

# It's Ragdoll Time!!!

by Isabelle Bellavance



GC. BW. RW Darlmildol Sir Rupert of Kebekat, a seal point & white male CFA's Best of Breed and the North Atlantic Region's 8th Best Cat and Best of Breed. 2002 Br Gail Arthur On Isabelle Bellavance



GC. BW. RW Dollhouse Denver Blues of Kebekat, a blue point & white male CFA's Best of Breed and the North Atlantic Region's 11th Best Kitten and Best of Breed. 2001 Br Janeil Cillessen On Isabelle Bellavance



CH Kebekat's Bizou, a blue point & white male Br/Ow Isabelle Bellavance

It's November 1999, and we're at the turn of the century: we're in Kansas City at the mega event, which is the CFA International Cat Show. Twenty-three Ragdoll cats, kittens and alters responded to the call of Breed Chair, Judy Kay Halsey. All came in their best attire, displayed in a whole row of flashy ecru red cage bottoms, cage decorations and curtains harboring ticking clocks - showing that the "Time" had come... A beautiful display was made in the breed booth under the banner for "Provisional Breeds," with photographs of some of the nicest specimens of the breed, lots of information and marvelous real live cats for visitors, judges and fanciers alike to appreciate in their full glory. The cats were on their best behavior, proud owners and extra groomers/"foofers" at their command to participate in this mega event, all having but one thing in mind - show CFA, the largest registry of pedigreed cats, that the breed was deserving of their recognition... Then it was "Ragdoll Time!!!"

That was my very first taste of CFA and what an addictive experience it has turned out to be!! Just a few months later at the February 2000 board meeting, when Ragdoll breeders around the world were holding their breath as they attentively listened to the on-line transmission of the various items on the agenda, we all cheered a sigh of relief and cheered ecstatically as the verdict fell... The breed had been accepted into Championship, UNANIMOUSLY!!!

The venture towards CFA acceptance had been a long and difficult one, but breeders had relentlessly pursued this ultimate goal throughout the years, and they were finally going to be rewarded for all their hard work. From then on, Ragdoll breeders have been proud to exhibit their cats under the "Ragdoll" banner that hangs from the ceiling at subsequent CFA International Cat Shows. I'm very proud to have been a small part of this story and will take this opportunity to thank all those pioneers of the breed who contributed, each in their own way, towards this achievement, and will take

the rest of you on a trek to help you discover this breed that has stolen the hearts of so many people all over the world.

## History

It all started in a town called Riverside in California, sometime in the early 1960s. A woman of limited financial means and little education, Ann Baker, made her meager living working at a local laundromat while she worked on a small experimental cat breeding program that she dabbled with for a number of years as a hobby. None of the cats were pedigreed but she was breeding them proudly, attempting to create something unique, something of a longhaired Burmese-type cat.

Ann Baker had a neighbor, Mrs. Pennels, who had a large piece of property where a number of cats ran around and bred randomly. One of these cats was a longhaired white cat called "Josephine." Josephine was not a very friendly cat, being very protective and aggressive towards people and other animals that tried to get close to her kittens. Survival of the fittest was her motto, and survival instincts she did have. Josephine had an unfortunate accident one day, as she was run over by a car; she miraculously survived. How she managed to recover depends on which version of the story you have heard - although severely disfigured, she recovered sufficiently to be able to pursue her love affairs with the local tomcats and produce a few more litters.

Ann had been known to routinely "borrow" one of Mrs. Pennels' cats to breed some of her own cats to. Thus she entertained a certain friendly, neighborly relationship with Mrs. Pennels. During one such visit, Ann was completely taken aback by the striking beauty of one of the kittens in Josephine's last litter. It was a blue-eyed pointed kitten, with white feet and tail tip, harboring a blaze of white hairs contrasting on the dark mask of his face. For Ann, this kitten had a truly special and unique look. She was totally taken with this cat who she called "Beauty." Although Mrs. Pennels did not want to part with this particular cat, she agreed to let Ann Baker use him and promised

her a kitten from Josephine's next litter instead. On a later visit to Mrs. Pennels, Ann discovered that Josephine had had another one of her multiple litters, but this time she had bred to her son, "Beauty." None of the kittens had the same mitted look that appealed so much to Ann, but she decided to take home one of the kittens, a pointed female with lots of white and an inverted "V," who she called "Fugiana." She also acquired a dark female out of Josephine, and "Blackie," who Ann called "Buckweat." It was a good thing she did as shortly after, Josephine had one of her over-protective fits and attacked the family dog. Mr. Pennels, who wasn't really fond of the cats, had had enough of the hissing and catiness; he took Josephine and the remaining kittens in the litter to the local pound, where they were all put down.

From this point on, Ann modified the orientation of her breeding program and decided to concentrate on this new type of cat, aiming to produce more cats like Beauty. Although Ann had never paid attention to any of Josephine's previous litters, it seemed that the late offspring of Josephine were exceptionally large, low shedding, had non-matting coats and were blessed with very gentle dispositions. To the common layperson, it appeared that they had no sense of danger and were very tolerant to inflictions that would have been painful and produced violent reactions in any other normal cat. No one really knows where these attributes came from, or even if they were indeed legitimate; but, a research lab was commissioned at one point and after a lot of testing and probing, scientists determined that there were no physiological or neurological differences between the Ragdolls and any other cats.

Ann claimed that the trait came from Josephine, whose genetic make-up had been modified during the accident, but as Ann became older and perhaps a little more "eccentric," the story became more and more distorted - going into the midst of genetic engineering for secret government experiments, the introduction of human genes and such other