

The Cat Express

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An interview with cat Zappa

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Welcome to this interview with Zappa, a cat who lives at Cowboy Cat Ranch. Zappa, thank you very much for joining us on this beautiful Sunday afternoon. Can you tell us a bit about your life before you moved to the Ranch?

Zappa: I was living on the street when I got pregnant. Fortunately, some people noticed me and brought me to the shelter, called Mary S. Roberts Pet Adoption Center in Riverside, CA. I had my babies in a foster home. When my babies were old enough to be alone, I was brought back to the shelter where my forever human parents found me. That is how I came to live with them and when they moved to San Antonio, TX, they took me with them.

That sounds like a pretty rough start of your life. How has that influenced you?

Zappa: Well, I do not trust people and cats quickly and I am a little scared of unfamiliar things. For example, when my forever humans brought me home, I spent the first seven hours in my cat carrier, because I was afraid to go outside into the house that I did not know yet. My human daddy spent all that time patiently sitting next to me and in the end I took those very scary first steps into my forever home.

When was that?

Zappa: Let me see I am about 5 years and 5 months now, and they adopted me when I was about 2 years and 1 month, so that must have been in January 2013.

So that means that you were born in December 2011?

Zappa: Yes, they believe that I was born on December 12, 2011.

Do you feel that you have a special bond with your human daddy be-

cause he stayed by your side during that first day?

Zappa: Yes, I think that he understands me the best. I also like my human mommy, but it took us a bit more time to get to know each other.

How do you enjoy living with your forever humans?

Zappa: At first, it was really nice and quiet. I was living in the house together with my friend Aguerberry who was adopted at the same time. I like her, because she leaves me alone all the time. But then, my humans suddenly brought home three kittens, and I did not want anything to do with them! I tried to stay as far away from them as possible, but those little brats came to me all the time. So I had to teach them to respect me, and over time I have learned not to be afraid of them. I still need to hiss at them every once in a while when they get too close, and I don't like it when I am locked in a room together with them. I will start growling after a while when they don't stop bothering me. I also did not like it when they brought home Pumpkin, and I have been aggressive towards her.

How do you respond to strange humans in the house?

Zappa: I usually hide from them. I go to another room and I sit high on the shelves where I feel safe. If they stay for a long time (days) and behave calmly, I eventually find the courage to behave more like my normal self. If I am really bold, I may even let them pet me.

Speaking of petting, do you have any preference for how and where humans pet you?

Zappa: I like it when they gently scratch the top of my head. I completely trust my forever humans, so I allow them to also pet my back and sometimes my belly, as long as it is gentle. I like to sit on one of their legs while they are standing with one foot on the windowsill. I also sometimes like it when they pick me up and hold me in their arms. If I want them to do that, I will walk up to their legs and

rub my body against them. When our human mommy and daddy pick any of us up, they always support our weight by placing one hand under our chest and the other under our rear end, so we don't get hurt.

It sounds as if you like certain things in very specific ways. How is that with food, any preferences?

Zappa: O yes, certainly. First of all, I really like the Chicken Flavor Organic Cat Treats from Organix that my human parents sometimes give me. I wish I could eat that all the time, but I secretly understand it needs to remain special. My human parents give me organic, grain-free canned wet-food most of the time. When I am hungry, I will go to them and sit and stare at them until they prepare the food. Depending on my mood, I sometimes refuse to eat it if I do not first get a treat, or if they do not put some (broken) treats on top of the food. If the food is not presented correctly, I will walk away to let them know they did it wrong. I usually like it when they scoop the food on the ripple rug or on a towel, one teaspoonful at the time. And I don't like it when the other cats disturb me, because it makes me feel less safe. Also, the food must be fresh, preferably not from a can that has been opened a while ago. They never keep food open for more than 8-9 hours in the 37C food oven, and some of the other cats don't mind to eat the older food. However, I can tell when a can has been open for more than one or two hours, and I don't always like that.

Are there any flavors that you particularly like?

Zappa: I like my wetfood to be really wet, and all flavors from Evanger's are perfect! Depending on my mood, I also like Turkey and Vegetable Formula, Turkey and Liver Dinner, and Beef, all from Newman's Own. I may also eat some of the other flavors, but I refuse to touch venison and I also do not like briefly boiled organic chicken or home-made

organic chicken jerky. I have recently started to catch a bug or two in the outdoor enclosure that I bring inside to eat. I also really, really like to eat oat grass, and I sometimes throw it up again, but I feel fine when that happens, although it may look like I am really sick at that moment; nothing to worry about. And I like the food puzzles that they put out for us every now and then, especially when they contain my favorite treats from Organix. I am getting pretty good at fishing out the treats.

