

## **SIAMESE BREED COUNCIL NEWSLETTER**

### **JULY 2006**

This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the partnership between the Cat Fanciers Association and the Siamese breed in America. It has been a great partnership for both the breed and the association, and has seen great strides made in this past century. We came together in Reno, Nevada this June to celebrate the achievements of both.

The Siamese breed has seen great changes over the past 100 years. When the cat fancy was in its infancy at the turn of the last century, the Siamese was one of five breeds to form the nucleus of a new association, CFA. At the time there were no cat shows, judges, clerks or standards, no breed councils, no registration numbers or color charts. Although there was some short history of a rudimentary cat fancy in England to use an example, most of what we take for granted today was created from the hard work of an innovative group of people who met around an ordinary kitchen table in the year 1906.

Today's Siamese does not look much like the pictures of the early Siamese that helped form CFA. And yet it hasn't changed all that much either. Our earliest standards describe an elegant fine boned feline with angular lines to the head and flat planes to the skull. Wedge shaped, flat profile, striking large ears set in a line with the muzzle, short close lying coat, small to medium size, long tubular body: these phrases are found in the earliest writings about the Siamese breed. There are also many descriptions about the unusual striking color of the breed that don't differ much from the color descriptions incorporated into today's standard. Granted, our desire for a more extreme, refined, elegant cat has led breeders to select for those qualities, and judges to reward those qualities, but the Siamese cat is much as it always been, an intelligent, loving, breathtakingly beautiful example of the feline species.

The Siamese was one of the first breeds to gain recognition in the show ring, and is one that also continues to earn top honors today. Even though the cat fancy has now grown from 5 to almost 40 breeds, two Siamese still managed to be competitive enough to earn places among the top 25 championship cats this year, and another achieved a national kitten win. Our breed continues to thrive due to the combination of its unrivaled personality, elegance and distinctive color pattern, in spite of the many attempts to emulate it, incorporate it and distort it. The Siamese has given very much to the cat fancy in many ways, and this year we took the opportunity to honor all that it has given to us, and to celebrate the joy that just having this breed around has given to so many over the past century.

This year the Siamese Breed Council hosted a dinner instead of the usual breakfast for our annual awards celebration. Betty White was the keynote speaker, with a wonderful talk on the development of the Siamese standard over the past 100 years. Virginia Wheeldon spent hours putting together a pictorial history of the Siamese breed. A vet

from Royal Canin cat foods also spoke during dinner, explaining how they developed a dry food just for the Siamese cat, by observing and quantifying the special attributes of our breed. The dinner was a very special tribute to our breed, and the turnout was wonderful. Richard Katis videotaped both Virginia's and Betty's presentations, and the Breed Council will make them available on a CD in the near future, so those who could not attend will be able to share in both.

This year, as mentioned, we had three Siamese receive National awards. Earning the honor of third best cat was our best Siamese, GC, BW, NW Marmese Cobalt, bred and owned by Margaret Robins, and shown by John Robins and Margaret Robins. Cobalt is a stunning blue point with deep, deep blue eyes that just drew you in. Cobalt was a wonderful ambassador for the breed, winning many awards and friends, including Best of the Best at the Madison Square Garden show in NYC. Cobalt appeared on both Good Morning America and The Martha Stewart show to strut his stuff and was featured in many news articles on the show.

Twentieth best cat and second best Siamese was GC, NW MVABle Mithril of Dizzy Paws, bred by Mike and Vicki Franks and owned by Simmonds, Franks, Charlotte Holbrook and Sammie Iago. Both Sammie (Samcari) and Charlotte (Chimcheeree) were instrumental in helping provide the lines behind Mithril, and were honored for their contribution by the Franks. Mithril is a breathtaking lilac point, with beautiful boning and true lilac color.

Our third national winner was GC, NW Gimsin Golden Wings, who was third best kitten nationally, as well as both Best Siamese kitten and tenth best Siamese in Championship. "Lefty", as she is known to her friends, is a spectacular seal point with large large ears, and an amazing show presence. Lefty was bred and owned by Ruth and Tom Taylor, who also bred her sister, GC, RW Gimsin Posh. Posh is an incredible chocolate point, who was our second best Siamese kitten. Truly a great year for the Taylors.

