

the Metro

Pet *Gazette* inc.

March 2009

Vancouver's Only Pet Newspaper

Priceless



*Nicole Oliver...
Introduces her Crash Test Kitties!*

photo: Jason Kenzie

Nicole Oliver Introduces her “Crash Test” Kitties - interview with Kim Reid / photos Jason Humber

MPG: How are you enjoying working on Crash Test Mommies?

Nicole: It’s great, we just finished our fifth season, and it’s started to air now. I’ve had some time to distance myself ... and reflect back on it and it was wild!

MPG: It won’t air another season after this?

Nicole: I think that’s it, but never say “never”, in TV land right? There are 62 episodes out there and I’ve hosted 52 of them. Different families, all with the same issues, not getting any respect, it’s not easy.

MPG: What projects are you currently working on?

Nicole: I have a movie coming out in a month with Tom Berenger, called, it’s called Desperate Hours. Tom Berenger plays the bad guy, in it my daughter gets abducted by him. Using the amber alert system we’re able to find her and she’s returned home safely. That was a challenge; but was fun being a character, as opposed to being myself, because in Crash Test Mommy- I’m just me. It was really nice to step into somebody else’s life. It was nice stepping in someone else’s shoes, and at the end of the day, it was all just make believe. I knew how the movie was going to end, whereas, in reality television you never know how it’s going to end.

I also have a couple of cartoon series on the go. I’m the voice of Jadey Bug for Strawberry Shortcake, which is on CBS, and I have a show called Rollbots. Which is debuting on YTV this spring, I play Manx. I’m also a voice of Mrs. Clusky on Martha Speaks and

the Principal T.J.’s mom, which is on PBS kids.

As well, I just narrated a documentary, that was on knowledge network yesterday, about fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. So, my work’s all over the place, I’m very lucky in these tough times to be keeping busy, but that’s because I believe in diversifying and stretching yourself in all the different areas. Especially because I’ve decided to stay in Vancouver, Canada and kind of try to have a normal life as an artist, which is kind of an oxymoron.

MPG: Well you’re doing it and it seems peaceful.

Nicole: There is peace here. Today anyway, today is a good day, one day at a time, right?

MPG: Would you say that you’ve found the secret in the balance of work and play?

Nicole: Yes, absolutely, but to find balance, I think you need to know what your boundaries are. Some moments are slippery, but I found my little bounds and it’s working for me.

MPG: Growing up, did your family enjoy pets around the house?

Nicole: Growing up, we always had pets... I came out here in ’96 and I started rescuing cats, I wanted pets around.



Nicole with Thelma & Louise

My first cat I got in ’97, around McDonald and 17th, at a vet, there was a woman that was like a “cat rescuer.” So, there was this orange, kind of black and white, calico cat named Mango, that had been left behind, I guess when a family moved. She had a bunch of dental work that needed to be done, so we got her teeth fixed up and I think I paid only half the cost of it. Then she got cancer, so I had her for nine months. Then I took another cat in named Fred, who was a 20 pound, orange and white, massive boy, like he was huge.

I had him for a year and a bit. And I started dating my husband

in ’99 and it was so funny, he was so very jealous, when Chris was over. And (Fred) used to sneak on the bed, I used to laugh. My husband didn’t think it was funny. But he would sit and wait for Chris to roll over and then he’d pull a “Garfield”.

The 20-pound oomph, right on his feet, and then Chris would wake up and scream and I’d start giggling. So, then Fred had an aneurysm and we were away. Our plane was delayed, it was like he was trying to wait for us, but he couldn’t. So, I donated all of Fred’s cat toys and cat bed and dishes to CAUSE, which is out of Petcetera, at Rupert and Grandview.

So I walked in and there’s a cereal box on the loading bay and it’s moving. There were three kittens in there. So I get inside and say where are the kittens?

They were covered in feces and stuff, one of the girls took one and there were two left. They fit in my hand; they were so tiny. There was a little grey fluff ball and then a white one and I called them Thelma and Louise and took them home.

They’ve been the most amazing things. They’re 10 years old and they have the run of the house. They’re quite interesting, especially after the babies were born. There were some adjustment issues with one, I had a really hard time, and it just came down to time. **MPG:** They’ve done well for themselves.

Nicole: Yes, so, this is our crazy house. Thelma’s the little love bug. They’re family, they get along fine...

They help balance the testosterone in the house, because I’m definitely out numbered with one husband and two boys. I want to get a dog next.

Crash Test Kitties continued...

MPG: How do you think they’ll [the cats] react to the dog?

Nicole: x I’m going to get a Shiatsu or something of that size- wise that doesn’t shed. My father in law came over the other day, after my mother-in-law passed. Both the cats jumped up on him. And sat on his lap, ... for 45 minutes. The boys ran around and they stayed right there... animals know.

