UBCF President's Message by Willa Rogers-Hawke ........................................  2
Editorial - A Nose by Any Other Name by Nancy L. Reeves .......................  3
Adventures in Thailand by Renee Weinberger and J.D. Blythin .................  8
Mod Daeng's Journey Continues by Nancy L. Reeves .............................. 14
Trip to Thailand in Search of Burmese by Beatrice L. Wood ....................  16
The Case for Outcrossing by Nancy L. Reeves ....................................  20
Genetics of the Burmese Cat by Dr. Joseph C. Thompson et al..............  21
UBCF Website Update .................................................................................  25
UBCF June 24, 2010 Meeting Minutes .......................................................... 26
CFA Burmese Breed Council June 26, 2010 Meeting Minutes .................  29
Photos and Drawings of Early Burmese ....................................................... 31
A Burmese is a Burmese is a Burmese by Charlotte Smiley .....................  32
Burmese Rescue ..........................................................................................  35
Plans for the Next UBCF Newsletter .......................................................  36
UBCF Membership and Officers and How to Join UBCF .......................  36
Dear UBCF Members and Friends,

Recently we've all read and perhaps contributed to the discussion of increasing the genetic diversity of our breed. While the specifics of how to go about this and best serve the Burmese breed are still under debate, there seems to be nearly universal agreement that this must be done. At times these discussions can become heated and full of passion but I encourage them to continue and for all of us to keep foremost in our minds that we are doing this for the health and benefit of the breed we love so well. Along this line kudos to Renee and J.D. on their recent import (story within).

This past show season CFA joined other associations in merging our Burmese Sable and Dilute beauties into a single colorful breed. This road has been a long one in CFA which began with "sables only"... then later adding the other colors as a separate breed with a separate name (Malayans) ... then changing the name Malayans to Dilute Burmese but still keeping them separate and apart from the sables ... and now to the final grouping which makes them just Burmese, a single breed.

Regional Directors - you serve a tremendous job to our organization and I need to hear from you regularly. If UBCF Members in your region aren't coming to you - go to them, find out what's on their minds and what areas of concern we might be able to address and hopefully help resolve. Remember always that we can't assist if we don't know what problems are facing our breeders and exhibitors. UBCF has had a long history of being an active, working organization and not just a social club. You can help us keep it that way. You can reach the breeders at shows obviously, and some forethought in planning and announcing a brief UBCF meeting during a lunch break at a show is a great idea. Make sure people understand that new members are welcome to attend these meetings as well.

UBCF actively encourages increasing the genetic diversity of our membership by increasing that gene pool as well. New members bring new ideas and new perspectives and remind us all of the things we faced when we started out on that scary road called breeding. Those who don't breed but enjoy exhibiting are also a welcome addition to our group, and we should be doing all we can to encourage the exhibition of our breed and sharing the knowledge we've acquired and learned over the years on how best to exhibit. Perhaps a stipulation that your kitten buyers join UBCF so they can be informed and educated on how best to care for the kitten they get from you is a good way to bring new members into the fold. A new UBCF ad will soon appear in one of the cat magazines, which we hope will bring new members into our midst. Also, I would be remiss not to mention our beautiful new website and to thank Brian Tripp for his efforts in getting it up and running. I hope everyone has seen it.

And by all means please remember to renew your membership! I can't tell you how often we hear from people that they thought they were members of UBCF because they "just paid their dues". It's a sad fact of life that the weeks and months are going faster than they used to as we ... mature. Enough about that! We want your membership and more importantly we want your continued membership.

A very informative UBCF meeting was held in Minneapolis recently and special thanks to all who helped organize the meeting and the many who contributed so much at the meeting itself. Exchanging ideas and sharing our knowledge is key to improving our beloved Burmese and solving the problems that we all acknowledge must be solved. Minutes of the meeting are included in the secretary's report elsewhere in this N/L.

In closing, please help keep UBCF alive and vibrant by participating and contributing actively. While I am always open to hearing from our membership, remember too that your Regional Directors as well as our other executive officers are also there to help you in any way possible. We have a great group of people to serve and assist you and working with each of them I know they take that job seriously.

Best wishes to all,

Willa Rogers-Hawke, President
United Burmese Cat Fanciers, Inc.
A Nose by Any Other Name
(with Apologies to Shakespeare)

Editorial
by
Nancy L. Reeves

The opinions expressed in this editorial are solely the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of other UBCF members or officers.

As editor of the UBCF Newsletter for the past two and a half years, I have explored and written about a variety of subjects related to the Burmese cat. Over the past few months, however, unexpected events and experiences have given me a fresh perspective on our breed's colorful past, the challenges we are facing, and what the future must hold for the Burmese cat if it is to survive and flourish.

To me, fair friend, you never can be old
For as you were when first your eye I eyed,
Such seems your beauty still.

