

THE NATIONAL CAT CLUB SHOW — OLYMPIA

December 13, 1969

Mrs. A. M. Dickie



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Seeing the National Cat Club Show at the Olympia in London partially satisfied two of my great desires. One, of course, was to see the cats from the famous British catteries which have been, in the main, only names on my pedigrees. The other, because I am a former Show Manager, was to see how such a huge number of cats could possibly be vetted, "penned" and judged in one day.

Saturday, bright and early, I went to the hall. Imagine, if you can, the biggest quonset hut you have ever seen! It had a glass roof over the center of the building and under this the pedigreed cats were penned so that they might be judged by "daylight." Being London in winter, this was not very bright.

The pens (cages) — 24" x 24" with a few 36" for large males, neuters, litters or exhibition — ran across the building in double rows with 7' aisles. One wide aisle in the center had two platforms for final judging and there was also a wide aisle lengthwise of the building. The building was so large that there was a 30' - 40' space all around the penned area. On three sides were booths for toys, cat products, etc. The fourth side held the penned household pets who did not necessarily have to have daylight for judging!

So much for the physical set-up.

Cats were entered in four categories — Longhairs, Siamese, Shorthairs except Siamese and Household Pets. There was a veterinarian for each category and exhibitors lined up before the correct veterinarian. The vetting standard and procedure is similar to ours. It is interesting to note that declawed cats are ineligible for show (just as they are here), as are monorchids as well as cryptorchids, and that no cat may be shown twice within a period of fourteen days. This is to prevent the spread of disease or infection but it also serves to give the cats a well-deserved rest between shows. Would that CFA would adopt this rule!

Once vetted, the cat is penned in an **undecorated** cage. White blankets without markings, white or tin litter trays (unless those provided by the show are used) and a hot water bottle **under** the blanket are all that are allowed in the cage. Each cat has a tally (or disc) with its number hung around its neck by a white tape. This numbered disk is provided by the Show Committee. Cats are penned numerically as they appear in the catalog. This is wonderful for the spectator who wants

to see a particular cat or breed but must be hard on an exhibitor with several entries who wishes to keep an eye on her cats.

Judging started at 10 a.m. and shortly before that, tables (one for each judge) were assembled in an orderly manner in one section of the open area. Theoretically exhibitors are not allowed in the penned area during judging and must not carry their cats around the show at any time. The steward for each judge carries the table with a basin of water for his or her judge and is also responsible for locating the cats to be judged and handling them if the judge so desires.

There were 1800 cats in this show and about 80 judges. Each judge with his steward went from cage to cage through his section of the show, assessed the cats at the cage and marked his book. For Best in Show each judge may nominate (according to what he/she is judging) 1 adult, 1 kitten and 1 neuter which are only brought up if they won their open class. The five judges, who sit at a long table on one of the raised platforms in the center of the hall, choose one out of the Long-haired cats, one Shorthaired cat, one Shorthaired kitten, one Siamese cat, one Siamese kitten, and one each of the Longhaired Neuters, Shorthaired Neuters and Siamese Neuters nominated. I was much amused at the showmanship of some of these cats. A steward brings them up one at a time and deposits them before the first judge. Some of the cats had to be passed on from judge to judge but the old pros walked nonchalantly down the table on their own four feet!

Mrs. Pond has very kindly explained to me about the judging of Bests which I did not understand at the time of the Show. I was also confused because some pens seemed to have so many cards which I took to indicate Shows. She tells me that these are "classes," not "shows." Each cat must, of course, be entered in two classes and may be entered in as many as fifteen. The reason for this is the many club, breed and distance or radius classes. These radius classes accept cats from within a radius of 50 miles of London, over 50 miles from London, etc. Also clubs may guarantee classes for their members.

First through fourth places are indicated by various colored cards. After that come the VHC (very highly commended), HC (highly commended) and C (commended). Rosettes go only to the very top cats and have streamers four or five inches long. Trophies in general remain in the possession of the club or clubs and are brought to the hall in large wooden chests, displayed, presented and then repacked for the following year.

All of the cats with which we are familiar were represented except the Korats. In addition they had the Turkish (Van?) cat. It is a semi-longhair white with caramel spots and loves to swim and has a bad disposition, I was told. There was also the Spotted Silver, a shorthair with tabby-like markings broken so that the cat appeared to be spotted. This is one of the oldest coat patterns known and has recently been recognized.

As in all shows, there were wonderful specimens and some not so good. Being a longhair breeder, I found it difficult to assess the merits of the shorthairs but felt that there were some very nice ones.

One difficulty I had in looking at the longhairs was caused by the different way that cats are groomed. I longed to ask to groom a cat our way to see what it would look like. It is impossible to put into words the difference in grooming technique. One would need pictures of one cat with British style grooming and then re-groomed our way. There seems to be a roundness to the setting of the hair where we fluff our cats' hair up.

The names of the classes fascinated me. A Kitten is from 3 to 9 months; a Novice is one which has not won a First under G.C.C.F. rules; Breeders class is for cats and kittens exhibited by breeder; Senior cats are over two years; Junior cats are under two years; Litter (exhibition only) is for kittens 10 weeks to 3 months; Limit is for cats which have not won more than four Firsts; Special Limit is for cats which have not won more than two Firsts. Then there are Debutants—cats which have not been exhibited under G.C.C.F. rules; Maidens — cats which have not won a First, Second or Third under G.C.C.F. rules and, finally, Novice Exhibitors for cats or kittens whose **owners** have not won a money prize under G.C.C.F. rules. Last, but not least, the Neuter or Altered class.

Confused? So am I, but, perhaps, another show will clear up the fog.