Best Siamese premier this year was GC, GP, RW Thai-Yves Deja Bleu of Kittrik, bred and owned by Chris Simpson & Jean-Yves Tardiff and Tom & Loretta Baugh. Loretta enjoyed showing Bleu very much, but even more enjoys him at home. He is the star of the house, and as Loretta said, "sleeps with us every night, and wakes us every morning". Everything a true Siamese and a true show cat should be.

We also had eleven Siamese achieve the title of Distinguished Merit this year. This shows once again the strength and depth of this breed, as the cats range from those not shown to a national winner, and demonstrate the true reach of our breed in and out of the show ring.

We had one change and an addition to our Breed Council awards this year. The Jesse James award, previously given to the best seal point in premiership, will now be given to the best premier overall. And the Wascally Award, sponsored by Dianne Alexy, will be given to the best seal point in premiership going forward.

I want to thank all those who worked so hard on this Annual, including Vicki Franks and Sibyl Zaden who designed the beautiful Ikebana table decorations that made the dining area so lovely. Kathy Baron arranged for Royal Canin to speak at the dinner and negotiated the donation from Royal Canin that enabled us to purchase the centennial paperweights as gifts for all who attended the dinner. Kathryn Brady designed the paperweights and arranged for them to be created, as well as organizing the breed flat sponsorship for the balance of last year. These breed flats, honoring the Siamese cat, have been awarded to the top kitten, championship and premiership Siamese in each ring at select shows this year, and have been very popular with exhibitors and judges alike. Susan Beuerlein complied the ads for the Centennial book, and typed the program for the Annual dinner this year. And to the rest of the awards committee, Kathy Hoos, Bob Molino, Dianne Alexy and all others who contributed to the work done this year, thank you all so much. This was a really special year, and a very special awards dinner, and we couldn't have done it without you.

There were several interesting topics discussed at the Board and Breed Council meeting on Thursday morning. One was an update on the communication project that is available for the breed councils to discuss their concerns with the judges and vice versa. The Siamese Breed Council had brought our concerns to the judges regarding the lack of emphasis on color in the judging ring last year. Some of the feedback we received was that if we wished to have the judges pay more attention to color we should increase the point allotment in our standard to emphasize color. As this breed council has a strong feeling that we should not change the standard but rather focus on education in this area, it was suggested to me that we use this opportunity to explain why our standard does not need to be changed and contains enough points to require focus on color as well as type. I would like to get as many opinions on this as possible so that we can address this concern via the communication project, and have included a question on this topic on the Breed Council poll at the end of the newsletter.

Other topics discussed were gaining easier access to the registration rules for the Breed Council Secretaries, as well as making the registration fees for "unknowns", such as domestic shorthairs used for American Shorthair programs, uniform across the breeds.

Another issue that we were asked to discuss with our breed councils is if the terminology used by the judges to describe our breed in their finals is consistent with the description of the breed in the standard? This was brought up by a Board member in order to make us think about how our breed is being portrayed versus how the standard describes it. It would be ideal if the wording in a standard truly conveyed the breeders' conception of their breed and if that same wording was used to explain individual breed qualities to the public. This is another area where I would like more input from the members, so I have placed this question on our poll.

Two other items that require Breed Council members' input were also discussed at this meeting. Annette Wilson asked that we poll our members on how often they felt that breed standard changes should be made. Currently, a breed council can request standard changes each year, if they desire. And while it may be an acceptable practice for new

breeds who need to refine their conception of the ideal feline, older breeds should hopefully have a more definite understanding of what their breed is all about, and should not be requesting changes as often. The Siamese breed rarely changes its standard, and the membership has been pretty consistent in wishing to keep it as close to the Jeanne Singer standard as possible. Keep in mind also when considering this question that enough time between standard changes should be allowed so that there is time for adequate discussion of the need for the change and time to consider all viewpoints on the change so that the proposal that is submitted has a strong consensus among its members.

