

The Bombay

by Suzanne Zwecker

Not so long ago, in a land not so far away, lived a fine lady who loved beautiful cats. She dreamed of creating a new breed of cat that would resemble miniature panthers: muscular, yet graceful, sinuous and sensuous, with gleaming jet black coats and eyes like glowing coals or shining copper pennies. The lady was the late Nikki Horner, of Shawnee Cattery in Louisville, Kentucky. The breed she visualized as a mini-panther would eventually come to

tabbies) and her Burmese. She had Cat of the Year four times, Best Opposite Sex Cat four times, Best Kitten at least once, and over 100 grand champions. Shawnee was a large, obviously very successful cattery, and for many years Nikki was far too busy to even think much about her mini-panther fantasy, much less actually work on it.

Finally, around 1965, Nikki decided to go back and try again to



GC, RW Road To Fame's Kizzy, CFA's Best of Breed 1994 and 1995 and the Great Lakes Region's 6th Best Cat 1995. Br: Herb and Suzanne Zwecker, Salpietro and Pusateri. Ow: Herb and Suzanne Zwecker.

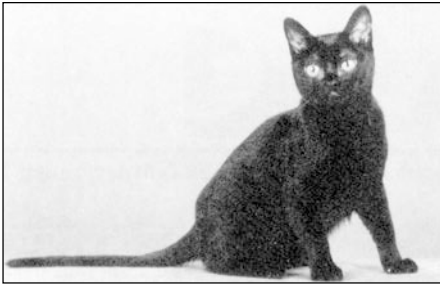
be known as the Bombay. The Bombay is a blend of Sable Burmese and Black American Shorthair. With the exception of coat and eye color, however, the Bombay is much closer to the Burmese. The head should be rounded, with a short nose, but not as extremely short as you would expect to see on a Persian. The eyes are large and round, preferably a deep, vibrant copper in color, although gold is allowed. The body is firm and muscular, never soft, and surprisingly heavy.

While the ideal Bombay body is a smidgen longer than the ideal Burmese body, there is a great deal of overlap, so it is perfectly proper for a Bombay to be every bit as short-coupled as the average Burmese. In a mature Bombay, one can clearly see the taut muscles rippling beneath the sleek black coat, which is often compared to patent leather. The coat should be very short and close lying, so that it appears perfectly smooth, almost glass-like. The combination of gleaming black coat, rippling muscles, and mysterious copper eyes really does bring to mind the magical black panther of India.

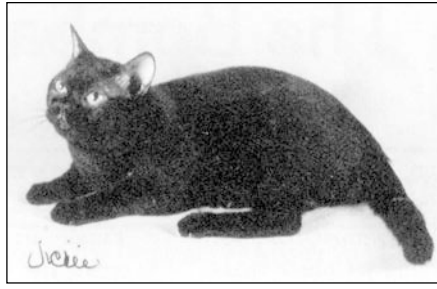
Nikki's first attempts to create this "mini-panther" took place in the late 1950s. She experimented with crossing her Burmese to some black domestic shorthairs, but the results were most unsatisfactory so the effort was abandoned after just a few litters. For the next few years Nikki concentrated on her Persians (especially the whites), her American Shorthairs (mostly silver

create her vision, the beautiful mini-panther. She had decided to name them "Bombays" if she ever succeeded. This time around she used five pedigreed black Americans bred to her sable Burmese. The CFA Board of Directors accepted the Bombay breed for registration in June of 1970. By 1972, Nikki had produced over 100 Bombay kittens in 27 litters. By that time, most of her breedings were Bombay to Bombay. The Bombay met the requirements for number of cats registered, had its own breed club by 1974, and was accepted for full championship status as of May 1, 1976. The Bombay was finally a "real" breed, but within months of this accomplishment, Nikki Horner retired from breeding and showing, and sold out her cattery.

