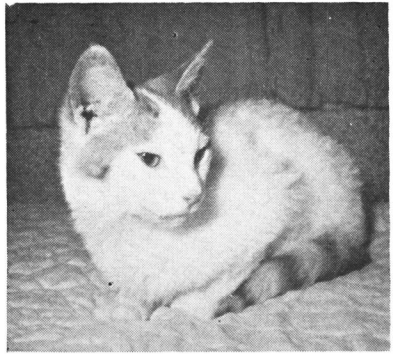


NOTES ON THE AMERICAN WIREHAIR

The coat mutation known as American Wirehair occurred in a domesticated cat born near Verona, New York. The original mutant came to the attention of Mrs. Joan O'Shea who acquired the cat and its full litter sister. The wiry coated male Adam had a sparse coat of a red and white piebald pattern while his normal coated sister Tip-Toe was brown tabby and white. At maturity the two were bred and produced four kittens, two of which were wirehaired. Only one of the wirehaired kittens was raised to maturity. The surviving wirehair female was bred back to her sire and produced one stillborn and one living wirehaired kitten.



Adam

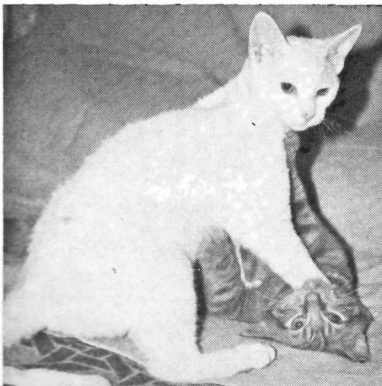
O. Bill Beck

The early American Wirehairs are elongated in body type, high on their legs with tall ears and prominent orbits in which large almond shaped eyes are set. The subcutaneous tissue is somewhat less than normal but the cat is hard, well muscled and has a tubular trunk.

There are several differences which set the wirehair apart from all other coats, but the most striking one is a distal hook which causes the hairs to tangle.

Fortunately for Mrs. O'Shea and Mr. and Mrs. William Beck, III, who joined her in preserving the coat, the mutation has proved to be more dominant than recessive. In addition, what is more important, there is no evidence of disease or lethality associated with the Wirehair.

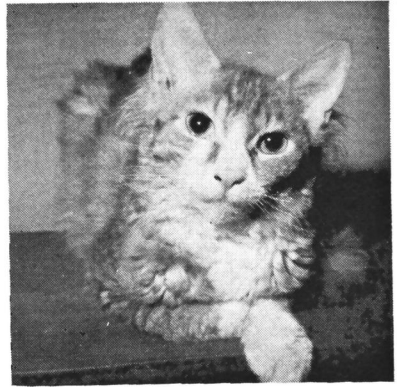
Through the efforts of Mrs. O'Shea and the Becks, Wirehair cats have been placed in the hands of interested breeders in the United States and Canada. What follows are notes on two early American Wirehairs. If the observations are somewhat flippant and irreverent, it is because the cats themselves are wholly irreverent. Their personalities are such that they have dominated a household.



Heatherwood's C.W. and Fiorello

In March of 1968 Bill Beck wrote me about the new coat mutation which Joan O'Shea had found. Of course, I was curious about any new mutation that occurred in cats, and Bill sent me some samples of the coat as well as some samples of the German Rex coat for comparison. It was obvious that Adam was different from any other cat that had been previously described in the fancy. My interest continued in the new breed that was to be established by Mrs. O'Shea; however, I did not feel at that time that I was going to become involved in the project.

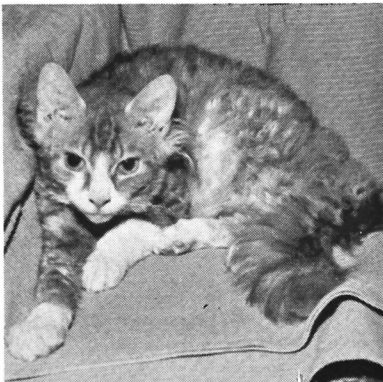
During September of that year I was standing in the vet line at a local cat show talking about the Wirehairs and said that I would like very much to have one. As quickly as the words left my mouth, someone tapped me on the shoulder and said "You've got one". It turned out to be Maddie Beck who was exhibiting in the show. We made all of the arrangements; and sometime in November, the coldest night of the year, I was sitting, shivering, in a car waiting for Ellen to arrive. She, too, was shivering on some forgotten runway for about three hours before we both got together.



