

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

### Some Notes on the Work and Cats of Richard H. Gebhardt



Mr. Gebhardt, judging a Black Persian, his favorite color and breed.

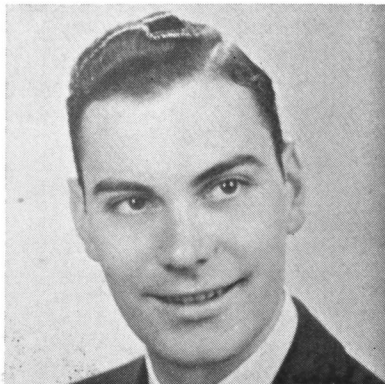
not yet Black) was cheaper than a Siamese he wanted which was \$15.00!

However, once started he continued with the Blacks, mating Smokie to a stud, considered very good at the time for \$15.00, and with the money from the resulting litter bought a Silver and a White, two Persians that lent their name to his cattery "Silva-Wyte."

Dick's interest and dedication was soon spotted by the old guard and it wasn't long before he was taking many show jobs and club offices; he did stewarding and publicity as well as all tasks "from the ground up". He became Vice President then President of Garden State Club at 22. It was the year that he became show manager for the well known Asbury Park show, one of the largest at that time and was also accepted to the CFA Judging Program. "Judge" Gebhardt became a very sought after Judge, for as he later gained experience he added this to what seemed to most, an unmistakable talent for "selecting the best". His fame as Judge has spread to Europe where he has been invited again and again, he is now on the regular list of Judges in the GCCF, in England, the first American Judge to attain this honor.

His interest in cats brought Dick some memorable experiences. He remembers the exciting times when no less a personage than Princess Nathalie Troubetskoy visited him and his mother with her "Egyptian Spotted Cats", a real novelty in that era, and they took in the cat shows. Not only

If there is such a thing as "Cat Fancy Aristocracy" then Dick Gebhardt must surely merit some sort of a title. Ever since he was fourteen, he has been involved with cats, having bought a "Black female Persian" at a pet shop for \$10.00 at that tender age. However, his latent ability to look with the critical eye of a judge was even then manifest for he tells me he was "never so blind, even though he loved her, as to believe she was worth more than was paid for her." It was by accident that Dick started with Persians instead of Shorthairs. The Persian "Smokie" (so named because as a kitten she was



Dick at 22

the cat shows occupied them but they were entertained by a number of America's great hosts such as the Michael Grace's of Grace Shipping and the Actors Guild where he met Marilyn Monroe when he says, "she lived up to every bit of her fabulous publicity". The Opera Ball and the opening night of the National Horse Show also provided them with great gala evenings!



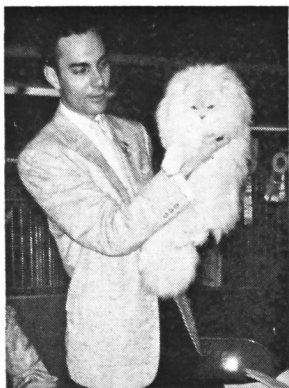
Dick when living in East Orange, 1956

We would expect someone so dedicated to cats to be rather one sided but oddly enough many of our CFA great seem to be all around people as well. There were four siblings in the Gebhardt menage, among them was Harry, Dick's twin brother. They went to school in East Orange, but after High School, Dick became an art major in a private school. He had to leave this pleasant pursuit however, and became a Bank Teller after which he worked as a payroll accountant. He had not found himself yet, and grew discontented. A pet shop was the answer; his own business, where he could be around the animals he loves. This and his judging seem to place him in the field where he rightfully belongs.

When I asked him what were the high points, in his Fancy experience he was quick to mention the special event, "when I first saw Elsie Hydon's **Gr. Ch. Lavender Liberty**". To him, this blue Persian was the apex of fine breeding. Even an inexperienced cat breeder would recognize the greatness of this cat. Another thrill he remembered was when he made **Gr. Ch. Shawnee Trade Mark** his Best Cat in Allbreed. This cat made a terrific impression on him, he could not forget him. "Perhaps I should mention the saddest thing that could have happened to me in my cat-breeding career was when I lost **Voo Doo**. He was a great cat but I was so personally attached to him that it was not his greatness I missed but my pet. I had to bury him just before I left for a judging assignment. I will never forget it".

One innovation that I believe Dick can claim some credit for, was the emphasis on showmanship. To Dick, this meant a certain flair, not only in a Judge's attire but in a kind of compelling presentation of his winners. He took into account the gate as well as the exhibitor in creating a sense of drama and excitement. He would sweep a cat up high for all to appreciate, causing the owner to almost swoon with pride. Fine showmanship certainly has added to our contemporary shows: the ring is the stage and Dick takes full advantage of the prestige and beauty it provides.

At the young age of 41, Dick has held most every position and office CFA has to offer. Club President, various offices, Show Manager. President of the Judges Association (its first), Board Member and President of CFA. It is a story without words; there must reside in him some very unusual abilities for his constituents to return him



Judging a shaded Silver  
in Houston

year after year to office. From my own personal vantage point, I find him most agreeable to work with; he is concerned about CFA always but in a quiet way. There is no frenetic need to impress, no witch hunt to point an accusing finger at someone less than perfect, no interest whatever in stirring up mischief or in being an "over-achiever", for he is his own man and knows what he wants to do and how he wants to do it.

