

## THE EYES SHINE LIKE DEWDROPS ON THE LOTUS LEAF

By DAPHNE NEGUS

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Mrs. Richard Negus, holding female Korat kitten, Si Sawat's Maliwan at show in Santa Cruz, California, August 1966.

While in Thailand, in 1966, Mr. John A. Nagle, a frequent traveler to that region, told a Chinese acquaintance, a businessman from the city of Korat, that he was looking for some cats. "Oh?" said the businessman. "You want a Siamese cat?" "Yes," said Mr. Nagle, "I am looking for some Korats." The businessman beamed. "Ah—you are looking for some of OUR cats!"

And that is how the Korat is thought of in Thailand. To the Western mind springs a picture of a cat with a svelte, light colored body with darker points and brilliant blue eyes. Whereas a Thai might visualize a silver blue cat with brilliant green eyes—the Si Sawat, or Korat cat.

An early reference states that the original Siamese cat was either Seal (Royal) or Chocolate (nearly solid), and that the gene for Blue was introduced by mating with a solid blue oriental type cat originally living in the city of Corat (Korat). This cat was purebred and was nurtured by the people of that city. There are breaks in the family tree of the first two recognized generations of Blue Point Siamese in England. The "Parents Unknown" might have been Russian Blues, or they might have been blue shorthairs. However, those Siamese imported from Thailand may have carried the blue or Maltese gene from the Korat cats. And such a blue cat WAS exhibited at a cat show in London, the Holland House Show of 1896, by a young Mr. Spearman, an Englishman just home from Thailand, who defended his "Blue Siamese," when challenged, by stating that there were others in Siam from where he had brought it. Since no records were

kept in Thailand none can say if the blue in the Blue Point was from the Korat cats, or if it came from an occidental blue cat as has been stated in an English reference. There were Korat cats in America in 1934, but I do not know if they were exhibited, ever exploited, or were just pets. Brief references appear in magazines, such as one a friend told me about in the now defunct "Pet Digest" in the 1940's.

So my story of the Korat cats in America jumps an era or so. To tell it, I must take you again to Thailand. It is 1947. Mrs. Robert W. (Jean) Johnson has arrived with her husband in Bangkok for a stay of six years. When she asks for a Siamese cat, her Thai friends are puzzled by her description — a cream colored cat with dark face, ears, feet, and tail—and they tell her about a cat that is solid blue. There is no meeting of the minds about this. Finally, when she obtains a Seal Point Siamese cat from Mme. Ruen Abhibal Rajamaitri, in Bangkok, she shows it to her misunderstanding friends.



Ch. Mali of Si Sawat as a young female AA Korat F. '65-'66.

"This is a Siamese cat" Mrs. Johnson says. They look at it carefully. "It is a Siamese cat," they agree, "But it is not the cat of the Siamese!" They explain carefully once more. The cat of the Siamese is a stone-colored cat, the color of lustrous black pearl, the color of cigarette ash. It has vast green eyes and it is known as the Si Sawat Maiow, or the Korat cat. At night, the eyes of the Siamese cat shine like rubies; those of the Korat cat shine like emeralds. It is called the Korat cat because it was first found in Ampur Pimai of Korat Province. (Pimai is the district.) Korat is the unofficial name of the old capital, officially known as Nakorn Ratchasima, of the northeastern part of Thailand. Bangkok is the unofficial name of the present-day capital of Thailand, which is officially known as Krung Thep. (As someone pointed out, it is just as well that N a k o r n R a t c h a s i m a is popularly

known as Korat because we would have had quite a time trying to popularize Nakorn Ratchasima cats!)

Mrs. Johnson never sees but five or six Korat cats all the time she is in Thailand. She even has temporary charge of some. But conditions of their ownership are such that they are not for sale. They have been received under terms of highest honor, esteem or respect, and endowed by the giver with the attributes of bringing good health and fortune to the recipient, all of whom are members of the Thai government, the Thai nobility, or representatives of foreign governments. Mrs. Johnson travels extensively in Thailand in her search



Design for KCFA Insignia by Mr. S. Sajjratee and Mr. S. Srisukoon. Korat cat standing in front of ancient Thai structure.

so greatly expanded, many Thai people prefer to lead out their lives within their own circle. Advantage is not always taken of the widened boundaries provided by a modern world. Small wonder the coveted cats eluded Jean Johnson's search at that time, even in the beautiful stone ruins of Ampur Pimai.

