

CH. BERNINA HEIDI



Britain's First Red Abyssinian Champion

by DORIS THREADINGHAM

Although Red Abyssinians would appear from time to time in litters, and, as far back as the turn of the century, one was recorded, they were given away as neutered pets. The Abyssinian Club frowned upon these cats for everyone thought them the result of a red tabby mating. This, of course, is not the case for the Red is a true Abyssinian which lacks the black pigment of the Normal (Ruddy) colour.

The late Mrs. Dorothy Winsor, Tranby Cattery, England, decided that she wanted to breed the Red Abyssinian and work for its recognition. Lacking any encouragement from other fanciers, she proceeded alone. Her breeding programme was based on stock she acquired in the late 1950's from Lady Liverpool (*MERKLAND YILMA* and *MERKLAND SHEBA*, both females) and Mrs. Edith Menezes (*TAISHUN KHEPRA*, a male). I, too, was interested in working with the breed and, when I went to live in Hull, very close to Mrs. Winsor, we were able to work together. The Governing Council of the Cat Fancy officially recognized the Red Abyssinian in 1963 and Breed 23a became a reality.

My Normal queen, *KATTYPUSS JACINTHA*, was mated to Mrs. Winsor's Red male, *TAISHUN KHEPRA*, and, joy of joys, out of her litter of 5 kittens born 12th April, 1964, one was a Red girl, *BERNINA HEIDI*. *HEIDI* began her show career at the 1964 Kensington Kitten Show and, among many firsts won that day, she obtained her Open. That summer, at small sanction shows, she was Best In Show Shorthair several times.

As an adult in February, 1965, *HEIDI* was awarded her first Challenge Certificate by judge Val Prentice at the Coventry and Leicester show and was taken up for Best In Show. It is my contention that a cat should have her first litter by the time she is a year old because a frustrated queen leads to a bad breeder so *HEIDI*'s

career paused for motherhood.

Her next show was in September, 1965, at the Hertzs. & Middlesex show where she got her second C.C. from Effie Aitken and, again, was Best In Show SH. In October at the Yorkshire she won her third C.C. under Gwendoline Budd and Best In Show SH. This completed her Championship and *BERNINA HEIDI* became Britain's first Red Abyssinian Champion. In the years that followed, *HEIDI* earned five more Challenge Certificates.

TRIO OF CHAMPIONS

In 1965, *BERNINA NAOMI*, Red Aby female, was born as the result of a mating between *TAISHUN KHEPRA* and *CH. BERNINA HEIDI*. *NAOMI* was a Champion before she reached her first birthday! The following year, a repeat of the breeding produced *BERNINA PRINCESS* who quickly became the third Red Aby queen to win a Championship: she was mated and sent to Johannesburg, South Africa. She produced one kitten, a male, who has sired many kittens.

In Heidi's fourth litter, again sired by *TAISHUN KHEPRA* for there was, as yet, no other Red Aby male at stud, she had three males: one, *BERNINA SASCHA*, went to Johannesburg where he has sired many litters. Quite recently I received a catalogue from Port Elizabeth, S.A., and read of a Red Aby son of his who had won 8 Challenge Certificates. *SASCHA*'s brother, *BERNINA SIMEON*, went to Mrs. Garnett, Chesterfield, Richmond, Virginia, USA, and soon became a Champion. From a litter born in 1968, two kittens went to breeders in Sweden and did well.

In 1970, *HEIDI* was mated to a new stud, *KHOSHAN EL KABAR*, bred by Rex Hobson and owned by Mrs. D. Lancaster. *BERNINA RED LANCE* was in this litter and, from the moment he was born, I knew he would be a 'flyer'. The kitten had very good bone structure; good, well-tufted ears correctly placed; good wedge shaped head; good length to body; and his coat, even then, had a well defined red hue without blemish. He has six C.C.'s to his credit and many B-I-S wins. When he was only six months old, he started on his matrimonial road by having an 'indiscretion' with a Brown Burmese queen. Two of the kittens born were



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The Red Abyssinian is firmly established now, both in Britain and overseas, but, in the beginning, it was indeed slow and heavy going. During *HEIDI*'s early show career, the Red Aby was not generally appreciated. Very soon, however, knowing Championship was within reach, many Aby fanciers wanted the Reds and started breeding them. Via *HEIDI* and her progeny, now numbering over 40 kittens, both Blue and Cream Abyssinians are appearing. These new colours are not yet recognized but it is hoped for within the next year.

HEIDI does not call very frequently now, but I am hoping to mate her to a Normal for, strangely enough, I have never kept one of her progeny for myself.###

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