

## NOTES ON TORTOISESHELL PERSIANS

Agnes Bradley



Mrs. Bradley

Tortoiseshell Persians, the harlequins of the Persian family are the most fascinating and frustrating, exciting and disappointing of all the Persians to try to breed.

Not only is it difficult enough in breeding show Persians to try to obtain the type to make up a top winning show cat but also in the Tortoiseshell Persians, one now has the additional challenge of the tortoiseshell patching. There is a haphazard chance of birth as to where the patching will occur.

In breeding, when you have finally obtained the desired tortoiseshell you must now look at the new born kitten and ask yourself several questions.

Will it have the desired blaze? (a straight line of either red or cream on the side of the nose upward to the forehead). This is not an essential factor but preferred in the standard, and makes a flashier cat.

Will it have four legs patched? This is a requirement in the standard. A tortoiseshell with four solid black colored legs will be faulted severely in the show ring.

Will it have the deep copper colored eyes to enhance the patched face? A tortoiseshell with pale eye color as a kitten will never develop copper or deep orange eye color as an adult.

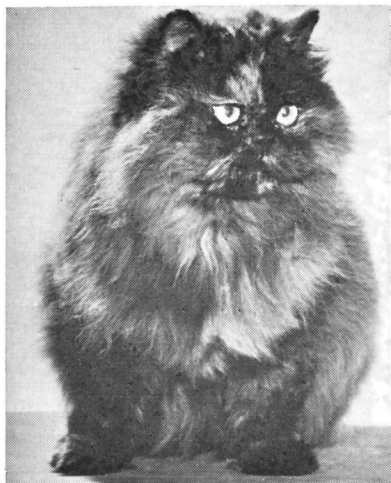
Finally, will it have the type to be considered a good show Persian and be able to meet or better the standard of the colored Persians in the show ring? What good is patching without type?

Rare indeed is the Tortoiseshell Persian that meets all these qualifications.

To emphasize the rarity of the Grand Champion potential tortoiseshells and to point up their scarcity, C.F.A. in its sixty five years of conducting cat shows has produced only eleven tortoiseshells who were deemed worthy of becoming Grand Champions.

It was not until 1960 that the first Tortoiseshell Persian became a Grand Champion. She was "Grand Champion Normont's Duchess!" She was owned and bred by Mrs. Merald Hoag and won many "Best in Show" awards. Even though she has since died she will always be remembered as the first C.F.A. Grand Champion Tortoiseshell Persian.

Following closely in her footsteps was Grand Champion Kohinoor Kathleen of Moonfleet. She was bred by Mrs. Mary Kate Carroll and owned by Mrs. Marjorie Rogers until Mrs. Rogers death in 1960. Kathleen was in the auto accident which killed her owner but left her



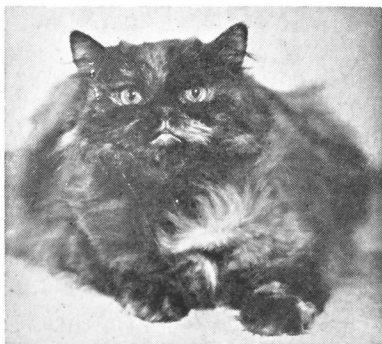
Gr. Ch. Kohinoor Kathleen of Moonfleet

unharméd. She then became the pride of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Ehrhardt, and when she was over six years of age, Kathleen went on to become a Grand Champion.

There was a long pause of three years before another tortoiseshell became a Grand Champion. In 1964, Grand Champion Astra's Monita became the third tortoiseshell Grand Champion. She was my first Grand Champion Persian and oddly enough she came from a breeding of a white female and a color bred Wimauma male. The white dam had a red sire, "Champion Longhills Red Treasure," making possible the genetic link-up to produce a tortoiseshell. There were four whites in the litter and the tortoiseshell.

Grand Champion Astra's Monita had many "Best Cat" awards and is the grand dam of National Champion Astra's Firefly and Grand Champion Astra's Gypsy.

