

by Diane Seidel

GONE

In past years, the CFA Yearbook has published several fine articles devoted to the origin and history of the Russian Blue breed. In writing this article, however, I should like to give my impressions of the last six years, the bloodlines, breeders, and the cats who have helped the Russian Blue breed achieve an increased degree of recognition in the show ring and in the Cat Fancy in general.

In 1966, when I first realized that pedigreed cats and cat shows existed, the Russian Blue was more noticeable by its absence than its presence in the show ring. It wasn't unusual at that time for a person seeking to view a Russian Blue at a show to find that the only Russian Blues in the show were on the Purina Cat Chow flyer describing the various breeds. With this information, however, one could not be certain what it was that set the Russian Blue apart from the other blue breeds of cats. On one occasion I entered the Baltimore show which then as now has one of the largest entries in the country and found myself with the only Russian Blues entered.

Perhaps I am being a little pessimistic, but in my opinion, interest in the breed at that time was very low. This was the result of three related factors: most cat breeders were not interested in becoming involved with the Russian Blue breed; most judges were less than knowledgeable about the breed because they were given so few to handle; and as a result the pet buying public was generally unaware of the breed's existence. In all fairness to the judges, I must add that the variety of types of Russian Blues being shown at that time may have caused many of them to become completely confused as to what a Russian Blue should look like. It wasn't that Russian Blues, taken as a whole, didn't have all the features called for in the standard but these features were never found in one cat, and hence, judges were being presented with specimens excelling in some features while severely lacking in others.

In contrast to that situation, one can now find 15 to 20 Russian Blues entered in many shows and as high as 30 entered on some occasions.

In recalling the situation 6 years ago, three breeders stand out in my mind: Mrs. Dorothy Lech, Three Crown Cattery, who is still very active in breeding Russian Blues; Mrs. Peg Calkins, Felinest Cattery, who is also still active; and Mrs. Harriet Zimmerman, Aberdeen Cattery, who unfortunately passed away this year. In my opinion our present stock and the fine examples we now see



Grand Ch. Velve's Willwinky

may never have come into existence had their motivation and love for the breed not been as strong as it was.

Mrs. Dorothy Lech, of Wayne, New Jersey, is primarily responsible for the importation of several of the finest Russian Blues Sweden has had to offer. The beautiful head and body balance of these cats along with their fantastic emerald green eye color was a truly important contribution to the breed.

The most famous of these, Gr. Ch. Pavel of Braheborg, Imp., is behind many of the show winners we see today. I feel Pavel's most outstanding features are his emerald eye color and his head type. No one who has ever seen this depth of green eye color can forget it and the head type of the Swedish cats is of great consequence because it is the only line which carried an almost flat profile.

This near flat profile is so necessary to our present Russian Blues because it is one of the characteristics that sets them apart from Korats, Blue American Shorthairs, and British Blues. Although some judges have felt that some of the present day Russian Blues are too Siamese like in head type, I personally feel it is most important to hold firmly to this characteristic in moderation or our Russian Blues will be no more than tipped Blue Domestics.

I must also mention that unfortunately the Swedish line with all its benefits did not offer the best in coat plushiness, as a general rule, and the depth of