Now it is June 12, 1959. Mrs. Johnson is at home at her Cedar Glen cattery, in green, rainwashed Oregon. A call from the airport tells her that there is a pair of cats there for her from Thailand . . . Nara and Darra, son and daughter of Mom Noel, named for the royal uncle of H. M. Queen Sirikit, Mom Luang Deg Sanitwongse, who had fetched Mom Noel from Korat as a Christmas gift to Mrs. Austin Flegel, wife of the Director of the United States Economic Mission. Mrs. Johnson, who had seen and admired Mrs. Flegel's Mom Noel and her kittens while in Thailand, is at last the owner of a pair of Korats, sent to her by a friend, from the Mahajaya cattery of Mme. Ruen A. Rajamaitri, where Mom Noel now lives.

Inquiries go out immediately for other Korat cats. Not one is to be found. Mrs. Johnson has brought back some Siamese cats from Thailand. She resorts to an outcross. The body structure of her native Siamese cats is similar to that of Nara and Darra, the imported brother and sister Korats—born of a mother and son mating. Mrs. Johnson carefully weeds out any progeny with Siamese characteristics. The Korats and their kittens are exhibited in various parts of America and Canada as more breeders purchase them. Thus Nara and Darra are the first pair of Korats known to be imported into America for breeding purposes.

The next pair comes to Miss Marie E. Purdy, of Maryland, in January, 1961. Magazine and newspaper articles cause added interest and the Korats come to more owners.

In 1964, I visited a cat show in California's San Fernando Valley and was stopped cold by the largest, greenest, most sparkling pair of eyes—Cedar Glen's Jami of Ar-



Cedar Glen's Pichit of Si Sawat, 2nd generation American born Korat Male. AA, AW Korat Male 1965-'66.





Cedar Glen's Little Kay of Arcadia AWHM  
Korat Male '65-'66. Males have faces like  
Little Bears.

Gardner, Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Clark of New Jersey, Mrs. Paul L. Gecking of Ohio, Mrs. Bertha M. Nuttall of Indiana, Miss Gail E. Lankenau (now Mrs. Woodward) of California, Miss Isobel M. Hutchison of B. C., Canada, and me. Every known breeder of Korats in the U.S. and Canada is invited to join, and is requested to send in full descriptions of their Korats and any Korats they have ever seen. From the replies, using the CFA "Outline for Necessary Information," a Draft Standard was compiled by Mr. and Mrs. Ray

Gardner and myself. I sent the Draft, and successive drafts, to each member, and each Board Member, for comment and vote. We are all meanwhile taking our cats and the drafts to many shows, seminars, teas, judging schools and exhibits, and are soliciting the advice and guidance of many judges. Great courtesy was extended the Gardners and myself at a judging school session in South Pasadena, California, presided over by Mrs. Pat Johnson, who allowed us plenty of time to go over our draft standard point by point with our cats and get the reactions of those assembled. Our Founder Members and those experienced in the cat fancy were a wonderful help, par-

cadia was on exhibit among other Korats owned by Mr. and Mrs. Ray F. Gardner, of Arcadia, California, who have been breeding Korats since 1963. Mrs. Gardner, seeing at once that my heart is lost to the Korat cats forever, filled me with joy by giving me Arcadia's Silver Boy—who curls up under my chin at bedtime. Male Korats have faces like a child's teddy bear, or like the little bear "Smokey" who guards our forests.

In March, 1965, I purchased my own "family"—Cedar Glen's Pichit, Cedar Glen's Ninliwan, and their daughters, Mali and Mei Ling (ten weeks old), in Charlotte, N. Carolina, and brought them home with me to Los Angeles.

In April, 1965, a breed society for the Korats had its beginnings, with Mrs. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs.



My first Korat family



ticularly and unforgettably, Mrs. Ray Gardner . . . I can never thank Mrs. Ellen Dickie enough for her wisdom, kindness and patience throughout the launching of the Korats on their show career, or Harriet Wolfgang, Irene Powell, Betty O'Brien, Paul R a i n e, and Mrs. Louise Sample, and, later, my Regional Director, Mr. Will Thompson, for their encouraging interest and support.



Jean Johnson, Daphne Negus and Gail Lankenau (Woodward) holding Mahajaya's Dok Rak of Gala (Imp.) Korat Female at the meeting August 1965.

So, we now have a breed society with members in many states of America and in Canada; a Constitution; a name—"Korat Cat Fanciers Association"; a slogan—"For the Protection and Development of the Korat Cat"; and a Proposed Standard which is finally shaped to the satisfaction of the Korat owners. It was with high hopes that I mailed our Presentation and request for recognition to CFA on October 15th, 1965 . . . and in March, 1966.