Ellen

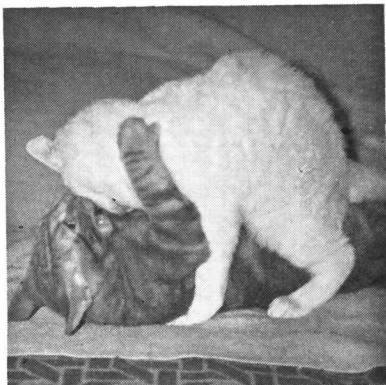
I had never seen a cat carrier shake on its own, but this one did. And as we got her into the car and tried to keep warm, the carrier continued to shake. I opened the lid and could not believe what I saw. No one is ever fully prepared for what a new mutation in cats will look like. It turned out that Ellen was no exception. We finally arrived home, and I thought the best course to follow was to plunge in and let her meet the umpty-ump American Shorthairs, and other assorted varieties of felines in my house. I put the carrier on the sofa, sat beside her and opened it. This was the first time I saw her in full light. She was a red head and had a temper to match. I had never before heard the unearthly screams which emitted from Ellen's throat whenever one of the other cats tried to peek at her. After three days on the sofa, during which time I am sure nature pushed her to the litter pan and food dish, she finally stepped from the carrier in full glory. While I was prepared to love anything that had come along and was called feline, tenderness of any sort is put to the test when one sees a brillo pad walking on four legs. Attached to the rear of this frizzled animal was a plume like feather duster, laughingly called a tail, one which would have put a vaudeville queen's

feather boa to shame. She had very large ears and her most redeeming feature was exquisite jade colored eyes. Ellen's coat was quite thick, I would say anywhere from one half to three quarters of an inch in length. It was resilient and almost had the feeling of sheep's wool. The coat was practically water repellant, a fact Ellen had learned early in life. She had decided that washing would not help, and she promptly gave it up. As a result, it was necessary to clean her face almost daily. Ellen was and is crazy like a fox, and this face washing routine was an attention getting



Ellen showing full tail

mechanism that worked extremely well for many, many weeks. Although she loves kittens, Ellen is her own best friend. She is the only cat that I know that will sit in the middle of the floor all by herself, sound asleep and purr to keep herself company. She is one of the most independent cats I have ever known and also one of the most lovable. She fitted into the household with the other cats fairly well, and became enamored of a brown tabby and white cat. However, in spite of three different matings, she has never conceived. This concerned me a great deal as one always worries about lethality in a new mutation. Of course the stud was unproven and this didn't help matters either. But one thing that became readily apparent is that no matter how sexy a Wirehair may be, tom cats have less interest in them than in the ordinary American Shorthair. There is something about the coat that startles them.

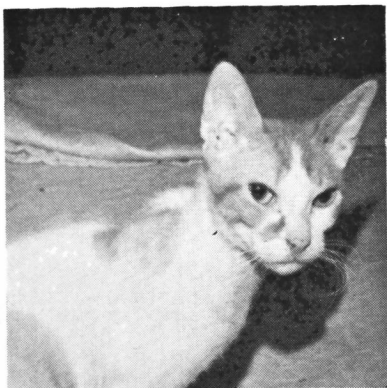


C.W. and Fio

One of our most interesting adventures was to put Ellen on exhibition at a local show. She cowered and shook in the cage from ten A.M. Saturday morning until she was presented to one of the judges. It was as if lights turned on and cameras were rolling. Ellen's startled face looked as if she heard a fanfare somewhere, because as soon as

she was in the judge's cage, she turned it all on. There was much preening and washing and posing. She had that "I'm wonderful" look. Ellen sat, walked, cast coy eyes over her shoulder and flicked her feather duster. What a remarkable change in a cat. She keeps washing every day hoping that she will get to go again. What a marvelous and wonderful girl she is!

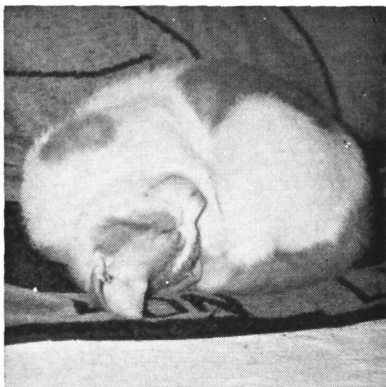
Several months after Ellen arrived, Bill Beck wrote that he was going to devote his entire attention to the German Rex and was looking for a home for Amy, the red and white cat that was Ellen's mother. I simply could not think of this really historic



