

FRIENDSHIP THROUGH FELINES

C. Bess Higuchi



Mrs. Higuchi

behind with Japanese friends their beloved pets as a token of continued friendship. These intelligent little creatures had no difficulty in capturing the hearts of the susceptible and sentimental Japanese, and it took little time for them to acquire their "place in the sun".

Delving into its history a bit, the cat has been in Japan for many centuries, as it has also been in other countries. It is presumed that the ordinary cats were first introduced into Japan around 500 A.D. from China to help exterminate rats and rodents which were destroying sacred scriptures and writings. Another theory is that cats were imported into Japan from Korea, being put on ships to protect the cargo. Upon arriving in Japan, this unusual little creature was one day presented to the Imperial Court, where the members instantly fell in love with it. The cat was even given a Court Rank in order to remain in the palace, because in those days a person without Rank was denied entrance in the Court. This little cat, having received a Court Rank which was not even acquirable to the common people, enjoyed aristocratic privileges and was fondled by the Court ladies, then the nobles, and on down to the temples and shrines. Then, it gradually descended to the ordinary citizens, and there it remains to this day.

However, the history of pedigreed cats in Japan, namely, the Persians and Siamese cats is very recent. The Persian was first introduced into Japan by a member of the American Embassy in the 1930's. Baroness Kimiko Shirane, upon visiting the home of Mr. and Mrs. Burnett was struck with the beautiful white Persian sitting in their living room, and it was not long after that she was the owner of a beautiful white Persian kitten. Madam Shirane is still a devoted Persian fancier. Regarding the Siamese cat in Japan, upon my visit to the United States in 1965, Mrs. Bess Morse of Los Angeles had

mentioned that she had given a pair of Siamese Cats to a staff member of the Mainichi Daily Newspaper who was then visiting the United States. However, in those days, there were no cat clubs in Japan and the whereabouts of these early Siamese cats are, to our regret, untraceable.



Judge Pat Johnston, right presenting
Plaque of Honor to the late Dr. Matsui

When, after the termination of the Pacific War, Persian and Siamese cats which accompanied the families of the Occupation Forces, were given to their Japanese friends the new owners were much impressed with their majestic nobility, mysterious intelligence and faithful affection.

Soon, a group of cat lovers got together and in 1956 the first Japanese cat club was created, having their historical first cat show in 1957 with Prince Mikasa, brother of the present Emperor of Japan, cutting the ceremonial ribbon. There were about 20 cats in all, mostly Siamese and less than a handful of Persians, and of course, no household pets. The Japanese gave little thought or consideration to cats up to this time, since their only reason for keeping them was for the purpose of exterminating rats.

In 1963, through the efforts of Lieutenant Robert Zenda, who was then stationed in Camp Zama, Tokyo, the first CFA-type cat show was introduced in Japan with a CFA Judge coming from the United States. Mrs. Betty O'Brien of San Diego, California, judged the show with Mrs. Joan Van Zele as manager of the show. At this show, the Japanese did not know the difference between a Blue Point and a Lilac Point. There were kinked-tails and overly-nourished cats



Judge O'Brien admiring
Cat Fancier's Cat

in the show. There were cats placed in the Lilac Point class, and after the show it was learned that there were no Lilac Points in Japan at that time. The Japanese were very surprised to see household pets at this show.

The following year in 1964, Mrs. Pat Johnston came with Mrs. Gwen Webb who was then Regional Vice President of the Southwest

Region, to judge our Second International Goodwill Cat Show in Tokyo and the first in Osaka. The Tokyo show was again held at a United States military installation, with the snow-covered Mt. Fuji prominent in the background. At this show, there were less obese cats, less kinked-tail cats and more household pets. At this time, Pat brought with her and introduced the first Abyssinian cat into Japan.



Judge Betty O'Brien honoring Best Cat, as proud owner Reiko Ito looks on.

Then in the autumn of 1965, Mrs. Betty O'Brien again came with Mrs. Ellen Dickie to judge our Third International Goodwill Cat Show in Tokyo and the second in Osaka. The Tokyo show was held at the exclusive department store in the heart of downtown Tokyo, which the Emperor of Japan occasionally visits. This was an opportune time to show the various types of cats to the amateur cat lovers and to promote the welfare of the less fortunate cats. The Japanese this time were interested in studying the difference between a Chinchilla and Shaded Silver, which Mrs. O'Brien stated were so close in coat color and so changeable that even a judge frequently has difficulty in distinctly defining the two. Also, the remark made by Mrs. O'Brien in her astonishment of our improvement in two years is vividly remembered. She said, "What happened to the kinked tails and the fat cats?" Since our first show in 1963, championship bloodlines of the Siamese and Persians were imported from the United



Mrs. Johnston presenting the Princess (Emperor's Grand daughter) with a white Persian

States, England, Australia and Hawaii. New Chinchilla bloodlines were imported from Mrs. Jeanne Ramsdale, American Shorthair Silver Tabbies from Mrs. Irene Buchan, both of Los Angeles; a pair of Manx was introduced through the kindness of Mrs. Annabelle Hoyt of Dallas, Texas. Burmese and Rex cats have also found new homes in Japan.

In the finals of the show, so very gracious in her Japanese kimono, Mrs. O'Brien herself was an "Ambassador of Goodwill."

