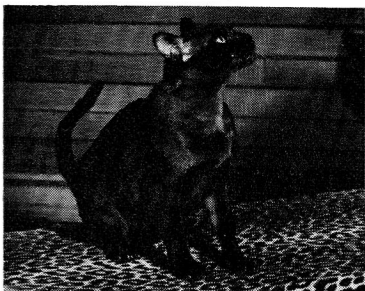


QUEEN OF THE HOUSE

(From Archangel Newsletter, courtesy Margaret Calkins)

By Mme. Du Set Calkins

My name is Du Set—Ch. Chi-Sai Du Set of Ty-Ru to be real proper. However, let me introduce myself properly. I have been #1, instructor at the Feline Inn—Most of the cats around here refer to my owner as Mommy but not me—we have been together too long and as we have a mutual understanding as to who is boss around here she is simply Peg to me.



The author Du Set at home in the "Catio"

I want it clearly understood that I was born in Texas and I come from a very beautiful home — my kittenhood was spent in being adored and petted—my sisters were very famous, my true mother is an editor and an interior decorator so you know I am not spoofing as to my rating in Who's

Who in the Cat Fancy and that really is **me**.

Now, I have made up my mind to leave this place; but can't go right now as I do have four little babies to take care of. I don't have a thing to do but feed and wash diapers for the next six weeks; so I have the time to think things out and **reminisce**. I have my catnip mouse packed and the heck with the brush. I have had enough of that — this last insult to me has made my mind up (can you imagine telling me that I contributed to the delinquency of a minor?) Peg thought that I was resting up real nice when I thought about that young Siamese so what if he was only six months old; he did appeal to me; so white and lovely and next to my brown skin, who thought of segregation? Everyone else is talking about mixing so I got in the act to prove that animals like a little spice now and then, too. I flirted and, young though he was, I taught him just what to do and a lot of thanks I got for it — just screamed and carried on as though I had committed a mortal sin; but at least that was better than the first time she bred me when I first came here. Oh boy, do I remember that time but good — almost five years ago or was it six — These kids are the hungry kind; Peg sez its that hybrid vigor but they sure are hungry; make me forget what I was thinking about — Oh yes, when she bred me the first time. It was really seven years ago. I had to look it up as time marches on and between feeding and getting old, I forget. Well, anyway, Peg had that kennel for so long — and when Calypso bred me she kept getting on the floor with us, trying to hold us together. He got real mad about it; and, of course, I nearly blew my cork: who wants such interference as holding us together. I scratched her up real good — finally we listened as she called the Vet to ask him why we didn't tie like dogs; then I knew I better take her in hand and teach her a few things for her own good.

It was during that pregnancy that Peg decided to enter me. Again,

I fixed her. She entered me the day she bred me, real smart like. The show was only three weeks away; so she was under the impression I wouldn't show my condition; but I knew I was carrying 11 kittens, so I had the pleasure of watching her squirm with embarrassment every time a judge picked me up. Of course, I only got red and yellow ribbons: served her right, the sneaky thing. That was the time she stole half my kittens and gave them away, which didn't do her a bit of good as I watched them in the nursery cage next to mine. Tsan Sue, an old friend of mine, tried to take them and help me out; but she just doesn't idolize her babies as I do; so one by one, Peg watched them die. I saved all six that I raised even though they were tiny and she helped with bottles and eye droppers of vitamins.

Those were the good old days around here. People came who liked cats and I can tell you, people just swooned when they saw my golden eyes and shiny coat. I ate it up, keeping myself nicely washed and clean and dragging my favorite toy for the customers to share with me. I sure sold a lot of cats for Peg. I even taught her how to kiss me! I always give her a gentle nibble every day just to show I care.

I am quite sleepy; these kids have kept me up half the night. They are different from my other children. They do an awful lot of crying and fighting already; but, as I have lived with Siamese all these years, I am quite used to their gossiping and gabbing. These children will have to be a little more quiet, as they are certainly getting on my nerves and I can't concentrate on my future plans. Oh yes, I was bragging about how I worked with Peg and her kittens. Once she went to one of those cat shows of hers and got the whole bunch of us sick and Oh was I sick. My throat was sore and my eyes hurt and she kept putting in some stuff that made it impossible for me to see. I didn't eat for days and what with kittens, I just had and my weight way down, I certainly am glad she didn't take any pictures of me that time. I would have been a disgrace to the cat fancy, I was that gaunt. I wish I had that assortment of food right now. It actually looked like a Pet Cafeteria; but I couldn't eat a thing then nor could I even sit down because she kept sticking me with needles, feeding me with a baby bottle (at my age!); but I did like that baby food; it went down nicely with my sore throat. Now, I only get it on occasions. She cut up chicken hearts and bits of liver too. They would slide down easy and not hurt too much. Really, all night long, as sick as I was, she would come about every two hours and cuddle me and then jam something else down me (and me sick enough to die!). I watched her, too, that week.

No one got any rest around here; all my friends were in the same boat. My kittens all died that time, plus others. I overheard her crying about seventeen in all; but, really, I was too sick myself to console her. However, now we all get poked and stuck more often with needles; so maybe she learned about viruses the hard way as none of us has ever been that sick at once since then.