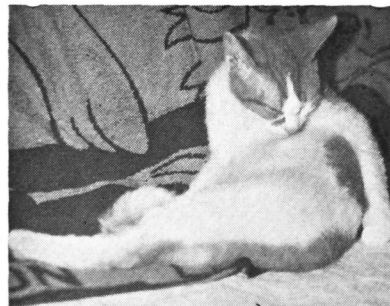
Hi Fi Amy — Fall 1970

cat being anywhere else but with me. So there I was at the airport again, this time all day instead of three hours. Amy had been sent to Tampa and was experiencing sunstroke on a runway there; and although she should have arrived at eleven thirty in the morning, it was seven o'clock that night when we got the poor sun baked creature. It was August and this time the hottest day of the year. Poor Amy! Heat emanated from her for a day and a half. Having experienced

Ellen, I thought I was prepared for anything, but no such luck. Amy turned out to be a red and white piebald spotted cat with a tremendously dramatic pattern. Her ears were larger, if that is possible, than her daughter's. She was higher on her legs and had a prehensile tail that wrapped around any object of convenience. If I was startled by anything it was the lack of coat in Amy. It was no longer than a sixteenth to a quarter of an inch. This was quite a shock, so much of one that I called Maddie Beck to find out if she had been clipped for the summer. Maddie was startled in that I did not realize how sparse the coat was on the majority of American Wirehairs. Ellen was the exception to the rule. But if you have only experienced the exception, the rule still comes as a shock. The first mistake I made with Amy and Ellen was to think that, possibly, long separated mother and daughter might wish to see each other. The reverse of this, of course, proved to be true. They both screamed like banshees with their red fur flying. Immediately Amy was placed in my bedroom with the silver Exotics. And she did fairly well, at least better than Ellen did in meeting her new friends. Amy simply cleared the decks. Amy adjusted much more readily than Ellen. The setting remained harmonious as long as she had her way. She was not to be disturbed by other cats or other people. It was apparent that Amy did not consider herself a cat to be viewed by curious visitors. The tail would flick, and



Amy relaxing



Amy bathing

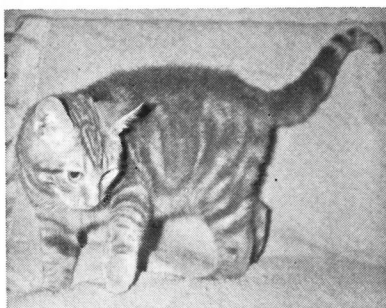
her eyes close to a slit in the most withering and contemptuous gaze.

Somehow, she always mellowed at night and for a while her favorite position was seated next to me with her head resting on mine. As time passed Amy took over my pillow and me. She only purrs at night having saved up all those good guttural, steam radiator noises just for my ears. If Amy happens to be disturbed at night she leaves the bed and finds some morsel of food, usually sardines, which she has put aside like any good

pack rat. After this has been smeared on her face, she returns and breathes the lovely essence on anyone in her place. It is a moving experience.

As it turned out Cissie, a shaded silver Exotic Shorthair came into season about the same time that Amy did, and each was bred to the proper mate. Throughout their pregnancies I am sure they exchanged bits of advice and gossip. However, on the night that Cissie delivered

her kittens Amy suffered a spontaneous abortion. It was good for her, however, to join Cissie in looking after the new Exotic kittens. They took turns, the mother taking care of the babies at night and the wet nurse Amy looking after them during the day. She was an excellent mother and I felt that as soon as she came in season again we would breed her. It was not long thereafter that Amy was bred to an odd-eyed white American Shorthair. She became tremendously large during her pregnancy and had a difficult delivery. She had produced very large kittens before, and this turned out to be the case again. She had four male kittens, three whites and one red. Two of the kittens are wirehaired, the other two are smooth coated. All have very thick coats. The red kitten is spectacular in that he is a classic blotched tabby. They are thriving and Amy has proved to be an unusually good mother. At present she is training her sons to be as bright and independent as she is.



Heatherwood's Fiorello
Amy's boy

(From the notebooks of Dr. Rosemonde S. Peltz who also furnished the photographs. See CFA Board, Page 7 for her address.)

NOTICE

Contributors to the CFA Year Book

Send typewritten pages, one side only, double spaced.

Author should send clear glossy photograph of self, name and address on back, and a short autobiography.

All photographs should be black and white, with name of subject and address on the back. Number them in article and make list by number on separate sheet.

If using footnotes please list them numerically throughout the article and write numbered footnotes at end of article.

Be sure of your facts by doing careful research.

Articles on breeds of cats should cover the following:

1. Early history if available.
2. Names of early breeders and cats with any wins.
3. Present day breeders and cats.
4. Any problems with breeding.
5. Any grooming or feeding practices of the author.
6. What is hoped for future improvement.
7. Discussion of other ideas; health, showing, breeding standards, ethics, etc.