In spite of the Bombay's new championship status, the breed was not immediately accepted at first by some judges, exhibitors, and most of all the Burmese breeders. Many of them refused to allow Bombay breeders to use their Burmese studs or even purchase Burmese kittens for use in a Bombay breeding program. I can remember hearing exhibitors joking that, "Some judge was so out of touch that he or she actually put up a Bombay!" At the time I had only Persians, but that remark bothered me just the same. Were these people trying to say that no hybrid breed could ever be a good thing? What about the Burmese? Remember, the Burmese is also classified as an established hybrid by CFA. Partially because



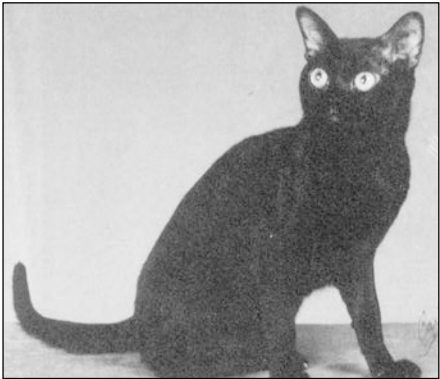
GP Night Sky's Fulfilled Destiny. Br/Ow: Jo Ann and James Arnett.



GC CharliCats Sean Dubh. Br/Ow: Charlie and Mary Lynn Farmer.



GC, NW Road to Fame's Luv It Black, DM CFA's 2nd Best Cat 1985. Br: Herb and Suzanne Zwecker, Ow: Herb and Suzanne Zwecker and J. and M. Williard.



GC, RW CharliCats Black Hawk of Timari, CFA's Best of Breed 1997 and the Gulf Shore Region's 15th Best Cat and Best of Breed 1997 and Best of Breed 1996. Br: Charlie and Mary Lynn Farmer, Ow: Mary Hughes Bruesch.



GC Keijik's B.B. Bravo of CharliCats. Br: Charlene Gould, Ow: Charlie and Mary Lynn Farmer.



GC, RW CharliCats Joanne Thompson. CFA's 3rd Best of Breed 1998 and the Gulf Shore Region's 24th Best Cat and Best of Breed 1998. Br/Ow: Charlie and Mary Lynn Farmer.

of the extensive prejudice, and partially because most of them really weren't all that good yet, Bombays weren't exactly lighting up the sky at shows. Bombays in finals were few and far between. It took six years to get ten Bombay grands, and most of them were three or four years old by the time they granded.

In 1977, Herb Zwecker acquired one of Nikki's Bombays from someone who could not keep her. He fell hard for the breed (after years of working exclusively with Burmese) even though the cat never finaled. She was already several years old, and he was unable to successfully breed her. He thought that was probably the only Bombay he'd ever see, and certainly the only one he would ever own.

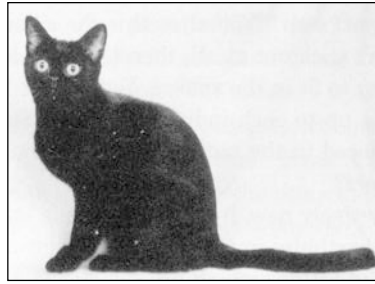
Not too many years later, Herb and I took in a cute little tortie kitten that came around begging for food at my parents' business. She had a fairly short face, big round copper eyes, very intense red and black coloring, and she was just adorable. She was very tiny when we first got her, and so skinny we weren't sure she'd make it. She was healthy, though, and filled out rapidly. After a few months we decided to try to find a pet home for her. Since no one ever called us looking for torties, we decided to take her along to shows. She had a fabulous personality, and was such a flashy, pretty cat that we were sure someone would take her. Unfortunately, the public had no interest in a pretty little domestic shorthair. We were feeling awfully discouraged when an exhibitor who happened to own an American Shorthair National Winner saw her and made it clear he wanted her. At that point we reconsidered, feeling that if she were good enough for him, maybe she was good enough for us to keep and show. We named her Saturday Night Fever and showed her a few times. "Saturday" got some grand points, but no big wins, so we decided we might as well breed her. The male was another street-bred cat, named Black Friday. The only black in the litter was Black Jack, a male. We intended to sell him as a pet because he just didn't seem to be good enough to keep, but no one bought him, so he stayed. [Editor's Note: At this point in time it was much easier to register a cat of unknown ancestry as an American Shorthair than it is today.]