Next to become a Grand Champion in 1966, was Grand Champion Astra's Gypsy. She was bred from a black female, Astra's Black Pearl and a cream male, Champion Gaylands Sunbeam of Astra. Grand Champion Astra's Gypsy has extreme type and in one season went from novice to Grand Championship. Surprisingly enough there were three tortoiseshells in the litter. Two have become Grand Champions and the third, Ch. Astra's Skylark, is half way through her Grand Championship.



Gr. Ch. Astra's Monita

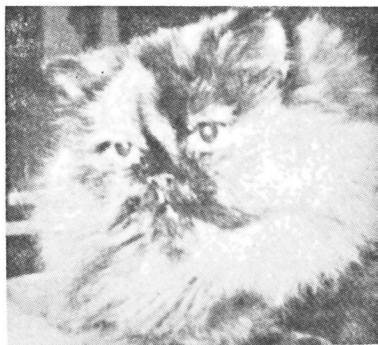


Ch. Astra's Skylark

The following year brought forth another Grand Champion tortoiseshell. She is Grand Champion Birch Haven Tike of Ben-Mar, bred by Mrs. Nina Duff and owned by Mr. and Mrs. Ben Ehrhardt.

In 1968, a bumper crop of five tortoiseshell Grand Champions appeared, and for the first time a tortoiseshell Persian became

"Cat of the Year", She was Grand Champion Misty Mornin' Meg bred and owned by Mr. Charles Milwain and Mr. William Nix. She is outstanding in her type and patching. She did much traveling to win sixty-two "Best Cat" awards in order to achieve the coveted "Cat of the Year" award.



Gr. Ch. Misty Mornin' Meg  
C. P. Milwain & W. T. Nix

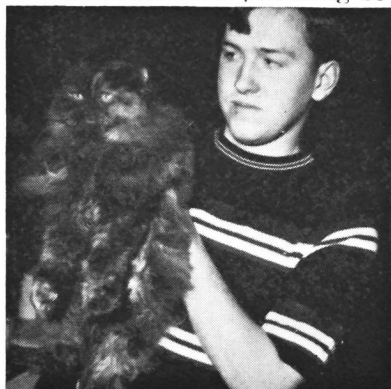
That same year Grand Champion Astra's Gypsy's litter sister Grand Champion Astra's Firefly was shown to Grand Championship. She is a good example of a tortoiseshell with a definite blaze and the additional showy factor of having her chin on the opposite side of the blaze, divided with cream markings, adding emphasis to the attractive face.

Next is Grand Champion Cherubino Twice Blessed, bred and owned by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Foster of California. She is a lovely tortoiseshell showing the excellent example of both good blaze and split colored chin.

Fourth is Grand Champion Birch Haven Pan-Z-Face of Catalot, bred by Mrs. Nina Duff and owned by Leslie Hunter. She is a flashy tortoiseshell and the Hunters are justifiably proud to own her. They have selectively bred her and she has produced some fine progeny, including two Grand Champion males.

The fifth tortoiseshell that year achieving Grand Champion status was Woodkiff Calypso of Castilia, owned by Mrs. Marcena Meyers.

The 1969-70 show season brought the last tortoiseshell Persian recorded to have made her Grand Championship. She is Grand Champion Glenorchy Merl owned and bred by Mr. and Mrs. C. Clarendon. Merl as a young cat, Mrs. Clarendon notes, excelled in type but had not developed her patching so that it was not until the following year that she came into her own to earn the achievement of "Best Tortoiseshell" of 1969-70.



Gr. Ch. Woodkiff Calypso of Castilia

It is interesting to note that in Merl's pedigree, there is much the same combination of blood lines that are in my Astra background, a blend of Longhill, Wimauma, Gaylands and Dixieland background.

Mrs. Clarendon's comment on the color fault of Merl as a young cat leads me into the subject of color in tortoiseshells.

I have found that in kittens it is desirable to have black predominate.

In newborn kittens I look for a blaze, a few patches of red and cream, patching on the feet and just a few hairs of cream or red over the body to indicate future color. As the kitten matures, these small patches of color will enlarge and become brighter in color. A young kitten with large areas of patching over the body, as it matures, by two or three years, will have an undesirable redish coat. The tortoiseshell should at all times have predominantly black with patching that is brilliant and well defined. The patches of each color should have only that color in the patch. Any intermingling of colors gives a blurred or brindled effect.