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 104

Most of our UBCF newsletter readers know that I am a dedicated "traditional" Burmese cat fancier, breeder, exhibitor, and advocate. I have had Burmese in my life for more than 20 years. As a breeder for 12 years I have experienced setbacks along with successes, and learned some difficult lessons along the way. But I have persevered and am proud of the beautiful, healthy kittens I have raised this past year. I am also grateful for the generosity and trust of those who have provided me with outstanding breeding cats, allowing me to produce offspring that are competitive in the show hall. Mine is a small cattery with only a few litters a year, so each kitten I raise is precious.

But on three separate occasions recently, to my amazement, prospective clients rejected my beautiful healthy kittens on sight. I had carefully screened these families, and knew they would provide wonderful homes for my Burmese babies. I looked forward to meeting them in person and anticipated the joy they and my kittens would experience in their lives together. But when these individuals came to my home to meet my kittens, they did not want them for one simple reason: the kittens' noses were too short. Didn't I have any with longer noses, they asked?

I did my best to assure them that the other wonderful characteristics of the breed remained intact, but they did not care. They were searching for the look they admired in the Burmese they had known and loved for ten, twenty years and more. They wanted the same Burmese that captured the hearts and loyalty of countless cat lovers in the decades after Dr. Joseph Thompson and geneticist Billie Gerst raised the first kittens born to Wong Mau, the mother of our breed.

In the eighty years since Wong Mau first came to the United States, her progeny have spread all over our world and, according to recent reports, have even been returned to the land of Wong Mau's birth, Burma. But on their journey across the globe the looks of many Burmese - their noses in particular - has changed dramatically.

Certainly some changes in cat breeds are to be expected over 80+ years, as they are influenced by the personal tastes of the breeders who produce them, the exhibitors who show them, the judges who award them, and by those who subsequently amend breed standards. In that same time period, other breeds besides Burmese have also changed and new breeds have been developed as a result of spontaneous genetic mutations, including Scottish Folds, American Curls, and the wavy coated Rex breeds. An older, existing breed's look can also be affected by these new breeds, in an effort to make breeds distinct from one another.

Arguably, however, no other breed in the cat fancy...
has ever experienced the rapid and dramatic change that occurred within the Burmese breed. That too was caused by a genetic mutation . . . a lethal one.

I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world scarce half made up. . .

William Shakespeare, Richard III

There are different theories about where and when it happened. Some believe it was a spontaneous mutation as has resulted in the creation of new breeds. Others feel it may have arisen concurrently with the development of Exotics, which in the early years were produced through breeding short-nosed Persians to Burmese. Regardless of its origin, no one disputes the fact that a genetic mutation occurred in the late 1960s to early 1970s that profoundly affected our breed and literally changed the face of Burmese cats.

A male named Good Fortune Fortunatas epitomized the new "contemporary" look. According to those who saw him, he was magnificent, with a broad rounded head, short nose, enormous gold eyes, stocky body, and a lustrous sable coat. He achieved great success in the show hall, and Burmese fanciers were soon lining up their females to breed to him, purportedly even in motel rooms in the evening hours after cat shows. His offspring quickly spread across the country and grew up to echo their father's achievements in show halls. When they were old enough, these cats were bred together and their progeny eagerly anticipated. But breeders were in for a rude shock. Deformed kittens began to appear, born alive but tragically without the ability to survive for very long outside of their mother's protective womb. Good fortune it may have been for the show success of Fortunatas and his descendants, but that success came at a terrible price.

In the early years after the head defect appeared, it was estimated that an average 25% of kittens born to contemporary Burmese cats were affected by this "cranial facial mutation" or "Burmese Head Defect," and that average continues to this day according to a study completed only a few years ago. It wasn't long before the existence of these deformed kittens created a rift in the Burmese cat community. Some chose to continue breeding the carriers of this lethal defect, as they preferred the new look of the cats and enjoyed their show hall success. Others did not like the look or believed it was wrong to deliberately continue any lethal gene because of the long term impact it would have on the breed's overall health. Many also objected to the sad fate of the deformed kittens that had no chance of survival.

While Good Fortune Fortunatas may not have been the originator of the mutation that created the contemporary Burmese, research shows that he is the bottleneck. Every contemporary cattery today can trace their cats back to Fortunatas. Whatever concurrent contemporary lines may have existed in the past, they have all been brought together through him. We know this because a member of UBCF spent several years analyzing records, using reverse pedigrees to identify the descendants of Fortunatas. Of course only those offspring that were registered and entered in available databases could be traced, so these numbers are likely undercounted. When this research was completed in 2009, it had identified more than 5,000 Fortunatas descendants in the United States and more than 3,000 in Europe. The study showed Fortunatas descendants behind a few traditional Burmese lines as well.

How does this research benefit the Burmese breed? The study was done based on a premise that will remain controversial until a genetic test for carriers (HD+) of the cranial facial mutation is developed. If the gene or genes producing the head defect are simply recessive, then it can be bred out through careful matings and pedigree management. If, however, the lethal gene cannot be bred out, then this database will be useful for those wishing to
identify which cats they should test for the lethal gene and, if the test is positive, eliminate those HD+ cats from their breeding programs.

