

How To Get Into The Aby Business Without Really Trying

by Frances Schuler*



I FELL IN LOVE with the Abyssinians on the cover of 1945 Cats Magazine. They were owned by the Richardsons in Tucson, Arizona. Their cattery is called the Wijiji Cattery.

After recovering from a serious illness I was told by my doctor to get a hobby. I tried several but didn't get much interested till I decided to try raising Abyssinians. This was fine but it turned out Abys were not easy to find. A friend finally heard of some in Tucson and we were fortunate in getting a female kitten from those same cats pictured on the magazine. We were quite in love with

Tigre from the start. She was sweet and easily handled at home but she was really scared out of her life at shows and she screamed like a siren. At this time she had no competition at all.

When we needed a male to breed to her, the hunt started all over again. We had met the Warrens of Casa Gatos Cattery at a show and upon writing them we found a nice male whose name was Casa Gatos Marc Anthony. Tony was a real smoocher, he liked every one. When the kits were born there were three: Tom, Dick and Harriet. We lost Tom and Harriet at two months but Dick was sold and shown at many shows. He was noted for his even temper and would sit like a dog, not minding the people or the judges. Dick died here at Selene last fall at the age of 16 years. He had been neutered so he helped us raise many kittens. Dick liked olives, especially stuffed ones.

By this time we had the bug. We liked breeding and showing cats; so we, like many other novices, wanted more cats. We found Trinket at the Caper Cat Cattery in Staten Island, a very ruddy girl with the most vivid green eyes. With her we have had some very outstanding kits, for we were fortunate in having Ta-Lee-Ho's Ipo near for stud. These two have produced many Grand Champions: Grand Champion Selenes Vignette of Willquise, Selenes Farida of Livingston, Selenes Firefly, Selenes Hudini of Kalyan, Selenes Pogo of Usaf,

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Selenes Tammy of Aberdeen and Selenes Sha of Shermax. They also by now have some famous grand and great grand children.

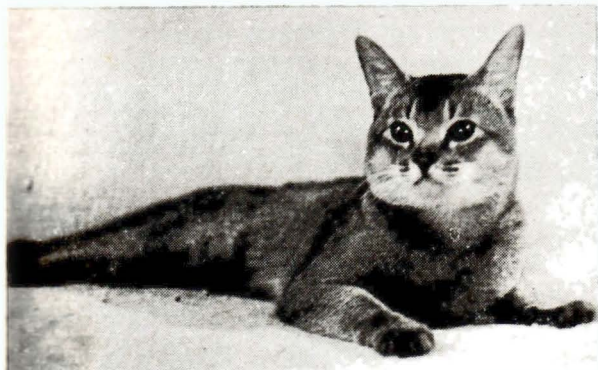
Trinket has always been "Boss" of Selene. Now, at 12 years, she still is, and the young cats give her a wide path when they clash with her. She has a middle aged spread and sometimes acts like a little old lady. She has not always acted like one, however. She had a bad habit of hiding when she realized we were going to a show. We would look, call and use all known ways to get her to come out. She usually stayed where she was and we had to find her. She rode like a lady though and wanted out of her carrier and would perch on the back of the seat and ride anything out. She liked a plastic carrier and Heaven help anyone that tried to put her in a closed one. She was our first "Best Cat." We almost flipped, but she made "Best" many times afterwards. Once at an Eastern show we arrived Friday night and after looking for any escape holes in our hotel room we left her out and went to bed. Next morning she was gone. Although we looked everyplace, and just knew she could not get out, she was nowhere to be found. We finally were about to think she had been cat-napped and we heard a faint noise. We tore the bed apart and found she had either found a hole or made one in the box springs so we had to tip it on end before she would come out. At shows she was fine if we stayed so she could see us while she was in the judges cages and when she was being judged. If we didn't she was fresh and took swipes at the judges.

Our only imported cat was Raby Chuffa. I believe he was one of the last kits of Raby Ashanto. He is in almost all of our pedigrees and I believe has been one of the most outstanding cats in England. Chuffa has always sort of chirped. This sounds silly but he does sound like a bird. He is in most of the Red Abyssinians' Pedigrees. We had one red from him, Rufus the Red of Selene, who had a deep coral coat with brown ticking.

Since then many, many kits and cats have come to Selene. We have shipped kits to almost every state and one to Hawaii and one to Germany. Ta-Lee-Ho's Ipo has since come here to live, also

Grand Champion Rings Abi Abdel who has the most beautiful deep ruddy coat I have seen in an Aby.