In March of 1981, Herb was sent out of town for two weeks on business. One of our young Burmese females, GC Road To Fame's Vinita, came into a screaming heat, and we didn't have a suitable Burmese male for her. We had two studs then, one a traditional grand, the other her full brother. I couldn't stand the screaming, so I gave in and put her in with Black Jack, who was then about eight or nine months old. I was afraid to tell Herb what I had done until her pregnancy started to show, and I had no choice. The best of the litter was a male we named Oh! Calcutta. "Calcutta" granded in May 1982. We liked him well enough to try Black Jack with another female, "Isis," who produced Mabel Black Label. "Mabel" did well as a kitten, and one allbreed judge repeatedly told us to campaign her, she'd go top 10. This was so exciting to think about, but, really, we thought that prediction was overly optimistic. We gave it a try anyway and Mabel ended up 10th Best Cat for 1982-83, the first Bombay ever to earn a Top 20 award.

Right after the end of the show season, we bred Mabel to the best Burmese we could find, GC, NW Kashmirian's Lord Lovatt, DM, owned by Shirley Cohoe. The breeding was a resounding success. Mabel had six strong, healthy black kittens, one of which was truly outstanding — GC, NW Road To Fame's Luv It Black, DM. We campaigned "Luv It" extensively, and he finished up 2nd Best Cat nationally in 1985, missing Best Cat by just a small handful of



GP Shadowland's Peter Pan of Night Sky. The Southwest Region's Best Bombay 1998. Br: P. and J. DeWitt, Ow: Jo Ann and James Arnett and P. and J. DeWitt



GC Shadowland's Mahalia. Br: P.A. DeWitt and D. Horan, Ow: Patti and John DeWitt.



GC Shadowland's Ransom of Blacpurl. Br: Patti and John DeWitt, Ow: Donna Heatherington and P. and J. DeWitt.



GC Road to Fame's Mogwai. Br/Ow: Herb and Suzanne Zwecker.

points. By June 1990, Luv It earned his DM, despite the fact that between 25% and 50% of his kittens were AOV Sable Bombays, ineligible to be shown. Luv It is now somewhere in the pedigree of just about all CFA Bombays. We have sharply curtailed our breeding and showing in recent years, ever since our youngest daughter was born in 1993. It seems to take all the energy we can muster just to keep up with our kids lately especially the little one. She finally started school this year, so we are doing more breedings and hope to be out on the show circuit again soon.

In recent years, several other breeders have begun working with Bombays. More and more Bombays are granding every year, and new breeders are producing grands as well as national breed winners. Most of these newer catteries have some of our cats somewhere back in their pedigrees, but they've each combined our line with different bloodlines, and each is working hard to develop their own "look." It's great to see all the different styles and to know that new bloodlines are being developed. I am including pictures of a number of Bombays from various catteries to illustrate the differences as well as the similarities. While several catteries sent nice photos of their lovely cats, only two responded to our request for a brief history of their cattery and a description of their goals: Charlie Farmer, of Charlicats, and Mary Hughes Bruesch, of Timari.