When will the gene or genes identifying head defect carriers be found? We have been assured that they will be found and that there will be a test, and I believe researchers are getting very close. But will this test be all that we hope it to be, will it solve the problems our breed is facing? Will it unite a divided breeding community? And can we wait for this test to take action to help our breed? To all these questions, the answer is no.

It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.

William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

In 2008, Dr. Leslie A. Lyons at the University of California, Davis published a landmark study analyzing the genetic diversity of cat breeds, and that study showed that the breeds with the lowest genetic diversity in the cat fancy are Burmese and Singapuras. The samples for Burmese studied were a combination of traditional and contemporary cats. Unfortunately, however, because of the cranial facial mutation that has divided the Burmese community, those two breeding populations are in actuality further separated into two distinct gene pools. Therefore, the genetic diversity of the Burmese cat is even lower than Dr. Lyons' research has shown. And low genetic diversity is not healthy for any breed, especially in a time when the number of breeders is declining because of the rising costs of raising kittens and other factors. Low diversity can impact a breed’s overall health and make it more susceptible to genetic problems. It can make a breed vulnerable to diseases that could potentially wipe out segments of the population. This apparently is happening in Burmese and Birmans in some parts of Europe, which currently are being hit hard by the lethal disease feline infectious peritonitis (FIP).

For years Burmese breeders have been waiting for a test to identify the gene or genes that create the Burmese Head Defect and the mode of inheritance for this mutation. While we have waited for "The Test," it has seemed to take on almost mythical proportions, not unlike a talisman with magical powers that can heal all our wounds. It is past time for that myth to be dispelled and our goals for our breed to be grounded in reality. I do believe that all Burmese breeders, be they contemporary or traditional, would like to eliminate the head defect from our breed. But if the genes involved are shown to be inextricably linked to the distinctive phenotype created by the cranial facial mutation gene, will all contemporary breeders be willing to give up the look they like, the show hall success they enjoy, and the long term investments they have made in their breeding lines? It is my personal belief that many if not most will not be willing to give those up, and therefore the cranial facial mutation gene will continue in our breed even after the test for HD+ cats is available. Given that possible scenario, what steps can we take to help the Burmese cat? The clear path that will lead us to a healthier breed is through outcrossing.

As mentioned in the Autumn 2009 newsletter, the past two years I have been registering and showing my cats in TICA and in CFA. In CFA, there are no outcrosses for Burmese even to those cats that are genetically Burmese but cat-egorized in different "breed" divisions: European Burmese, Solid Tonkinese, and Sable Bombays. In TICA, however, European and American Burmese are all one breed. Bombays are also a part of the Burmese breed group. So I joined TICA to be able to outcross to the European and Sable Bombay lines that are not available to Burmese in CFA. I am looking forward to obtaining a blue female kitten that is one quarter European later this summer.

Though our Burmese community is divided, there are ways we can work together to improve the future of our breed. We can do this through taking advantage of the outcross options in TICA and making a similar outcross program available to breeders in CFA. In CFA the discussion has already begun. Exactly where that discussion will lead is uncertain at this time, but there are logical directions in which we could go, including reducing...
A Nose by Any Other Name

the number of generations before cats from other registries that have incorporated European or Sable Bombay lines can be brought into CFA, and planning and requesting a CFA outcross program that includes Solid Tonkinese and Sable Bombays. Both of these breeds are genetically Burmese, but they are from breeding lines most of which have not been brought together for decades.

Another factor that impacts the Burmese cat's genetic diversity is the small number of foundation cats that were used to create the breed. After her 2008 feline genetic diversity study, Dr. Lyons proposed steps that could be taken to improve the health of the Burmese breed, and these were published in our September 2008 UBCF newsletter. Besides identifying and using outcrosses such as those mentioned earlier in this editorial, Dr. Lyons' recommendations also included bringing in imports from Thailand. Though Wong Mau herself may have come from Burma, it is likely that the breed's true origins were in Thailand. And thanks to Burmese breeders Renee Weinberger and J.D. Blythin, we now have a young Thai Burmese (known in Thailand as a "Suphalak") named Mod Daeng to help us in that step. You will learn more about her later in this newsletter.

To achieve success, we need a carefully planned multi-pronged approach to bringing genetic diversity into our breed. Not every breeder will want to participate. And some may prefer one outcross option over another. For example, contemporary breeders are more likely to be interested in Sable Bombays for outcross, due to the fact that most Bombays are contemporary. Traditional breeders probably would prefer Solid Tonkinese because they are unlikely to be carriers of the cranial facial mutation. Unfortunately, it appears that European Burmese in CFA will not be available as an outcross, as their breeders have worked hard to create this as a unique breed in CFA. But European Burmese lines are available through other registries, as long as the number of generations before they can be brought into CFA can be reduced to make this a practical option for outcross.