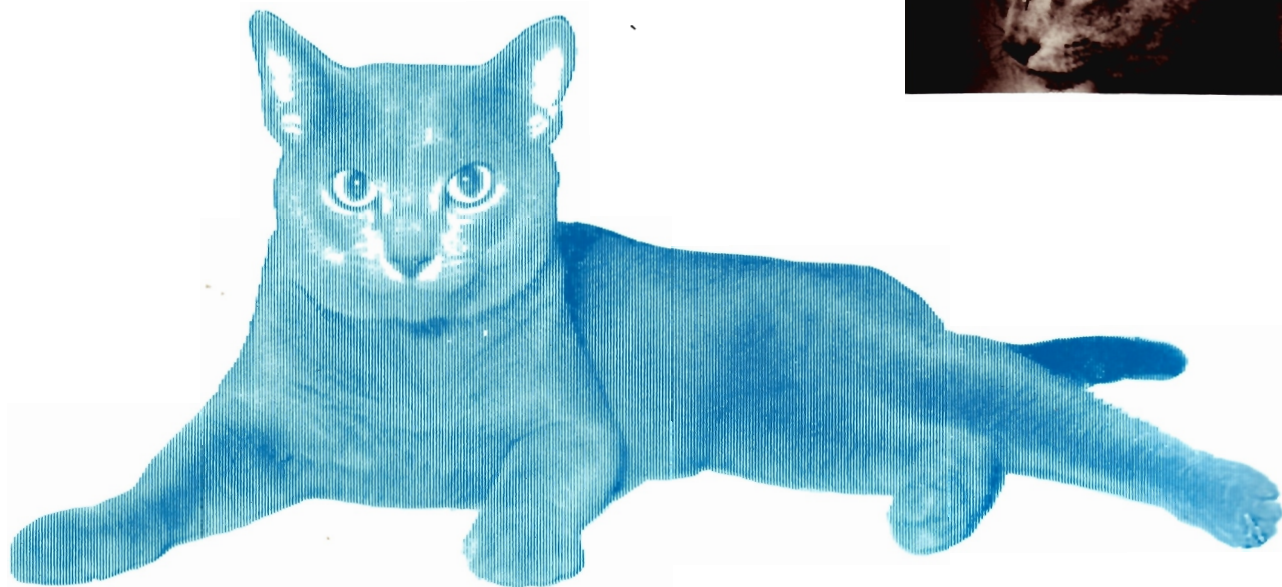
Two Russian Blue Kittens

tipping so desired in our present cats. As a result of this lack, many judges did not consider them as worthy of a final win. Their contribution to our present cats is unquestionable, however, for without their head type and eye color the near perfect Russian Blue could never have come into being.

In the Chicago area, Mrs. Peg Calkins, Felinest Cattery, was working with another line which was unique because of the English imports it contained. This line's most outstanding characteristic and contribution was its pale coat color and silver tipping. Unlike the Swedish cats with their deep emerald green eye color however, this British line demonstrates a paler lime green color which has come to be considered as an unfortunate but almost unavoidable consequence of the paler blue coat color.

The English stock also carried refined boning, and almost any breeder seeking a more delicate boning in their Russian Blues should take this fact into consideration. The English cats with their beautiful coat color did however lack coat plushiness, and their head type was not the most desirable, being long enough but with a definite break. As a result, they were not always consistent winners in the show ring, but their contribution to our present day cats is of great consequence.

BLUE!



Grand Champion Velva's Blue Viking

Gr. Ch. Felinest Flying High of Velva, above

Mrs. Calkin's most famous cat is Gr. Ch. Felinest Silver Dollar. He is behind almost every light coated Russian Blue being shown today. It is interesting to note, that although Silver Dollar demonstrates mostly English influence in his appearance he does carry some Swedish cats in his background and also some of the old Dunloe stock, which I will discuss later, so he may have been the first cat who was a combination of the three most important lines in Russian breeding today.

In the southern part of the country, Mrs. Harriet Zimmerman, was working with yet another line. It is my understanding that Mrs. Zimmerman purchased most of her stock from Esther Taylor of Atlanta, Georgia, who had imported some of the first Russian Blues ever brought into the country. This line was primarily of English Dunloe background and had the plushy coat not found in the other lines.

The Dunloe line is perhaps the oldest Russian Blue line found today and had been, in the past, the most popular line. Strangely enough; it was not the most popular line in this part of the country when I began breeding, being found at that time only in Harriet Zimmerman's cats.

Harriet's most famous cat was Gr. Ch. Es-ta's Tao of Aberdeen and I remember seeing this lovely cat in the middle of summer with the fullness of coat that I had thought impossible to achieve. This fullness of coat was certainly needed by the majority of Russian Blues and I believe many of the Russian Blues with good coats today can trace their background to these lines.

Unfortunately, it is my opinion that the Dunloe cats had been very closely inbred and had begun to have problems with lack of size and a very definite domestic head and body type. Also, perhaps because of this inbreeding, the production of kittens was very low. It was a common feeling among many breeders when I began working with Russian Blues that they were difficult to breed and this idea along with the story that Russian Blues had little or no vocal capacity can be attributed to this line.