Charlicats Cattery, owned by Charlie and Mary Lynn Farmer, has been a CFA Cattery of Excellence every year since its founding in 1994. Their breeding program has yielded five grands, two regional winners, and two national Bombay breed winners. Their foundation stud is GC Keijik's B. B. Bravo (son of GC, NW Road To Fame's Instant Replay), still beautiful and breeding at nearly 12 years of age. The Farmers also have a younger stud, GC Shawnee's Bagheera of Charlicats. They are grateful for the guidance of Joanne Thompson (Jo Don), Charlene Gould (Keijik), Ron Laubach (Tangyi), and Nikki Horner (Shawnee). Charlie Farmer says they are trying to achieve "Tangyi coats, almost Road To Fame heads, Keijik dispositions, and Shawnee muscle tone and boning." He feels their best efforts have been GC, RW Charlicats Black Hawk of Timari, with great copper eyes and incredible balance, and GC, RW Charlicats Joanne Thompson, with classic Burmese type except for the slightly longer body.

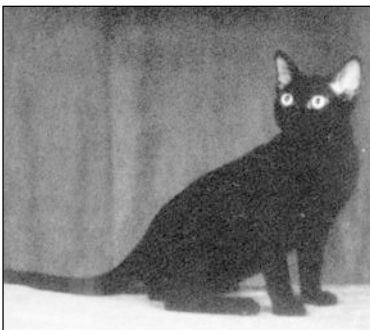
Mary Hughes Bruesch has been interested in Bombays since 1980. Her dream was realized in 1995, when Charlie and Mary Lynn Farmer presented her with GC, RW Charlicats Black Hawk of Timari, affectionately known as "Baby Hawk." He is extremely sweet and affectionate, and just



GC Shawnee Bagheera of CharliCats. Br: Nikki Horner, Ow: Charlie Farmer



GP, NW Shadowland's Yoda. CFA's 17th Best Cat in Premiership 1998 and the Midwest Region's 2nd Best Cat in Premiership 1998. Br: Patti and John DeWitt, lessees. Ow: Patti and John DeWitt.



GC, GP, NW Tangyi's H.S. Gandy Dancer. The Northwest Region's 2nd Best Kitten 1995. Br/Ow: Ronald Laubach and John Robertson.



GC Shadowland's Sinaye. Br: Patti and John DeWitt. Ow: Patti DeWitt



GP Shadowland's Black Jade. Br: Patti DeWitt. Ow: Ruth and Lee Simmons.



GC Rataat Starry Night of Blacpurl. Br: Sharon Knight, Ow: Donna Heatherington.



GC Karo's GiGi. Br/Ow: Judy Roberts.



GC, RW Tangyi's H-D Devil In A Black Dress. CFA's 2nd Best Bombay 1997 and the Northwest Region's 17th Best Cat 1997. Br/Ow: Ronald Laubach and John Robertson.



CH, GP Libertycall Nickolina of Shadowland. Br: Joyce M. Takacs-Brasseaux. Ow: Patti DeWitt and C. Bertoncin.

loved being shown. In 1996, he was the Gulf Shore Region's Best Bombay, and in 1997, he was the Gulf Shore Region's Best Bombay and 15th Best Cat, and CFA's Best Bombay.

Nikki Horner's original plan for the Bombay called for it to be basically a black, copper eyed Burmese. She got her way, and for years the standards were nearly identical, except for coat color and eye color. A few years ago, the breed council voted to change the standard away from the Burmese. The new "head" description outlaws the very extremity (in head and nose length and depth of break) that the old standard required. It seems almost as if the standard were rewritten to describe the cats most breeders already had, instead of what we had been striving so hard to achieve. I find this weakening of the standard to be very upsetting, and it is my fervent hope that we breeders will be able to change this someday soon. The new standard is inconsistent as well, requiring a round head, with the muzzle not altering the round contours of the head, but not "pug" nosed, and with no break, only a "stop." Visualize this for a moment. If the head is round, or spherical, and the muzzle doesn't stick out at all, then the nose *has* to be extremely short, and it will need to have a break in order to fit in the sphere. You cannot have it both ways, so I guess the interpretation of the standard is up to each individual judge. Since this change in the standard was made, no Bombays have placed in the national top 25. Could it be because the standard is now completely impossible to meet?