Another consideration is the point that the breed councils exist for the purpose of making standard changes. The Breed Council Standing Rules state: “[The CFA Breed Councils were established in 1970 to serve as advisory bodies on breed standards to the CFA Executive Board. The Breed Councils channel opinions and suggestions from the individual breeder to the Board through the Breed Council Secretary elected by each specific breed.](#)” Therefore no limitation on standard changes is certainly the right of a breed council. It may be better if there are guidelines on how often it is appropriate for a breed council to bring standard changes before the Board, rather than hard and fast rules.

An innovative program that was discussed during the meeting is the Breeder Assistance Program. This is a program that will allow us to identify breeders who have special needs, who may have a medical illness, financial problem or other issue that is causing difficulty with care of their cats and offer them assistance in placing their cats. Please refer to the CFA website for additional information on this program and the personnel involved in running it.

Two additional items need to be mentioned. One is that we are continuing our centennial celebration of the Siamese breed through the International in November, 2006. You are welcome to sponsor the Siamese breed flats for any show that you chose or select one of those chosen by the breed council to receive the flats. Please contact Kathryn Brady [Kathryn@katsmith.net](mailto:Kathryn@katsmith.net) to let her know which show you chose. The cost remains \$25 per show, and that will include the cost of shipping the breed flats to your show. Also consider recycling breed flats in your area for use in other shows. Many people have won multiple flats and don't wish to keep all of them. A great use of extra breed flats is to allow other breeders the opportunity to win them again, while at the same time getting additional recognition for the Siamese breed during the last half of our centennial celebration.

The breed council has also undertaken a new project. As many of you are aware, every time someone wishes to introduce changes into the Siamese breed, whether it's to save CFA in Europe or to introduce pointed cats that are not Siamese into our breed or into our show classes, they raise the specter of the failing health of the breed in general. Rarely are the cries about the health issues that supposedly haunt the Siamese breed backed up with anything substantial, like names of specific cats, lines or catteries that are experiencing these devastating illnesses, but rather appear to be deliberate attempts to modify the feelings of Siamese breeders towards introducing other breeds as outcrosses. As should be obvious, I am very biased against this use of health as an excuse to

introduce cats other than Siamese into what has always been a natural breed. In full disclosure I believe that Siamese have no more health problems than any other breed, and that most problems come from poor cattery management or one particular line or cat used incorrectly. That said, I cannot offer any quantitative proof to back up my point of view any more than the other side has offered any for theirs.

Therefore the Siamese Breed council will put together a poll to be sent out once a year to try to capture the information that we will need to truly determine if there are health concerns with our breed. I have formed a new committee to do this. Valere Hull will head the committee assisted by Virginia Wheeldon and Sue Huffman. The committee will take all input from Siamese Breed Council members and will use this input to formulate a group of questions regarding health, longevity, reproductive capabilities as well as other pertinent issues pertaining to Siamese cats and the breeding of them. These questions will then be sent to at least three different veterinarians for their input as to the validity of the questions as well as to see if they would like to add additional questions. Lastly the committee will seek the help of statisticians to be sure that the questions are posed to obtain credible answers and that we have questions that will allow us to compile meaningful statistics over the years. This is not something that will produce immediate results but over five and ten year periods we should be able to identify trends and see if the Siamese breed is truly facing a health crisis. Additionally I hope that this poll will help us to learn which areas of cattery management relate most closely to the Siamese breed and how we can improve those to maximize the health of our cats. Other unanticipated results will probably come from this poll, so I hope that all of you who are currently breeding will be willing to complete this survey in the coming years.

Please take the time to complete the poll at the end of this newsletter as soon as you can. I know that there are several questions that will require a lot of thought, so don't put this aside and plan on doing it later. Also feel free to discuss these issues on the Siamese lists to bounce ideas off other breeders.

This past year has been a really wonderful one for the Siamese breed in CFA. I hope that the coming one will meet or surpass all of your expectations in both exhibiting and breeding. And once again, thank you for all your hard work and contributions to making the Siamese Breed Council such a powerful advocate for the best breed in CFA.

Debbi Stevenson