

# MY UNBELIEVABLE OPPORTUNITY

By HARRIETT WOLFGANG

What does one do when an unbelievable opportunity comes along? Take advantage of it? You bet I did!

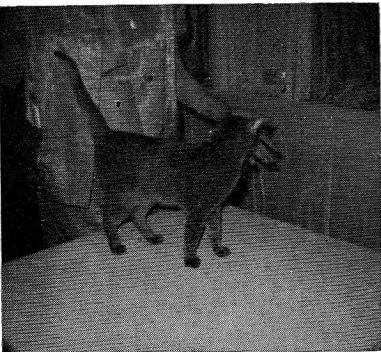


Mrs. Wolfgang with judges in Germany, discussing Russian Blues.

Mr. Wolfgang and I were washing windows when a letter was delivered inviting me to judge two shows, under rules of the Federation Internationale Feline D'Europe (F.I.F.E.). One in Ludwigshafen, Germany, the other in Norrkoping, Sweden. Included in the invitation was a request that Mr. Wolfgang accompany me if he so desired. This was a most thoughtful and gracious gesture and it was deeply appreciated. We experienced this thoughtful consideration throughout our trip. Needless to say, there were no more windows washed that day!

After the tremendous impact of the invitation began to wear off, we settled down to plan for the trip. Friends offered to board our cats; persons who had traveled abroad offered valuable advice and suggested shortcuts which saved us many dollars. Good wishes came from all over this country and many from abroad. A Minneapolis milling company, for whom I had served as a consultant for a new cat food, had the F.I.F.E. standard translated from German and/or French into English. This was a great help for, to judge well, a true translation was needed.

As these good wishes rolled in I began to have qualms as to my ability to change my thinking to another standard, one basically European; to be diplomatic in the wording of my written reports of each cat judged (one of F.I.F.E. judging requirements); to overcome my embarrassment in lack of language education. I gradually attained a stability of mind and purpose and felt I could handle whatever situations that might arise. And arise they did!



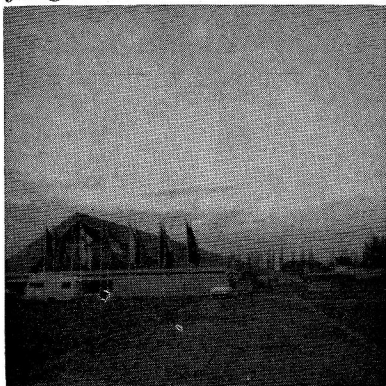
Two views of the brilliant Ruddy Abyssinian.

## In Ludwigshafen, Germany

European cat shows are different from ours. I am not at all certain I like them, nor, do I think the European breeders and exhibitors receive or experience the pleasure of friendly competition such as we know. The show in Germany was a three-day affair, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, held in a magnificent building. The showroom was beautifully decorated with fresh flowers, plants and shrubs. Over four hundred cats were entered with seven judges to judge them.

Judges licensed under F.I.F.E. are never overworked. They are paid "Meat and bed" (all expenses) but no judging fee. Judges, in this show, were to judge between forty and sixty cats. A judge's qualification of license designates the number of breeds and cats he is to judge. Cats are judged once as in an All Breed show. The entry fee is minimum to the point of being almost non-existing. In other words, it creates no financial burden to the exhibitors. Financial success of a show depends entirely upon the public attendance. **DON'T THEY ALL?** Exhibitors, when entering their cats, know the judges scheduled to judge the show but **NOT WHICH JUDGE IS TO JUDGE WHICH BREED.** The judges do not know which breeds are assigned to them until they receive their judge's book — or at least I didn't — unless of course a judge is licensed for a few specific breeds. The assigning of breeds is the responsibility of the show committee.

The excellently designed auditorium contained many private dressing rooms. Each judge was assigned one and given the key to insure privacy. The room contained a bed, washbowl, desk and chair, large mirror and wardrobe chest. As all judges are expected to be present during the show hours of all three days you can well imagine the comfort our rooms gave us.