Will the current look of the Burmese we love change as a result of these outcrosses? Temporarily, yes, it is likely for the first generations created through outcrossing. But when comparing the long-term health of our breed to the ability to achieve show success in the short-term, the choice is clear.

We must take the current when it serves, Or lose our ventures.

William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

A very significant event for Burmese cats occurred in February 2010, when the CFA Board of Directors voted to combine the Sable and Dilute Burmese Divisions into one breed, following an affirmative vote for that combination by members of the CFA Burmese Breed Council. While this was long overdue and is ultimately the right decision, it was nonetheless shocking and upsetting to many traditional breeders. Yes, traditional HD- Burmese have been making great strides in recent years. We have bred increasingly competitive cats that have won high awards in CFA, but these have primarily been in the Dilute Division. And if this past show season is any indication, those successes remain few and far between. Only one traditional HD- cat made it to the top of the six classes this year (Kitten, Champion and Premier in the Sable and Dilute Divisions), and that was a Dilute Champion. In this current show year in CFA the divisions are now combined, and in a world where contemporary HD+ sables tend to dominate, success for HD- cats may be an uphill battle.

While the recent decision by the CFA board to combine the divisions may seem at first a disadvantage for the breeders of traditional HD- Burmese, I think there is a way we can take advantage of it instead. I believe this is an opportunity -- a chance to speak out and inform the world about our HD- cats and why it is so important, now, to support traditional cats and to create a bright and healthy future for them and for the breed as a whole.

We must develop tools to inform and educate judges, fellow cat fanciers, and the general public about what is happening to our breed. We should not assume that anyone truly understands how widespread HD+ cats are and how few original HD- Burmese cats remain by comparison. And we need to be sure that judges and exhibitors in all
registries understand the importance of allowing outcrossoes for the future health of our beloved Burmese. Outcrossing will take time, and we cannot wait any longer to start that process. Some contemporary breeders may choose not to work with outcrossoes or not to eliminate the HD+ carriers from their lines. But if traditional breeders make that same choice, then the future of our breed will be in jeopardy. Without action on the part of traditional breeders, the number of contemporary cats is likely to continue to increase worldwide and with them HD+ carriers. It is important for all of us to participate in taking steps that will lead us to fewer carriers, greater genetic diversity, and an overall healthier future for our breed.

What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet . . .

William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet

When UBCF was revived a nearly three years ago, we amended the original mission to reflect our concern for and dedication to the health of the Burmese cat. Yes, UBCF is about inclusion and our membership crosses registries with no affiliation, however our dedication to the health of our cats and the survival of our chosen breed remains paramount. While I believe we have accomplished a lot in two and a half years, we must do more. Before the population of the original, traditional, HD- American Burmese declines any further, there are steps we must take to reverse this trend.

Over the last couple of decades, to produce show cats that are competitive with contemporaries, traditional breeders have been raising offspring with rounder heads and shorter noses. Must traditional breeders keep producing shorter and shorter noses in an effort to make our traditional cats compete with HD+ cats? Is that what we really want, to imitate the look that is a phenotype expressed by a lethal genetic mutation? While in general I do like a more rounded head and a shorter nose, which balances nicely with the cobby bodies of our little brown cats, I think in our own efforts to win show ribbons that also can be taken to the extreme. There are health risks associated with shortened profiles, including excessive eye discharge, susceptibility to URIs, or cherry eyes. And do we really want to entirely lose the look of the original, traditional American Burmese, the look so many of us fell in love with long ago? The look that clients still want to find when they look for Burmese kittens with whom to share their lives?

Let us work together to restore this wonderful cat to the vitality and widespread acclaim that it deserves. If you are not already a member of your registry's breed council, join it and propose and vote for outcross options, then participate in whatever options become available. These now are within our reach, and we must take advantage of these opportunities before it is too late.

In closing, whatever registry you are involved in, please also find a way to exhibit your cats and kittens for the world to see. Bring your HD- Burmese out to show judges, fellow fanciers, and the public, so they understand how important it is to preserve this unique and beautiful breed. Whether you call the cats you love traditional, HD-, European, American, or the original Burmese, the name is not important, but keeping this wonderful Burmese breed healthy and flourishing -- that is what matters.

My heartfelt thanks to Renee Weinberger and J.D. Blythin for their article “Adventures in Thailand,” and to Rose Wheeler, Willa Hawke, Renee Weinberger and Daphne Negus for the historical articles included in this newsletter.

ERRATA

In the Autumn 2009 issue, we announced that the UBCF newsletter and editor won awards at the Cat Writers Association annual conference in November 2009. One of the awards announced by CWA was listed incorrectly, but we only discovered this after the last issue was printed. Following is the correct list of CWA Awards UBCF received.

