

A HISTORY OF THE BOSTON CAT CLUB

Virginia R. Cobb

With the 56th Annual Cat Show scheduled for this Fall, it is obvious that the B.C.C. is well past the half century mark so it would be impossible to record in this brief outline all of the interesting happenings over the years. It is hoped that these highlights will be of interest.

In the Spring of 1904, six people met at the Animal Rescue League in Boston and formed the Boston Cat Club. Helen Brayton (who later became Mrs. Tate) was the real founder and the guiding spirit and it was through her interest and efforts that the Club grew and prospered.

In 1905, the first Cat Show was held at Mechanics Hall in Boston, in conjunction with the Poultry Show. There were 185 cats entered and the show, governed by A.C.A. rules, lasted 5 days. The 1907 Show Catalogue listed, besides the Long Hairs and Domestic Short Hairs, 1 Siamese, 2 Abyssinians, 5 Manx, 2 Russian Blues and 6 Austarlians! These last two breeds were exhibited by Miss Alfrieda Richards of New Wedford, Mass. By 1911, the powers that be must have taken pity on both the cats and their humans and the time was cut to 3 days. (Just when the 2-day show came into being, I don't know.) 1914 seems to have been a gala year. There were 214 entries in the Show and the list of "Specials", which consisted of everything from a box of chocolates to \$2.25 in gold, took up 19 pages!

In 1919 the Club decided to hold its first independent show. It was held at the Copley Plaza Hotel and, apparently, was a huge success, \$900.00 from the proceeds being given to the T.B. Children of Devestated France.

In 1920 the Club changed its affiliation to the C.F.F. and shows were governed by their rules until 1934.

In 1922 the Show made \$950.00 and the "Silvers" took all of the "Bests". The Judge, Mrs. Gertrude Taylor, remarked that in all her years of judging, she had never officiated at such a well run show. The members made 200 catnip mice and grew 170 pots of oats for the sales table. This was the first Show held in Horticultural Hall. At the C.F.F. Annual Meeting that year, Mrs. Brayton, the delegate from Boston, moved that in future Championship Classes be allowed. This motion evidently carried as such classes appeared in succeeding catalogues.

In 1923 there were 101 members and a tidy little sum of \$1,000 in the treasury, fulfilling a goal of the Club from its beginning. During these years, sales were held before the Cat Show and approximately \$100 was usually realized. This was then used to stock the sales table.

1925 was another banner year, financially speaking, the sales table made \$125, the rattle kitten brought \$240, and a sale of 101 cats prior to the Show \$473.

In 1926 the Club withdrew from C.F.F. and remained unaffiliated for 7 years, however, it continued to hold shows under C.F.F. rules. In 1927 the Club gave a gold medal to a young boy who rescued a cat from a building which was being demolished. In 1931 a Silver Specialty was held in conjunction with the All-Breed Show and Mrs. Helen Brayton Tate served as Judge. Best Cat went to Miss Lillian Goodwin's Silver. In 1932 the first Siamese Specialty was held and Best Cat went to Mrs. Hugh Dailey with Newton's Salome.

In 1934 the B.C.C. affiliated with the C.F.A. That year the Show featured a "First" in the United States — a Championship Mouse Show! There were 50 mice, each in its own tiny cage. The combined Cat and Mouse Show was an intriguing idea and had a valuable publicity angle. Best Mouse was Miss Amy Blanchard's of Milton, Mass. The Rev. J. Willoughby Ferrier from England was Judge.

It is interesting to note that from 1928 through 1939 the Club employed Mr. Rupert Kubza to serve as Show Secretary. However, in 1940 some of the members offered to do the job, so Mr. K was no longer employed. Since then various members have handled the work most satisfactorily.

In 1930 \$100 was donated to the British War Relief, and, on through the war years, all profits from the Shows were given to various Relief Organizations. Donations were made to the Red Cross, the Army and Navy Emergency Relief and to the Boston Stage Door Canteen.

In 1945 some of the profits went to the March of Dimes. Bill Cunningham came to the Show and received \$200 in bags of dimes. This was the year the Show cleared \$1,000 and donations were also made to the Stage Door Canteen, Animal Rescue League, Angell Memorial Hospital and a wheel chair and walked were given to the Soldiers' Home in Chelsea, Mass. In 1947 the Club helped to buy a tiger for the Franklin Park Zoo.

