Three’s Company

For those of us who remember our high school Latin—and who does?—there’s a principle, ‘omne trium perfectum,’ suggesting that things grouped in threes are more satisfying and rewarding. Case in point: Dan Toth and his three dogs, all of whom were adopted from the Robin I. Kroogman New Haven Animal Shelter.

Dan’s “kids,” as he calls them—D.J. (adopted in 2021), Lemme (in 2019), and Nevada (in 2010)—have rested their plump canine laurels at his Seymour home for a combined 13 years. Prior to this trio Dan also adopted Marcus (in 2006) and Scotty (in 2019), who have since crossed the “rainbow bridge.” So, why all these pit bulls?

“I’m a believer that pit bulls need a second chance,” he says. “My instinct tells me that these dogs have great personalities. I can tell right then and there if we’re a good fit.”

Dan’s dogs are proof of that. D.J., whose shelter name was Dan Handsome, is a happy boy who is eager to please and full of energy. Upon bringing him home, Dan says that there was some resource guarding, where he exhibited excessive possession of food and toys. D.J. soon realized, with a bit of training, that no one was out to get his “stuff,” so that behavior has since disappeared. Lemme, originally named Linus, has a big expressive face, cropped ears, and an omnipresent smile. He also sports a huge chest, which Dan calls more of an “eight-pack than a six-pack,” and outweighs the other dogs by nearly 20 pounds. Nevada, the oldest (who kept her original name), is happy to frolic with her canine brothers despite her health issues. Having arthritis, atopic dermatitis (an inherited predisposition to allergies) and hypothyroidism—all being treated by medication—doesn’t stop her from being an integral part of the family.

A typical day at the Toth household begins at 4:30 AM. Dan, an electrician, has a busy day ahead. The dogs rise shortly afterwards, with enough time for the morning rituals, outside laps, and a quick breakfast. The rest of the day is spent on their beds, awaiting Dan’s return at 3:30 PM.

“I don’t get further than the foyer when I hear the dogs’ nails tapping on the floor, then come the rubdowns and kisses,” he says. “A nose to my cheek takes care of the worst day.” Usually, D.J. and Lemme jump up on Dan as a welcome-home gesture, but Nevada is content to mightily wag her tail to say “Hi!”

With “daddy” home, there will be more laps, treats, and balls thrown outside. The backyard is a canine retreat that features a fenced-in yard, surrounding woods, a large deck for sunbathing and ample time for “zoomies.” This threesome can bring a bit of thunder and Dan admits that at first, keeping them under control was a challenge. “I’ve gotten some grey hair,” he says, “but they’re all just titanic marshmallows.”

Dan’s living room boasts two strategically placed sofas. One is for dogs and the other for humans. D.J., Lemme and Nevada know the “off-limits human sofa” rule very well.

But, if anyone lands on the canine sofa, three pairs of envious eyes will focus on you. Quietly and patiently, the dogs will wait until it’s vacant. Then, the well-worn sofa will be covered with nearly 200 pounds.

Bedtime also brings certain regulations. After a last frolic outside and nightly treats, it’s lights out by 9 PM. Nevada has a memory foam bed with three blankets arranged to her liking. Lemme and D.J. sleep alongside Dan. “I get a whopping ten inches to myself,” he says with a laugh, “but they’re my fur babies.”

Having three dogs could be daunting to most people, but Dan clearly has mastered training and coordinated feeding, sleeping, and playtime with ease. He is an “adopter emeritus” and can’t remember a time when he didn’t have dogs in his life. As any responsible dog owner will tell you, adopting an animal is for life. Discipline is ongoing, good health is at the forefront, and spaying/neutering is required. Dan believes that all shelter dogs need a second chance and finds it sad that some animals are so neglected—forced to endure the elements, be unsure of their next meal and not have any human interaction. “Adopt, don’t shop” is a phrase that he truly holds dear.
**What’s It All About,**

**Alfie?**

Love comes in many forms and, dare we say, colors—or so Rosemary Decapua and Vanessa Indich have discovered. This married couple, romantic partners for 40 years, have been cat lovers for just as long. “Actually, growing up, I always had dogs, never cats,” Rosemary says. “Vanessa was the cat person. She introduced me to them, and I fell in love.”

They share a special fondness for orange cats. That breed of cat fancy is what brought them to the New Haven Animal Shelter in 2008, following the passing of their fiery-coated feline of 16 years, Pumpkin. “We happened to come to the shelter the same day someone who had been fostering a litter of nine kittens brought them back to be adopted,” Rosemary says. “We were looking for orange kittens, and there were two males in this litter. One was the runt. I told him, ‘We’re going to be back to get you.’” In fact, she and Vanessa adopted them both, naming the runt Sonnyboy, and his brother, Barney.