CWA Muse Medallions:
Best Newsletter Column (tie)
for Nancy's Editorials
Best Opinion Piece, Essay or Editorial
for “The Health of the Breed”

CWA Special Awards:
The Purina Pro Plan ® Pedigreed Award
(to the writer or creator of the best entry of the year that focuses on cat breeds, pedigreed cats, and professional breeder issues)

The Fort Dodge/Healthy Cats for Life Turning Point Award (for the best published work by a beginning cat writer or photographer)
Adventures in Thailand

By Renee Weinberger and J.D. Blythkin

Dr. Leslie Lyons delivered a warning at the 2008 CFA Burmese breed council meeting about genetic diversity. She stated that the Burmese breed had the lowest diversity of all CFA breeds, and that we should look for solutions to this looming problem. One of her suggestions was to go to Thailand and import native bred cats. In February 2010, we made the journey halfway around the world to do just that.

Before we got on the plane, we did a lot of legwork back home to line up contacts and plan our trip. We connected with Martin Clutterbuck, the authority on native Thailand cat breeds today. After a complicated interlibrary loan process, we received and read his book, *Siamese Cats: Legends and Reality*, many times! Martin's friend, Aree Yoobamrung, owner of Areerat Cattery, had a female kitten we might be interested in. Additionally we contacted Dr. Ed Rose, of Chiang Mai cattery, who had previously worked with western breeders of Korats, Siamese, Khao Manee, and European Burmese. Dr. Rose had an intact male he was willing to place with us. So, it looked like some great possibilities before we even left: an unrelated pair of Suphalaks! However, by December, we had learned that the male in Chiang Mai had passed away. Nevertheless, we packed along a second Sturdibag, optimistic we would find another native bred Thai Suphalak. Nancy Reeves offered to receive a cat shipped from Thailand and work to get it healthy for us. Unfortunately, we were not able to take her up on her offer, as we did not find any other eligible Suphalaks from Thailand other than that female kitten from Areerat cattery.

First a little background on the cats of Thailand. It is widely believed that the Burmese we know in the west came not from Burma originally, but rather came to Burma from Thailand. There are a series of ancient folding books in Thailand that were believed to have been originally written somewhere in the 14th-18th centuries. The books depict several ancient breeds of Thai cats: Thong Daeng, Ninlarat, Dork Lao, Maew Kaew, and other black and white cats.

The Suphalak is also known in Thailand as a Thong Daeng which in English means "copper" cat. This copper cat depicted in the manuscripts has become known to the west as the Burmese, although the Thais do not distinguish between sable solid and sable mink - both colors are "Suphalaks." (*Siamese Cats: Legends and Reality*, 2004). Cats have been imported and incorporated into the Burmese gene pool from Southeast Asia several times in the in the past. These cats were:

**Copper Imports:**

- Wong Mau - Hybrid Female from Burma (likely a Sable Mink Suphalak)
- Tangyi of Forbidden City - Burmese Female from Burma
- Ananda of Forbidden City - Burmese Female from Burma - did not reproduce!
- Casa Gatos Biladi - Copper Male from Thailand
- Chira Tan Tockseng - Hybrid Female from Singapore
- Mahajaya Toffee of Bowbell - Copper Male from Thailand
- Mahajaya Sai Thong of Pandit - Copper Female from Thailand
- Mahajaya Nong Chai of Bowbell - Copper Male from Thailand
- Lop Buri - Copper Male from Thailand

**Siamese Outcrosses:**

- Minga of Yana - Seal Point Siamese Female
- Ricki Tic - Seal Point Siamese Male
- Resea Lee - Siamese Female
- She Shan Mau - Siamese Female
- Tai Mau - Siamese Male imported
- Tai-Tai of Tang Wong - Siamese
- Minkee of Chindwin - Seal Pt. Siamese Female
- Mon Luan - Siamese Male
- Chula Mia - Siamese Female
- Bing Tse Ling of Ching Ming Tai - Seal Point Siamese Female

Before leaving for Thailand, we wanted to gather as much information as possible about how to find local breeders and how to safely and legally export cats from Thailand. We contacted Dr. Cristy Bird of Sarsenstone cattery in California, making her acquaintance through Nancy Reeves of Burma Pearl cattery. Nancy and Cristy had gotten to know each other through local TICA shows, and Cristy had edited Martin's book and written the last...
chapter! Dr. Bird was an invaluable contact, giving us all the nitty gritty information and a how-to guide on importing cats from Thailand, as she had done this task many times herself. It was from her that we knew where to go to get the export permits, how to get to the veterinarian’s office, and a meeting with her good friend in Bangkok who literally helped lead us by the hand. She also prevented us from making some serious mistakes!

Our initial motivation to go the distance came from Erika Graf-Webster, who had originally invited Dr. Lyons to the breed council meeting. We stayed in contact with Erika after the meeting as she endorsed Dr. Lyons’ suggestions and encouraged us to make the trip. She also helped with the initial legwork by contacting Dr. Rose and Martin Clutterbuck. Later we contacted the new breed council secretary, Art Graafmans, and presented our idea to him as well; he also fully endorsed Dr. Lyons’ findings and supported our plans.

