

## WILL THE REAL RUSSIAN BLUE PLEASE STAND UP

By BOB HAZLETT



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We've had two kinds of cats at our house during the time we've been captives of the fancy. For the first several years it was Siamese and they were, probably, the fancy's all-time worst. But we loved them and hauled them around to the shows, thrilled when we took a red ribbon over our usual yellows. Siamese breeders will be quick to agree that, when we elected to breed and show a good line of chocolates, we did indeed have a tiger by the tail.

Then, because a just providence takes care of fools and beginners, our good and cherished friend, Mrs. C. W. (Marge) Pallady, gave us the little cat which was to change our lives. Because I had so admired the animal and, I guess, just because that's the wonderful kind of person she is, Marge gave us our first Russian Blue.

What a change! Into our menagerie of howling banshees came our stately blue lady. Asserting her rights and her claim to total leadership took only minutes. And, from that day to this, nothing about our relationship with the fancy and, in truth, the world around us, has been the same.

Her name is Anna. I use only her given name as opposed to all that formality of titles and awards because she has retired to a tranquil life of absolute dictatorship. She came to us with a goodly share of acclaim already hers. And, happily, she continued her winning ways. It was quite a switch for us to exhibit a cat which, not only took blue ribbons, but also, wonder of wonders, even had a chance at those mythical, distant and mysterious things the other exhibitors called "the finals."

"Hey, this is all right," thought we, carrying home our loot. "If one Russian Blue can accomplish all this for us, just think what two will do." So nothing would do 'til we had a suitable spouse for our Anna. And, in time, he came. As if fate were writing the libretto, his name was King.

By now the Siamese were on borrowed time. The Blues had taken our hearts. Finding good homes for almost thirty loveable appleheads wasn't the easiest thing in the world



Mellstock Anna of Pallady. English import with solid Dunloe background.

to do but, somehow, we did it. The decks were cleared for action and let the chips fall where they may. The world was going to hear about our blue beauties.

"Faint heart never wins the race," they say but they hedge their bets with "look before you leap." In short, we really didn't know what we were getting into with these fluffy blue felines. It wasn't long until we realized that some deep and serious research was in order. Just where had these quiet little cats come from; what was their lineage or were they indeed a breed unto themselves; what far-sighted person was responsible for their introduction to the fancy and a myriad of other seemingly impossible questions. If we were going to be authorities, it seemed prudent to have a little information. But, sadly, and again from the bottomless barrel of semi-wise old sayings, "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

As we dug into our Russian Blues' background the truth slowly seeped through. There just isn't one clear and solid story about this breed. Here, let me give you the benefit of a part of what we found.

A book written in 1959 by Grace Pond says "It is thought that these cats came to Britain many years ago, brought from Russia on cargo ships trading between Archangel and this country. It was not until after the last war that the name Russian was adopted. It must be appreciated that the Russian Blues seen in Britain today are the result of many years of selective breeding, and that the name Russian, like that of the Abyssinian, does not imply the country of origin but is merely the name given this recognized breed."

Okay, they existed but people didn't call them Russian Blues. They were Archangels but, Mrs. Pond went on, again writing in 1959, to give a standard for this breed which described what we would consider today to be very foreign type. Not quite what we think of as the cat called Archangel today. So, with apologies to Mrs. Pond, let's dig a little farther back.

In a book copyrighted 'way back in 1900, Helen M. Winslow, in her fine book "Concerning Cats" says, "The Russian Long-Haired pet is much less common even than the Persian or the Angora. It is fond of cold weather, and its fur is denser, indicating that it has been used to colder regions. Many of the cats we see are crosses of Angora and Persian, or Angora and Russian, so that it is extremely difficult for the amateur to know a thoroughbred cat which has not been mixed with other varieties."

There is also a fine short-haired cat coming from Russia, usually self-colored. Mrs. Frederick Monroe of Chicago, owns a very handsome blue and white one."

Whoops! Now we discover that they did too call them Russians, or at least in Miss Winslow's neighborhood they did. And, on top of that they weren't necessarily monochromatic cats at all. To compound



Ch. Biru's King (of Bobcat)  
Dunloe background with out-  
crosses to American lines.

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with the 1

his long hair just by the ski  
for all the world as if you v  
short-hair bred to the Persian  
that wouldn't hold through t