Auditorium Ludwigshafen, Germany  
(Show Hall)

I waited in this room until the show committee escorted me to my ring. When presented with my judge's book I saw I was to judge sixty cats: Abyssinian, Russian Blue, Havana, Karthaus, Burmese, European Shorthair and Lilac Point Siamese.

Judging rings in this show, consisted of a card table and chair to be moved down the rows of benched cats as the breeds were judged. Seven people were waiting in my ring. Two were apprentice judges. (F.I.F.E. requires seven apprentice shows before licensing a judge); two were my personal assistants and three were stewards. I soon learned how valuable, to me, the two assistants would be. They were bilingual.

As I started to judge I faced my first problem. European judges when judging do not, as a rule, handle the cats as we do and, although the personnel of the club and all those people who were to serve my ring had seen the film, produced by CFA in San Diego, California, of



Center of show floor showing podium, decorated, with show committee at work.

ards. Of course the stewards were working as trained and, I think, afraid to let me have full control of a cat.

It was not until later that I realized another problem. Protocol had entered the picture. I discovered that my assistants were hesitant to translate my words of instruction to the stewards unless asked to do so. No one in Europe, it seems, steps into a problem nor offers advice unless asked to do so. When finally, in desperation, I turned to them for help they hastened to give the translated instructions to the stewards — that I wanted each cat in my own two hands! Thereafter things began to move.

F.I.F.E. mechanics are much more simple than ours. Classes consist of kittens, open, champion and international champion — male and female, plus a class for complete litters. These litters of very small kittens (judged one litter six weeks old) complete against each other for "Best Litter" and the breeder whose litter wins this award is almost assured of good sales. "Open" cats work for championship, "Champion" cats work to gain international championship. No "Best of Breeds" or "Best of Class" are awarded. With so many judges working and the breeds being broken up into so many sections no judge could select a "Best in Show."

C. F. A.



Close up of podium



My two apprentices studying the ticking and bands of the Abyssinian

The show committee indicated we were to select a "Best Cat Judged."

Judges do not award or hang ribbons. Place or class awards are noted by colored stickers put on the cat's card (from the judge's book) by the show committee after the judge has turned in his book. They are as follows.:



Example of how a steward holds the cat while judge writes

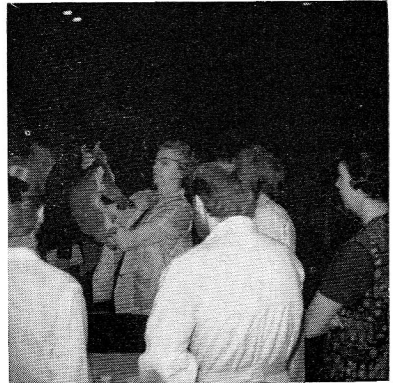
**Excellent:** This is their highest class award and compares to our blue strip first place class ribbon. Should there be more than one Excellent cat in the class the awards would be Excellent 1, Excellent 2, Excellent 3, etc., representing first, second, third in the class. [(Open, Champion, International Champions cannot advance without an Excellent rating (first place.)]

**Very Good:** This is an average or better than average cat but not one of Excellence. Cats awarded such a rating follow the last designated Excellent cat or, from above example, a Very Good I would represent a fourth place in the class.

**Good:** Poor quality, compares to our cats who do not rate a class ribbon. Should there be only one Excellent, one Very Good, a Good cat would earn the third place rating within the class.

**Satisfactory:** Very poor quality comparing, almost, to a disqualification.

Judges are required to fill out, in as much detail as possible, a card in the judge's book (above mentioned), one for each cat, as to its merits—good, mediocre or poor. I found it extremely difficult to find words to explain my opinion of why a cat was "Good" and not "Very Good," or "Very Good" and not "Excellent." I had no difficulty writing about Excellent cats! But I had been warned about the sensitivity of European exhibitors and how easily they become offended or insulted. I dared not tread so softly, with words, as to indicate the possibility of being argued into changing an award. I had been told that this has happened. Yet, I felt compelled to word my reports as I have always judged—to judge every cat as it is, on its own merits regardless of the breeder or owner or the cat's previous awards.