After a year and 8 months of discussing and thinking about such a trip, we made the voyage on February 9, 2010. At the time we traveled, there was only one nonstop flight from the U.S. to Bangkok - leaving from Los Angeles. Instead, we flew out of Chicago on Asiana, a South Korean airline, and connected through Seoul to Bangkok. The 747 left O’Hare airport shortly after 1:00 AM and, following the curvature of the Earth, flew for fourteen hours over northern Canada, Alaska, the International Date Line, and Russia to Seoul.

Air Transport World named Asiana its "Airline of the Year" in 2009. Those used to the lack of service on domestic flights nowadays would be blown away by the comfort and level of service in the economy class cabin. Within a few hours of taking off, the flight attendants served Bibimbap, a Korean specialty served as a bowl of warm white rice topped with beef, seasoned vegetables and chili pepper paste. The ingredients are stirred together thoroughly just before eating and were better than any airline food I have ever had (back when U.S. airlines served food). Anyone who finds it difficult to sleep in flight will be pleased to find hours of movies, games and short videos built into the video panel on every seat. Asiana went out of its way to make the long-haul flight as enjoyable as possible.

We landed in Seoul around 6:00 AM local time. Of course, to us it felt like 6:00 PM the previous day! Thankfully, we found one of several Dunkin’ Donuts stands and successfully fooled our bodies into believing it was morning, at least for the rest of the day. As our flight from Seoul Incheon airport to Bangkok did not leave for twelve hours, Asiana airlines provided a free bus tour of Seoul (for those who did not want to do a tour or who wanted to sleep, the airline offered a free stay at the airport hotel instead). The tour hit a few of the highlights of Seoul, including the Presidential residence (known as the "Blue House" for its blue-tiled roof), a museum of Korean history, and a wonderful, traditional Korean meal at a downtown restaurant. After the six-hour tour, it was back to the airport for the flight to Bangkok.

The flight from Seoul to Bangkok was almost six hours of bumpy air. Due to the prevailing winds, we took off toward the north ... and quickly made a very hard left over the ocean to avoid entering North Korean airspace. The two Koreas are technically still at war with each other even though there are few direct skirmishes. The flight skirted around China over water (which added considerably to the length of the flight) and passed over Taiwan, then the narrow strips of Vietnam, Cambodia and finally, Thailand. Around 10:00 PM, we landed at Bangkok’s brand-new Suvarnabhumi (pronounced "Su-wanna-poom") International Airport. In all, including the layover in Seoul
Bangkok during the day is a booming, sprawling metropolis of over 10 million people. It sits on the eastern shore of the Chao Phraya River, although its suburbs, of course, extend to the west as well as the 30 miles east to the new airport. The river, along with many canals extending throughout the city, was Bangkok's original "road," and the genesis for the city's nickname "Venice of the East." In modern times, many of the canals have been paved over, but still exist underground. The climate is definitely tropical. Although we visited in the "cool season," daytime temperatures were in the mid-90s with high humidity. To protect one's skin from the brutal sun, and because the culture insists on a level of public modesty, wearing shorts and small tops such as tank tops are no-nos. In public, men should wear lightweight long pants and shirts that at least cover the shoulders. Women should wear long skirts and shirts that cover the shoulders and torso completely.

Each day, the streets are filled (and we mean filled) with people, cars, trucks, taxicabs, tuktuks (three-wheeled auto rickshaws that are mainly tourist traps), motorcycles, mopeds and bicycles. If you find yourself in Bangkok, you would be well advised to stay off the roads during the morning and afternoon rush hours, as the local saying goes, "the cars are stuck." Motorcycles and mopeds dart in and out of traffic and crazily squeeze between traffic, making life dangerous for drivers, passengers and pedestrians alike. Other than public transportation, metered taxis are generally the best way to get around, so long as you either insist that the driver use the meter or negotiate a flat price at the beginning of the trip. Thankfully, public transportation options are expanding rapidly.

The original public transportation source was riverboats. Just like any city street, travelers can choose between large riverboat "buses" that make several stops along both sides of the river and smaller "water taxis" that are low to the ground. In the last decade or so, Bangkok has added both the BTS Sky Train, which is an elevated line serving Bangkok's most popular business and shopping areas, and a subway line that runs between Bangkok's two main train stations. A long-delayed elevated rail link between the new airport and the central city is also nearing completion. Public transportation, especially the Sky Train, will get you almost anywhere you want to go in Bangkok, but does not yet serve many of the residential areas.

