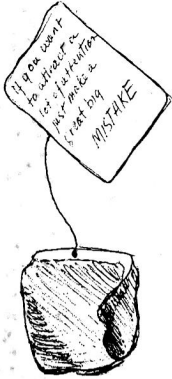


HOW'S YOUR LAUGH LIFE?

Virginia Gerbe

Amongst my souvenirs is a tag, put out by a major tea company, which is attached to all their tea bags, each one carrying a different message for thought, for each cup of tea. This one reads, "If you want to attract a lot of attention, just make a great big mistake." Methinks, somehow they heard that Mrs. G. uses **THEIR** brand of tea, for it seems to carry a personal message for this writer. And, of course, Mrs. G. did not have any collusion with the company.



In my case things just happened to fall, naturally, into place, as far as one putting the ole foot-in-mouth situation.

Let's take the very first show I ever entered. Thanks to our teenager, at the time, and these teenagers get blamed for everything nowadays, I took our little female Calico Cat, "Junior," to a local one day show . . . not CFA, in 1965. All we knew was that we had a very pretty cat and off we went. Waiting in the line for the Vet Inspection, I turned to a fellow in line behind me and admired his kitten.

"What kind of a cat is that?" I asked pleasantly. He did not really give me an answer, but turned the kitten around and gave the rear view. I saw nothing. Which, later I found was exactly what I was supposed to see, nothing as the rear of the kit I was looking at belonged to a Manx. Sorry 'bout that, Bob, if you are reading this. For one who never knew of the existence of the breed, I think I played it pretty cool.

At that show the word going around was that the cat did so nicely that she should be entered in more shows. So our "Junior" was entered in the Long Island Cat show, in Flushing, N. Y. and in the meantime a blurb appeared in our local weekly newspaper stating that a local man, of this town, would be exhibiting his cats at this show.

"Oh, how nice," Mrs. G. thought . . . someone from our town also has a show cat. A phone call to this fellow established that, and it was with great hope that he might have a male for our gal cat. "The colors of your cat are fine," he said, "but, the size is somewhat difficult." It was when I asked "why?" I found out that this gentleman is **THE ED FERRAR**, famous for his wild animal act with jungle type cats. Needless to say, it was a vereeee funneeee bit! But, he saw the humor of it, and at the show, I introduced him to our little "Junior" and he showed me the beast that I had hoped would be her mate. I think it was a tiger. Enough said?

Then at a later time came the incident, which surely must have happened at least once to any one of you readers. My husband and I were discussing an entry in the ring, and discussing the bad points. So, who was to know that the owner was sitting right in front of us, and we sure found out mighty fast. Whew!

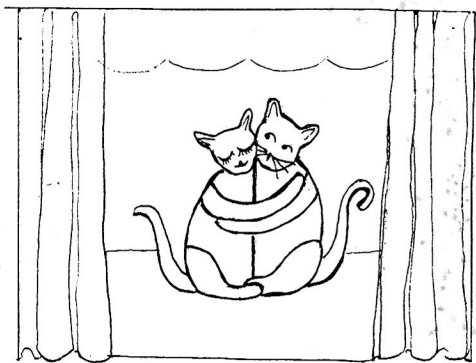
I don't even have to leave my house to get in trouble with these cats. This one time I was so darn eager to breed a pair the female of which was playing coy and giving a hard time. The male kept stalking, finally trapping his prey in the living room window. You guessed it. Sure enough, the phone rang. "Jinnie, do something with those cats! The kids are out there." With all the sex education going on in the schools, my cats without the benefit of a Government Title Grant are giving the kids an education, and I still get complaints.

I tell you, I must live in the "you-can't-win" neighborhood. But, it took so long for that pair to "find each other," I should have charged a fee for entertainment and called it, "Peyton Place, Feline Style."

Every show seems to have its "finer" points for me . . . at least one incident where the foot goes into the mouth. There was the show in '67, and once again I blew it in all my innocence at that time. I had brought in a couple of kittens on the second day, without going through the Vet check, which I later knew was wrong. But, my personal enthusiasm was so great that I had just wanted to show these babies to some of my show friends and send them home right away.

Well, the count is lost on how many people came to me to tell me to get those kits out of there, even long after they were home snug in their nest. But, the real blooper came in the heat of a shouting match with some fellow whose identity was unknown to me, at that time. Drawing up this five plus one size seven frame I bellowed in full voice to this fellow, words to the effect, "Your cages are over in the corner, mine is here! I suggest you go over to **YOUR** corner and stay there and leave me alone!" So, how was I to know that I was telling **THE** Regional Director to go stay in the corner? Boy, I found out mighty fast who **HE** was! Since then, it must be said that an understanding has been reached and there seems to be a somewhat amiable relationship now.

The key to the problem seems to be just finding out first to whom you are talking. There was this other time I got into a discussion with someone on the proper feeding and diet of the cat. Somewhat tongue-in-cheek I made the statement that it seemed to me that the best looking cats seemed to be the garbage can raider street cat. This



fellow turned out to be a representative of a well-known cat food company. Ditto with a vitamin company representative when approached for an endorsement and I asked "What's That?" As a newcomer, I truly never heard of the stuff, but I have since learned to be a little more, er . . . diplomatic, shall I say?

But, even experience has it tough teaching this individual. At the last Madison Square show I went all out to fix up the show cage attractively, using a reproduction of a lovely picture of a Calico kitten posed with a Silver Tabby kit.



Photo by Lee John

Will the REAL Cat please stand up? Upper: Ch. Junior Miss Twinkle. Lower: J. M. Twinkle's Calico Comet.

The picture received just about the same admiration as did my live cat in the cage. By the time this one fellow had come along I had answered numerous queries on the picture, so it all became an old hat affair. Or, so I thought. This fellow seemed even more interested than the others and the wheels started turning in wonderment. Finally he said, "I'm the artist who painted the original." And yeah, I thought to myself, I should tell this guy I'm Judy Garland. Another kook, I thought. And once

again the diplomacy took over, just in case. Yep, he **WAS** the real thing, and later, while watching a judging he came behind me with his beautiful wife and a friend and whispered, "So, you didn't believe me, did you? I found out you checked on me." Looking at the friend, I realized that this was the fellow I had asked to confirm the Artist's identity. Of course, things weren't made much better by the stumbling apologies. But here was one of the few times a real gentleman was found, and I still admire the picture!

So that's the way it goes. Just a few samples of how this one unwittingly endorses that tea tag slogan . . . Boo-boo type mistakes aplenty, but that kind of attention I can do without, really!

And so, I guess the moral to the story is somewhat similar to the one currently being used for the motorist. That being, when you approach Mrs. G. (that's me) for any reason, **THINK DEFENSIVELY!**

P.S.—In order to protect the guilty there is no picture of the author!