

# Capistrano hybrid cat owner counters critics

## Countering critics, owner says mixed-breed cat is 'the same as the other cats, except he's lightning fast.'

By PETER SCHELDEN  
The Orange County Register

When people find out that the Cachias own an exotic cat sold for \$22,000 to \$130,000 and cross-bred between two types of wild animal, the critics often react strongly.

The Cachias have been told they are irresponsible, pretentious and even heartless for owning Hobie, their designer-bred ashera.

But Jo Cachia, mother of two girls, says people have the wrong idea.

Here is how the Cachias got their cat, according to Jo.

"It was pure accident. We were at a Tony Hawk charity event. (Hobie) was one of the auction items. My girls were like, 'Mommy, please!' I looked at my husband (Vic) and he shrugged his shoulders."

The bidding stood at \$1,500. Jo was told the cat was worth \$12,000, so to make her daughters happy she bid \$2,000.

But when the other bidders saw the girls' reaction, nobody outbid Jo.

"Everybody was looking at my girls who had tears streaming down their faces, and nobody bid against us," Jo said. "The girls were squealing with joy. I think people stopped bidding because of it. I didn't need another cat, but we love him."

As for the critics who accuse the Cachias of not caring about the rising number of unwanted cats, their other three cats were all abandoned.

In a recent news story, Jo told a reporter that she would get rid of Hobie if he became violent. Some people took that to mean the Cachias would have Hobie euthanized.

"They totally took that out of context," Jo said. "What (the reporter) asked is, 'What if this cat started attacking your children or your kids' friends?' I said if it became dangerous, we would have to get rid of it. I said I didn't expect I would have a problem with it. It was licking my face at the time."

This isn't Jo's first wild animal. As a girl, her father brought a monkey home that he found at the race track.

"We had that monkey for 14 years, until it started biting," Jo said. "We had to get rid of him, so he ended up at Lion Country Safari."

Vic had a dog who started to bite, but instead of putting the animal down he found a ranch where the animal could live out its life.

As for the cat, Hobie is slightly bigger and much faster than most house cats. More curious, too. He has spots like a leopard and a black-striped tail. Other than that, he is about the same as other cats.

People have warned that designer cat owners like the Cachias may get bored of their animals once the novelty wears off. Jo disagrees.

"That's like saying the novelty's going to wear off with my baby," Jo said. "Maybe there are a bunch of snooty Beverly Hills people with attitudes like that, but it's not me."

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