I think Abys have a distinct sense of humor and will entertain any one. Our neuter, Tid answers the door. He gets quite excited about it and if its a



Tr. Gr. Selene's Firefly

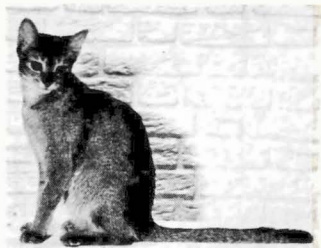
peddler and I just do not answer the door Tid tells on me. He loved the Insurance collector and delighted to get on the table to help him write, make change and the like. There was just one hitch. The man hated Tid. I asked him if he was afraid of him and he said no he just disliked cats as they were sneaky. Tip paid him off for that, for one time when the district manager was along with him, Tid took off from the top of the refrigerator, landing on his shoulder. The collector hit the ceiling. Of course the manager and I laughed. The collector tried to act like a gentleman about it but the next time he came alone he gave me an ultimatum, I must keep Tid away from him or mail in my premiums. I decided this was Tids home so I mail them now before he gives the man a coronary.

Gina was our little liar. She was born with a small deformity and was always more or less babied. She took advantage of us many times. The opening of the refrigerator door was a chance for some extra bites. She also managed to get under our feet for when she did this she was of course picked up, and her foot rubbed while she got the extra bite. We did try hard not to step on her and when we missed her she would start crying and raising her paw like we had stepped on her. We watched her closely and discovered that Gina lied! She knew this was one way of getting attention and the extra tidbits. She has since been spayed and gone to her new home in Maine. I sincerely hope Gina is telling the truth now.

Choti-Li Fawzia, rightfully nicknamed "Heller" because she has been just that, has done some of the funniest things. She learned to use the bath room at an early age. This she did all by herself. She would dash out of the door and go up in the willow tree and swing on the highest limb and scream, which brought out all the neighbors to see who was "hurting" the cat. Our ladder was not long enough and neither was I able to climb the tree, so I coaxed, pleaded and scolded Heller to try to get her to come down. In desperation one day I decided to go in and call the Firemen and when I came out of the door there was Heller; she had come down under her own power. She tried it a few more times till we decided she could not arouse the neighbors like this and now we put Heller on a leash when she goes in the yard.

It seems we all have a special cat. Ours was Garnette who was such a beautiful kit and later a very beautiful cat. She was never really healthy and she was always with me, helping wash the dishes, make beds and even assisting me run the sweeper. We lost her at 16 months and with each new litter we keep hoping to get another just like her.

There are two Abyssinian clubs in the States. The United Abyssinian Club, Inc., and the Abyssinian Cat Club of America. The U.A.C. has published a book called "Journey from the



Selene's Garnette

Blue Nile" written by our club President Aida Zanetti of Cambridge, Mass. which has been well received and sold many copies. We know there is much more to learn about the Abyssinians. Breeders have worked very hard to improve the breed as can be seen at shows now. The classes are quite large and the quality of the cats is very noticeable. This has taken much hard work on the part of the breeders. Of course there are always exceptions but they are in the minority.



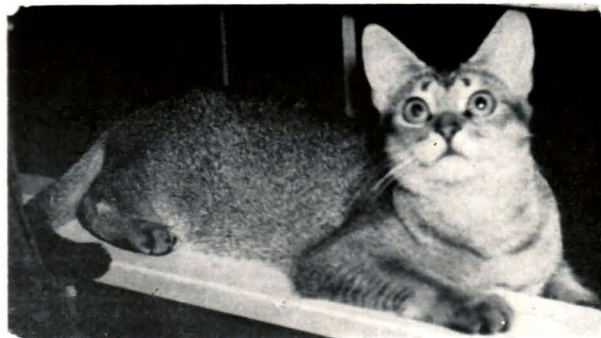
Caper Cat Trinket of Selene

this is what makes the Aby an Aby. When we can get good type and color then we shall be happy. To me an Aby is not a huge cat, not a really long cat in body and above all does not have a wedge head. When we get a cat with all these faults we have a ticked Siamese and a very unlovely cat it is.

Eye color is another thing much discussed by breeders. We all admire the deep gold eyes. Many do not have them though and until we can produce gold eyes exclusively let us be happy with hazel and even green. To me Aby breeders seem too impatient in their desire to produce the perfect cat. How many perfect Siamese, Persian, Burmese do we see? None so far. Some are very lovely but not perfect.

Texture and depth of coat is something also much discussed. Abys should have a deep heavy coat that is not as thick as the Russian Blues but it is never close lying like the Siamese. I have heard it described as a thick open coat.

Some day I hope to see the perfect Aby. It is really a wonderful feeling to ship cats to their new owners and get the letters about them, how they adjusted, how easy to handle and how much they are liked. It makes all the hard work of raising them worth while.



Our first cat, an early Aby, Tr. Ch. Tigre of Wijiji.

Well anyway, I now have a hobby. I don't have time to feel sorry for myself and believe me its due to that picture on the magazine. Its a very satisfying hobby. So if you want fun in your life, get an Aby.