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Bill Rea ? Settling Ella down

I've heard it said that parenting is probably the most difficult job one can undertake, as well as the most rewarding.

I take that statement at face value, as I have never fathered a child, as I am now crossing into the chronological decline known as the late-50s, it's unlikely that's going to change. But I am well acquainted with the patter of little feet around the house.

As many of you know, we have a cat which my wife and I welcomed with reasonably open arms earlier this year (actually, Beth did the welcoming, and I went along with it in the interest of domestic tranquility and knowing there are a lot of cat lovers out there who would hate me had I done anything less).

Ella is a tabby, born a little more than six months ago in Beth's brother's barn. He suggested we take her into our home, partly because he had more barn cats than he needed, but in more of an understanding that we were dealing with a grieving process, the result of our previous cat Sidney leaving us in November.

There have been a few benefits from having Ella in our lives, not the least of which being a happier wife. Ella is also in the habit of greeting me at the door when I get home, even when I've been working late. Sidney never did that.

But life has not been easy with Ella either. Not surprisingly, a kitten at that age can be adventurous and aggressive. She also has four paws that are well equipped with claws, and Beth and I both have the lacerations to prove it. The spouse of at least one Caledon councillor expressed concern upon seeing the marks on my arm from Ella's claws.

And there have been a couple of times when she has come very close to losing her happy home. About a month ago, we were setting up for a small dinner party. A tablecloth had been placed on the table, and Ella was excessively intrigued with one of the corners hanging over the edge. The result was one of the wine glasses that came from my late mother went flying. For one of the very few times in the almost 30 years I've known her, I actually thought Beth was going to cuss. I was mad too, largely because I had to clean up the broken glass, while trying to calm my wife down.

As well, she has a habit of trying to get into things. Open a cupboard door when she's nearby, and you'll soon have a pussycat to eject. Ella even tries to get into the refrigerator.

She can also be a pain when one is trying to sleep.

Ella tends to hunker down with Beth and I at night, which isn't too bad, although her method of entry to the bed sometimes leaves a little to be desired. She has a habit of jumping just high enough to clear the mattress, not worrying about what else (like a body) she might collide with. Trust me, There are few ways of being woken up that are less enjoyable than suddenly finding yourself with a face full of hurtling pussycat. She's also a little prone to sneezing fits, and having a cat sneeze in your face in the middle of the night is going to wake you up too.

The real problem is that while I'm an early riser (seldom sleeping beyond 7 a.m., whether I have to get up or not), Ella wakes up even earlier, like about 5. And since she's rather sociable, she likes to have someone awake with her. So she goes to work with the claws, and that has already cost me more blood than I care to think about.

She also has a bad habit of jumping onto things, especially if she can be inconvenient about it. I often do work at home, typing on my laptop, and Ella likes to get on the table and either watch me work, or bug the hell out of me, going so far as to claw at my hands as they move, or waltz back and forth over the keyboard. It can be frustrating.

Cats never played a big part in my life, that is until I got married. There was always a dog around when I was pretending to grow up, largely because my father travelled a lot on business and insisted there be a dog in the house if he was going to be away from home so much. But cats were rather foreign to me.

It's amazing what comes to a person when they get married, especially if they marry a cat lover. That was the case for me, as Sally was one of the items that accompanied the wedding vows, along with the bed (I supplied the TV and most of the dishes). After Sally came Sidney, and now we have Ella. So all of the cats have been female, and since it has been Beth who's done all the picking, I'm assuming that was deliberate.

Which brings us to this past Friday. That was a big day, because we had Ella fixed (you know what I mean). Beth has assured me it's necessary, also telling me it will likely result in a much calmer cat. I hope she's right, because there's only so much blood loss a man can stand.

Naturally, it was an ordeal for Ella, and Beth was having a bit of trouble hiding her concern. And I'm such an empathetic jerk that I spent most of the day feeling sorry for both of them.

But things went well, although as of this writing (Saturday afternoon), we have about a week of complications to look forward to. Anyone who knows anything about cats know they like to keep themselves clean by constantly licking themselves. But there is also the danger that Ella could go after the area where the incision was made, which could create complications. Accordingly, Ella has

been fitted with a conical devise around her neck, which restricts where she can go with her tongue and mouth.
Fortunately, it has not impacted on her ability to feed herself. Ella is still the same eating machine she's always been.
But this device (I'll call it a collar for want of a better term) is no load of laughs for Ella. She has been having all kinds of trouble maneuvering about the house.
I had never really noticed it before now, but cats do like to nuzzle up against things as they pass them, and a collar like that makes things rather difficult. The collar keeps bumping into things, causing Ella much consternation. It hasn't done a lot for Beth or I either.
Stairs was something of a concern when we got her home. Ella's litter box is in the basement, and I made a point of being near the stairs the first time it looked like she needed a trip below, ready to catch her if she tripped. Fortunately, Ella had the good sense to take things slow (she obviously takes after me), so in the end, stairs have not been a major issue. But there's a lot of ?stuff? in our basement. She's used to getting around it, but not with the collar on. I briefly toyed with the idea of moving some of the stuff, but concluded that would not be wise. She's going to have to wear this thing for a week, and I'm not always going to be around to move things for her. Better to let her figure out how to get around on her own.
There are a couple of things she won't be doing for a couple of days. She likes to run up and down the main stairs in the house doing a slalom course between the rungs in the banister, but that's been set aside for the moment.
Actually, she's been pretty sedate so far. Beth thinks it has something to do with the medication the vet put her on. I hope things are a little more permanent