At the CFA Annual Meeting in March 1966, Miss Marie E. Purdy, a Siamese and Korat breeder, who has been active in CFA for many years, moved that the Korat cat be accepted, and the motion carried with favorable recommendation. I then compiled a further Presentation and Formal Request for acceptance, up-dating and adding to our information on places, dates and judges where Korats have been shown, number of Korat breeders and their stock in each Region, including Alaska and Japan, the KCFAs Officers and Board, photograph, sample of pedigree of a Thai-born Korat and sample of a pedigree of a 4th generation American-born Korat, history and background, and I included proof of the real aims of the private listing, set up by Mrs. Robert A. Clark, to show origin of our Korats in Thailand. I mailed a copy to each CFA Board Member and Officer. The way seemed open to our longed-for acceptance. We are producing litters of fine, all silver blue kittens. Inquiries are coming in from other parts of the world. We have already sent a pair of Korats to South Africa. Mrs. Clark attended the August meeting, taking with her the Preliminary Breeding Chart she has made for the Korats.

In future years, this will be of tremendous interest—as is the Burmese one today—as it show the first imports and their descendants, and the added imports—with the symbols to signify the silver blue and the outcross, the males and the females. Other business precluded discussion of the Korats at the August meeting. Now comes the meeting of September, 1966. It is not quite a year since we put in our first request for recognition. Mrs. John Bloem moved that the Korat be accepted for registration and championship competition as an Established Hybrid Breed. Motion carried. 11 yes, 4 no.



Jean Johnson with two of her Cedar Glen Kittens.

The joy for our silver Korats is somewhat tarnished at the news that they are now to be registered as, and classed as, an “Established Hybrid”; and the judging standard states that their eyes are: “Green or hazel.” Hazel? Established hybrid? We are promoting what is possibly the only natural breed that is being bred in the western world as well as in its native land — Thailand — in its ancient, natural form! However, just as was done with the Burmese over a quarter of a century before, for lack of breeding partners at the time, an outcross with Siamese was resorted to. With the number of imports on the increase,

this has never again been necessary. As for the “hazel” . . . The eyes of our Korats are not always green—The kittens of course, have blue eyes. The blue becomes amber or yellow (or hazel). Later the green irises out from the pupil. The mature cat’s eyes are green or golden green, brilliant, luminous and fabulously expressive. When the eyes of a Korat are on YOU, you KNOW you are being looked at!



Si Sawat’s Seesip-Hah young Korat male. Owner Richard Negus.

The eye color changes, but the Korat coat color never changes . . . Korats are silver blue from birth to death . . . they exist in no other color. If they are not born silver blue, they are not Korats. They have negated themselves. It is as simple as that. Thanks to the kind understanding of Jane Martinke and the National Breed Council of our efforts with a breed that is “new” to this continent, the standard now sets the Korat eye color down as: “Brilliant green-gold” . . . And we hope that judges will bear in mind each stage of the color transition in the eyes of our Korats — from kittenhood thru adolescence to maturity—when judging them.





Mali of Si Sawat as a kitten.

Perhaps color is one of the hardest points for humans to agree upon. There seems to be quite a divergence of opinion as to the proper description of the Korat eye coloring. Most agree that Jade Green is the most desirable—and the hardest to get. In an old manuscript in the National Library, in Bangkok, entitled the “Smud Koi,” or “Papyrus Book” in a section called “Characteristics of the Siamese Cats,” the cats of Thailand are shown in color and described in ancient Thai poetry. There, the Korat, or Si Sawat, appears in Fig. 5, under the heading “Mal-ed” (Thai for seed), an amiable looking, silver blue cat, with a very long tail. Verse is as follows:

“The cat ‘Mal-ed’ has a body color like ‘Doklao’

The hairs are smooth with roots like clouds and tips like silver.

The eyes shine like dewdrops on the lotus leaf.”

“Dewdrops shining on the lotus leaf” suggests a sparkling green, or yellow-green—or how do you interpret this? The description of the coat is exact. Our Korats do have soft hair, sprouting out all bluish-grey and ending with silver—like ticking. ‘Doklao’ refers to the flowers of a wild herb, like lemongrass, with silver-tipped leaves. It is a popular name for a female Korat. It is also a charming Thai way of saying that one has “silver threads among the gold,” referring to the white hairs which Time bestows upon us. ‘Mal-ed’ is popular for male Korats. It means seed, and refers to the color of the seed of the Look (fruit) Sawat. ‘Si’ means color . . . and the color of the Korat (Si Sawat) cat and the Look Sawat seeds is the same.

