



Mrs. St. Georges

## MANX AND ME

By BARBARA ST. GEORGES

It seems like only yesterday, but it was the summer of 1959, that I drove to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and bought my first Manx. That day began for me eight years full of challenges, heart-aches and rewards. Little did I know then how attached and interested I would become in this comical, lovable and intelligent breed—the Manx.

Since in 1959 I was very interested in becoming an All Breed Judge, and until that time had only bred longhairs, I decided that the Manx would be an interesting breed to work with and a beginning to my learning about short-haired cats. (A year later I was to acquire my first Siamese and to begin learning about them through showing and breeding experience.) Thus my first Manx came to Briar Brae Cattery. Her name was "Bon Chats Jo Ann of Briar Brae," age 10 weeks, color black. As "Jo Ann" grew, I entered her in shows and she quickly became a C.F.A. champion, giving me much pleasure, and, at the same time, teaching me about the Manx standard, which I had to learn for judging. "Jo Ann" had a



Bon Chats Jo Ann

winning personality, shy but lovable, she had a keen desire to be with me at all times. I began to realize that I was more than just interested in the Manx from a judging standpoint and decided to go into breeding them. I was fortunate at that time to acquire my second female, a copper-eyed white, "Silva Wytes Zero of Briar-Brae," from Richard Gebhardt who had been actively working with the Manx. One only had to glance at "Zero" to know she was a top-notch Manx. Her cutest attention-getting trait is to knead her front paws lifting first one out and up towards you and then the other. She also has the most loving eyes of any cat I have ever seen.

These two female Manx, "Jo Ann" and "Zero," can be traced into the backgrounds of almost all my Manx, as well as many others around the country. They sit proudly in my cattery and are still producing.



Silva Wyte Zero (Kneading)

It became obvious that I must get a male to use with "Zero" and "Jo Ann." At about that time Dick Gebhardt was forced to cut down on some of his cats and I was fortunate to gain the famous Tr. Ch., "Trauntail Christopher," a handsome classic brown Tabby Stud. I bred him with my two gals, and from "Jo Ann's" first litter I got one kitten, a black rumpy male, who, as beginners luck would have it, is my CFA Gr. Ch. "Briar Brae Maxie," a big winner for many years.

This was the beginning of my experiences with Manx. Since that time I've found breeding is not merely a matter of luck but rather a carefully planned breeding program. I've learned that the less inbred the Manx are, the fewer problems can be expected. At this time I have three unrelated Stud cats and ten queens, so I am able to breed without inbreeding. I have never kept a genetic record of taillessness, but I have noticed that some of my queens produce a greater number of tailless kittens than others. I have also discovered that a stumpie queen will produce just as high a percentage of rumpie kittens as a rumpie queen.

I do not go along with the theory that all Manx kittens born with tails in a litter should be destroyed, the reasoning here being that the fewer kittens in the litter, the stronger each kitten will be. To me a Manx is a Manx, born with a tail or not. I do not believe in having their tails docked so the true Manx appearance will be complete. I have discovered that these stumpie kittens may be exceedingly strong cats, and I have never had any trouble in selling them as pets. I always tell the prospective buyer that I have had the kitten's tail docked and point out to them all the true Manx qualities it does have. I make the pedigrees on these kittens available only after they have been neutered or spayed.



Jo Ann and Zero

I have had a lot of fun working with color in my breeding program. It is fun to note that a parti-color will dominate a solid color, even white. In fact, I have had parti-color kittens pop up after three generations of breeding away from them. Someday I'd like to make an intensive study of color genetics.

I have found that of the three breeds of cats I work with, the Manx make the best mothers. They are the most devoted to their litters and seem to remain with their young much longer than the other

breeds I have. I don't have a Manx mother who wouldn't willingly accept kittens from another queen in an emergency situation, even a different breed of kitten. Old "Jo Ann" so loves kittens that I need only say "Do you want babies?" and she will jump in her box in the hope I will give her some. One of "Zero's" daughters, "Millie Manx," wanted kittens so badly that she used to leap twenty feet off our balcony to get bred by any visiting tom! It took me several rounds of this experience to discover how she was getting out of the house. Then one day I saw her making the leap. The resulting litter produced two kittens, both adorable but completely unlike a Manx. We named them "Romeo" and "Juliet" for the balcony scene and were fortunate enough to find homes for both of them. Once caged, "Millie Manx" produced some fine litters of Manx. She met an untimely death, however, last year when she had a stroke and now lies in peaceful repose on our hillside with "Trauntail Christopher" and several other prized Manx who have gone on to greener pastures.

When I was breeding Persians exclusively, I was taught by many who had years of experience in breeding cats that one should breed a Persian once a year only; that it was just too hard on them to breed any more often. I try never to breed a queen before ten or eleven months, but find I cannot hold them off a longer time. Then almost as soon as they have their litters, they are back in season and most of them stay in this state until they are bred again. I have found the best results come from weaning their kittens when they are eight weeks old and giving the queen a one-two month rest before I breed her again.

My ten Manx queens range in age from one year to ten years and all are in the best of health and condition. Manx seem to be one of the strongest breeds of cats as far as being able to stand cold weather and maintain robust health. My Manx actually enjoy sitting outside in their runs in a snowstorm. I've watched them darting about trying to catch snowflakes and even playing hide and seek in the accumulating drifts. I have never had a Manx catch cold or have any other ill effect from this sort of exposure.



Briar Brae Mathew

I have noticed they are very true to their own kind. When a new Manx queen comes in for breeding, my three studs all spot her at one time and are very enthralled with the new arrival. However, if a Siamese or Persian queen comes, they ignore her completely. Gr. Ch. "Briar Brae Maxie" would viciously attack another breed if I let him near it, even a queen in season. But put a Manx queen in with him, and he is a real "Rudolph Valentino." When I first started working with Manx, I thought it would be fun to name them with names that begin with the letter "M." We have just about used up all the

names in the English language that begin with M, so I guess we'll have to start using German, French and Italian names. However, it really made the Manx I have bred stand out name-wise, and my family has had many fun hours naming cats.

I cannot write enough about the charming and comical personality of the Manx. They talk with a Brrrrrrrrrrrrp noise that is utterly charming, either in response to a person's voice or when they are amusing themselves in play. My husband's cat Ch. "Briar Brae Mathew," better known as "Tootie," talks incessantly and truly is a companion and friend. He follows Mr. St. G. everywhere, even up onto the bathroom vanity where he Brrrrrrrrrrps his approval or disapproval of every move my husband makes while shaving, brushing his teeth, etc. This cute noise reaches its real peak when a queen has her kittens. Sometimes when I have three or four queens, each with a litter of kittens, the noise sounds almost like a petshop full of canaries.

The Manx at any age seem to play harder, jump higher and have a bigger bag full of pranks and tricks than one could ever imagine. They are inventive and clever, and each day that passes brings with it a new trick or game they have invented.

My Manx have taken over a big place in my house and cattery, an even bigger place in my heart. I think I'm safe in saying my Manx are here to stay!