Culturally, and to avoid prison, it is very important to remember that speaking against the King of Thailand or damaging or insulting his image (which is on all Thai money) is a crime for which you can be imprisoned. Most Thais revere the King and will not look kindly upon those insulting him. There has also been recent civil unrest and a corresponding military crackdown in Bangkok and throughout Thailand, which climaxed in the burning of several buildings on May 19, 2010 and about 85 killed and over 1300 wounded. The violence appears to have ceased for now, but the underlying issues have not been addressed. Even so, the U.S. State Department has issued no travel warnings or alerts for travel to Thailand.

After spending the night near the airport, we took one of Bangkok's ubiquitous and inexpensive taxicabs downtown to our hotel. Jean Robinson, a Korat breeder who had imported several cats from Thailand, recommended the Asia Hotel to us, and it was an excellent choice. Think four-star hotel with several restaurants, interesting shops, a cabaret show, a concierge, two pools, including a rooftop pool with an awesome skyline view, and an included, full buffet breakfast for $18 per night. Not to mention that it also has a direct footbridge to the Ratchathewi Sky Train station. The rooms are not the swankiest, but were considerably nicer than most budget hotels in the U.S.

After getting settled, we went out on foot for a brief shopping trip - mainly for essentials and to get a feeling for the city. Central Bangkok, particularly Siam Square, has a number of western-style shopping malls, and the majority of the sellers spoke English well enough to conduct business. The cards are marketed to international visitors; calls to the U.S. were actually less expensive than calls within
Thailand. Not that the cost mattered - virtually everything in Thailand, from food to products, was significantly less expensive than its equivalent in the U.S. We spent the rest of the day relaxing in the rooftop pool at the hotel.

In the evening, Bangkok’s streets change dramatically. Shops selling all manner of goods and food carts selling grilled meats and seafood, soups and other traditional Thai fare spring up along the sidewalks and in the Sois (small streets between the main ones) and alleys. Many of the food vendors cater to the locals. The ones we tried were fantastic. The restaurants we tried in Bangkok were also world class. As expected, the Thai food was spectacular, but we also visited an excellent French crepe restaurant and several first-rate restaurants. At one of the food carts, we ate grilled shrimp and saw an interesting street cat - he was definitely expressing the Burmese gene, although he was a silver spotted seal mink tabby with a bobtail! He came over to our table, presumably for food, but was amenable to being petted. He showed us that the Burmese gene and friendliness exists in the general cat population in Bangkok, even if it is covered by more dominant colors and patterns.

We spent Friday, February 12th sightseeing. We took the riverboat bus up the river to visit the Grand Palace and Wat Pho. The Grand Palace is a breathtaking, huge compound of buildings, temples and sculptures. Feeling overwhelmed from the start, we spent 500 baht to hire a private tour guide. It was the best $15.00 we spent on the trip. Mr. Tui explained where to look and what to look for. His expertise allowed us to see and understand the palace itself and its significance in Thai culture, and to tell whether the statue you are looking at is a good demon (wears a ring), evil demon (does not wear a ring), or monkey (does not wear shoes). We also visited nearby Wat Pho, home of the 400-foot long Reclining Buddha statue and a certain brown mackerel tabby.

On Saturday morning we met Martin at our hotel. With Martin, we visited Areerat Cattery, which is also known as "The Siamese Cat Conservation Center." Mostly, Areerat cattery concentrates on Siamese cats, but they maintain a few representatives of the other Thai cat breeds mentioned in the text and the Khao Manee. There were two Suphalaks in the cattery, Thong Daeng, an eponymous male, and Kim Kim, a female. These were the parents of the kitten that we had been offered. Among the cats (mostly Siamese in color) roaming the house was this tiny little kitten named Mod Daeng. "Mod Daeng" literally translates as "Red Ant." It is also the name of a superhero in a local comic book for whom she is named. We also received as much pedigree information they had on her, which was only three generations on the sire's side and one on the dam's. While Mod Daeng was clearly a mink Suphalak with a long nose and some color faults (ghost stripes, but no lockets), her round head and eyes, straight tail, and impressive size for a girl of her age made her too promising to pass up. After we returned home, the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory at UC-Davis confirmed that Mod Daeng is sable, mink, and does not carry champagne or blue.

Martin explained that the Suphalak cats are waning currently in the local cat scene in Bangkok. Thai breeds wax and wane in popularity, and local breeders may have individuals from various breeds, depending on their situation, at any given time. Currently the Korat and the Siamese are the most popular Thai cat breeds, however the breed of cat for which they are best known worldwide is

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**Mod Daeng’s Sire Thong Daeng in Thai Cat Carrier**

