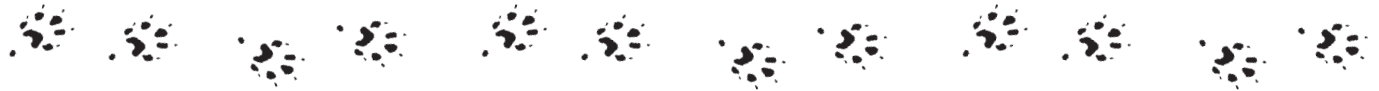


The Fuzzy Papers

NEWSLETTER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS FERRET FRIENDS
SPRING / SUMMER 2004



Letter from the President

by Phyllis M. Spy

HERE we are going into a new season and so much has been accomplished since we started our reorganization in October of last year.

Our first General Meeting, held on February 5th, was a great success with over 20 ferret lovers attending. The business meeting focused on the progress made to date in the reorganization of MaFF, as well as setting goals for the year 2004. If you attended the meeting, you will have received your copy of the minutes, which I hope you find helpful in better understanding the future growth of MaFF. The meeting was followed by a short social, where we held our raffle for the Martin's Barn Carrier stocked with ferret goodies with the proceeds going to our Guardian Angel Fund to help support our Temporary / Emergency Foster Network. We also had for sale some beautiful Valentine ferret bedding, handmade by Rose German, along with some lovely crocheted ferret afghans, handmade by Diddy Wheeler. Part of the proceeds from the sale of these items went to MaFF's Shelter Assistance Fund.

One very specific goal set for 2004 is the raising of \$2,000 for the Shelter Assistance Fund to be presented to the two MaFF-affiliated shelters – Gimmee Shelter Ferret Rescue and The Educated Ferret. If you are interested in seeing our progress, as we work towards our

goal, you can find that information on the MaFF website. We will continue to regularly update the website as we collect monies. At this time, most of the money is coming from the sale of Hilliard's chocolate candy bars and personal donations. If you are interested in getting involved in the sale of candy bars, please feel free to contact me via email at: president@maferrets.org.

MaFF has three events scheduled at this time, with more to come in the months ahead. We will be participating in the 5th Annual Pet Fest Walk for Animals on Sunday, May 23rd at Buttonwood Park in New Bedford. We are also listed as a vendor at the Boston Pet Show to be held in September at the Bayside Expo & Conference Center in Boston. To see more information about these and other events, see the "Fuzzy Events" box on Page 10 of this newsletter, or visit the MaFF website and click on "Events." More details will be posted on the website as they become available. The success of both of these events relies on our volunteers and their fuzzies. If you've never volunteered for one of these events, you haven't had the opportunity to spend time answering questions on the care and handling of a ferret with a new ferret owner or share your personal anecdotes with another ferret owner. It is a very rewarding experience and one that leaves a lasting memory.

MaFF still has much to do in the coming months and we are planning meetings, activities, events and fundraisers to help us achieve our goals. There are three more General Meetings planned for this year and each meeting will cover our business agenda as well as focus on each phase of our mission statement – Education, Outreach and Shelter. It is my hope that by the end of the year 2004, each of us will have a better understanding of each part of our mission statement and what it means to MaFF and to us as ferret owners. In this way, we can prepare ourselves to better address the needs of ferrets and our community of ferret lovers. Activities, events and fundraisers provide us with the opportunity to not only educate ferret owners, but also to raise much needed funds for our Shelter Assistance Fund, our Guardian Angel Fund, and MaFF's education programs.

Finally, if you haven't already done so, I would like to invite you to sign on as a member of our growing "family of ferret-lovers." Your time and talents are the cornerstone for a successful year for MaFF. You can fill out and mail in the short membership form on the back cover of this newsletter, or you may find a copy of our membership application on our website, or you can send email to me at president@maferrets.org with any questions or for more information.

I would like to wish everyone and their ferrets a very healthy and safe spring and summer and look forward to seeing you at future MaFF functions.

— Phyllis M. Spy, President

The Story of "Little White Girl"

by Tessa's Mommy

I HAD been ferretless and petless for more than a year, mourning the loss of my dear little sable girl Weezie, who died from adrenal disease last March. For reasons beyond my control, I was unable to adopt another pet during this time, and things were really, really hard for me. I can't begin to describe the loneliness, a huge overwhelming empty hole of despair that only a little weasel heart could fill. I planted lavender, yarrow

and scented geraniums in her little garden, and watered it every day. I put a sleeping angel there to watch over her. I cried nearly every night, missing the little one who used to sleep by my foot and cover me with morning kisses. Weezie eventually visited me in a dream, and some of the pain lifted. And I would often remember the afternoon (a few months before Weezie's death) that I actually saw the image of a small white ferret running through my room and around the corner to the bathroom, where the litterbox was. When I followed it and looked into the bathroom, there was nothing there. I was never sure of what I had seen, or why it had appeared to me.

And then...

Just last month, my roommate and I finally had the chance to take a train ride south and visit his sister and brother-in-law. We had heard that the neighbors had ferrets, and we were dying to meet them. We asked about them, and learned that there was only one left.