Gr. Ch. Glenorchy Merl

It is unfortunate, but true, that cats exhibiting this type of patching are difficult to produce and cannot be bred to order. It follows, therefore, that the number of tortoiseshells is comparatively few, and of these, a show quality tortoiseshell is as rare as a precious jewel.

Tortoiseshell cats, both short and long hair, have been known to exist long before cat shows, but it was not a breed which was produced intentionally in the first place. It is much more likely that cats showing tortoiseshell markings were the product of breeding by cats of various solid colors. When the cat fancy came into existence it followed that the unusual and attractive colored Persian was to find its place on the show bench.

With few exceptions to the rule, one can safely say there are no male tortoiseshells. As with the Blue-Cream, its coloring is a sex linked gene, and although rarely a male will appear, it will either die as a kitten or almost assuredly be sterile. Theoretically, all of them should have been sterile, but there are records of at least two males who were capable of siring.

There are various methods in trying to breed Tortoiseshell Persians. I have used a black female who has a tortoiseshell dam and bred her to a cream male. From this combination I have produced black, tortoiseshell and blue-cream females, and black and blue males.

A black may be mated with a red to try to produce tortoiseshells, however it must be a solid red, without red tabby in its background. The red tabby will introduce undesirable bars and ticking into that patching.

Blues may be also used with solid reds to produce tortoiseshells. If one is obtained from this combination, it may be more difficult to show, as in using a blue male, it may result in the undercoat showing a blue shading. This must be stripped out lest it be faulted for being unsound in color.

The only undesirable factor in using solid reds is that the resulting patching may have very little cream, carrying only red patches.

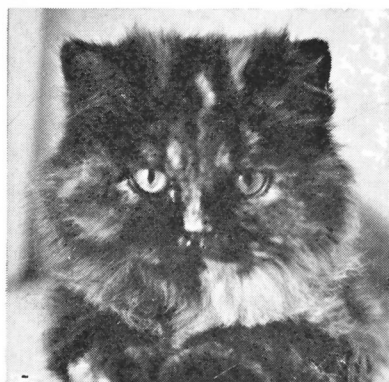
One may be fortunate enough to obtain a tortoiseshell female kitten.



**Catalot's Confetti**



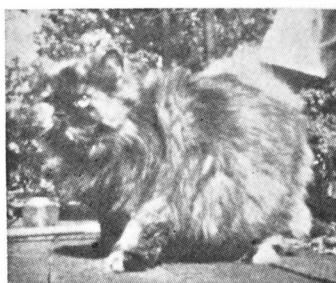
**Leslie Jo Hunter and Birch Haven Pan-Z-Face of Catalot, O. V. Hunter**