This explanation is passed on to me by Mr. Sunti Srisukoon, a member in Thailand, businessman, consultant, B. A., scholar (ten languages and ten dialects) and cat fancier. His poem to his beloved Malaid’s Maled, three times a champion and twice a television star, appears at the end of this story. Khun Sunti has provided our Association with much valuable assistance, and information from his own experiences with the Korats and from knowledge gathered by Khun Prasit Sahakorn, Dr. Jit Waramontri, and Luang



Tr. Ch. Malaid’s Maled; died 1963. Owner, Sunti Srisukoon.





Chione Armagh-Breague's Blue Bell, young female, owner, The John R. Carlsons of Chicago.

Pripont Pochanapisuti, lawyer, and breeder of Korat cats for thirty years.

We are proud to number among our Honorary Members, Khun Ying Abhibal (Mme. Ruen A. Rajamaitri) whose Mahajaya Siamese and Korat cats have been going out all over the world for many years, not the least of which were Jean Johnson's first pair—Nara and Darra, now peacefully at rest between the paws of the cat goddess, Bastet.

Another prominent Bangkok breeder, the famous lawyer, Col. Chompoo Arthachinda, has also exported some of his Korats to the U. S. and Europe.

Because of the widening interest in Korats all over the cat world, it is now possible to purchase pedigreed Korat cats from breeders in Thailand. The Sunday Market is a waste of time. Be sure to get your cat's pedigree so that you can check its ancestry if you are able to achieve the nearly impossible and get one from a farmer or villager. Without a pedigree, you will not be able to get a registration in the U.S. There is no cat registering association in Thailand. There are no breed societies, or clubs, that put on shows. Shows are held for entertainment, for charity, for some special occasion. When Mr. Nagle was in Bangkok, in 1966, he felt privileged to find himself invited by Khun Ying Abhibal to a special Korat show on Thai TV. About one hundred Korats were present. Mr. Nagle, you can be sure, seized this opportunity to try to obtain at least one of them, but he was met with the usual refusal there and up-country where one villager told him he could have anything he wished in his house, except his Si Sawats! The first prize at the TV show was not necessarily awarded to the best looking cat. It went to a Korat who responded to his master's unspoken command . . . First, as the cat was on the judging table, the man held out his arm to make a bar. The cat stood up on his hind legs and stretched up to put his forepaws on his owner's forearm, so that the judges could see his contours. After sufficient pause, the man slapped the table and the cat laid down with his four feet in the air, waiting like that until he was given the signal to stand up again. This was an irresistible performance that easily took first prize.

Korats have been exhibited in America and Canada since 1959. During the time our association was first formed and our cats at-



Malaid's Doklao, playing with her kittens. Bangkok 1966.



Mrs. Pat Johnson judging Mali in 1966.

tained Championship status (1965 thru 1966), Korats were shown even more extensively. Wherever they were shown, members gave me the places and dates and I mailed out to each judge (with duplicates to the show secretary too in many instances) a copy of our Proposed Standard, Brief History of "The Good Luck Cat of the Thai People," and Personality. We did not want our little cats to arrive on the judging table and sit there, unheralded and undescribed. Nor did we wish to delay the smooth running of the show by causing a judge who had not previously seen our cats to have to ask around for a standard or, worse, if "the owner of this cat can tell us what the breeders are looking for?"

Incidentally, we have encountered frauds among the exhibitors. Here and there, a blue cat of local (not Thai) origin has popped up as a "Korat." Sad to say, nothing protects the honest cat breeder from such practices except the weakness of the would-be defrauders themselves, and actual competition with the real product.

For the first time, Korats were included in the 1965-66 All-American lists. So honored were: Cedar Glen's Pichit of Si Sawat, All American and All Western Male, and OS Mali of Si Sawat, All American and All Western Female, both belonging to me. Cedar Glen's Little Kay of Arcadia was Honorable Mention and Western Honorable Mention Male. He belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Ray Gardner. Mrs. Paul L. Gecking's Tru-Lu's Thai Koratie was All Mid-Western Male, Cedar Glen's Sukisan of Larlin, belonging to Mrs. Alayne Appel, was All-Eastern Female, and Cedar Glen's Kasem of Ab-Hi-Ko, belonging to Mrs. Bertha M. Nuttall, was All Mid-Western Honorable Mention male.

Many of our Korats now have CFA Championships. Among them are: Ch. Mali of Si Sawat (mine), Ch. Cedar Glen's DiDi (Mrs. Jean Johnson), Ch. Larlin's Sukisari (Mrs. Alayne Appel), Ch. Si Sawat's Malivan of 3R's (Mrs. Marguerite Swift), Ch. Larlin's Kasuki of Margus and Ch. Leck of Margus (Mrs. Margery S. Hoff), Ch. Tru-Lu's Thai Timia (Mrs. Paul J. Gecking), Ch. Cedar Glen's Rajada (Mrs. R. D. Cooper and Mrs. J. Glen Brown, Canada), Ch. Cedar Glen's Kasem of Ab-Hi-Ko (Mrs. Bertha M. Nuttall).



