

Feature Article: Release at will

"Cat Lady" author logs over 30,000 miles for cat rescue

(Denton, Texas) —When Crystal Wood and her husband, George, were planning a visit to Forgandenny, Scotland, they also made arrangements to carry a Siamese cat named Tommy Tinker in their checked baggage. Tommy Tinker had been adopted from Texas Siamese Rescue by a family living near Perth, and their job as “Meezer Express” transporters was to deliver the cat safely to its new home.

“I wish I had a dollar for every time someone asked me, ‘Don’t they have cats in Scotland?’” recalls Ms Wood. “You just have to understand cat people.” And evidently she does: Ms Wood is the author of *Outing the Cat Lady: Embracing Your Feline Addiction with Style* (Tattersall Publishing, \$14.95). The book is a humorous guide to living the Cat Lady lifestyle, complete with nine reasons a woman (or a man, for that matter) should admit that she is a Cat Lady and “come Out” with courage, attitude and style.

The Scotland trip was the longest and most memorable cat delivery made by the Woods, but it represents only a fraction of the time and distance they have driven in the volunteer service of Texas Siamese Rescue, located near Dallas, Texas, which is a part of

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the Siamese Rescue Alliance, a national non-profit cat rescue organization. The shelter near Dallas is a waystation for between 100-120 cats at any given time, primarily Siamese and other exotic breeds; since its beginning, more than 5,000 cats have found homes through its website and adoption events.

Transporters are called upon to shuttle cats between the Dallas rescue center and members of the fostering network in Austin and Houston; the Woods have made these round trips dozens of times, packing as many as 18 cats and kittens into their vehicle per trip. They have participated in the seizure of neglected and abused cats, and have collected cats surrendered by their owners for various reasons. Ms Wood traveled to Louisiana following Hurricane Katrina to pick up cats from an overflowing animal shelter in Baton Rouge, and delivered pet food and supplies donated by Denton veterinarians.

But the most satisfying part of transporting for Siamese Rescue is the opportunity to participate in a “Meezer Express,” where a cat is transported from foster care to its adoptive home. One Meezer Express transporter can either drive the entire route, or, for a very long distance, arrange a relay with other Meezer Express drivers.

Ms Wood says that there is nothing like seeing the reaction of a new adopter to meeting their new cat or kitten for the first time. “Most adoptions are done online, and they have only seen photos of their new cat up to this point,” she says. “When they finally get to meet their new pet, their happiness is overwhelming—and contagious.”

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Since they began volunteering in 2003, she estimates that she and George, together or separately, have driven or flown more than 30,000 miles for Siamese Rescue.

Traveling many miles on the road or in the air has its advantages: Ms Wood wrote the first chapter of *Outing the Cat Lady* in the air on the way to and from Scotland, and other parts of it on their many trips across Texas. “I’ve met some of the nicest Cat Ladies and Cat Daddies literally in the world, working for Texas Siamese Rescue,” she says. “This book is for all of them, and I hope it proves that the term ‘Cat Lady’ isn’t always prefaced with ‘crazy.’ These are some of the sanest, kindest, hardest-working human beings around.”

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More information: www.tx.siameserescue.org