Sonny and Barney proved to be highly energetic, robust cats, much like their predecessor Pumpkin. “We loved them to pieces, but boy, were they a challenge!” says Rosemary. “They demanded a lot of attention, and Vanessa and I both worked full-time, so it was a little difficult. But really, they were great cats, and they had each other for company.”

Alas, unbeknownst to their owners, both also had congenital heart disease that only showed itself later in life—sadly, Sonny died at 8 years, and Barney in November 2020, at age 13. “After Sonny passed, we were afraid Barney would be lonely, but he actually enjoyed being the kingpin of the household. Barney respected Sonny, but after Sonny died he never sought him or showed signs of depression. If he had had his way, he would have been an only cat.”

Petless once again, Rosemary and Vanessa returned to the shelter in February 2021, a little more cautious about adopting. “We’re both seniors now,” Rosemary says. “We didn’t think we could do the baby-raising thing again.” This time, they were in pursuit of an adult orange cat they’d seen on the shelter’s WTNH Channel 8 showcase, “Pet of the Week.” When they arrived, however, they discovered that that cat had already been adopted. No matter: They instead crossed eyes—and souls—with a gorgeous 1⅛-year-old silvery-gray and white longhair named Boba. “He was lower key than the cats we’d owned before and had a beautiful gentle aura about him. His eyes just spoke to us.”

Now known as Alfie, this feline remains a gentleman, readily allowing his moms to trim his nails and carefully groom his luxurious coat.

“He’s not as playful as Sonny and Barney were, but he loves his stuffed Lamb Chop doll,” Rosemary says (which you can see in the photo published here).

“Mr. Zeus

“He’s a big bird watcher, and talker—he chatters all the time, although he didn’t start until a week after we got him. I think the stress of moving in with us intimidated him at first.” Adjustment stress also caused an initial bout of continual sneezing, which evaporated once he settled in.

Mya-Rose & Mr. Zeus

“When we adopted him, we told him he was going to Disneyland, and that’s where he is!” says Rosemary, laughing. Indeed, Alfie lacks for nothing; his bounty includes two window-facing cat condos. “We care for cats better than some people take care of their kids.” She and Vanessa have taken pains to provide him a calm, Zen-like environment, complete with evenings spent watching TV by candlelight and regular music-listening sessions (he’s developed a taste for everything from classical music and Liberace to soft jazz and Shirley Bassey).
Though Rosemary says they’ve introduced him to seemingly “every brand and flavor” of wet food on the market, he remains resolute about eating only dry cat food: “I’m just thankful he’s a good water drinker. Basically, Alfie lives a very quiet, structured life. He’s totally contented. He actually looks like he has a smile on his face at times.” He’s also, as it happens, very social. “I love the fact that he comes out to greet everyone who comes by—not that we have a lot of company.”

As senior citizens, Rosemary and Vanessa are keenly aware that there may come a time when Alfie will have to live without them, so they’ve made arrangements that ensure he’ll go on to be as well-loved in a new family as he is now. “We always try to think realistically,” Rosemary says. Meanwhile, they’re reveling in the joy he brings to their lives. “This cat is a complete angel, a sweetheart of an animal. He’s docile and friendly and loving, and at this stage of our lives, he brings balance to our home.”
Tatiana Andreyev in memory of Mr. Agnes Lemmon Shipley.
Anne Bailey in memory of Angel.
Kathy Barringham in memory of Willy. “I will forever miss him.”
Joseph Beaudoin in memory of “my brother Charles Beaudoin, avid supporter of the New Haven Animal Shelter.”
Brian Blakeley and Terry Freeman in memory of Kate, Nell-Bob, and Betty.
Sharon Bornholz in memory of Lynne Keane, “friend of animals.”
John and Eileen Brannigan in memory of Chaz, AKA Gizmo-Fatboy, “gone but forever in our hearts.”
Ellen Burch in memory of “dear, sweet Bea, beloved pet of the Greig family.”
William Cannon and family in memory of Sophie.
Robin Covino in memory of Desmond, “never forget.”
Lau Crigco in memory of Jessica.
Edward Danaher in memory of “Sandee and in honor of Dorothee.”
Mary Drury in memory of Tippy.
Sheila Epps in memory of Simba.
Barbara and Jerry Gaab in memory of Light.
Peter and Kate Hvizdak in memory of Fay Hvizdak, “who loved our rescue Labs.”
April Feathers and Fred Jungeblut in memory of Richard (Ricky) J. Vining, Jr. and his “beloved black lab Max. They brought joy to many.”
Chris and Toddie Getman in memory of Handsome Dan XVII.
John Gordon in memory of Danny Klein.
Justin Gorski in “loving memory of Moo, Shirley Draqen’s dog.”
Mr. and Mrs. David J. Kaplan in memory of JuJu. “Thank you for bringing her into our lives”
Susan Keeney in memory of “my grandmother.”
Jean Koepe in memory of Moms, “a beloved cat.”
Elizabeth Kressley in memory of Ziggy, “beloved cat.”
Tracey Legger-Hornby in memory of Beatrice, “beloved pet of Deborah Greig and Brian Hornby.”
John Levis in memory of “Jerry the pitbull, proud 2006 FNHAS alum.”
Patricia and John Martin in memory of Nancy L. Robinson.
Patrick McCarthy in memory of Karen McCarthy.
Barbara Melotto in memory of Toby Joe.
Mary Molitor in memory of Boo.
Tony and Karen Papa in memory of “a sweet dog named Anabelle.”
Arel Peckler in memory of Lee Ellen Peckler and “our beloved cats Willy and Laredo.”
Laurie Cecarelli-Prizzi in memory of Dusty, “my boy.”
Ryan Reynolds in memory of Skipper, Kasper, Colonel, Oscar and Roscoe.
Anna Marie Scalia-Luzzi in memory of Mary Dolores Nelson.
Marsha Silverman in memory of “Muffin the Wonder Dog.”
Anna Simeone in memory of “all my 7 beautiful dogs.”
Jeannie Sutton in memory of Riley and Pepe and in honor of “all dogs and cats in need of loving homes.”
“Wild Bill” Taylor in memory of “Dr. Pepper—16 years.”
Vivian and Gaetano Troiano in memory of Mary Dolores Nelson.
Linda Turski in memory of Humphrey and Oakley.
Allison Tynan in memory of “our beloved Toby, one of the best dogs in the world.”
Cynthia Walker and Patrick Edwards in memory of Johnny and Baxter, “our beloved Boston terriers.”