How often do you eat?

Zappa: They usually offer me food four times a day. When I refuse to eat, they will try again later, or when I go to them to let them know I am hungry. They let me eat as much as I want, because I often eat less than they would like me to. There are periods that I eat really well, but there can also be several days in a row when I do not eat a lot.

Do you drink any water?

Zappa: Hardly ever.

Why are you so picky about your food?

Zappa: A pretty girl like me should of course take care to maintain a healthy weight.

A beautiful girl you are indeed. What is the name of the pretty pattern of your coat?

Zappa: The color of my fur is called tortoiseshell. Almost all tortoiseshell cats are girls and we are proud to be special.

Is it true that tortoiseshell cats have a bit of an attitude, or should I call it tortitude?

Zappa: Sits and stares, but refuses to answer the question.

Ok, let's go to the next question then. Do you have any favorite spots to hang out?

Zappa: I do have my preferences, but they change over time. Right now, I really like to sleep on a bunch of comforters that are folded up into a large cat carrier in the bedroom. I also like to sleep on the couch in the outdoor enclosure, on the top shelf of the Lotus cat tree that is also outside, or to lay in the grass outside. In general, I like soft places such as the beds of the cat trees, but I never sleep with my humans on the bed.

So you like to be outside?

Zappa: Yes, I do. The only thing about going outside is that I cannot really get used to those cat flaps. I am very happy that my humans understand. They usually keep the cat door in the human door to the outside enclosure open without a flap, and have the flap on the door in the master bedroom leaning on one of the shelves of a nearby cat tree to keep it in an open position.

If there is something that you want, how do you tell your humans?

Zappa: I will sit and stare at them until they get up and get me what I want. Could be playing, petting, or food. They have to find out what it is that I want. I sometimes also meow to get their attention. I never just meow, so if I do they know there is something that I want.

Which toys do you like to play with?

Zappa: I like to chase toy mice that they throw away for me, and strings that they move over the floor. Preferably black strings. Not sure why, but that really triggers my hunting instinct. When it looks like the string is moving out of my view, I jump to catch it. It is really nice when my human mommy or daddy move it in such a way that the string slowly disappears behind an object or their legs when they are sitting down. I also like it when they move a stick or plastic rod under a rug or towel, I will pretend it's a mouse and will try to catch that too.

Do you have any experience with these new plants that everyone keeps talking about, that make you feel euphoric?

Zappa: I think you mean silver vine and some other plants, right? Silver vine is fantastic!! I love it when they sprinkle the powder on the carpet or put it inside a thin sock. I also really enjoy the wood sticks that are lying around the house. I give those lots of cheek rubs or hold the stick between my front paws to give it bunny kicks. Namibia and I really love the silver vine wood sticks!

How do you like your litter box?

Zappa: I like really big litter boxes that are not covered and that are cleaned every day. We use World's Best Cat Litter that is made from corn and unscented.

Do you have any health problems that you are aware of?

Zappa: Last year, I had fleas and started to lose my fur in a few spots. It is called flea allergy dermatitis. I believe Pumpkin has the same. Since that time, my humans give me preventative monthly flea medication. We recently had to switch from Revolution to Catego, because some of these fleas apparently were not killed by the Revolution. We also receive preventative medication for heartworm, called Heartgard. I also have tooth resorption lesions and have had one tooth removed so far. I need a dental checkup and cleaning every 1.5 years to make sure that my teeth are in good shape.

Why only every 1.5 years and not every year?

Zappa: I absolutely hate being in the car because I get very car sick and will drool heavily and throw up after a while. Cerenia medication against car sickness does not work for me. That is why my humans schedule my dental cleaning and full body checkup at the same time, so I only need to go once instead of twice. After the tooth extraction, they ask the veterinarian to give me slow-release subcutaneous buprenorphine that lasts for 72 hours and works really well against the pain. It also makes me super stoned. The veterinarian knows about my car sickness and they proposed the 18 months schedule, except when there are medical urgencies of course.

Do you have anything else that you would like to share with our readers?

Zappa: It would be good for them to know that I have a microchip just in case I get lost. I also need to have my nails cut every two to three weeks. I once got stuck on a cat tree when my nails were too long and that was such a bad experience! Never again.

One last question: the name Zappa sounds familiar. Are you named after someone?

Zappa: Yes, indeed. I was named after the great musician Frank Zappa.

Thank you, Zappa, for this interesting conversation. I feel like I really got to know you!

Zappa: Thank you for trying to get to know me.