We went next door to meet the ferret. And oh, what did we see! A little white girl in a big dirty cage, sleeping in a filthy hammock. There were no blankies, no toys, nothing to crawl under or hide in. Just a big cage with two very, very nasty-looking hammocks. There was a lot of poop on the cage floor, which was where the food and water dishes were. The feeder was one of those bin-feeder things, and it looked pretty dirty (at least there was some food in it). There was water in the water bowl too, but leaves were floating in it, and it did not look clean.



The owner woke her up by pushing on her hammock, and she fell out of the hammock (three floors high) and landed on the floor. He handed her over to me. She was a slender little DEW with burgundy eyes. Scattered throughout her white coat were many black hairs. She was missing an arm. Two years ago a raccoon had gotten to the cage and had mauled her

"I can't begin
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arm so badly that it had to be amputated. Now the little girl's cage was in a part of the yard which was guarded by the dogs, who seemed to be very protective of her. I took her in my arms and the first thing she did was nip my bare arm. I petted her a little and handed her over to my roommate. She mouthed him and then leaned up to

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Contributions to this publication are
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Send articles or ideas for articles to the
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give him a kiss on the chin. He passed her over to his sister, who also got mouthed on the arm. By this time, the little girl was wiggly, so she was returned to her cage, where she promptly pooped.

The owner told us that he originally had more ferrets, but one by one, they had died, leaving only two remaining. The children had never been conscientious about locking the cage, and the ferrets had escaped on several occasions. Last year, the little girl's cagemate had managed to escape and made his way into someone's yard, where he was killed by the dogs. Now, this little one was all by herself. The children had lost interest in her, and no one ever took her out of the cage or played with her any more. So she just sat in her cage by the back door, day after day, with only the dogs for company. The owner could not even remember her name.

He asked me if I wanted her.

Oh how I wanted to rescue her right then and there! But I was dealing with an agonizing No Pets situation at home, and in any case, we couldn't take her (not to mention her cage) back with us on the train. "You can't rescue every little creature," my roommate told me as we sadly walked back to his sister's house. I couldn't get



that little face out of my mind. Both of us thought about her all the way home.

How could such a beautiful little Being not have a NAME? Whenever I spoke of her, I called her "Little White Girl."

I called the local ferret rescue contact, who was willing to take her, but it was clear that she was already overwhelmed and exhausted with many little needy ones. And then Little White Girl's owner suddenly changed his mind. Now he wanted to give her to one of his son's friends rather than turn her over to the rescue lady.

I was so discouraged. I didn't know what to do next. So I prayed — HARD. I simply couldn't conceive of a world that would let someone like me into Little White Girl's life for no purpose whatsoever. There had to be some karmic reason that I was brought to her!

And then my roommate's sister called us. The owner had changed his mind again. He would sell us the cage, with Little White Girl in it, for fifty dollars. Did we want it?

My roommate had one last "ace" up his sleeve — one I had been stalling on for vague reasons — and he laid it on the table. Amazingly and unexpectedly, it WORKED! Our No Pets situation (which was virtually set in stone and absolutely rigid) was suddenly NOT a factor anymore!

I was so happy that I just came unglued. My roommate's sister paid the owner ahead of time, as he was going out of town for a month. We took the car this time and drove down to get our precious new child. And that's the FIRST thing we did when we got to town. Since the owner was gone on vacation, a neighbor boy helped us hoist the cage over the fence. My roommate set to work cleaning and collapsing the cage, and I put Little White Girl in a clean travel cage, along with her old food (only eleven nuggets left!) and a little stuffed dog toy. When I reached in to put a water bowl down, she lunged at me and nipped my arm again.

I decided not to stick my arm in there anymore. But I really didn't like the look of her old food. So I began hand-feeding her nuggets of Totally Ferret food through the bars of the cage. Oh, you should have seen her wolf them down! I have NEVER seen any animal eat so voraciously! She



practically inhaled them! She just couldn't get *enough!* (and here I had been worrying about how in the world I would manage to switch her food! I had no idea what her old food was!) As hungry as she was, she never bit or even mouthed my fingers. Gradually she slowed down, and took the nuggets gracefully and politely in her mouth. And then she crawled under her new sweatshirt to go to sleep.

I didn't sleep a wink all night, worrying about her. In the morning I handed her again. Everyone came in to admire her, and she regarded them solemnly with her dark eyes. She slept all the way home, never once raising herself up to see where we were going.

We got her cage all reassembled, and I added a new sleeping pouch and hammock. We covered the narrow shelves with towels and sweatshirts, and added a few toys. We put food and water on the top shelf, right near the sleeping pouch, where it would be easy to reach. We lined the bottom with newspaper, since she had made it clear that she had no use for litterboxes. And then my roommate lifted Little White Girl up and put her in the cage.

Oh, if only you could have seen her! She hurried up all the ramps to the top floor (you could never tell that

she only had three legs) and then hurried back down, exploring everything. She rolled the ball and tussled with the little dog toy. And then... she began war dancing! She danced and danced, with her mouth wide open! She did somersaults! She came up to the side of the cage and stood on her hind legs, looking at us! She rolled around several times and ended up on her back, smiling! And after playing with her dog a bit, and eating some of her new food, she went to sleep in her sleeping pouch with her little head sticking out — just like a tiny person in bed. After awhile she curled up deep inside the pouch, so happy to finally be able to be under something, safe and private in her very own clean bed!