Myself at work surrounded by apprentices, stewards and assistants.

I was fortunate in not having to award anything higher than "Best Cat Judged" (I thought). The award is not announced at the time of judging, (judges do not announce any awards only noting them in the judges book) but withheld by the show committee until *Year Book, 1966*

such a time as they deem the announcement necessary. It so happened that in this show, unless the exhibitor was a particular friend of the judge, those winning "Best Cat Judged" did not learn of it until about noon of the third day. A Pity.

Exhibitors are excluded from the show room during judging, usually the first day. When at long last, after all judging has been



Mme. Britta Remborg holding "Best Cat Judged."

concluded they may enter. Only at this point does an exhibitor learn what his cat won or who it lost to. The card from judge's book containing the written report and the colored sticker indicating the judge's class award hangs on the cage. Unless an exhibitor reads ALL cards entirely there is no way in which he can learn whether or not his cat has a chance for a "Best Shorthair", Best Longhair" or "Best Cat in Show" award. This card hangs there for all to read and it is understandable that an unkind word or two might embarrass the owner or breeder for days. Many

an important sale has been lost and many made; because, all a prospective buyer needs do is read the card belonging to the cat he is interested in and he has the judge's opinion. This, I believe, is the basic reason why European exhibitors will fight to death to have an undesirable word, on the card changed.

I have good cause for this belief. Unknowingly I walked right smack into such a situation—that of an exhibitor, unhappy with the award, and the written reason received from me, went to great and unpleasant lengths in trying to persuade me to change an award from "Good" to "Very Good". She had two cats involved; one received a "Very Good" the other "Good". She had a sale for the "Good" cat and could not get her price unless the cat rated "Very Good". I would not change my award and again, in words, explained the reason—all this with an interpreter helping. It became most unpleasant and the interpreter was very ashamed of this exhibitor's display of poor sportsmanship. I finally asked the exhibitor to take her complaint to the show committee or go directly to the F.I.F.E. Board. She refused to do either so we terminated the conversation. Later, two F.I.F.E. judges, who had previously experienced such a hassle with this exhibitor, discovered that she had switched her cats in the benching cages to fit the award she wanted on them so as to make the sale, not daring to tamper with the posted cards. When, some days later, I returned to Germany, from Sweden,



Lunch Break (All Judges and their assistants.)

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I was informed that the exhibitor had been reprimanded and would not be allowed to exhibit for many months. Shortly after noon of the third (Sunday) all judges were called to the podium where the show manager announced that now we would select the "Best Cat in Show" (I was beginning to think they never would and worried about it—I had reason to).

Stewards brought each "Best Cat Judged" to the podium where the judges were to cast a written vote for their choice, after voting



One of the few judges who takes the cat under control.



One half of show floor (benched cages)

this was expected, that a judge's interest pleased the exhibitors. It was a pleasant task indeed. But how unfair at this late date to ask us to make an unbiased vote (seemed it was their custom). By this time I knew four of the top seven cats and their owners and asked to be excused from the final vote. A number of judges spoke up and said, "That didn't matter, they did too." I then asked to judge (handle) the other three cats before casting my vote. They then said, "That wasn't necessary, just pick a cat I liked". How very unfair—I couldn't conform, so took time to examine, quickly, the cats with which I was unfamiliar. Even then the casting of my vote made me very unhappy, as unhappy as the exhibitors who were asked to stand away from the "Judge and Steward Ring". Oh, yes, the stewards continued to hold the cats. Everyone continued to give the impression of innocence of who owned what cat, what the cat had previously won or, anything about the affair. I voted for a gorgeous blue Persian female which compared favorably to our Best Cat quality—it didn't win. Most of the judges liked a large, rangy, coarse cream Persian male.

A huge table was loaded with the most gorgeous trophies I have ever seen. All shapes and sizes of medals, silver, books, statues, linens

as well as mementos and photographs. During the remaining show hours of Sunday the show committee awarded them from the podium. One to me also. I am extremely proud of a gold and silver medal presented to me carrying the club's identification.