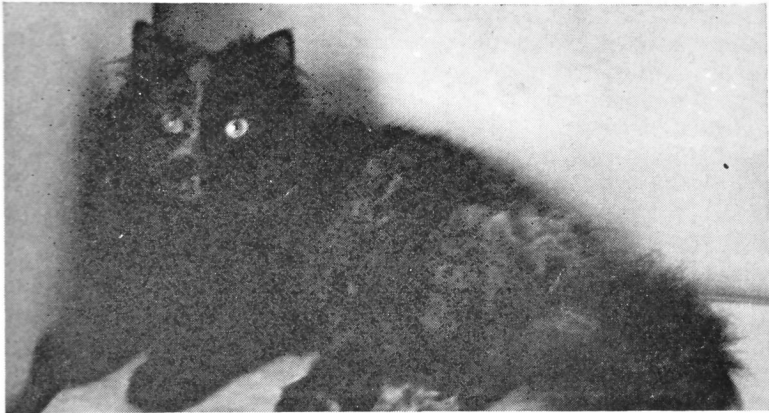
**Astra's Chicadee**



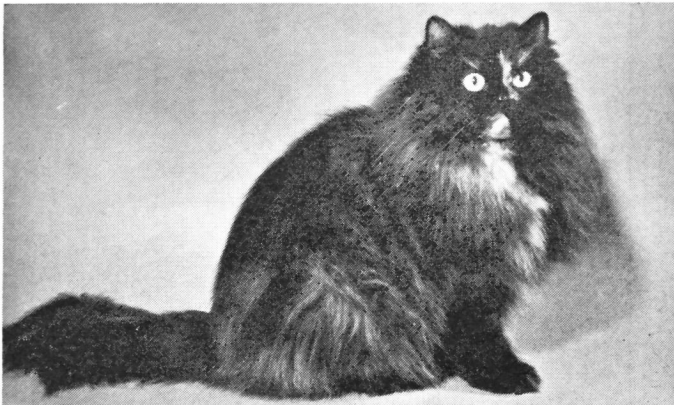
**Cherubino Twice Blessed  
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Foster**



**Birch-Haven Tiki of Ben-Mar  
Mr. and Mrs. B. G. Ehrhardt**



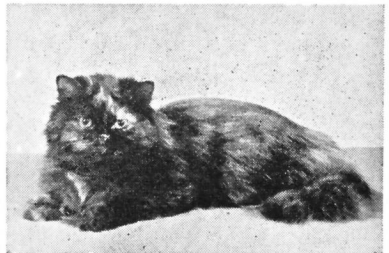
Ch. Astra's Cricket



ACFA Gr. Pr. and Trpl. Ch. Smithway Berdina. O. Annette Smith



Astra's Firefly



Astra's Gypsy

There is a variety of colors she can be bred to, to try to reproduce her color. She can be bred to any solid color blue, black, cream or red male. The resultant litters will be mixed in colors. Most of the kittens will be solid colors and occasionally there should be a tortoiseshell. It is unlikely there will be more than one tortoiseshell in a litter.

There was an article in last year's C.F.A. year book by A. David Bandy on "Sex-Linked Color in the Domestic Cat." I think that anyone interested in delving more deeply into color inheritance would find this article most helpful. It is a very authoritative and comprehensive study of color.

The Tortoiseshell Persian is never a dull cat. She is full of "sugar and spice and everything nice." My tortoiseshells have very lively dispositions. They are very affectionate Persians and very responsive to attention.

In showing Tortoiseshell Persians, there are two factors which go hand in glove. The first factor is diet. Only when fed a well balanced diet, with all the minerals and vitamins a cat requires, will the coat take on the luster and sheen of a healthy animal.

I feed my Persians twice daily. The diet consists of beef, supplemented with oatmeal, wheat germ, powdered milk, bone meal, vitamins and linatone. A bedtime snack of dry kibble helps to prevent tartar formation on the teeth.

Kittens are weaned with milk and pablum, and strained baby food, gradually working up to beef meals. They are fed four times daily, two meal meals and two milk and pablum meals.

Finally, for showing, a tortoiseshell must be immaculately clean. The beauty of the patched coat is the contrast of colors. This can only be accomplished by bathing and grooming, since no powder may be used. I have found it advantageous to bathe a week before the show, washing completely with a mild shampoo, followed by a thorough rinsing with a spray attachment. Excess water is removed with towels and an electric hand drier is used to complete the drying. Precautions against chilling after the bath must be taken.

Daily brushing and combing will restore some of the oil removed from the coat by bathing.

In being presented to the show ring, the coat from the shoulders forward, is lifted and groomed towards the face. The rest of the coat is combed back and lies flat showing its pattern and contrast of color.

I hope this article will be of interest to potential breeders of this fine variety of Persians, and that more will find their place in the show ring with "Best Cat" awards.

#### Biographical Note

Born in Brooklyn, New York, I attended Brooklyn College, then entered Long Island College Hospital and received a degree in Nursing.

During World War II, I volunteered as an Army nurse and served in Europe as a first lieutenant. After the War, a degree in anesthesia brought me to my present profession.

Since childhood, I have had at least one dog and cat, plus a variety of other pets, to the dismay of the rest of the family.

My first show cat was a Siamese purchased in 1947. The following year I entered my first cat show. I showed Siamese exclusively for over ten years and gradually started showing Persians. I still have and show both breeds.

It has been a family affair. Without the support and help of both my mother and husband, it would be difficult to maintain the Astra Cattery.