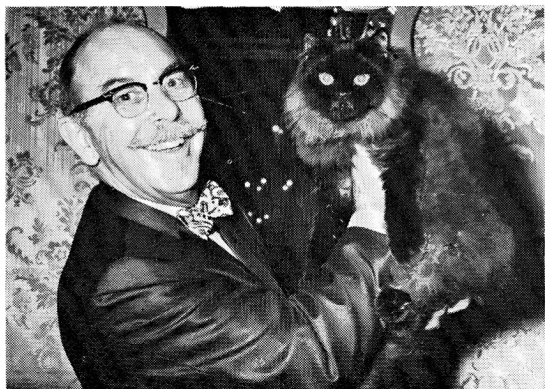
In 1966, the Fourth International Goodwill Cat Show in Tokyo and the third in Osaka was judged by Pat Johnston, accompanied by Mrs. Wyse of Hawaii. This time, Pat Johnston presented to the grand-daughter of His Majesty The Emperor a beautiful white Persian, daughter of Paleface, the 1963



Judge Raine and Best Cat
Tokyo 1968

King of Cats in America. By this time, the Japanese had imported various breeds, such as the American Shorthair Silver Tabby, Brown Tabby Manx and Himalayans. Excellent Siamese and Persian bloodlines were imported from the United States, England and Australia. And Pat brought with her a blushing bride for the bachelor Abyssinian which she had brought two years ago.

An astonishing change of atmosphere was to be seen in 1967 at the Fifth International Goodwill Cat Show with the first gentleman



Judge Raine in a jovial mood
at a Party, Sanno Hotel.

to judge, Mr. Paul Raine, who hails from Whittier California, the home of our present President Nixon. With curiosity and excitement all in one, the Japanese were anxiously looking forward to his arrival. With his gentle mustache and cheery smile, and looking like a real Japanese in his formal Japanese attire, the Japanese liked Judge

Raine instantly and called him the "jolly gentleman." Especially, at the Kyoto Cat Show, where it was held this year rather than Osaka, Mr. Raine, after lining up his finals in their cages, went to an audience seat, sat there a while and smiled very delightedly, "I am very proud of my choices!" The Kyoto fanciers were very much touched and said, "each judge has his own personal touch in judging; each is so very different and so very impressive in doing his finals."

Then the following year, 1968, a Judge from Chicago, Mrs. Lynne Beck, was kind enough to come on only a week's notice to judge our Sixth International Goodwill Cat Show in



A Typical Japanese Cat Show

Tokyo and the fifth in Osaka. This was due to a sudden, unexpected automobile accident of Mrs. Doris Springer, who had been scheduled to judge in Japan. We were very sorry to hear the sad news and regretted her not being able to come. However, Mrs. Beck, with her gestures of confidence and authority, her pleasant personality and pleasing humor, no time was needed to be favored by the fanciers here. In doing her finals in Osaka, she was dressed in a lavender kimono with gold embroidery. Trembling with joy and walking so graciously like the Japanese lady amused the audience so much that nobody wanted to leave the show room even after it was all over.

Not only have cats been coming to Japan from abroad, but cats from Japan have also paved their way into the hearts of Americans. The "Oriental Blue" which resembles the Korat Cat was bred true to three generations in Japan by an ardent cat lover. A lady in the middle east of the USA, was astonished at its beauty and type and purchased two Blue "Japanese Shorthairs" to breed with her Korats (in America). All of the judges that have come to Japan have marvelled at the soft texture of the Japanese cats and were startled when they hear that the Japanese give so little heed to them.

The friendly relations through the common interests of cats are not limited to the United States and Japan only. They have introduced us to friends in Europe, Australia and other continents. Trophies have been exchanged with various countries of the world; Madam Brita Remborg of Sweden, who is also a prominent member of the Federation Internationale Feline D'Europe; Mrs. Aina Bjornberg and Mrs. Borje Erling-Glaad of Sweden; Mrs. Helen Nordane of Nor-

way; Mrs. Edel Ringsted of Denmark; Mrs. Molly J. Oliver of Holland; and Miss Catherine Kinnon of Australia. Mrs. Jacqueline Chittleborough, the International Committee of the Siamese News Quarterly, visited Japan on her recent trip around the world with her husband.



Mrs. Lynne Beck Judge

bonds between us are firmly tied, I would say. In this age of war, and more wars, when people are struggling for survival, I think we are very fortunate to have these intelligent little felines to give us warmth of heart and to help us appreciate our friends around the world with their mysterious and scintillating purr-sonality.

Notes on the Author

Mrs. C. Bess Higuchi, who has been a moving force for the acceptance of CFA and the Cat Fancy in Japan, has been interested in cats since childhood; perhaps because, as she has humorously put it, "she was born in the year of the 'Rat' according to the oriental calendar". The Siamese have been her favorites, which she has been breeding for eight years. Red Tabbies are also part of her cat family. Mrs. Higuchi has been most active in many fields, namely as an author of cat articles in Japanese publications, an interpreter, guide and travel escort. Although she is professionally known as Interpreter with the Department of Navy Civilian stationed in Japan with the U.S. Forces, she is known and respected throughout CFA as "Mrs. Cat Fancy of Japan", for she established the CFA Liaison Office in Japan, is a member of the International Committee, on the Board of Governors of the Japan All Breed Society, Vice-President of the Japan Long Hair Cat Club, is Secretary of the American Siamese Cat Club of Japan, has many times been Show Secretary arranging for our U.S. Judges to judge in Japan and is now on the roster of CFA Judge Trainees. She may be reached at the following address: Mrs. C. Bess Higuchi, Hq US Forces Japan, CMR Box 2048, APO San Francisco, CA 9-6525.

Through the introduction of Mr. Sam Scheer, we had an opportunity to meet them and were shown slides of their beautiful Red Point Siamese which they raise in Australia.

With personal contacts between individual citizens of our countries through the medium of our common interest in cats, who speak no evil and say so little, the