Of all the breeds I judged, in Germany, one breeder's Abyssinians took top honors. I found their brilliant ruddy color extremely good. One fine male, my "Best Cat Judged" received the vote for "Best Shorthair". The bone structure of the European Abyssinians is not as oriental as we are familiar with but the color, ticking, texture and density of coat surpass American Abyssinians. Eye color is good to excellent. I was most impressed with this group of cats from this one cattery. Other Ruddy Abyssinians entered were of lesser color and carried far too much white including many white spots.

The Red Abyssinians were few in number and not good. Those brilliantly red carried very bad white spots. The one Red without white or white spots was of lesser dull color.

After being so interested in helping the development of the Russian Blue cat, I looked forward with great eagerness to judging these cats under F.I.F.E. rules. As before mentioned I did not know what



Lovey blue Persian. My vote for "Best Cat in Show."

breed or breeds I would be judging so spent considerable time studying this breed's standard. I had been told the controversy, as in this country, over this breed was high and of great interest. I was completely disillusioned, totally unprepared for what I saw. I don't wonder breeders are unhappy with their imports. The standards vary a little but not enough to make the difference I saw. I think European breeders misinterpret their standard. The cats I judged, what they must be breeding, were similar to our medium typed Siamese and carried a coat similar to our heavier coated Siamese. In fact, they appeared to be solid colored Blue Siamese with green eyes. GREEN eyes they do have, beautiful green eyes—slanted.

Breeders of both countries (Germany-Sweden) were concerned about their cats not winning, as expected, when sent to us and I spent hours explaining our standard, as well as, trying to explain what their standard meant. The breeders were in full agreement with most of our requirements and formed a committee to speak the following week before the F.I.F.E. Annual Meeting in Berne, Switzerland, hoping to achieve a few changes in their standard to conform more closely with ours. Some changes were permitted but at this date I do not have a revised breed standard so cannot inform our breeders.

I judged very few Havana Brown cats but those exhibited were in poor condition which spoiled their color, which could have been good. The eye color was good with heads a little wider and coats heav-

ier than I find in the U.S. In recalling conversations, I am under the impression that this breed is not being given serious consideration nor the attention it deserves.



Karthauserkater (Karthausier Cat)

forget the lush, plus dense soft light blue coat. When I touched one for the first time, after feeling the coat, immediately looked at the head and my heart dropped — yellow, copper eyes. **THERE WENT THE HELP FOR OUR RUSSIAN BLUES.**

European breeders do not appear to give credit to their European Shorthair. While they exhibit most all the colors we do, it is almost impossible to find anyone who is sincere in breeding a color-bred cat of this breed.

Resulting litters, while fine type, contain any and all color genes. I was first elated then disappointed when judging a litter of five kittens six weeks old (judged as a unit). In this litter from a copper-eyed white dam and a black sire were two copper-eyed whites, two silver tabbies one of which was the best silver tabby female kitten I have ever been privileged to see or judge and, one brown tabby. Immediately wheels began to turn as I thought of the help this kitten could be for an outcross for our Silver Tabby cats. Following the close of the show I had an interview with the breeder to discuss the pedigree. To my dismay I found that this beautiful kitten was one of those "God Given" cats. Her background carried every color in the rainbow. It would have taken five to seven years to come anywhere near clearing her color genes. Yet there she was in all her potential — a gorgeous Silver Tabby European Shorthair. My disappointment was only exceeded by the breeder's for she would have been so proud to have her stock in America. But not once, in our



"Best Litter" Persian group

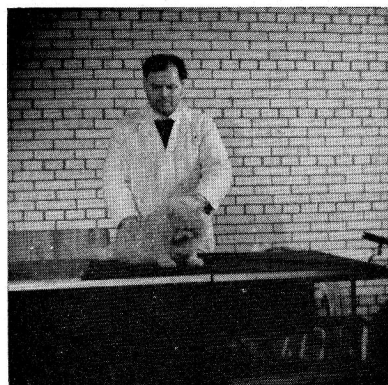


conversation did she evidence any desire to breed, genetically, a true bred color. This kitten was one of two I wanted to bring home to help "underprivileged colors or breeds." The other was a black Persian which I found was out of Gebhardt-Smith stock. I was unsuccessful in both instances. One, the tabby, would not have helped; the other no money could buy.