Mrs. Wolfgang holding Cedar Glen's Liliwan of Arcadia with author at Seminar, 1966.

The fur along the spine of our cats has a tendency to break as the cat moves. It often forms a sort of spinal ridge. Their coats don't shed all the time—of course the advent of warmer temperatures or the normal sloughing off of old coat brings the hairs out in the brush . . . but they can be petted without leaving behind a covering of floated off hair. Some of mine use their tail like a fifth arm. One can feel the tail wrapped around one's arm, or waist, like a band of iron, as the cat is being carried. The other day, I looked in on one of my Mamma cats and her tail was curled around her fifth kitten. Some owners report other idiosyncracies, differing from those of other breeds they handle . . . such as that the Korats like to "feel" new objects, and new people, with their teeth, and that they set their teeth gently on their owners as a form of affection. As a breed, they are not talkative and they are not destructive. They are very intelligent, sensitive and receptive. One of mine, a recent, adorable, gift from Jean Johnson, has learned to "retrieve"—which she does indefatigably.

As I said earlier, we have exported a pair of Korats to South Africa. Their new owners, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Muller, drove from their home in Cape Town to Johannesburg's Jan Smuts Airport, a distance of a thousand miles each way, to pick up their traveling cats. This year, we will send a pair to Denmark so that they will be through their quarantine (six weeks) and settled in their new home in time for Denmark's largest annual cat show, held in Tivoli Gardens, in Copenhagen, with many entries and full TV coverage. One of Col. Chompoo's female Korats is already in Western Germany and we have sent a male Korat over to start a line of Korats there.

The Thais, though a race of warriors, cultivate a life of harmony. King Rama IV wrote a letter to President Lincoln, offering "Foreign aid" in the form of some royal fighting elephants during the Civil War. Thailand has one of the oldest air forces in the world. Its history goes back to 1911. Nakorn Rajasima (Korat) has been a bomber base since about 1937.

In the KCFA slogan "For the Protection and Development of the Korat cat," "Protection" comes first. The gentle, beautiful Korats inspire this protective feeling in so many of their admirers. Is it because of the many good luck fables that surround them in their native land:—gift of silver to a highborn bride, in olden days, to ensure a fortunate marriage; a cloud colored cat with eyes the color of young rice to bring good crops to the farmer; good profits—silver again—to the merchant?



Mei Ling of Si Sawat Korat female, which belongs to author.



Or is it their sweetness and beauty that has inspired such devotion through the centuries and endowed them with their heritage of being loved and cherished? Whatever the basis for this feeling, it has inspired the occidental owners of this playful little oriental cat to the most united efforts in behalf of any breed hitherto introduced to the cat fancy, and has gained them their acceptance with the greatest celerity and the most harmony.



Cat show in Thailand 1963. Mr. Sunti Sriskoon holding his Korat Male Tr. Ch. Malais Mal-Ed.

As a tribute to Triple Champion Malaid's Maled, I end the first chapter of my Korat story with this song and poem, written by Sunti Sriskoon to his beloved cat "because he was so obedient and affectionate." The free translation is by Jan Forman of Los Angeles, also a Korat owner.

### SONG

*Ich bin nicht allein  
Ein Buch schoen und fein,  
Meine Katze dabei:  
Die Gedanken sind frei.*

*No more alone; my life expands—  
A cherished book within my hands,  
My cat near-by:  
My thoughts soar high.*

*Ich bin nicht allein  
Wenn die Sonne schoen scheint,  
Meine Katze dabei  
Mein Leben ist frei.*

*No more alone; no dreary days—  
The benison that sunlight plays  
Upon my cat with me:  
My soul strides free.*

### POEM

*"Maled." meine liebe Katze  
Zweimal Du im Fernseh'n warst.  
Dreimal auf der ersten Platze—  
Du und alles musst' vergeh'n.*

*"Maled," my beloved friend,  
Twice you graced the flowing screen;  
Three prizes won—a dividend—  
But cats, as all, must leave the scene*

*Wenn ich bei Dir lesend sass  
Riebst Du oft an meinem Schuh;  
Nun die Schuhe niemand putzt—  
Warum gingst Du schon sur Ruh?*

*In quietness you and I shared much;  
You purred and, times, my shoe caressed.  
No longer do I feel your genile touch—  
Too soon, too soon you sought your rest.*

