

A tribute to Morris, the cat

By LYNN HERSHEY
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NEWARK, Del. - No animal did more to foster appreciation of cats than Morris, recently deceased TV star, gourmet, and sophisticated-about-town.

Many people who had always disliked cats were gradually seduced by Morris into a state of confirmed felinophilia (love of cats). Those who ventured into cat ownership (a misnomer—no one owns a cat) soon discovered what they had been missing all those catless years. Feline personalities are delightfully varied when you make the effort to get acquainted. Cats also represent an amazing collection of other admirable qualities. For example: BEAUTY: The smallest feline is a masterpiece. (Leonardo da Vinci said it, I didn't.) LOYALTY: A cat may trek hundreds of miles

to be reunited with its human family. COMFORT: If, on a dismal day, you have never been comforted by a warm, purring lapful of soft cat, I pity you. DEVOTION: Cats do not need to knock you down, bark non-stop, and swab your face to tell you they love you. Their love is deep, however, if you will but learn to recognize the subtle signs—the steady, adoring gaze, the gentle rub on the ankle, the paw placed softly on a shoe, the forehead-to-forehead nudge, and if you're lucky, a nose kiss. PROTECTIVENESS: When a doctor visited our ailing four-year-old, Big Brother Cat on the bed uttering unmistakable sounds warning, "If you lay a finger on this kid, doc, I have 18 claws that'll make you regret it." PATIENCE: A toddler wanted to give a cat a ride in his tiny Playskool wagon. The cat immediately

understood, voluntarily arranged himself in the wagon, and spent an hour being pulled across the floor in a series of unsettling jerks. A dog would have left after five minutes. DIGNITY: A noble Siamese was posed on a window ledge, contemplating the world. The aforementioned toddler appeared and began running a little toy car up and down the cat's back. The Siamese remained motionless, neither reacting nor departing. He simply ignored the indignity. ARTISTIC INSPIRATION: What other animal could inspire an engineer to design and build an elaborate cat entertainment center, complete with carpeted floor-to-ceiling scratching post, plus eight lofty, carpeted perches, all with protective railings to keep puss from falling off (a highly unlikely occurrence)?

Is the woollybear a weather forecaster?

NEWARK, De. - Drive along almost any country road at this time of year and you're apt to see numerous fuzzy caterpillars scurrying across the road. Some of these will be banded woollybears—the caterpillar old-timers say you can use to predict the severity of the coming Winter.

The caterpillar is black on each end with a band of orange-red in the middle. If you should pick up one of them, it will curl into a tight ball of orange and black fuzz. If the black covers most of the caterpillar, the coming Winter is supposed to be severe; but if orange predominates, a mild Winter can be anticipated. At least, that's the way the legend goes.

No one knows for sure whether the banded woollybear can be relied on for an accurate prediction. It doesn't seem likely that it can, but a few studies some

years back by the American Museum of Natural History indicated that there might be a correlation.

If you check on the banded woollybear, though, don't draw your conclusions from one caterpillar. Find the average from many of them. Some may be more reliable than others, according to these studies.

Other insects are also reported to be useful for

predicting weather. If hornet nests are placed high in trees, it signifies a mild Winter. Frost is supposedly six weeks away when you hear the first katydid. And, if mud dauber wasps build close to the ground, the Summer is supposed to be dry.

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