As A Young Girl

Then, it was a lovely spring day and I was sitting in one of the tree beds that Peg had rigged up in the window, the sun was warm and the store was just jammed with people all petting and ooh-ing and ah-ing all over us, when lo and behold! some beatnick grabbed me by the tail and started swinging me. I was terrified! I yelled and tried to turn and scratch him, bite him or anything to defend myself. Peg got in the act, too, when she heard me yell for help. She clobbered him! He let go and ran out of the store. Ye Gods! was my tail sore. Then and there, I made a resolution. No one, but no one, will ever pet me below my head as I never want to go through that again! That nasty character. The next day I saw a sign on the door, "25c admission. Refundable with purchase." I heard Peg say, "Too many people! Can't control them with the cats! Better, less people and only cat lovers will come in from now on." But I know some of them still don't give two cents for me; so I am going to guard my tail. I certainly don't trust any of them.

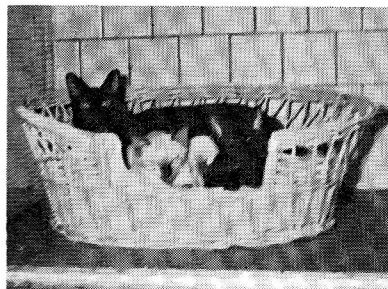
Of course, you know I helped build this place. When Peg decided we should have a Catio, I taught her a thing or two about that. I jumped the fence and out I went to explore those noises and things I have seen through the window. I ambled about smelling all the grasses and garbage cans around here and decided I had better go up a bit, so I climbed a few stairs, too, I got so high and when I peeked over, Lord, I was four stories up. I couldn't jump. I got scared and couldn't remember how I got up there, so I just sat and waited. I knew Peg would find me sooner or later, mostly later — five hours I sat there. I could hear her whistling for me, but as I am such a dark brown and matched the roof, she didn't see me and I was too scared to yell. Finally, some sun-bather was eyeing me and, of course, I was signalling him. Between the two of us, I made myself known and between ladders and uniforms and much yakking, two firm hands grabbed me and safely carried me down. Of course, I was kissed and had to kiss back; but I could hear Peg cussing me out, privately under her breath, wondering how many tickets she was going to have to buy for the Firemen's Benevolent Association, whatever that is.

About a week later, I thought I'd go for some more of those delightful smells and took off (this time being very careful not to do any climbing). I ambled around having a great time for myself. Of course, I wasn't on the prowl for a new spouse, but that's when one finds them. There was this delightful striped cat, the kind that comes and visits once in a while, the kind I never can get close enough to. This one smelled nice and dirty and he was twice my size. What a man for me! We talked and I told him about my home and what good meals we had, nice beds and plenty of litter to toss around. After we played about for a bit and he found out I wasn't looking for another husband, he trotted right back home with me. My own husband saw him and almost had a "cat-a-strophy," he was so wild. He told me a thing or two, mostly two, about chasing around and picking up skum. If he could have gotten his paws on him, I know he would have murdered the both of us. My striped friend decided to come in when he spotted Limey, one of those English Russian Blues that Peg bought and he was already to start l'amour tu Jours — even had her by the neck! Peg

was yelling; all the help was yelling; the customers laughing; water flying; brooms swinging. I had to hide, but chose a topmost view to see Stripey's next step. Peg routed my dear guest. Then the yard boy snitched on me, so I was caged for a week. Repairs on the fence cost Earl, Peg's husband, a broken arm and, wouldn't you know, he blamed it on me!

Poking around the desk, I ran across my diary. I can recall how my temper flared over those kittens; but, by the time I weaned them and perfected their manners and helped send them out for adoption, I calmed down and got into the same old rut.

I want to tell you that we were both pleasantly surprised at the results of my philandering. My children are talked of and bragged about to this day; so we finally convinced Peg (a foster parent of one of my offspring) that she must have another cat. She wanted the pair to look alike even though baby #1 is almost three years old. Anyhow, last summer, I went through the entire bit again, listening to the soft whispering voice of the hybrid Siamese was quite nerve shattering to a seven year old Burmese; so regardless of how I feel, no more messing around for me.



Du Set and Friends

Peg was quite interested in the results because, by this time I have great grandchildren here and am the instigator of all those Champagnes, too. My cross-bred children have a very smutty coat and pronounced green eyes. The boys that I did see have a very dark streak straight down the back and have very definite points. My Champagne granddaughter has no points but a very slight shading on the face. From me she inherits those gold eyes. I have never studied genetics although I can guarantee you that I am pure Burmese and very proud of the Champions in my own 4 generations.

One of the prospective couples who came for one of my Golden Siamese bought one and returned it the next day. It seems, I learned from my eavesdropping, that this woman had called a very active Siamese breeder who told her it was like adopting an illegitimate child and she would never be happy with a cross-bred cat. So, my dear friend Tsan Sue let her have a pair of her Siamese kittens. My little boy went to two little girls where he is fondled and plays with them every day of his life. I carefully taught him just how to run that house.

Now that I am almost 8 years old (close to 50 by your way of thinking), I am not so boisterous and amorous as in my younger days. One litter a year takes up most of my energy and, of course, those days of having eleven at one time are over. If you should come by on Wells Street, I favor that bottom basket in the very front basket tier I was telling about earlier. You can pound and rap on the window all you please. I'm too used to that now. I like my sunning and still like to know I am chief instructor here, so I do have to supervise everything that goes on. There are always new crises and youngsters that have to be kept in line; so I really can't afford to leave after all.