Starting in 1948 the Siamese Specialty Shows as well as the Solid Color Specialty were held with the All-Breed Shows.

In 1951 the members voted to buy the Club's own cages instead of renting. These were designed by a committee and made by the Marlboro Wire Goods Company of Marlboro, Mass. 200 show cages and 20 judges cages were purchased. They are larger than many show cages and have been very satisfactory.

In 1954 the Usen Canning Co., makers of Tabby Cat Food, gave the Club a Tabby Banquet just prior to the Show. This was very much enjoyed by the humans and **perhaps** by the four-footed guests of honor also present. The banquet was well covered by the press which, of course, gave the Show good publicity. Sponsored by the newly formed Short Hair Club of New England, the first Short Hair Specialty Show was held that year.

In 1955 the first Long Hair Specialty Show, sponsored by the Solid Color Club of the East, was held with the All-Breed Show. And this year, the Boston Cat Club celebrated its 50th birthday, so a Golden Anniversary Show was held. A large golden banner stretched across the hall welcoming "one and all". The catalogue cover was in gold and each exhibitor was given a catalogue and a ball point pen inscribed with details of the occasion as a souvenir from the Club. Mrs. Marguerita Goforth of La Mesa, California, was the All-Breed Judge and gave Best Cat to a Siamese. The Short Hair Specialty was a memorial to Ch. Oriental Nanki Pooh (Nikki) who had recently died in his 17th year. Incidentally, it poured the entire two days.

In 1958 Sir Felix Mayflower of Plymouth, England, was a featured exhibit. This was the cat who sailed from England on the Replica of the Mayflower. All three Judges that year were members of the B.C.C. — Mrs. Mabie, the All-Breed; Mrs. Broks, the Short Hair Specialty; Mrs. Lee, the Long Hair Specialty.

The 1959 Show was a benefit for the S.P.C.A. specifically for Research in Cat Diseases at the Angel Memorial Hospital. \$200 was donated out of the proceeds for that purpose. A little cat that had warned its family of a fire was given a medal by the S.P.C.A.; and exhibits of other animals having the Siamese color pattern (rabbits, mice, etc.) were another interesting feature.

A change of location for the 1960 show was tried, moving from the Horticultural Hall where we had been for many years, to a hotel. This move was not successful. The rooms were too small, service was poor and the "gate" much smaller than in other years. So the 1961 show will be in Horticultural Hall. A new motel has just been opened directly across the street from the Hall with parking in the rear. This will be very popular with the exhibitors. The show will be held on October 28-29, 1961.

These last three years the Club has grown considerably, from an average membership of 100 over the years, the active and associate members now total 129 and there are 8 honorary members. The oldest members (in terms of membership) are Mrs. Raymond, Mrs. Mabie, Mrs. Buzzell, Mrs. LaFayette, Miss Rich and Mrs. Cobb.

Throughout the years meetings were held in various places, halls, tea rooms, members' homes, YWCA, etc., but for the past several years the Bostonian Hotel has been the home of the Club. A year book is issued every two years after the biennial election of officers. This includes lists of the officers and members and announcements of the coming programs and hostesses for each meeting. For the most part the programs deal with subjects of interest to cat fanciers.

Boston has started many "firsts" such as the use of oil cloth on the floors of the judging cages so that the cages may be better cleaned between classes; first to use "the Breeders' Directory"; first to have a cat show in Memoriam to a cat. This was the 1943 Specialty Show, a memorial to Ch. Djer Kits Chinkaling of Newton. It was financed entirely by donations from Chinky's friends. Mrs. Pauline Kelsey acted as Judge and she gave her services.

There have been many famous cats at the Boston shows: "Hindy" of the Boston Post; "Eleanor Bolling" who flew to the South Pole with Admiral Byrd on his first trip; "Frisky" the hairless cat; "Tommy Atkins" the cat who was nailed in (by mistake, of course) with a crated shell, in England Three weeks later when the crate was opened at Harvard University a very wan cat fell out. He was taken to Angell Memorial Hospital and after weeks of careful nursing, fully recovered. Then there was "Cougat" an ocelot brought back to this country by a G.I. "Cougy" died shortly after the show. The Club purchased a glass case for his mounted body and his owner presented him to the Children's Museum in Jamaica Plains, Mass.

Approximately \$10,000 has been donated to various charities and causes during the 56 years of the Club's existence. Records from all meetings have been preserved and the members can look back with pride on more than a half century of growth and achievement.