Her cage sits in the living room, so she can be near us. She can hear us talking, and listen to the sound of the TV. We talk to her every time we walk by the cage, and sometimes we give her treats.

Yesterday we took Little White Girl to the vet for vaccinations and an exam. She weighs almost two pounds! Her coat is soft and lustrous, and her tail is fluffy and full. Her eyes are shiny and her ears look clean. She is a Marshall Farms girl, and we estimate her age to be about three and a half. She was a good girl and didn't try

to nip anyone except when she was getting her shots (our vet is too fast for her!) The only thing wrong with her is giardia, which explains the runny little poops. Amazing — considering the new information I was given — her old owner was feeding her DOG FOOD!

So then we had nasty-tasting medicine to give her every night for five days. She struggled and squirmed and spit it all over us, but she didn't try to nip either of us during the medicine process. She still nips my arm, especially if I am not wearing long sleeves. It's kind of scary, since I've always been afraid of biters and never ever thought I'd have to deal with one. I tell her "No bite!" in a stern voice, and hold her close to me, petting her head for a few moments. I've been hand-feeding her treats through the bars of the cage, which she takes carefully and delicately. She never refuses anything. She will lick Ferretvite and Petromalt right off my hand without trying to nip. Soon I will begin taking her out of the cage for supervised playtime (on linoleum). I think that some day she will be a very good girl. "She's a good girl already," my roommate says.

Now she has a name of her very own. I have named her Tessa. My roommate tells me that it means "Treasure." ■

Happy Ferret Freedom Day!



ON March 7th, 1996, Governor Weld made the following statement (read by then-Lieutenant Governor Cellucci) — "Search and seizure may make sense if there is a crocodile in the tub or a cougar in the closet, but a ferret on the Barcalounger — that's what domestic bliss is made of."

This was the day the bill took effect making it okay to be a ferret in Massachusetts and March 7th was declared Ferret Freedom Day!! The passing of this bill was made possible through the efforts of a small group of ferret owners, many of whom are still active in MaFF today. As we celebrate, we are reminded that in some cities and states across the country, there are still ferret owners fighting this battle. In Massachusetts, we still need help in educating the public about ferrets and our shelters need support to continue with the care of the ferrets to whom they have opened their homes.

In remembering Ferret Freedom Day, go play with your ferrets, give them an extra treat, and remember those who have gone to the Rainbow Bridge. Above all, be thankful to the people who made the effort to get this bill passed eight years ago. Without them, we would not know the joys of being owned by ferrets. And remember, there is still work to be done to ensure all ferrets are being cared for in the best way possible.

Special thanks to Gimmee Shelter Ferret Rescue, Luv of Ferrets, and the Educated Ferret Association for all of their efforts through the years in caring for the unwanted ferrets in Massachusetts. — Phyllis Spy, President, Massachusetts Ferret Friends

Winona

by Jan Miele-Fleury

YOU know this little face, don't you? A lot of MaFF members as well as many members of the general public who have received MaFF's basic informational leaflet (the one we call the "Top Ten" brochure) will recognize this little face from the front cover.

Winona was our little "cover girl" for this brochure, and she will remain so for as long as we reprint this informational piece about ferrets and about MaFF.

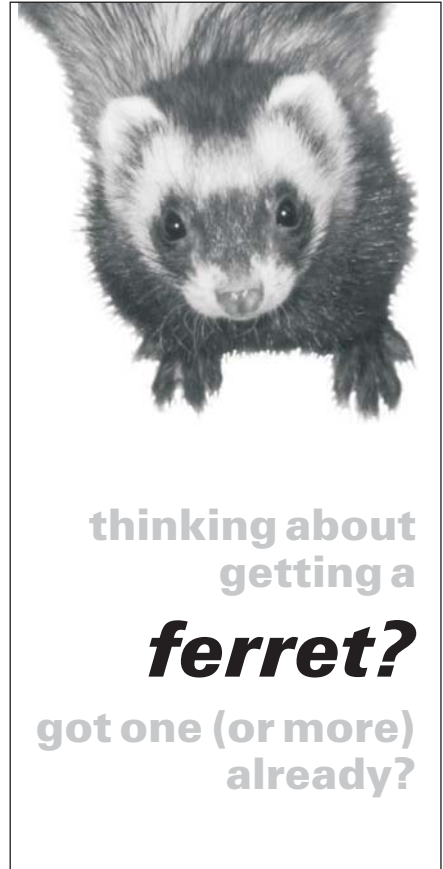
Winona was also one of my oh, so beloved ferrets, and a softer, more gentle, silky little fert you never could have known. Her little fur suit was so lovely. Winona passed away quietly in my arms on the morning of August 13th, 2002, as I spoke softly to her, my falling tears dampening her soft fur as I stroked her gently ... knowing she only had moments left: "good little Winona, pretty little Winona, sweet little Winona ... don't be afraid. What a *good* little ferret you are . . ."