How can I tell you about the Siamese without seeming prejudiced. Here again I think the breeders, not being able to witness the judging, underestimate the standard. Of the large number of entries, in both shows, I found only seven Siamese cats that were anywhere near equal to our "Best in Show" quality. Two of these were owned by American G.I.'s stationed in Germany and were American bred, of these seven, two were Blue Points. In Sweden I judged a Lilac Point litter of three which showed great promise. Other than these few, I judged no Siamese such as we exhibit. Many breeders approached me with interest in obtaining or breeding Siamese of the type shown in my book "Short Haired Cats", but, when I told them the going price for our top show cats they shuddered, saying, "They could never get enough return on the investment." When I replied that our prices were in line with their

export prices they replied, "Yes, but you Americans have more money." In this instance, as an ambassadress I was a complete failure; how could one make them understand that because a number of CFA judges used hard earned money, they should not have used, to come and meet all people of the world interested in CATS, did not necessarily mean Americans in the Cat Fancy were millionaires.

I did not judge Persians in Germany but saw many lovely ones there as well as in Sweden. I was so proud to find some American stock at the top of the winnings. I was very impressed with the lovely blue Persian



"Best Cat in Show"

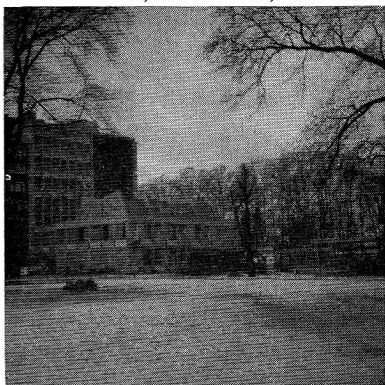
Female (before mentioned—my vote for "Best Cat"). This cat was bred in Europe and I was delighted to learn that she was owned by the person who owns the excellent American stock. This owner should be sitting in the driver's seat for future show cats. (Persians)

### In Norrköping, Sweden

When I finished my show in Ludwigshafen Germany, Mme. Britta Remborg, executive secretary of F.I.F.E. told me I was to judge the Norrköping, Sweden show just as I do at home—joy of joys! That show had one hundred and twenty entries. I was to be the only judge. I could have a platform, judging cages behind a judging table, exhibitor and public viewing it from opening to closing. One of my two bilingual assistants in Ludwigshafen, Mr. Per Hillfling-Oleson of Copenhagen, Denmark, was to be with me again. Things were again looking up. Imagine my dismay to find all of the chairs in front of my platform turned in reverse — so that those sitting in them had to sit with

their backs to my stand! I could not stand this for long. Shortly I went down and turned all the chairs around. Well, after all, I didn't want those good people to have stiff necks! And, I like people and I wanted them to be free in this privilege of seeing the cats judged. I wanted them with me, win, lose or draw.

When the show manager of the Norrköping show met us at the railroad station with a bouquet of red roses (yellow roses were sent to me in Germany) he asked me to judge all cats on Saturday, the first day of the show. He seemed greatly relieved when I told him this would be no problem as I had had a



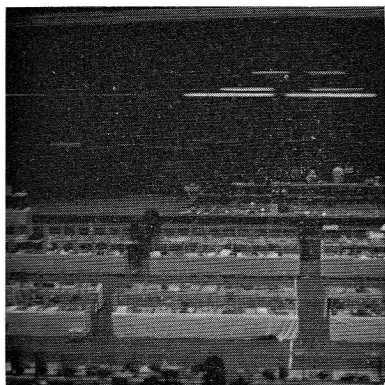
**Auditorium (small building),  
Norrköping, Sweden**



