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THE AMERICAN CURL: A TRUE "PEOPLE CAT"

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the american curl

BY JOYCE WHITE

These mischievous cats have both the look and the personality of a pixie. They are intelligent, funny and curious, affectionate to their owners and are well-integrated, both physically and mentally. Unlike most breeds, the American Curl is a "people cat," showing none of the stereotypical aloofness. They are easily taught and never lose their love of play, making them excellent pets for children.

The American Curl was officially registered as a breed in 1986. Previously, in 1981, a pair of kittens turned up at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Rugs in Lakewood, CA. One kitten, a black female with unusual, curled ears, decided to stay. She was named Shulamith. On Dec. 12, 1981, she gave birth to four kittens, two of which had ears like their mother. Nancy Kiester, after reading an article, contacted the Rugs and together they

entered Shulamith and two of her kittens in a 1983 show in Palm Springs, CA. Judges, breeders and the public agreed that the breed should be recognized. It was registered in 1986 by the TICA under the name American Curl. By 1996, it ranked 21th among 36 breeds in CFA popularity.

Since this is a breed with a fairly small gene pool, outcrossing to non-pedigreed cats will continue until Jan. 1, 2010 to insure sufficient genetic di-

A cat uses the litter box about 5 times a day.

Only LitterMaid® automatically cleans the litter every time.

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Nationwide, one million cats use the automatic LitterMaid Cat Box. Owners say LitterMaid is worth every penny.

NEW Mega Deluxe Model. Features include a roomier, deeper litter area that accommodates bigger cats, and requires less refills, a stronger, quieter motor that lasts longer and runs more effectively, a removable litter tray, and a cleaning rake that stops if accidentally touched.

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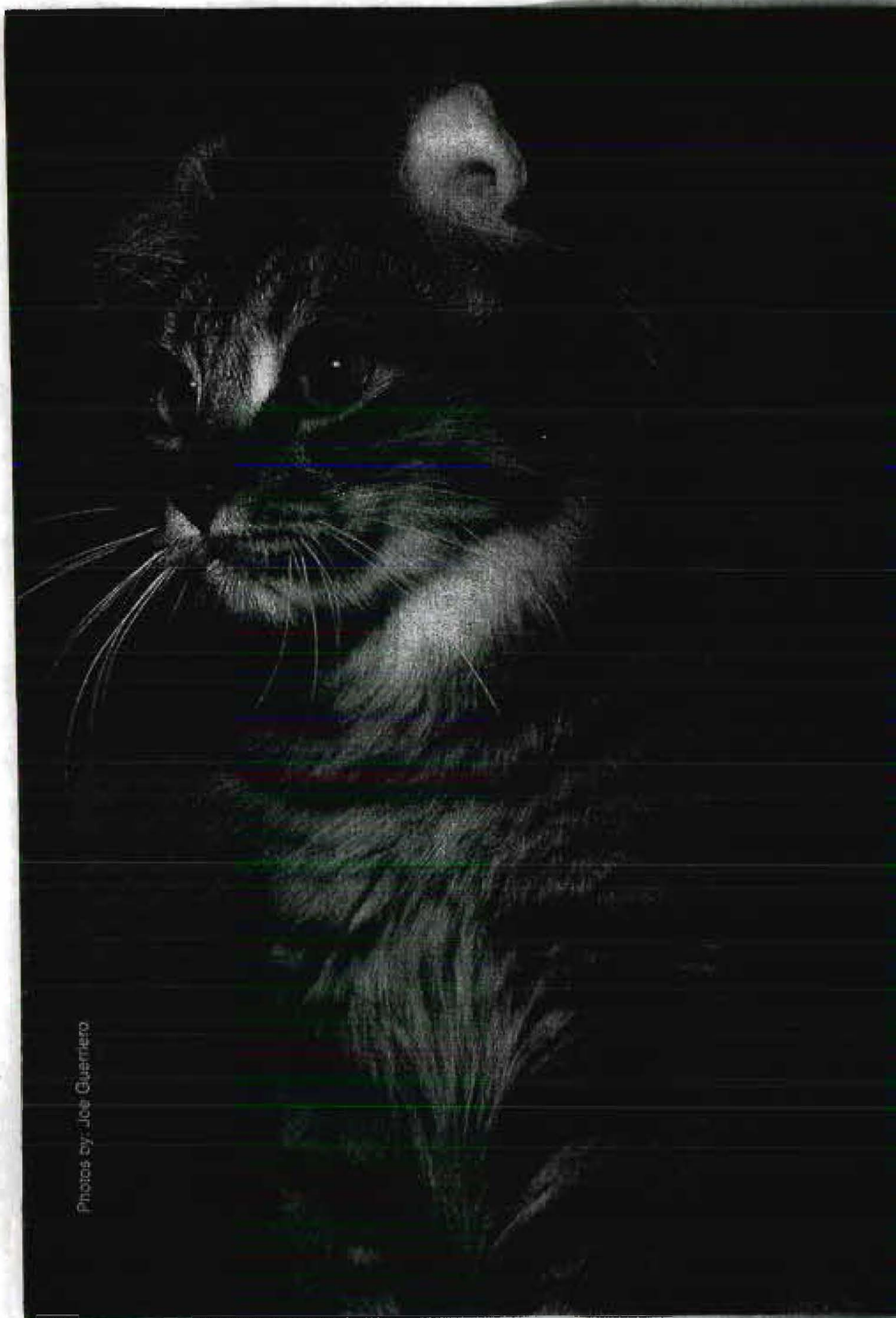
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Photos by: Joe Guerniero