She will remain forever dear in my heart. She was the last "store bought" ferret I will ever have, as I had already vowed to look for any new furchildren only in shelters. She had many nicknames, as for some reason all ferrets seem to have. My favorite nickname for her was "Nahnee-

Puzzle." This was because when I held her close and looked into her eyes, she always seemed to have a slightly puzzled expression. She was very much a cuddler. She was handled so much in her kithood that she became one of those rare ferrets who loved to be held. She loved it so much that she'd go all calm like a "doll-baby" in my hands whenever I picked her up. I loved especially to lay her on her back at full length along my two forearms (extended in front of me, elbows bent, forming a kind of hammock for her), gently "scratching" the back of her neck with my fingers, then nuzzling her belly — and she would give kisses on my face as I did that.

Coming home at night, my favorite call to the furoes as I came in the door was "Whoooo's *Fuzzy?*" This I would call out again as I came down the hall, and Winona was often the first to appear at the Weezle-Watch gate to be sure and tell me just who *was* fuzzy indeed ... her little self!

I have written before in these pages about pet loss (having had many ferrets over the years since our first, way back in 1987). These beloved ferrets were, in order of appearance into our lives: Gwendolyn, Winnifred, William (later dubbed "William the First," aka "William the Capon" because of his very gentle nature), Jessica, Winona, Rowena, FitchWilliam (or "William the Second"), Rikki Tikki Tavi, and now remaining: Zuzu (her full name being



Zuzu My Little Gingersnap), Bartholomew ("The Badger-Boy"), and Eowyn.

As we all know, each and every ferret of our lives is so very individual in personality, in likes and dislikes, in behavior, in the qualities for which we love them each so dearly. No two ferrets are alike. No ferret can ever "replace" any other ferret.

Hug your ferrets today. ■

MaFF Identifies Educational Needs

PART of MaFF's mission is **education**, and we're planning to discuss how MaFF can better fulfill this part of our mission at our next General Meeting on May 6th (See Fuzzy Events, Page 10). Jill Northrup will be giving a presentation at the meeting, and to get a "head start," we invite you to review the following lists of educational targets and suggested venues.

Educational Targets:

- Animal Shelter staffs (Animal Rescue League (ARL), MSPCA, city/town pounds, etc.)
- Animal control officers
- Animal law enforcement agents
- Veterinarians
- Students of vet tech programs (college level), and small animal care programs (in the high schools)
- People thinking about buying or

adopting a ferret

- People who already own a ferret
- Foster parents
- The general public
- Policymakers

Educational Venues:

- Training (in person)
- Web-based information (training modules, interactive quizzes, FAQs,

Continued on Page 11

The Fuzzy Papers

Deadlines for Submissions to
Upcoming Issues of
The Fuzzy Papers

For the Fall/Winter 2004 Issue
September 10, 2004

For the Spring/Summer 2005 Issue
March 10, 2005

**Submissions are accepted
throughout the year!**

Snailmail your submissions to:
MaFF / *The Fuzzy Papers*
PO Box 283
Marshfield, MA 02050
Or e-mail to: Phyllis Spy at
publications@maferrets.org

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Submissions to this publication in the
form of articles, letters, or
photographs, are
invited and encouraged.

Please feel free to send your
submissions to the
MaFF address above,
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Articles or letters can be neatly
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e-mail.

Making Springtime Ferret-Friendly

by *Fizgig Ferret*
with the help of *Crystal Bedell*

THE days are getting longer and the sun is brighter. Spring has sprung! For a ferret like myself, that means fresh air, new scents and a new coat. It's also time for ferret owners to take some important precautions, because with the warmer temperatures come hidden dangers.

◆ Secure screens on doors and windows. Fresh air does a ferret (and hooman) body good! But when you open up those windows and doors, keep in mind your fuzzybutts' uncanny ability to escape. Does the screen door close all the way, or are there spaces between the screen door and the frame of the doorway? Are your window screens ripped? Your safest route here is to keep open doors and windows out of reach of fuzzy. We don't need to push our nose to the screen to enjoy a bit of fresh air.

◆ Treat your ferret with flea and tick medicine. Ferrets and humans aren't the only creatures with spring fever. The whole world is coming alive and that includes critters we'd rather live without. But not all flea and tick remedies are safe for fuzzbutts. Consult your veterinarian before you administer medication.

◆ Don't let us help with spring cleaning. There's nothing more fun than exploring a disheveled room, but it's also very dangerous: our sinuses are sensitive to dust, cleaning

products are poisonous and exposed wires are just too tempting for a ferret that loves to chew (and what ferret doesn't?). Not to mention that you may have become so accustomed to your furniture layout that you've forgotten the reason why the end table is flush with the corner is because there's a hole in the drywall.

◆ Give your shedding ferrets a hairball remedy. The heavy layer of fur in your fuzzbutts' bedding has probably clued you in to the fact that your fuzzies are shedding. Remember, some of this fur makes its way to our tummies as we groom. Keep fur balls from causing serious health problems by giving your carpets sharks a hairball remedy.

