

PET PRIDE'S

ALL CATS

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NEPENTHES ABYSSINIANS

by Joan Wastlhuber



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photo by
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1 *Gr. Ch. Nepenthes Leo.* 2 *The Wastlhuber neutered CFA Grand Premier tabby enjoys a summer day by the pool.*
3 *Nepenthes Cattery looking towards the studio with fireplace. The Wastlhuber home in background.* 4 *Nepenthes Cattery.*

In 1969 we lived in a sophisticated San Francisco penthouse designed by us and built on top of a Telegraph Hill building overlooking the Bay. Our life at that time revolved around Alfred's architectural practice and my interior design business, frequent trips to Europe and other places, our main interest — skiing, and our house in Squaw Valley. We were surrounded by an art collection, many artifacts and exotic plants. Little did we know that the charming mixed breed tabby cat who visited Alfred's office each day would start to change all of that. This cat was owned by a neighbor and he enjoyed coming to work every morning. He was careful not to damage the drawings and was friendly and good

company to everyone in the office. We began to think it might be nice to have a cat ourselves just like him.

Other than Puss Puss whom I found in the woods and brought home with all of her suckling kittens at the age of 6, I had never had a cat. Puss Puss was wild and never would come in the house and the kittens all were raised and placed. The tabby cat brought back memories of this short but never forgotten experience. Alfred had a tabby cat named Peter in Germany as a child, so we both decided to find a tabby as a pet cat to live in the penthouse. Of course the tabby would have to have a companion to keep him company while we were at work. One of Alfred's clients told us we should con-

sider an Abyssinian and that a cat show would be the place to see all kinds of cats.

That first cat show opened a whole new world for us. We not only found a breeder of purebred classic brown tabby American Shorthairs, Bert and Ruth Wrench, but we also were fascinated by the graceful wild cat appearance of the Abyssinians. We bought one of each and they fit right in to the penthouse and traveled on weekends with us to the snow in Squaw Valley. Both had registration papers and the breeder of the Abyssinian said he was good enough to be shown and convinced us to enter them in the Concord Summer Kitten Match. It was Toby, the tabby, however, who stole the show. He won

lots of ribbons, while Jason, the Abyssinian, had his white "drip" pointed out to us by one of the judges as being a disqualifying fault. We carried the two kittens into the showhall in our arms never having seen cat carriers or realizing how unsafe this is.

We went home before the finals so we didn't hear until later that Toby would have been a finalist. Now, in looking back, we are grateful for the kindness shown to us by the judge who explained Jason's fault in a way that assured us that he was nonetheless a beautiful cat. We enjoyed that show, and after so many people told us Toby was outstanding, we decided to go to one more. After a few Best Kitten wins we were hooked and Toby eventually became Grand Premier Ru-Bee Tobias of Nepenthes. He is now 12 years old and was last shown on his tenth birthday when he still was able to take some nice wins including Second Best Cat. At every show we watched the Abyssinian classes carefully and gradually became determined to find a top quality female whom we could breed.

In 1970 Nepenthes Cattery was registered and in 1971 we were able to purchase our first female from Edna Field, Ch. Chota-Li Fifi of Nepenthes. At that point our small Porsche started to become crowded on weekends to the snow country and the artifacts had suffered some damage. It seemed time for a change so we sold the house in Squaw Valley and instead remodeled an old fishing village house, including cats' quarters, all on a large dock directly over the water north of San Francisco near Vallejo. For a while we kept the penthouse but eventually leased it and put all of the artwork in storage where it still is. The house at Sandy Beach is designed for cats. It is comfortable and informal with practical materials. The cats are able to run free on the dock, boat slip and pilings and, because we are surrounded by water on three sides and fences on the other, they are safely confined to our property.

We acquired foundation cats from several old American bloodlines. The most important foundation male who is in the pedigrees of all Nepenthes kittens born today, was Gr. Ch. Amulet's Pepi of Nepenthes. Pepi was CFA Best Kitten and also 2nd Best Cat in 1970, a double National win in one show season. Pepi was available for sale upon the death of his owner and breeder, Elizabeth Freret, and Alfred surprised me with him as a gift in 1973. When Ch. Avenue Mandarin-Shoniev came

from Hertha and Duane Chellevoid in Arizona for breeding to Pepi, she produced a special litter of four males and one female. We acquired from this litter both Gr. Ch. Avenue Pepi-Tbasko of Nepenthes who became CFA 10th Best Cat in 1976, and Avenue Pepi-Kyenne of Nepenthes. Both of these males have been important in our breeding program, and they have enabled us to establish a line breeding system using cousin matings.

