.



Verne allowed Rusty his screaming behavior; it didn't bother him because he loved Rusty for the 16 years of friendship they had shared. Verne didn't know how much longer Rusty would be alive. So if the old Rust bucket was getting pissy, ... well, that was OK!



The funny thing was that Rusty didn't look old. He ran around like a kitten. Only his grouchy old cat attitude gave away his true age.



Rusty had been a close friend for 16 years. Verne stopped drinking the summer that Rusty came to him and had never had another drink. So Verne thought of Rusty as his sobriety angel. Through all those years Rusty has stayed sober, too.