

# People & Places

## People

### CINDY CANTRELL

**PURRFECT ENDING:** With her cat missing for more than a week after leaping out of her lap in pursuit of a chipmunk, Lexington resident Virginia Tavilla said she had given up hope of seeing 5-year-old Waffles again. She was even more concerned because every day he was gone represented a missed dosage of steroids to treat the neurological condition that she feared was preventing the outdoor cat from finding his way home.

Little did Tavilla know that Waffles's medical challenges would be what brought him back safe and sound.

Waffles was found without a collar, tags, or implanted microchip identification a half-mile away in Bedford by a woman who noticed his recently shaved front leg and neck. She brought him to Dr. Kathleen Leavey at VCA City Cats Animal Hospital in Arlington, who recognized the shaved areas as indicative of a spinal tap — a relatively rare procedure in cats used to look for signs of inflammation, infection, and some forms of cancer. Leavey began calling local board-certified veterinary neurologists to see if the orange and white cat matched the description of any recent patients.

One of those calls reached Dr. Mark Troxel, a veterinary neurologist at Massachusetts Veterinary Referral Hospital in Woburn, who had treated Waffles in August. He checked the hospital records, identified Waffles, and put an elated Tavilla in touch with Leavey.

"In eight years of veterinary medicine, I've never heard of this sort of thing happening before," said Troxel, who declared Waffles to be "holding his own" after examining the feline the day after his Oct. 2 return home. "It's an unusual way to identify a cat, but I'm glad it worked out."

Tavilla said she and her daughter are relieved to have Waffles home and appreciative of the many acts of kindness that returned him to them.

"It's almost unbelievable," said Tavilla, noting that Waffles is happily being "beefed up" to regain the weight he lost during his escapade. "He's a survivor," she added, "but he's not going outside anymore."

**PHILANTHROPY AWARD:** When Kenneth Braverman died from cancer in 1997, his widow, Roberta "Bobbi" Braverman, recalled one of his friends saying to another, "I hope you've asked God for everything you want, because now that Kenny is up there, he won't have time to talk to anyone else."

"He was a wonderful conversationalist," Braverman said of her husband of 43 years, "and a wonderful man."

On Wednesday, Braverman will be recognized for her philanthropy in her husband's memory when she receives the Tikkun Olam Award from the Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations at Merrimack College in North Andover. Meaning "to heal the world" in Hebrew, the Tikkun Olam Award recognizes those whose lives and work have brought greater justice, mercy, and forgiveness to the world through religious, economic, philanthropic, or political engagement.

Braverman worked alongside her husband in their business, the Little Folks Shop in Stoneham, for 30 years until they retired in 1987. Following her husband's death, she established the Kenneth Braverman and Thomas



PHOTOS JOHN BLANDING/GLOBE STAFF

Waffles is safely back home with Virginia Tavilla of Lexington, after being lost more than a week.

Casey, O.S.A. Memorial Fund for Library Resources in Jewish-Christian Relations at Merrimack College.

Additionally, Braverman helps cook meals for the Bread & Roses soup kitchen in Lawrence, tutors reading at the Walnut Square Elementary School in Haverhill through the Merrimack Valley Jewish Coalition for Literacy, set up a fund to sponsor interfaith speakers and events at Temple Emanuel in Andover, and is a 30-year member of the Southern Merrimack Valley Chapter of Hadassah, a volunteer women's organization. A resident of Andover for more than 20 years, Braverman moved to Haverhill in 2000. "I'm touched they feel I deserve this award," she said, "because it means a lot to me."

**NEW NOVEL SPOTLIGHTS LAWRENCE:** Author Jay Atkinson of Methuen advises his students at Salem State College to "write what you love" rather than according to a perception of what will sell. Fortunately, he has been successful on both counts.

Atkinson's fourth book, the novel "City in Amber," was published this month by Livingston Press. The project took 12 years, during which time he also wrote and published the narrative nonfiction works "Legends of Winter Hill: Cops, Con Men, and Joe McCain, the Last Real Detective" and "Ice Time: A Tale of Fathers, Sons, and Hometown Heroes." His novel "Caveman Politics" came out in 1997.

Atkinson said he got the idea for "City in Amber" from a Lawrence police officer discussing his theories about the suspicious wave of fires that plagued the city in the 1990s. Atkinson calls his book, which details the city's history from its earliest role in the garment industry, an "adventure story about the city, not



A woman who found Waffles brought him to a veterinarian, who recognized signs of a rare spinal tap.

one particular character."

The "City in Amber" book release party will be at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Redbones in Somerville, with readings planned in Lawrence, Methuen, Concord, Andover, Wilmington, and Lowell through January.

Atkinson has not had time to revel in his accomplishment; he is already working on a fifth book, which traces Jack Kerouac's cross-

country adventure. "Paradise Road" is due to be published by John Wiley & Sons in 2009.

"I'm very happy ["City in Amber"] is done and I hope people like it," he said, "but as a writer, you always have to be looking ahead."

People items may be submitted to [Cindy.Cantrell@globe.com](mailto:Cindy.Cantrell@globe.com).