Although the subject of possible outcrossing to other breeds is not a popular idea for discussion with any breed supposedly of a pure nature, the Russian Blues as I believe most every breed whether acknowledged or not, have been outcrossed somewhere in the dim, dark past. The breeders working today should have knowledge of these outcrosses so that they may know why certain problems arising from these outcrosses occur.

To further document my feeling that outcrosses have been made and were made for many years now, I refer to Harriet Wolfgang's article on Russian Blues which appears in her book entitled "Shorthaired Cats", which was published in 1963. The article states that breeders in England and America have experimented in cross-breeding the few obtainable bloodlines, with Blue Domestic and Blue Point Siamese, but neither crossing resulted in success. The Domestic cross ruined the oriental bone structure as well as lessened the plushiness of coat; the Blue Point Siamese cross did not lessen the oriental type, but it in no way helped the desired coat texture. This cross also induced markings of bars and tail rings.

My personal feeling is that the Blue Domestic cross also introduced into some lines a longer, more open domestic type of coat than is desirable. If anything can be said in favor of these outcrosses it must be that they contributed strength to the very limited stock which was in real danger of inbreeding itself out of existence.

I was very fortunate to have been able to see all three of these great Russian Blue males when they were in their prime and I can truthfully say that as varied as they were I loved every one of them. I pictured in my own mind what I believed a Russian Blue would look like that would most nearly meet the present standard and felt it was a combination of Pavel's eye color and head and body type; Es-Ta's Tao's coat; and Silver Dollar's tipping and refinement of bone.

Perhaps the one most important piece of advice that I can give to someone



Grand Champion Felinest Silver Dollar

just starting in Russian Blues is to first determine what the perfect Russian Blue should look like and then plan a breeding program with that goal in mind. Do not expect to achieve the near perfect cat in one breeding. Pick your breeding stock with care. It is perhaps strange but my first four cats did not achieve any greater award than Champion. Yet these cats have fostered a line which has produced more Russian Blue Grand Champions than any other line at any time in the past.

It sometimes seems unfair when several breeders will work for many years never quite achieving the show-stopper-type of cat and then someone new to the fancy will come along, combine two or three excellent lines and come up with THE CAT. The credit for the concept must go to the new breeder but the quality of the lines behind the winning cat lie definitely with the people who have bred the parents and grandparents.

I will relate my method of achieving this combination in the hope that it may help someone else produce a winning Russian Blue. My first Russian Blue female was Ch. Rasdedjan's Ninouschka of Velva. "Nina" was a Swedish import of little distinction in the show ring. She carries only a beautiful head type and a solid body. This solidness of body is invaluable for whether it is written into a standard or not the cat who feels solid and strong of muscle has a definite advantage in the show ring.

I next purchased Ch. Parr-San's Silver Token of Velva. He was a son of Gr. Ch. Felinest Silver Dollar and Ch. Erosjina of Braheborg (Imp), and a little sister to Gr. Ch. Pavel of Braheborg. Silver Token, although a very large cat, carried a heavily tipped coat, beautiful eye color and a lovely head type.

Next came Ch. Felinest Tonya of Velva, also a daughter of Silver Dollar and one of Mrs. Calkins English imports Jennymay Astrii of Felinest (Imp), Tonya carries refinement of bone, lovely lime eye color and head length. Nina bred to Silver Token produced Velva's Anastasia, which I will talk more about later. Silver Token bred to Tonya produced the most important cat I have ever bred, Gr. Ch. Felinest Flying High of Velva, famous not so much for his show

wins, although he accumulated enough points in one show for a Grand, but for his ability to sire grand champion Russian Blues. Flying High's head and body type, coat and eye color are dominant characteristics in all his offsprings. Not knowing his true worth I sold him as a pet to a close friend of mine for \$35. Although she allowed him to be shown as a young adult he was neutered before a year and a half. However, before he was neutered I bred him to five of my females and out of the 21 kittens produced from these breedings, 6 made their CFA Grand Championships.