**WE THANK YOU - IN MEMORIAM**

**In memory of Dolores Hawley**
“A lover of all animals.”
- Roberta and Helmi Ali
- Betsey Burgh
- Harry and Rheta De Benedet
- Cheryl Funaro
- Francis and Mary Gargano
- Diane Kendall
- Helene Sarracco

**In memory of Leighton B. Carlson**
- Duane E. Mellor
- John H. Morgan

**In Honor of:** 🐾

- Robert P. Beech in honor of Dr. Robert Beech’s birthday.
- Catherine Benedetti in honor of Casey.
- Roger and Rachel Blais in honor of Ricky, “a good boy who brings us joy.”
- Holly Flugrath in honor of “you people.”
- Karen Hanson in honor of Elaine Spinato, “dedicated volunteer.”
- Lee and Evelyn Harvey in honor of “Nathan Dachshund, proud 2019 FNHAS graduate.”
- Patricia Hewston in honor of Tammy Hewston.
- John Hils in honor of Coco Gilchrist.
- Mr. and Mrs. David J. Kaplan in honor of the “vets at Companion Animal Hospital and Drs. Glennon, Corrao, and the entire staff at New Bridge Veterinarians.”
- Laura Margolin and James Johnson in honor of “Oreo and Kali Cat, may they learn to live together.”
- Tim McNamara in honor of Nyles.
- Pat Miner in honor of “all animal shelters—God Bless.”
- Anne Olcott in honor of Elisabeth Oppenheimer’s bat mitzvah.
- Marsha Silverman in honor of “all you wonderful animal lovers.”
- “Wild Bill” Taylor in honor of Midnight, “my all-black cat.”
Our Special Thanks To:

- Awning Cleaning Industries
- BEKI Synagogue Hebrew School – “Tzadakah”
- McDonald’s Corporation
- North Shore Animal League of America
- Omega Zeta Pi Sorority Southern Connecticut State University
- Paws ‘N Effect – The WCRL Rally Club
- Town Fair Tire Foundation, Inc.
- Skyview Rehab & Nursing
- Unitarian Society of New Haven
- Wintergreen Magnet School

Amazon “Wish List” Donors:

- American Criminal Justice Association at the University of New Haven
- In Memory of Beauty for Janeen Powers from Sera and Batty Blue
- Elisabeth and all her rescues
- Ashley Kassai
- The Keith family
- Michelle
- Elisabeth Smith Moore
- NJHS at Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School (Mrs. Laggis and students)
- Abigail Page
- Arel Lisette Peckler and shelter graduate Ziggy
- Dayanara Rivera
- Emily Storm and shelter graduate Ruby (formerly Starr)
- Dave and Diane Sulkis in memory of Jake
- Michele Veiga
- and many other anonymous donors!
To donate your car, visit www.findafriendforlife.org – click ‘How To Help’ and scroll down to ‘Donate A Car!’

AmongFRIENDS contributors: Patricia Grandjean, Elaine Spinato, Deb Wan