versity. However, this leads to variations in conformation and personality from bloodline to bloodline, depending on the cats used in the breeding program. The gene that transmits this distinct ear curl feature is dominant; therefore, it needs only to be present in one parent to be passed on.

Both the shorthaired and the longhaired variety are recognized. The shorthaired variety has a thick, non-wooly coat that is soft and silky. The longhaired American Curl has a moderately long and smooth coat with little or no undercoat. The texture is silky and pleasing to the touch, and all colors and patterns are present.

This mid-sized cat is well-proportioned, solid and heavy for its size. When fully mature, between two and three years of age, it weighs between seven and 11 pounds. In profile, the nose is straight with a slight rise from the bottom of the eyes to the fore-

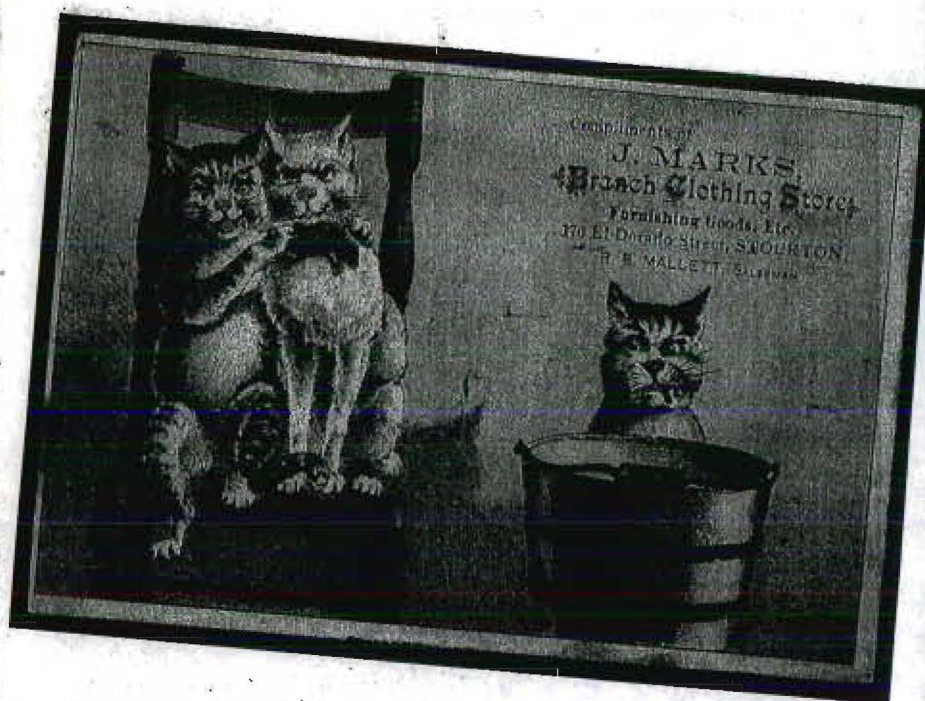


head. The chin is firm and even; the head is a modified wedge without flat planes; the muzzle is rounded with gentle transitions and no pronounced whisker break.