Another important and unusual litter came from Ch. Dar-Ling Krishtana of Nepenthes, purchased from Beverly Childs. Krishtana was bred to Pepi-Tbasko and this mating produced five males, four of whom became CFA Grand Champions. So far this has not been matched in any other Abyssinian litter. Two of these males, Nepenthes Leo and Nepenthes Dubonnet are now almost 5 years old and are still with us as stud cats. Nepenthes Tquilla of Badfinger is an International Champion as well and lives in Germany with Vincent Kaiser of Munich. Nepenthes Prophet of Dar-Ling is with Bev and Tim Childs. All four boys have in turn produced Grand Champions, and Leo was the CFA Northwest Regional Best Kitten 1977 and Best Regional Aby in both 1977 and 1978. We started showing him for a National win in 1978 and he had a good start with thirty Best Cat wins by September. But gradually we

could see that Leo didn't care for shows anymore. Many people will remember how well Will Thompson handled him, in spite of his intimidating behavior, as he made him Best of the Best at the Pet Pride Santa Monica show in September of that year. That was a thrill for us and the end of Leo's show career. Leo made up for our disappointment by producing a son, Gr. Ch. Nepenthes Nereus, who was CFA 4th Best Cat in 1979. The grandson of both Leo and Dubonnet, Gr. Ch. Nepenthes Akime, was CFA Best Abyssinian and 9th Best Cat 1980. Nereus' daughter, Gr. Ch. Nepenthes Esprit was also CFA 2nd Best Kitten in 1980, and she was Best Kitten across the board, including Best of the Best at the 1979 Pet Pride Santa Monica show.

In the last 4½ years we have bred 13 CFA Grand Champions and one Grand Premier. As anyone knows who has raised purebred cats for any length of time, it is not all easy. There are setbacks and heartbreaks. It is a tremendous amount of work and occasionally we wonder if it is worth it. We enjoy all of our cats foremost as pets and are therefore careful not to keep any more than we can easily care for with our one cat caretaker. Since Abyssinians need space to run and play every day, and they demand lots of affection, we believe in the absolute minimum of

Joan and Alfred Wastlhuber photographed at Casa Dorinda, an historic home in Santa Barbara. Architecture by Alfred Wastlhuber, interior design by Joan Wastlhuber.





Gr. Ch. Nepenthes Nereus, CFA's 4th Best Cat, 1979.

Males' quarters.

confinement. They dominate our house and dock and our young kittens do make a shambles of our living room at times. The breeding females, when they are in heat or nursing their litters, are in the "cat house" and are thoroughly content there with their own small studio space and food preparation area. They have individual rooms for their litters until the kittens are old enough to venture out and meet the others. The males have their own quarters on the other side of the dock overlooking the garden on one side and the water on the other. They like to be out on the dock in all kinds of weather and seem particularly to like cool crisp mornings.

We continue to breed Abyssinians primarily because we love the breed and want to do our part in maintaining its wonderful characteristics and improving on them if possible. No matter how nice the quality of breeding cats we know that a great majority of the kittens born will go as pets. So we feel our primary obligation and challenge is in producing cats who will give the people who buy them joy through their unique beauty, health and personality — the qualities which would be lost if the breed were not continued are precious to us as they set this breed apart from other cats. We particularly don't want to see the natural wild cat appearance, which attracted us so many years

ago, disappear from the breed. The health of all cats, as well as that of our own breed, is of great interest to us, and we are active in our support of feline health studies. I am currently president of the Robert H. Winn Foundation, established by CFA to raise funds and provide grants for cat research.

Improving the status and acceptance of cats in general by the public is important to us as well and we feel that the cat shows, through which we had our first real introduction to cats, are one of the best ways to do this. We are both active in two CFA clubs which put on quality shows: The San Francisco Revelers, Inc. and the Poppy State Cat Club. Every year we try to attend several special shows such as the Pet Pride Santa Monica show as we enjoy them and want to support these shows which do so much to benefit cats. The Cat Fancy now has definitely become a major part of our lives and we are grateful for the help and encouragement we have had from so many wonderful people in the past and continue to have as our involvement and interest in cats goes on.

PET PRIDE
WELCOMES
NEW SEAL
OF APPROVAL
MEMBERS



We urge all Seal of Approval Members, both old and new, to fill out the material recently sent to you so that we may include you in our Seal of Approval Directory. If you have not received this material, please let us know promptly. The ever-increasing number of requests for applications in this special membership is heartwarming as more and more people promise to uphold our high standards for the care of all cats. Please join us in welcoming the following new members:

- Margot Williams, Wickenburg, AZ — Siamese
- Colonia Tavis and Carolee Swanson, Pompano Beach, FL — Persians and Household Pets
- Patricia Vonhoff, Queensland, Australia — Himalayans
- Catherine Deaton, Middletown, OH — Persians
- Karen and Hank Etling, Hollywood, CA — Havana Browns and Siamese
- Wally Connolly, Seaside, CA — Persians