Things have not always been easy, and in business, in CFA and in his personal life there have been many disappointments, defeats and frustrations. But Dick does not give up and perhaps because suffering is certainly always present in the human condition, he has learned to persevere when he thought he was taking the right path. For

this kind of strength, we can be grateful; it is a good quality in a President. Dick's appearance in the Cat Fancy was expertly timed to take advantage of the great expansion of CFA, and to know and associate with the early movers and shakers. He learned from the best. Elsie Hydon was first, with her proud sense of excellence and strength in application to duty; what better mentor could he have had just starting out? He appreciated the confidence that Matil Rotter showed in the ring and determined to follow her method. He admired the breeding of Anthony DeSantis, who would show up with as many as twenty or more Longhill cats at every show. In this time of change and growth of CFA and the Cat Fancy he learned lessons that have stayed with him throughout his life.

A proper list of achievements for this space-limited biography would fill a book, but we will list a few of the outstanding ones which might be an example for other young Fanciers who would like to learn and grow, as did young Dick who started at fourteen.

**Mr. Richard H. Gebhardt:**

Has been active in CFA since 1946.

Served 14 years as President of Garden State CC.

Was President of the Judges Association for 6 years.

Owned and bred Cat of the Year, Gr. Ch. Voo Doo and Gr. Ch. Silva-Wyde Trafari of JB.

Member of CFA Board 11 years.

On Board of Trustees of Morris Animal Foundation.

Field Director of Pet Pride.

Was listed in 1972 Edition of Community Leaders of America.

Consultant to National Geographic, Special Feature on Cats 1964.

First International AB Judge.

First American to Judge in Europe.

Has judged in Canada, Copenhagen, Paris, Munich, Brussels, Melmo, Sweden; London. Was guest judge for the Special Centennial Class at the 1971 National Cat Club Show at Olympia, England which was held in celebration of 100 years of Cat Shows.

Judging 1972 shows in Tokyo and Osaka.

Was elected President of CFA in 1968 and again in 1972.

C. S.

# PRESIDENT RICHARD H. GEBHARDT

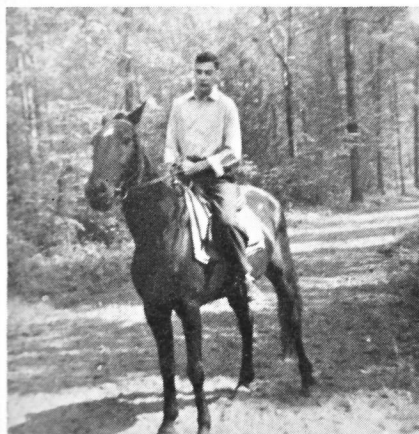
## EARLY DAYS WITH



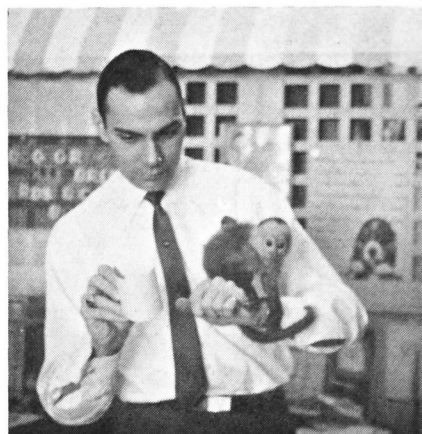
Outside of the Home Office (the U.N. of the Cat Fancy) with Bess Higuchi from Japan and Jean Rose.



Matil Rotter and Richard Gebhardt judging Voo Doo. Best in Show at Wilmington, 1958.



An early hobby—Horseback riding and Horse Shows.



Dick in his new Pet Shop about 1960.



Opening night at the National Horse Show at Madison Square Garden, NYC.

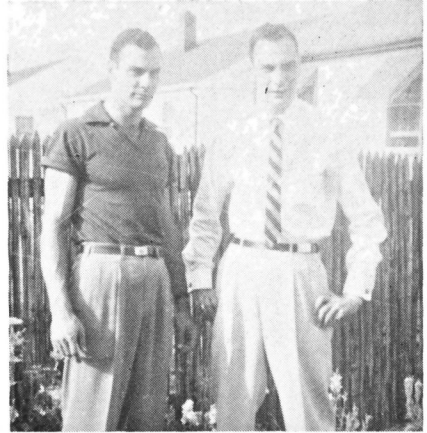


At a party given by Mr. & Mrs. Michael Grace of the Grace Shipping Lines. Princess Troubet-sky with Richard Gebhardt, 1956.

## FAMILY . . . AND . . . FRIENDS



Proud owner of Voo Doo with picture by artist Ed Hughes presented at Regional Banquet by the Members of the Garden State Club for Dick's 20 years membership.



Dick with twin brother, Harry.