

## RANDOM SAMPLES

# KRINGER THE CAT WILL BE PART OF THE FAMILY FOREVER

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When billionaire Leona Helmsley died in 2007, she bequeathed \$12 million to her 9-year-old dog Trouble so the pet could live out the rest of its days in luxury and later be buried next to her in a mausoleum. So, you see, there's sort of a precedent for a decision my mother recently made: to have the ashes of our family's recently deceased cat, Kringer, buried with her.

More on that in a moment. First a few words about Kringer.

Named after the '80s cartoon character He-Man's cowardly green tiger, Kringer truly was part of the family. He was another sibling when my brothers wanted to play football in the hallway (Kringer was the ball); he was another child to be loved by my mother, who doted on him daily.

Like most family members, Kringer got into his fair share of trouble. When a camcorder was left on the floor with the only copy of my uncle's wedding tape still in it, the cat stepped on a button and recorded over it. You always knew he had been really bad when my mom called him by his full name, Kringer Edward Smith. (I'm not sure why the cat and I have the same middle name.)

He also had his quirks, even beyond the six toes he had on each paw. Most cats would be happy to drink water from a bowl. Not Kringer. Either he demanded ice cubes that melted into the carpet or he sat on the bathroom counter and meowed until my mom gave in and turned on the faucet so that he could drink directly from it.



Kringer

Still, the adorable white cat with the tiger stripes was unconditionally loving and was loved unconditionally in return, especially by my mother, who tended to Kringer even as her three boys went off to college and moved away from home. When he died last month after dealing with diabetes for six years it was time. He was 16.

At first my mom, who grew up on a dairy farm and is no stranger to the circle of life, assumed that she would bury Kringer in the backyard alongside other pets like Pokey, my guinea pig from junior high school. Then she thought about her own mortality and the fact that this land wouldn't be with the family forever. It didn't seem right that Kringer would someday be in someone else's backyard.

That's why his current whereabouts are in a little tin can on an end table in my parents' living room. The white container, about 6-by-3 inches large, has black paw prints on the outside and Kringer's ashes in a little bag on the inside.

"I wanted him somewhere I would see him," my mom told me. "He liked the living room."

Other pet owners are making similar decisions to have their dogs and cats, even hamsters and garter snakes, cremated and saved in urns, even if the numbers are relatively small, according to a national pet owners survey by the American Pet Products Association.

Paws and Remember, a Toledo pet crematory, averages about 45 cremations a week for owners who want to hold on to pet remains, said employee Todd Parker. Its prices range from \$115 for a box urn for a small animal to



more than \$400 for heavier pets and beautiful glass-blown receptacles.

The pet lovers among you probably understand all this. Others may roll their eyes. For people like my mom, though, the issue is cut and dry, and that's why she wants Kringer to be interred with her.

"He's been with the family. I wanted him to stay with us," she said.

After 16 years, it's hard to argue with that. And so for Kringer it's ashes to ashes, dust to dust — and, who knows, maybe a little catnip sprinkled in for good measure. What more could a good cat want?

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