

Featured Felines: Cats with special needs 5

(page checked, June 2026)

Oskar, Juno, Klaus and George; Homer, the blind wonder cat

Oskar, Juno & George, blind cats, and Klaus *(2012)*

Originally from Omaha, later Seattle



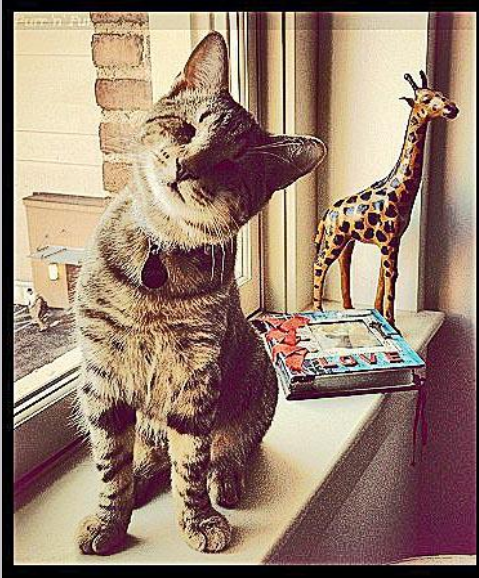
Oskar (*above*) became something of an internet sensation and there are a number of video clips of him and his friend and housemate **Klaus**. Mick Sydlowski from Omaha, Nebraska, who's a collector of vintage musical instruments, and his wife Bethany went to a farm in the country to look at an old autoharp. The instrument's owner also wanted to introduce them to a tiny brown tabby kitten, the last of the litter, which was totally blind. The seller's concern was that if the kitten didn't find a home quickly, he would be killed by a predator or would ultimately end up in a shelter. The couple wasn't looking to adopt a kitten; they already had rescue cat Klaus at home, and were a bit worried at first that Klaus would be upset, since he had openly displayed his displeasure with a kitten they had previously tried to adopt.



But they fell in love with Oskar (named after the autoharp's maker, Oskar Schmidt) and so agreed to give him a home. They stopped at their vet's on the way back and, on receiving a clean bill of health, the kitten, who was born blind due to a genetic abnormality, became their newest family member. Klaus, a former stray with damaged ears, initially had no interest in becoming Oskar's big brother, but after slow and careful introductions he began to take to the little tyke. And in return Oskar, an insatiably curious and playful youngster, awakened Klaus' 'inner kitten'. Then, like inseparable brothers, they constantly hung out together. Taking on a protective role to prevent serious mishaps, Klaus kept a watchful eye over his 'little brother'.



Mick and Bethany were concerned that Oskar's blindness might lead him into trouble, get him hurt bumping into things and make him unable to find his litter box. However, they needn't have worried; Oskar's other senses were acute and compensated well for his missing eyesight. The adaptable feline grew into a fine cat, who had absolutely no difficulty dashing around the house, chasing Klaus, or galloping through the long hallway outside their apartment under close supervision. Oskar also had an ample supply of bell-filled toys with which he and Klaus enjoyed playing.



In the clip [Oskar the Blind Cat & His Best Friend Klaus](#) (2012) the cats stand at the front door and demand to go outside and take a walk — in this case along the halls of their huge apartment complex, where they thoroughly enjoyed exploring. The one that really captured people's hearts is [Oskar's First Toys](#), made the day after his adoption and showing him having a whale of a time chasing balls with little bells inside. In November 2012 it was the winner of the overall Grand Prize for the best cat video of 2012 at 'The Friskies' awards, and by the end of December it had received nearly 4.5 million hits. There's another short clip of Oskar [opening a closed door](#), and many more can be seen from Mick and Bethany's [YouTube channel](#).

Oskar had a much visited Facebook page, no longer there but superseded by another page, but by April 2024 no pages for Oskar or Klaus were still available. On the original page it was reported that the family had moved to Seattle, in Washington State.



Update: Sadly Oskar died in February 2018 of an apparent heart attack, aged just six years, surrounded by his human-and-feline family in his Seattle apartment. He hadn't shown any previous signs of illness, but it turned out he had an undiagnosed heart defect. He had a huge following on social media and his death was a big shock. There is a lovely, heartfelt tribute to him, one of many, [here](#).