◆ Spring clean your fuzzy first aid kit. If you haven't already checked your ferrets' first aid kit this year, don't wait any longer. Make sure medicines, baby food, etc. have not expired and that everything's well stocked. You might even consider adding a few items to round out your kit. Do you have cotton swabs? Popsicle sticks for a splint? Karo syrup?

Finally, enjoy the season! This is the perfect time of year for ferret club activities, such as picnics and frolics. Drag your hooman by the socks if you have to, and enjoy a little sunshine together! ■

We Thank You

MaFF wishes to thank those who have — and those who continue to support their local shelter by adopting ferrets who otherwise would be “permanent” shelter residents, by donating supplies (hammies, food, treats, etc.) and — most importantly — by donating much-needed money to cover costs of surgery and medicines for those sick and elder ferrets. Special thanks go out as well to those who have opened their hearts and homes in assisting the shelters by providing foster care when needed.

Meant to Be

by Diane Wall

MOST of you have gotten “the call”... “I know someone who has a ferret who needs a new home” or “you have ferrets, want another one?” Every day it breaks our hearts that it seems we can’t save them all. Through fate or faith I want to tell you a story about a “meant to be” story.

Coming home from a busy day in August, I checked my messages, a couple from the usual family members and friends and one from the local vet. It was like one of those calls we ferret lovers get all too often. They had a little ferret girl there that the dog officer brought in, someone had found it running around in their yard; she was scared and skinny but friendly. They took her in, examined her, fed her and quarantined her. Did I know anyone who was looking for a nice little ferret since I was the local “ferret lady”? I admit I didn’t call back right away, but went and tended to my five instead. While I was sitting on the floor playing with my ferrets I felt guilty and went to return the call. I chatted with the vet, got some details, and promised I’d keep my ears open for someone who would be right for her.

During the next two weeks one of my ferrets wasn’t acting quite himself so I brought him down to see his original shelter mommy so she could have a good look at him and check his blood sugar. We thought perhaps he had the beginnings of insulinoma so I booked an appointment at the shelter’s vet. He got another good exam and blood work done. I totally believe in second opinions and left feeling more confident. On the hour drive home, the thought occurred to me that I hadn’t received a follow up call about the little ferret at the local vet’s office. I called in using my cell phone and

spoke with them. She was out of quarantine, had been vaccinated and was feeling very cage bound. I asked them if it would help if I took her “for the weekend” to give her some exercise and take a look at her to see her characteristics and adoptability. They were ecstatic that she would have the opportunity to get out of the cage, even if it was for a weekend, as she was getting very depressed. Well now you think you know how this story ends, as it is so familiar to just take them in for “a weekend” and they end up grabbing you heart and staying on, but there is more to this story so keep going.

I brought her home in a box carrier and took her out to introduce her to the family. It was Friday night pizza night and she poked her head out to have a look about. She sniffed in the direction of the pizza and before we knew it she lunged forward and snatched the pizza crust right out of our hand. She brought the whole

crust under my sweat shirt and ate it up so quickly there wasn’t time to take it away from her. Henceforth she was known as Miss Pizza “Crusty.” I let her run around my ferret room until she wore herself out and was snoozing in a big work boot, hanging upside down over the front, typical ferret sleeping position. The first day I made her ferret soup she ate so much I thought she would actually burst, and as a reward she licked my whole face, crawled up my shoulder and started to nestle in my hair. I let her sniff my ferrets though the playpen and one of my boys, Smudgie, started to play with her tugging a towel through the bars. Ok, so how could I bundle her up and send her back come Monday morning? You guessed it; Crusty was my first “Foster Ferret.” Crusty and Smudgie became fast friends, and within a week had graduated from strictly supervised playtime to sharing ferret soup, to sharing a sleepy hammock. Happy times for both Crusty and Smudgie — and I had thoughts of keeping her. No surprise there. I signed the adoption papers a month after her “weekend” stay.

Well, the story continues. I do



Crusty and Peeps waking up.

some ferret sitting and one of my regular customers was very sad that their lovely ferret was beginning to decline. They had been treating her for adrenal and insulinoma. Now it seemed she had lymphoma as well, and their baby didn't have much time left. Their regular vet wasn't available, so I talked to them about using my local vet and told them how Crusty had come to me. Sadly, when it was time, they brought their lovely Lucita to cross the Rainbow Bridge. They called me to let me know about her, and asked if they could bring their remaining ferret, Pepita, to visit to lighten their hearts, share their sorrow, and see my happy little ferrets playing. When they came to visit, they doted on little Crusty, Bouncie, Brownie, Rikki, Smudgie, and Max.

The next week, Smudgie was coughing a bit, so off to the vet's, onto antibiotics, and into the "sick cage" he went. He got worse over the weekend. He had pneumonia. I did everything from steamy bathrooms to every tip that other ferret owners suggested. At four o'clock in the morning, I woke to the sound of scratching at the side of my bed. Somehow, Smudgie had climbed out of the top of the three-tiered cage, and down the hall of my seventy foot house to scratch at my bedside. His breathing was so bad; I brought him back to the ferret room and opened the front door, to give him some fresh air. We all said a prayer to either please help him get better or to please end his suffering. The first rays of light were starting to appear as I placed him back in his bed. He must have crossed the Bridge right after that, as he was gone when I went to check on him just a while later. Crusty was the only one awake and licked the tears from my cheeks. Ferrets are so much smarter than us. Smudgie knew it was his time and came to me to say good-bye. Crusty was awake and waiting for me in a separate cage, because she just knew.