His most famous offspring, from a breeding with Velva's Anastasia who I mentioned earlier, is Gr. Ch. Velva's Blue Viking. Blue Viking was Best Russian Blue in CFA in the 1970-71 and 1971-72 show seasons. He was also Great Lakes Regional Best Cat those two seasons and 7th Best Cat in CFA in 1970-71 and Second Best Cat, Best Shorthair in the 1971-72 season in CFA. These wins made him the highest scoring Russian Blue in CFA history and an incentive, I hope, to anyone working now or thinking of working with Russian Blues in the future.

I would like to mention one other cat of my breeding that I feel is of importance. Gr. Ch. Velva's Williwinky, although show extensively only in the 1970-71 show season is a combination of all three lines, being a product of Viking's litter sister, Ch. Velva's Miss Behavin, and Ch. Velva's Buccaneer, grandson of Ch. Erosjina of Braheborg and Gr. Ch. Es-ta's Tao of Aberdeen. Willi was shown as an adult only from the middle of January until the end of May, but in that time he accumulated enough points to be Great Lakes Regional Second Best Cat to Blue Viking. These wins are only really significant because they are wins made by Russian Blues, a breed never before achieving that type of recognition.

In conclusion and in an attempt to illustrate further the importance of the three lines I have mentioned in this article I have compiled a list of all Russian Blues making their grand championships since the 1966-67 show season. Explanatory footnotes follow those cats illustrating one or more of these lines.

1966-67 Show Season

- Gr. Ch. Felinest Silver Dollar (2)
- Gr. Ch. Selene's Alexander of Marrakech
- Gr. Ch. Tinnerdalens Njusia of Bobcat (1)

1967-1968 Show Season

- Gr. Ch. Kit-Kin Peter of Car-Mac (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Three Crown Brita of Illelani (1)

1968-1969 Show Season

- Gr. Ch. Bobcat's Blue Flame of Braunhaar
- Gr. Ch. Felinest Flying High of Velva (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Es-Ta's Laurel of Aberdeen (3)
- Gr. Ch. Kabbarps Inula, (Imp) (1)
- Gr. Ch. Karn's Alexei
- Gr. Ch. Kit-Kan Volga Boatman (2) (3)
- Gr. Ch. Pavel of Braheborg (Imp) (1)

1969-1970 Show Season

- Gr. Ch. Aberdeen's Blue Doll (3)
- Gr. Ch. Bobcat's Blue Blaze
- Gr. Ch. Felinest Blue Chip of El-Bee-Jay (2)
- Gr. Ch. Meri-Rose Alex of Kit-Kin (1) (3)
- Gr. Ch. Meri-Rose Mischa of Evinrude (1) (3)
- Gr. Ch. Rogers Hts Njuska of Thayne
- Gr. Ch. Three Crown Aina (1)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Blue Viking (1) (2)

1970-1971 Show Season

- Gr. Ch. Aberdeen's Blue Esther (3)
- Gr. Ch. Car-Mac Pia (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Hy-Line's Silver Knight (1) (2) (3)
- Gr. Ch. Hy-Line's Blu-Prince (1) (2) (3)
- Gr. Ch. Rindy's Haven Jeffie
- Gr. Ch. Three Crown Lubim Senaya (1)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Extraordinaire (1) (2) (3)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Silver Queen of Hy-Line (1) (2) (3)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Mr. Ree (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Mimsy of Gryphon (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Sky Chief of Hy-Line (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Williwinky (1) (2) (3)

1971-1972 Show Season

- Gr. Ch. Braunhaar's Alix of Verde
- Gr. Ch. Car-Mac Carla (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Car-Mac Lavendel (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Car-Mac T'Gallant of Caro-Lei (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Grandyl Boris (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Hy-Line's Silver Song (1) (2) (3)
- Gr. Ch. Hy-Line's Star Dust (1) (2) (3)
- Gr. Ch. Kit-Kin's Shadda (1) (2) (3)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Blue Fairy of Sahara (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Hallelujah Baby (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Vanessa of Les Joy (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Fresh N' Foolish (1) (2)
- Gr. Ch. Velva's Gone Blue (1) (2) (3)

- (1) Swedish Import
- (2) English Import — Felinest
- (3) Old Dunloe Line



Gr. Ch. Felinest Flying High of Velva



Pavel of Braheborg, owned by Dorothy Lech of Wayne, New Jersey.

GONE BLUE
by Diane Seidel