Oskar with Gwen Cooper, author of Homer's Odyssey

Later in the year Mick and Bethany adopted another blind kitten, named Juno, who'd been found wandering the streets of Merced, in California, at only a few weeks old. She's a very pretty grey tabby. Klaus, or 'The Klaus' as he was known, was a gentleman and befriended her as he did Oskar. He himself was still going strong in 2020, although by then he was around 20 years old and some health issues were starting to become evident.



Juno

Update: On 19 July 2022 the 'old boy' suffered a severe stroke, and died the following day aged approximately 22. He'd been an amazing cat, had overcome many problems during his long life and had been a great friend and companion not just to his humans, but to blind cats Oskar and Juno as well.



By early 2024 the only Facebook page I could find was for Juno, [here](#) (*last used in June 2024*). However, it seems that Mick and Bethany have adopted another blind cat, a ginger called George (*below*), who also features on that page. It isn't clear when he arrived, but he was there later in 2021, so must have overlapped with Klaus for a while. There's an [Instagram](#) account, but that also seems to be little used.



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Homer the blind cat (2024)

Miami & New York, USA



In early 1997 Gwen Cooper was living and working in Miami, Florida and, having ended a long-term relationship, was residing in a friend's apartment. She had two cats, tabby **Scarlett** and white **Vashti**, having had them for some three years. Given her circumstances, she wasn't looking to take on another cat. But one day she received a phone call from someone she knew at her cats' vet's office.

A tiny black kitten, only three or four weeks old, had been brought in with a serious eye infection, such that the vet felt the only option to save its life was to remove the eyes, which had been done and the sockets stitched up. A home was now being sought, but the people who originally owned it didn't want it back, and none of the practice's other usual adopters was prepared to take it on. The approach to Gwen was a last-ditch effort to find the little mite a home. Somewhat against her better judgement, Gwen agreed to go and see the kitten – and was smitten! When she picked it up it snuggled against her and started a remarkably loud purring for such a small animal. She knew she had to adopt him and so, a few days later, having visited him several times in the meantime and with her friend's agreement, the kitten came to join Scarlett and Vashti. A lot of thought went into naming him, but eventually it was decided to call him **Homer**, after the blind Greek poet.



A remarkable life

Homer's story from then on is truly remarkable...As his eyes had been removed before they'd opened, he never knew what it was to be able to see, but his other senses more than compensated. When she finally settled and married, moving into her husband's apartment, that became Homer's sixth home, and he'd also taken in his stride the journey from Miami to New York. Wherever he was it didn't take him long to thoroughly explore the space available to him and learn where the boundaries and obstacles were, and then he rarely put a paw wrong. Scarlett and Vashti fascinated him and he wanted to play with them; they didn't think much of this cheeky interloper, but they learned to tolerate him. He became fiercely loyal to Gwen and protective of her, to the extent that when she was threatened by an intruder when in an apartment on her own one night, he didn't hesitate to launch himself, spitting and clawing, at the man, who fled.

Books

In 2009 Gwen published her first book about her life and experiences with Homer. Called *Homer's Odyssey* and subtitled 'A fearless feline tale', or 'How I learned about love and life with a blind wonder cat', it became a best-seller and has been translated into more than twenty languages. Reading it is by far the best way to learn what a really amazing little cat Homer was, The tiny kitten, who wasn't expected to live long or to have a very good life, lived for sixteen years and had a wonderfully happy life. He died from old age and a liver problem on 21 August 2013, peacefully and in his own bed. In 2015 Gwen published a sequel book, *Homer: The Ninth Life of a Blind Wonder Cat*, detailing his later years and eventual death.

For details of the Homer books see **Feline Folios 4** and **8** respectively. The popularity of the books gave a welcome boost to people's willingness to consider adopting blind cats or those with other special needs.



[Huffpost](#) (Aug. 2013 – by Gwen Cooper) | [Treehugger](#) (Sept. 2021) | [People](#) (Sept. 2013)
[Facebook](#) | [Wikipedia](#)

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