The next few days were very sad.



Crusty having fun.

Now it was my turn to be comforted by the couple who had recently lost their ferret, and I brought over Pepita to share my sorrow and watch the other ferrets play.

We talked about how ferrets can get depressed when they lose their ferret friends and decided to let Crusty and Pepita sniff each other thru the playpen. At first they seemed like they only wanted to nip each other. I suggested that we do some ferret play dates and to let me work with them a bit. By the end of the second play date, I had them both chasing each other in the tubes, dooking all the way. I had never heard either Crusty or Pepita dook before, and now they were having a ferret conversation. Perhaps they both shared their sorrow at recently losing their ferret friend, or maybe it was just "Hey, I'll chase you in the tube and you just try to catch me!"

When they came to pick up Pepita from the ferret play date what a surprise I had for them. Two ferrets playing together in the tubes, leaping and running and dooking. It wasn't long after that day that I asked them if they would like to take Crusty home

with them.

They were so happy I offered as they couldn't imagine how I would be able to give her away. I explained to them I really wasn't, that fate had given me a job to do as part of a bigger plan, and these two ferrets were meant to be together.

So Crusty has a new forever home, with a new ferret sister and new ferret mom and dad. I have visited her in her new home a couple of times and she is so happy. She has the run of an entire townhouse and only goes into the cage for snuggling up with Pepita. I sent her an email care of her new ferret parents to keep in touch — knowing she has the love that every neglected, abandoned and rescued ferret dreams of, and a life that was *Meant to Be*.

(Special thanks to: Dr. Susan Harrington of the Randolph Animal Clinic, Eve Valera and Kevin Spencer Adoptive Ferret Parents, Janice DeJesus Gimme Shelter Ferret Rescue).

The following are a pair of recent email messages exchanged between Crusty in her new forever-home, and her Mommy Diane. [Editor]

From Mommy Diane to Crusty:

Dear Crusty,

I know it's been awhile since I've seen you and wanted you to know that your old Mommy hasn't forgotten about you! I'm so glad to know you have a new ferret sister and great new Mommy and Daddy. I'm sure that you are getting lots of exercise and improving in your litter box habits.

I've been a bit busy lately helping out other ferrets who desperately needed help. Someone had surrendered four ferrets to the Boston MSPCA. They were scared and hungry, and were put in a very small cage. So I got a last minute call to go and get them and take them in as

foster ferrets. Thank goodness I had a carrier in my car that day!

After I got them home, I made them the special ferret soup, trimmed their nails, cleaned their ears and gave them lots of attention. They ran around the room and began dooking and playing.

I was so lucky, Crusty, that I learned so much from caring for you that I could help them too! Blizzard is an albino boy with beautiful ruby eyes. He has the adrenal disease, so he doesn't have much fur. We got him a Lupron shot to help him feel better and grow some fur back. He also has a funny cauliflower ear. He is sweet and very active. Slinky is a little black

sable female with some fur missing on her tail. We are taking her to the vet to see if she will do well with adrenal surgery. Mischief is a brown sable boy who looks just like you! He is almost five years old with a calm personality. He had the sniffles when he came home with me, probably from the wood chips, but takes his Amoxicillin like a very good boy twice a day. Then there is Tips. He is a big teddy bear healthy boy who looks like some one dipped all his toes in white paint. He follows me around like a puppy and gives lots of kisses.

So Crusty, I'm just writing to say that your old Mommy will never forget you and I still think about you every day. Be a good girl and don't forget how lucky you are.

— Love, Mommy Diane

From Crusty to Mommy Diane:

Dear Mommy Diane,

Thanks for writing. I miss you too. But you should be happy to know that I really, really, really love my new sister. We play a lot and she even lets me eat the food that she takes to the top of the stairs to eat. We go into Mommy Eve and Dad's bed under the covers and wrestle a little, follow each other around the bed, play in the tubes, in the peanut bin and under the futon together. And of course we go in different directions at times so that we can get away with things when only Mommy, Eve or Dad is around :) Then they squeak the toy and I go running up the stairs to get the toy — what great exercise.

My favorite toys are still my dolly, snoopy dog, Mr Penguin, Mom's cow slippers, and a couple of socks. I stash all of them downstairs all the time. Then when it is time to go in, I get to snuggle with my sis — ohhhh it is so cozy and warm in the hammock or sweatpants — whichever we prefer — but, in general we are wrapped up with each other. Sis is extremely sweet and gentle to me (I think I get a better deal than Mommy Eve or Dad! :))

Daddy eats his banana every day and I usually look irresistible enough to get a little taste — mmm they are so good! And then, when my nails get long Mommy Eve puts Linatone on my belly and I lick it off while she

trims my nails mmmm mmmm.

I am still not always making it to the litter box, but Mommy, Eve, and Dad don't mind because they know I try and have gotten better.