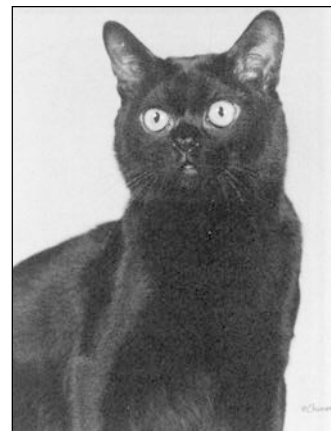
Because the Bombay is a relatively new, hybrid breed, it is still permissible to use both Sable Burmese and black American Shorthairs in the breeding program. Any combination of these two breeds and the Bombay results in kittens which are registered as Bombays. Using Burmese sets in the proper head and body type and coat length and texture. Logically, it would appear that the thing to do would be to just keep going back to Burmese over and over again, but this match up results in a substantial percentage of sable brown kittens that are physically identical to Burmese but are, indeed, Bombays. Because these AOVs cannot be shown in CFA, they are generally sold as pets. They can be used for breeding, but this would be rather pointless, unless the AOVs were better quality "Burmese" than the real Burmese. While Burmese may be used, too much inbreeding can result in kittens that are difficult to raise and more and more fragile with each generation. Inbreeding can also adversely affect disease resistance, resulting in a general lack of vitality. Because of these concerns it is absolutely essential to go to an American Shorthair outcross every few generations. We are very proud of the fact that Bombays are strong and healthy, and we attribute that to the American Shorthair part of the pedigree, which introduces a hefty dose of "hybrid vigor" every time it is used. Unfortunately, the American coat will usually prevail in most of the kittens for at least the first generation. This spoils the "look" of the cats, and consigns most of the F1 progeny to the "breeder" category, no matter how nice their type may be. As you can plainly see, we still need both of our outcrosses; one for quality, the other for health and strength. I can't imagine this situation changing any time soon.

Although Bombays, because of their general good health and high fertility are very easy to breed, it is quite difficult to breed good quality Bombays. The Burmese and Americans are very different in terms of head, body coat, and color. We want some traits from one parent, others from the second. This can be very tricky to achieve. All too often, any particular kitten will inherit the wrong assortment of genes. It's still a Bombay even if it is brown and fuzzy with a big long nose! Very few will be all that bad, and many can be useful as breeders. Rarest of all are showable cats, but what else is new? Trying to balance the needed traits from these two disparate breeds is quite a difficult juggling act, but for these gorgeous cats, it is truly worthwhile. The occurrence of sable Bombays is another difficulty, but not a major problem. On top of this, from time to time a kitten will be born exhibiting a head deformity. The percentage is relatively low, but they do still happen. At least this deformity is readily apparent from birth so you never have to worry about unaffected kittens developing the problem later. As we breed in more American Shorthairs, we seem to see less and less of this. It has actually been several years since I've seen a deformed kitten. To succeed long-term in keeping both quality and health, a breeder needs access to both extreme black Americans with copper eyes and Sable Burmese with sensational short, smooth, sleek coats, and at least fairly extreme head type.

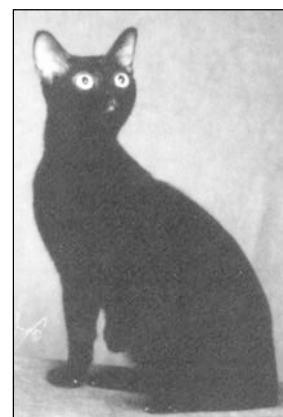
Bombays probably love people more than any other breed does. Their wild, exotic appearance belies their sweet, gentle, loving personality. The instant you sit down, your Bombay will be on your lap, purring loudly gazing soulfully into your eyes, their paws kneading gently on your tummy or chest. Bombays are head bumpers and nose rubbers. They love to be held, even enjoying being cradled upside down like a baby. One of our studs, "Jason" (who never sprayed), lived as our house pet for several years. Every night he would sleep on my pillow, cuddling up around my head and purring softly in my ear while I fell asleep. What a sweet lullaby! He was always still there in the morning, and there was no