The ears, the American Curl's most distinctive feature, are the result of spontaneous mutation rather than genetic engineering. Set at the outer corners of the head, the ears should curl back in a smooth arc away from the face in a 90-degree arc or better.

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claiming the proprietorship sitting on the counter next to the cash register. Astute businessmen, whether representing a national concern or the corner drug store, always had plenty of free trade cards to promote their respective enterprise. When completing a sale, the clerk included a complimentary card inside the bag as an additional 'thank you' inviting the customer to come back again.

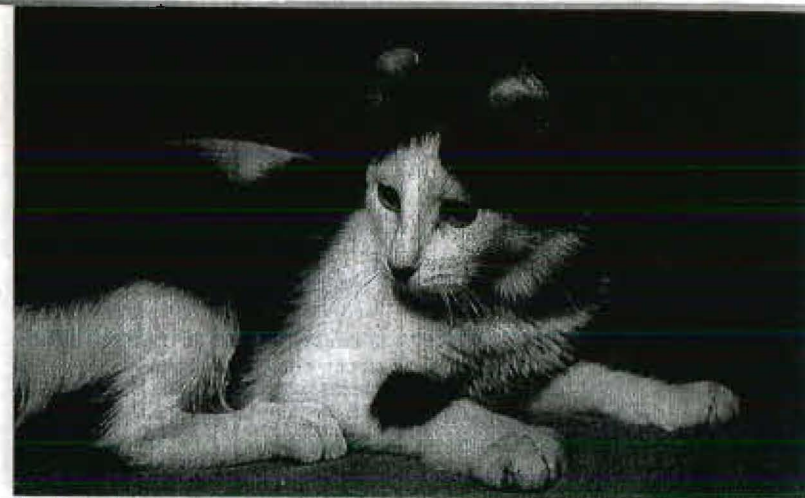
It is interesting to note that trade cards held a special fascination for the younger set and many times trade cards played on the juvenile and kitten theme. Used as incentives for

good behavior, children minded their P's and Q's in anxious anticipation at receiving a coveted kitty trade card as a reward when mother's shopping was complete.

Cats have played a major role in advertising products and services for more than 100 years, and it's a sure bet that the cat will continue to reign supreme as spokesperson extraordinaire when it comes to an appealing theme for advertising as we approach the 21st century. 🐾

Bernadine Chapman has written previously for "I Love Cats Magazine." She lives in Lodi, CA.

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The cartilage of the ear starts to curve and harden between the second and seventh day after birth, but does not take its final form until the fourth month when the ears become hard to the touch. Since the degree of curl can change dramatically over a short period, kittens should not be purchased until they are between four and five months old. The inside of the ears is filled with tufts of fur that stick out like little antennae.

Moderately large, walnut-shaped, bright eyes that are set on a slight bias are another charming feature of the American Curl. Color has no relation to coat color, except blue eyes are required in the colorpoint class.

Breeders debate whether the American Curl should be more cobby, sturdy and rounder; or if it should have a finer shape; should it be long-haired or shorthaired? However, all are in agreement about the ears. Three angles are permitted: the least admired is the ear that is hardly turned back; second, the ear that is slightly more curved; the preferred curl is one that forms a complete crescent. 🐾

Penalty Faults:

1. Ears set low, mismatched or pinched
2. Ears with a horizontal kink or vertical crimp
3. Ears with a corrugated inner surface
4. Any deep nose breaks
5. Heavy undercoat, ruffs, or course texture
6. Color on buttons, lockets

Disqualifying Faults:

1. Ears with an extreme curl: the tip of the ear touches the back of the ear or head
2. Ears lacking firm cartilage from the base to at least one-third its height
3. Any tail faults

TICA Standard Points

Head **15**

Ears **30**

Eyes **10**

Body **30**

Coat and color **15**

This is the first in a series of features about purebred cats by Joyce White. She is a regular contributor to "I Love Cats Magazine."