



Chipper

Your courage and strength was an inspiration to us all.

Rest in peace little friend....

On June 20, 2006, a woman called to ask if I could help a skinny 8 week old kitten that had been sleeping inside a tree chipper (a machine that chews up tree branches and spits out the resulting mulch). Not knowing that the kitten was sleeping inside the machine, a work crew had started it up - and out came the screaming, barely alive kitten.

The caller asked if I could come get the kitten and take it to a vet. She had no transportation and could not afford a vet. It was 9 in the morning and the "accident" happened at 7. No one had done anything to help the kitten who had been writhing in pain. I agreed to take the kitten. I didn't believe her story (how could a really small kitten climb up into the hopper?). But, my objective was not to determine how it got there (was there abuse? Did someone throw the kitten in?), the objective was to get the kitten to my vet as fast as possible.

It took me almost an hour to get to the agreed upon meeting place (she didn't want me to come to her house - we met at a nearby gas station). The poor kitten suffered another hour of pain as I rushed to meet the woman at the gas station.

I grabbed the box she'd put the kitten in and headed to Dr. Z's Animal Hospital. It was the longest 20 minute ride I've ever had.

The kitten looked very bad and every few seconds it would scream in pain as it moved around. There were obvious head wounds and the right front leg looked like it was broken in two places. The left front leg just dangled. The kitten's head rolled around.

I hate traffic lights. Every one was red as I rushed to Dr. Z. I called ahead to let him know the situation and begged him to please be ready to

examine this baby when I got there. Tough decisions would have to be made in the next few minutes. It was going to be heart wrenching.

I prayed.

They saw me coming and had the door open. Dr. Z stopped what he was doing and rushed to the bloody box with the kitten in it. A quick glance at the cat and he started issuing orders to his staff ... sedation and pain medication to quiet the cat so it could be carefully examined. Then x-rays.

To euthanize an animal is a very difficult decision for me. I don't make it casually. I kept second guessing myself. This kitten was in such pain, with terrible injuries. Should I, or shouldn't I? Were the injuries treatable?

Dr. Z came back with the x-rays. The kittens neck was broken but its spinal cord appeared to be intact. Both front feet were broken in multiple places. One leg might have to be amputated. The head had severe wounds and the right eye didn't seem to be functioning.

IF we could mend the feet, how would the neck heal? Would the baby be able to walk, eat, poop? Could it have any kind of normal life? If it needed special, life-long care, who would take this kitten and provide it?

Would this injured cat survive the next hour? Would it make it? Could it be treated? Would the cat have a decent quality of life, if treated? If the neck healed, could the cat function on its own? Unknown answers as we looked at the x-rays.

Dr. Z's advice was to keep him sedated and pain free, treat for shock, start medications and give the little guy 24 hours and see what happens.

And that's what we did. We named him "Chipper".

Its been almost 2 weeks. He's had several surgeries to repair his broken legs. His right eye is beginning to function, he sits up and tries to stand up, he's beginning to hold up his head, and he can eat on his own -- he

makes a mess, but he's learning how to do it! And, he purrs when you hold him.

He's a fighter determined to live! We want to give him every possible chance to make it on his own.

He needs more surgery and more time to heal.

We need to raise money to help this little guy. The current medical bill is over \$5,000. And there will be more expenses.

Sad News

At approximately 4:45 PM Saturday, July 8, 2006, Chipper passed away quietly in his sleep.

Cause of Death

Dr. Zeitlin performed a necropsy and found a swollen abscess deep in Chipper's brain. This abscess appeared to be the direct result of an injury to Chipper's skull. The skull injury had quickly healed over. Because it had healed over, the abscess was able to fester and go unseen for three weeks. Even though he seemed to recover from them, it is believed that the brain abscess had caused the seizures earlier in the week.

Cultures of the brain infection found that the antibiotics that were used to treat infections in other parts of his body would not kill the brain infection. Even if Dr. Z had known about the brain abscess, little could have been done. "Brain surgery" to remove the abscess would not have been an option for this already weakened baby.

We are still waiting on results from other tests to rule out any underlying causes that could have contributed to his death, but Dr. Z believes it was the abscess that caused his death. Chipper was negative for FIV and FeLV.

Chipper was well on his way to recovery from three orthopedic surgical

procedures to repair the tiny fractured bones in both of his front legs.