**"Best Shorthair"**



**One of the better Himalayans**



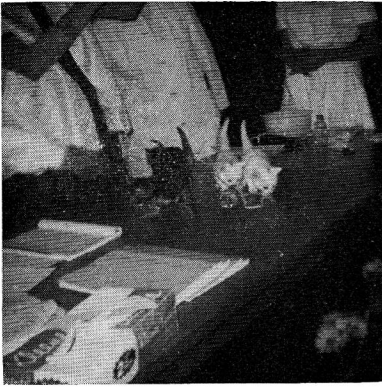
**Show room before judging started.**

*Year Book, 1966*

lot of experience in scoring or writing reports on each cat (same F.I.F.E. rules apply in Sweden) and did not think this assignment would worry me. This was a two day show.

Bright and early, with brisk snowy weather making everyone energetic, I started to judge the show. WOW! Six apprentices were waiting to work with me. They (plus my assistant) meant that there would be eight persons on the platform. When I turned from the table to get a cat

I couldn't see the judge's cages. I had to thread my way between them to get to and from the cages. It was fun though. Such interest I have never seen; yet, I remember how I loved every minute of working with Miss Kathleen Yorke, in Kansas City, Mo., long ago.



Litter judging

It wasn't long before I noticed that the public, after entering the show room, found there was something new going on up on the platform and came forward to see cats judged. Many to stay and stay before going to look at the benched cats. The show committee noticed this interest also; because late Saturday afternoon, when I was about two thirds through the judging, asked me to hold up and judge again on Sunday. I was happy to oblige because I was having a ball. I felt completely at home.

these people are to be able to hold a show, for such a grand animal, in grand elite surroundings. The room was decorated for Christmas with trees at each end of the platform. The trees were decorated with small flags of all nations and at their top flew the American flag. What an honor. How considerate. How kind. A small American flag, in a tiny standard, stood directly in front of our places at the banquet, held Saturday evening, for all club members, exhibitors, judges and assistants.

Cats in Sweden were much the same in type and quality as I saw in Germany. A lovely Seal Point Siamese female defeated a better than average Ruddy Abyssinian male for "Best Shorthair" and a blue Persian male defeated him for "Best Cat in Show".

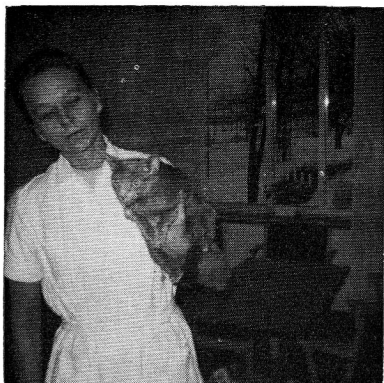


At work

As in Germany, the show manager and committee award all trophies. It was done with great dignity and finesse. I enjoyed watching this part of the Swedish show much more than in Germany.

Our work was now done and, being invited by my wonderful assistant, Mr. Per Hillfling-Oleson to drive with him back to Copenhagen we accepted with pleasure. It was a fairy tale trip following behind a snow storm, all the way, up and down mountains and around many lakes. No small wonder why they call Minnesota the "Little Sweden."

I came home so very proud, because, I could now tell our breeders and exhibitors that our quality of breeding, condition and grooming is



**Russian Blue**

superior to any I saw in Europe. I had not realized, no one would without witnessing it, that European exhibitors do not present their cats well. Perhaps they do not know how to help a Persian's coat, hold it's body during the show or brush out a Shorthair. Perhaps it is because, in Germany, exhibitors never see their cats judged and do not realize how they look when judged. Generally by the time the steward, wearing leather gloves, got through rubbing them every which way, while going to the judge's table, they look a mess. I just itched to get a comb and show them

how to aerate the coats, but I dared not because of the sensitivity of the people.

Once again I express my pride in being part of the American Cat Fancy and extend my compliments to you all for helping to keep CFA ahead of the field.



**Lovely Cream Kitten in very poor condition (note thinness).**



**Chinchilla Kitten "Best Kitten in Show"  
Bred in England.**