Crash Test Kitties cont...

MPG: With all the challenges you tackle and stresses that accompany them, what are the things that make you want to scream? How do you deal with the “hairballs” of life?

Nicole: What I find challenging, is just the demand on my time for attention. Be it kids, animals, work, and husband. If they all seem to coincide at the same time, that they need me, that’s when I have a major conniption fit. All the things in my life deserve my attention. But at the end of the day, I’m just one person.

Clearly, the cats are night creatures. So, when the kids are sleeping, that’s when they want attention. One of the biggest challenges we’ve had with these guys. Thelma is an awesome sleeper. But Louise, when it’s nighttime, it’s playtime. And she’s got that ---- sound that’s like, errerererrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr. That’s the last thing you want to hear at three in the morning. So, sometimes these girls remind me of a newborn and you have to get up every three hours have to calm them down. So she (Thelma) can sleep with us, but she (pointing to Louise) is put down stairs in the basement with her food, with her litter box and a comfy couch. Then I can get some sleep. You can only spread yourself so far. That’s where the boundary things come in. I’m learning to say “no”

That’s why I’ve decided to stay in Vancouver, because the quality of life is unparalleled. When I first decided to live here I lived in the West End, because I thought if I’m going to



Louise

live in Vancouver, I want to see the mountains and the water, that’s why I’m here. Otherwise, I’d go back to Toronto.

So, where we are now, we are nice urban central and I can see the mountains. I’m 25 minutes to a hill and to get outside. It’s such a part of the culture. I like to have a glass of wine, but a close second is to get out for some fresh air. It’s February and there’s snow back in Toronto. It’s (Vancouver) pretty outstanding.

My other big release from stress is gardening. I’ve got a big garden in the back. I started out with a black thumb, but I brag to say that I have a light green thumb.

MPG: Do you have a favorite cat tale?

Nicole: I love how I met these girls. But I’ve been pregnant twice and each time one of the cats were my protectors. The first time, I was pregnant with William. Before I even knew I was pregnant, Louise, the white cat, started sleeping up near my stomach. She never did that before. I would get up often in the middle of the night, and that cat would sit in the doorway and watch me and walk behind me and jump back up on the bed. The second time when I was pregnant with Brady, this one [pointing at Thelma] would do it. And actually both the cats, seem to have [their favorite child] She will sleep in Brady’s room while he’s away and the other will sleep on William’s bed during the day.

MPG: So, they [the cats] each have a special connection.

Nicole: Yeah, they just both chose one.

MPG: What does the future hold for your career, family and personal dreams?

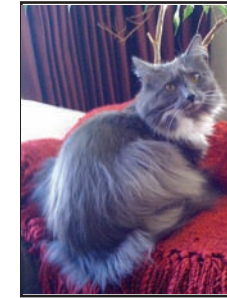
Nicole: It’s funny about what the future would hold. I’m a very competitive and ambitious person. But I’m trying much more to stay in the present. I just recently lost my mother-in-law, and it’s a clear reminder to appreciate each moment as you have it and to live in the present. To enjoy what you have as opposed to worrying about what you don’t have or where you want to get. It may sound hokey or heavy handed to say that, but it’s honestly where I’m at right now. I have lots of dreams. I’d like to keep working and do great things, I might want to direct and maybe I might try some politics. I seem to have a lot of opinions about things, so I’d like to see if I could do that. But mostly it’s just...I want more moments like that in my life. [Pointing to a family photo strolling along the beach] We rent a cabin in Parksville in the summertime.

MPG: A little bit of beach, mountains in the back and the family all around.

Nicole: Yep. And if I’m lucky enough to do what I’d like to do; instead of what I have to do. Then it’s a good day.

MPG: Is there anything at all that you’d like people to know that I haven’t thought about asking you?

Nicole: In general it could be pet related or with the elderly, there are so many things at home and around us that we could do to help make people have better, fuller, richer lives.



Thelma

There’s nothing wrong with pure breeds, but remember that there are a lot of little cats and dogs at the pound that would love a home. And you might be able to help somebody out next door; helping walk the dog, or something like that. That’s certainly pet related, but in life over all there’s just so many things in life we can do to help each other out. I remember when Barack Obama was running for President, that’s one of the good things he was saying. That’s one of the reasons I started watching him, and that’s why my kids even know the name of the President of the United States more than they know the name of the Prime minister.

You know, although we teach them, Stephen Harper, Stephen Harper, they know Barack Obama is the president. He’s made such an impact. That whole idea, if you want something done, you have to do it yourself and then also, turn and see if you can help the person next to you.

MPG: Mmm, the two “D’s” Dog or divorce, mmm

Nicole: I’ll think I’ll take the dog, no

MPG: I don’t have to write that part.

Nicole: Laughs

Learn more about Nicole at:
www.nicoleoliver.com