I am happy to hear that you saved more ferrets!! You are the best ferret rescuer. Your new additions sound very sweet — but you must have a pretty full house now!

Well, I think that is all for now. Mommy, Eve, and Dad say you can still visit whenever you want. I imagine you are pretty busy — but just so you know — you can still visit! By the way, I heard that Max wasn't feeling well. Is he doing better?

— Love, Crusty ■

In Memory of . . .

WE would like to remember all those little ones who have passed on in the last several months. Each of these ferrets was dearly loved and will be sadly missed by their owners. In hearing the stories about each of these fuzzies, it occurs to us that every one of them taught their owners some important lesson about life and living it fully. This list only contains the names of those ferrets who we have heard about. If YOU have lost a ferret recently and your fuzzle's name is not included in this list, please know that MaFF's thoughts and prayers are with you.

Tweeter
Snickers
Scratch
Tyler

Prancer
Duchess
Dusty (4 years old)
Baldy (8 years old)

Fat Rex
Sterling
Amber
Baby

Freddie
Rascal (8 years old)
Alexis (4 years old)
Elvira

Fuzzy Events Around New England

MaFF General Meeting

Thursday, May 6th — 6:30 to 9 PM

All are welcome!

Habitat for Cats, New Bedford, MA

Business meeting with special presentation by Jill Northrup on Education. Social to follow, with special raffle and ferret bedding for sale. For further information and directions, see the MaFF web site at <http://maferrets.org>

5th Annual Pet Fest & Walk for Animals

Sunday, May 23rd — 11 AM to 3 PM

Admission is FREE!

Buttonwood Park, Brownell Avenue,
New Bedford, MA

Sponsored by the Humane Coalition of Greater New Bedford.

Volunteers Needed! Call the MaFF Hotline at 781 224 1098 or send e-mail to info@maferrets.org.

MaFF will be participating in this annual benefit for homeless animals. Activities include a two-mile walk, fun contests, New Bedford Police K-9 demonstrations, pet photographers, pet care

information and products, food and refreshments, music, face painting, raffle and Chinese auction, and more. Participants who raise \$50 will get a free t-shirt!

Wheelchair Accessible

On the web, see www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us and click on Events.

Boston Pet Show & TICA Cat Show

Saturday & Sunday, September 25th & 26th —
11 AM to 6 PM

Bayside Expo & Conference Center, Boston
Accessible from both I-93 and Boston's mass transit.
TICA Cat Show, agility and police/protection dog demos, Bwana Jim's Alligator & Reptile Show, the Rare & Ancient Dog Breeds Show and the Northeast Angora Rabbit Club Show.

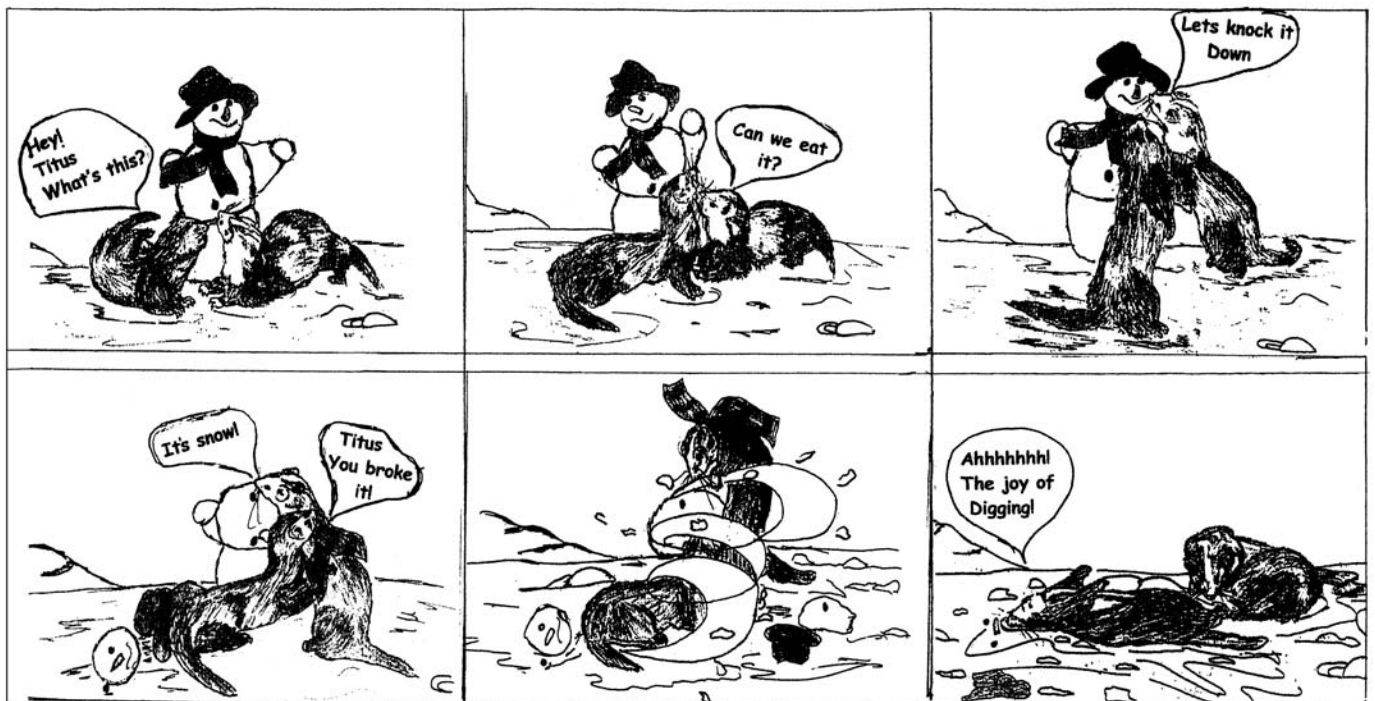
Tickets available at the door. For more information on the web, visit www.showevent.com