way he was going to let me get up and make the bed until I made a big fuss over him. It was always hard to get to sleep when he was away at shows. To illustrate the Bombay intelligence, Jason would open any door that had a nearby table or other surface handy to sit on by wrapping his paws around the doorknob and turning it! One female we had a long time ago would jump up, grab a doorknob with both paws, and swing back and forth while hanging from the knob until the door opened. Several of our Bombays have also learned how to defeat the childproof locks we put on our kitchen cabinets. For some reason, some of our cats just love to get a potato out of the cabinet to play with. Bombays love to play almost as much as they love to cuddle. If you drag a string, or wave around a feather or sparkler, they're in heaven. What's great is that they play very gently. Many cats would grab the toy and destroy it, or even get carried away and bite your hand, but never a Bombay.

The only negative part of the Bombay personality is that they need so much love. If you leave one home alone for several hours, you can forget about doing anything else besides petting your cat for a good long time when you get home. The solution is simple — get them another cat for company. It doesn't need to be another Bombay, but they will bond best with another moderately active cat, such as a Burmese or American Shorthair. Even a non-pedigreed cat would be fine. Many of our pet kittens have gone to homes where the companion is a dog, and they have always become "best buddies" very quickly. Bombays really enjoy the company of people, even children, most. Our five year old daughter Arnie has kittens that sleep with her by choice, and our son Robert, now fifteen, had, at the age of six or seven, trained a couple of kittens to play football with him. It looked pretty strange, but the kittens seemed to enjoy the game, even when he "tackled" them! Most of our Bombays even love complete strangers. When prospective kitten buyers come to see our kittens, the adults always hog the stage. They cuddle up in the visitor's lap(s), bring them toys to play with, and, in general, monopolize their attention. Most people say they want one of the older "mommy cats," because they are so affectionate and outgoing. Eventually, we manage to turn their attention to the kittens so they can select one or two. To pick a pet kitten, handle the entire litter. After a few minutes, one will reveal itself to be your kitten. It will purr readily, and be comfortable being held. It may come to you while you chat with the breeder. Both sexes make fantastic pets, as long as they are altered before reaching sexual maturity so it is best to have an open mind on that. Just buy the kitten that loves you. You will never regret it, and you'll never be lonely with a Bombay in the house!



GC, NW Road to Fame's Mougley of Sultan's Pad. CFA's 11th Best Cat 1989 and the Southwest Region's Best Cat 1989. Br: Herb and Suzanne Zwecker, Ow: Shirley Marcus.



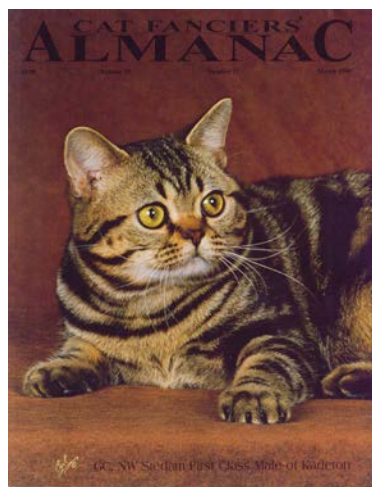
GC, RW Tangyi's H.S. Music-of-The Night. CFA's Best Bombay 1998 and the Northwest Region's 8th Best Cat 1998. Br/Ow: Ronald Laubach and John Robertson



GC CharliCats Rigel. The Gulf Shore Region's 3rd Best of Breed 1998. Br/Ow: Charlie and Mary Lynn Farmer.



CH, GP CharliCats Little Knight. Br/Ow: Charlie and Mary Lynn Farmer.



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