



Colin's pictured soaking up the sun in her favourite spot. Photo: PORT TARANAKI

Famous cat meets her end and won't be replaced

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COLIN'S the cat, who gained international fame for her high-seas adventure six years ago, is dead.

Her minders were forced to have the 17-plus moggy put down when she lost her battle with ill health.

Port Taranaki tanker terminal staff yesterday mourned the friendly tortoiseshell cat's passing and reminisced about her amazing trip from New Plymouth to South Korea aboard the methanol tanker Tomiwaka in 2001.

For tanker terminal superintendent Gordon MacPherson — the man who went to collect Colin's from the Korean port of Yeosu — it was a particularly emotional day.

Mr MacPherson says Colin's had not been well for a while, with old age taking its toll on the cat.

"About a month ago we took her to the vet and she was in the clinic for a week getting tests and treatment," he said.

Colin's was off her food and while Mr MacPherson tried to tempt her with fresh fish, she still wasn't eating much and was losing weight.

"It got to the stage where she had lost a lot of muscle mass, she was very thin. So the decision was made this morning that it would be best for her if she was put to sleep. It was a bit emotional . . . she had been a good companion here for us," Mr MacPherson said yesterday.

Tanker terminal manager Arun Chaudhari says word of Colin's death quickly spread around port staff and e-mails of sympathy soon started coming in.

Colin's came to the tanker terminal as a kitten and was adopted by former employee Colin Butler.

She became known as Colin's cat and shot to fame after stowing away on the Tomiwaka when she went on board with one of the crew. The pair fell asleep in his cabin and by the time they woke up the tanker had sailed.

What followed was an international rescue mission to get Colin's home. Initially she was going to be transferred at sea to another tanker heading to New Plymouth. But that proved too dangerous and the pet food company Whiskas helped foot the bill for Colin's airfare home.

Less than three weeks after her ship cat-nap Colin's was back in New Plymouth, where she was welcomed home in style. New Plymouth Mayor Peter Tennent named Colin's as an honorary ambassador of the district and the local cat club made her an honorary member.

Colin's framed certificates from those tributes still hang in the tanker terminal kitchen. Whiskas also supplied Colin's with cat food and paid for an annual visit to the local St Aubyn Vet Clinic.

For months media, and the public, followed Colin's story and e-mails, cards and messages came from around the world. A link to information about Colin's was set up on Port Taranaki's website and it remains there today.

Mr MacPherson says up until recently the plucky cat continued to defend her territory, frightening other cats and seagulls away from the roost she ruled for nearly two decades.

While Colin's is likely to be cremated and get some sort of memorial, Mr MacPherson says they are yet to decide exactly what they'll do.

One thing they do know is Colin's can't, and won't, be replaced.

"We've thought about it for a while . . . there won't be a replacement. A cat takes quite a bit of looking after, it's not for everyone and I won't be here forever."