

Bunnyboy and Me: Fighters for Each Other

Nancy Laracy

Although my new bunny rabbit, Muffin, is enchanting, she will never replace Bunnyboy, who was clearly meant to come into my life at a difficult time. After I was diagnosed with lupus and fibromyalgia, my doctor had recommended that I not have any more children beyond the two I already had. Coming from a family of many siblings, this news was the catalyst to a very sad time in my life.

Then, during the first snowstorm of the season, I impulsively bought a red Satin rabbit. Little did I know that, in many ways, he would become like a third child to me. Bunnyboy trusted me and wanted to be carried in my arms like an infant. He was also a special needs "child," Bunnyboy had been born with an immune system disorder. When he was nine months old, the veterinarian said that he probably would not live more than six months. Instead, Bunnyboy lived another nine years.

During that time, he traveled in the car everywhere with me, slept with me, and was treated like any pet dog or cat. But the unusual bond we formed "in sickness and in health" was just that—highly unusual—because bunnies are normally skittish, high-strung animals who are afraid of humans. Yet Bunnyboy defied the odds, surviving medications, MRIs, CT scans, and four surgeries. He even participated in the pioneering use of antibiotic beads on mammals at the world famous Animal Medical Center (AMC) in Manhattan.

Several years later, I was told that I might have cancer in my jawbone. Instead, it was a massive bone infection for which the doctor implanted in me the same antibiotic beads that had been used on Bunnyboy and had just been approved for use on humans by the FDA. The doctor said that without the beads, my outcome might have been very different, even potentially fatal, because of my severely compromised immune system.

Over the years, I had to administer penicillin injections to Bunnyboy every other day to control the chronic infection that should have taken his life years earlier. I also drained and bandaged many abscessed paws when the infection spread to his hocks.

Bunnyboy survived cardiac arrest in our kitchen when a routine injection went to his heart. My brother, who runs a hospital in Colorado, was there, and he showed my husband how to do the chest compressions while he did rescue breathing into Bunnyboy's mouth. On the fifth breath, Bunnyboy started to breathe on his own, an unusual feat, because unlike dogs and cats, rabbits are prey animals. They die quickly of a heart attack at the hands of a predator. Similarly, they die easily from fear or pain, and even anesthesia. Most bunnies just naturally give up. With every surgery that Bunnyboy had, I was told there was a significant chance he would die from the anesthesia. At one point during his fourth surgery, he went into cardiac arrest on the operating table at AMC, but the surgical team restarted his heart.

At AMC, they refer to Bunnyboy as the Miracle Bunny and the Iron Bunny. His medical records are used worldwide for seminars with incoming residents and interns learning how to treat lagomorphs (which include hares and pikas).

Bunnyboy had this amazing way of distracting me from my ailments. It seemed that whenever I had to start chemotherapy or gamma globulin infusions, he got sick and we were off to AMC, and then at times to NYU Medical Center for some of my own treatment with him in tow.

The outpouring of sympathy and support after Bunnyboy's death was remarkable. My foyer looked like a shrine as gifts and well wishes poured in from as far as Maine, California, and Florida. He was truly an exceptional animal and kept me fighting. We kept each other fighting.

Nancy Laracy has a degree in Business Administration and a long-term career in Human Resources and Executive Recruiting. She is currently involved with several fund-raising projects for inner city schools in Philadelphia and is in the final editing stages of Bunnyboy, A Story of Faith, Love and Miracles. The author may be contacted at nanski100@netscape.net.