For more information and the latest news on MaFF Events, see the MaFF web site at

<http://maferrets.org> and click on Events.

Or call the MaFF Hotline at 781 224 1098.

Alex & Titus in *Ferret Joys* by Donna Spirito



Ferrets of My Life

by Joan DeJesus

In the past six years, I have been through heaven, hell, and every existing plane in between, all because of about five-hundred little critters called ferrets. Yes, I live in a ferret shelter my mother started four-and-one-half years ago. I have thanked her and cursed her for it ever since. I was in the eighth grade, in home schooling, when we got our first shelter ferret, Anastasia. Since then, I have voluntarily, involuntarily, and unknowingly devoted hours every day, sweat off my back, calluses on my hands, scars on my hands and face, stinging salty tears from my eyes, countless laughs and smiles, and tender loving care to these creatures. I didn't even want, know, or love them. Before, I was a selfish, spoiled, brattish, immature child who put on a mask for company, relatives, and strangers. Now, thankfully, through time and effort, I have become a new person. Over time, I have learned patience while nursing emaciated, sickly, abused fer-

rets back to health and while teaching baby ferrets, or kits, not to bite. I have learned to love the unlovable, terminally ill, ugly, weak, old, dying ferrets. Take Igor, for example, named so because of a head tumor pushing his eye out of its socket. I have learned endurance and strength from long hours of building cages and cleaning the shelter. I have also learned sacrifice, for I no longer have a dining room or a social life. I have learned indifference from watching surgery being performed on various injuries and cancers. Lastly, I have also learned tolerance for the cruel, mindless scum (for lack of better wording) with whom I have had to deal almost every day. This has been an outgoing, once in a lifetime experience for me. I have made and lost friends, been embarrassed and praised, rewarded and punished, and have done every other thing an average adolescent has been through. Plus, I have this to look back on. Now, even with recently divorced

parents, I still get up early, stay up late, and even devote some weekends and holidays to caring for them. I can honestly say that this has been an eye opening experience for me, showing me deeds, personalities, crimes, and endless kindness from complete strangers. People say that I can act very mature, much more so than their own children. I never asked for this. Every day I long, no, I crave for the immaturity and wild fun that many of my classmates exhibit. They are usually wondering which boys or girls might like them. I'm usually trying to figure out how someone can be so heartless as to dump a pair of ferrets in a barren rusty cage by the dumpster, as if they were old toys to be thrown out. Or how a shelter owner in New Jersey could stick ill ferrets in sealed plastic bags to help them die a little more quickly and leave already dead ones in cages while the living ferrets have to crawl over them. Sometimes, I wonder how people could find no value and have no respect for every living being. What's that you say, "yeah right"? Well, let me tell you, yes, that *is* right. Sometimes, I wish it wasn't. But then again, everybody wishes that about something, don't they? Still, if I could do my life over again, there are a few things I would change. The ferret shelter is not one of them. All of the pain, frustration, and sorrow, along with the joy, victories, and love, have changed me for the better. "Thanks, Mom. Thank you, little ferrets." ■



Educational Needs, Continued

- links to other informational sites)
- Talks to annual MACOA training sessions
- Mailings to MACOA members and large shelter operators
- Educational literature, brochures, posters, calendars, etc.
- Partnership with an approved organization (such as Tufts Veterinary School) for continuing education training on ferret health. [Tufts welcomes ideas for educational training.]
- Partner with colleges that have vet tech programs to incorporate ferret health into their curriculum.
- Partner with agricultural schools (high school students who are moving into animal care fields) to incorporate ferret care into their

- small animal care programs
- Pet store education days
- Tables at various events (pet adoption days, Earth Day, etc.)
- Local cable access shows
- Consider ways to support the shelters with their ongoing educational needs, such as supplying materials

After reading this list, we're sure you're getting excited about all the ways MaFF can educate! Remember: by setting priorities and specific goals, we stand a much better chance of achieving these goals. Passion is great, but commitment and passion combined bring success. Your ideas and feedback are welcome! Won't you join us? ■

YOU CAN HELP MaFF SAVE PRINTING AND POSTAGE COSTS

Receive each issue of *The Fuzzy Papers* via e-mail!

Simply notify MaFF by sending an e-mail message to info@maferrets.org. Be sure to include the full, correct e-mail address to which you'd like to have each issue e-mailed, and we'll take care of the rest!