**Mod Daeng’s Dam Kim Kim**
Adventures in Thailand

the Siamese. Another breed in Thailand is the Khao Manee, an all-white, sometimes odd-eyed shorthair cat. For a short while, there was a Khao Manee craze fueled by western breeders coming to Thailand looking for imports to start out a new breed in the western cat fancies. In fact, we learned from Martin, and later Ed, that a few western (mostly European) cat breeders had come to Thailand in recent years and exported Korats, Khao Manees, and Siamese. It was this group of western breeders, who were unequipped to deal with cultural differences and cat fancy differences, that soured many of the local breeders to dealing with westerners. And, in fact, many refuse to do so after bad experiences and poor treatment. Some of these cultural differences revolve around the fact that most western cat fanciers offer all sorts of guarantees on breeding cats. But, this is not common practice in Thailand among the cat fancy. Rather, we noticed that "caveat emptor" seemed to be the rallying cry of commercial sales throughout Thailand. Many times cats exported had diseases that proved fatal or never reproduced. Indeed, we were made fully aware that the cat we were purchasing was being sold "as is" with no guarantees or claims about her future health or fertility. This is the most important advice we have for anyone attempting to import cats from Thailand. Your actions and treatment of the people with which you deal will not only help or harm your ability to establish a working relationship; they will help or hinder others' ability to acquire outcross cats from Thailand as well. Please, learn about the culture before you go.

Later that day, we met up for lunch with Martin and Cristy's friend, who is heavily involved in the local rescue scene and is a journalist with one of Bangkok's English language newspapers, The Nation. We learned a lot about these cultural differences and some of the mistakes made in the past. We also learned that we should avoid seeking cats at the Chatuchak weekend market, where people can buy many types of animals including exotic and endangered species. Martin and Cristy's friend warned us that the animals are brought to the market by people who are far less than scrupulous and do not take care of their animals. We were told stories of westerners who had purchased Thai cats from the market, and discovered that they carried diseases like feline leukemia or FIV. Unfortunately, the western breeders felt that the local veterinarians should euthanize these animals, but in general Thai veterinarians do not perform euthanasia, as they do not agree with it on religious grounds. As a result, many unwanted cats are dumped on the local rescue groups, temples, and on the streets. Fortunately, we did not go to the market. On the very weekend we would have visited, a local dog breeder died from rabies at the market!

After lunch, Martin's friend accompanied Mod Daeng and us to Dr. Summalee's clinic, the same clinic where Roger Horenstein had vetted his exports in 1997. The clinic is at the foot of the Phrom Phong Sky Train station on Sukhumvit Road, one of Bangkok's main thoroughfares. Unfortunately, Dr. Summalee is not practicing much these days, and her partner runs the clinic. There, we had Mod Daeng tested for FIV and feline leukemia (both negative) and treated her with Revolution. She also received a rabies vaccination and a distemper, herpes, and calici vaccine. While these vaccinations are not legally required for cats entering the United States, rabies vax is required for exporting animals out of Thailand by the Thai government! The clinic also boarded Mod Daeng while we set out for

Mod Daeng as a Kitten in Bangkok

Ed and Malee Rose, Chiangmai Cattery
Continued

We maintained our plans to visit Chiang Mai cattery in spite of the fact that the prospective male breeder had passed away. On Valentine's Day (which, quirkily, is celebrated extensively in Bangkok), we boarded a train for the daylong ride to Chiang Mai. At the station, we met another interesting street cat - a red mackerel tabby van. While fascinating and at first, the train ride eventually became somewhat tedious. It did provide a brief snapshot of Thailand outside Bangkok. After arriving in Chiang Mai late in the evening, we rode a songthaw, which is a pickup truck converted to carry passengers to our hotel. In the morning, we met Ed Rose, who drove us to his house and cattery. Ed and his wife Malee (who Ed says deserves much of the credit for his cats and success in general) have an impressive outdoor, enclosed cattery setup. Unfortunately, the Roses have retired from breeding and only had two elderly sable female Suphalaks remaining. These days, Ed works at a hospital in Chiang Mai and is also involved with a project to benefit one of the local libraries. We went out to lunch with Ed at a beautiful country club at which Ed is a member. After returning to the cattery and spending the afternoon talking about Burmese cats and trains with Ed and Malee, we returned to the hotel. The next morning, after a mad scramble, we made it onto a return flight to Bangkok.

Upon our return to Bangkok, we contacted Martin and his friend again. As we had no further leads and were exhausted, we spend the remaining few days of our trip relaxing, shopping, and exploring Bangkok. We also recovered Mod Daeng from the vet clinic and clandestinely put her up at the swanky, five-star plus hotel (also much less expensive than an equivalent in Chicago) at which we were staying. Two days before our flight, Martin's friend connected us with a taxi driver who had experience driving cat exporters to the animal export office at the airport. As required by Thai law, we brought Mod Daeng and the paperwork provided by the vet to the export office. We filled out additional paperwork, and the government veterinarian examined Mod Daeng and issued the export license. While the license process is relatively simple, taking no more than an hour, the process is an unfortunate barrier to exporting cats. The Thai breeders generally will not obtain export licenses for purchasers. They expect the purchasers to do it themselves or to hire a shipping agent, which can be difficult and expensive.

Two days later we boarded our flight from Bangkok back to Seoul. After another long layover, although not as long as expected due to delays, we were on our way back to Chicago. Mod Daeng rode with us in the cabin, under the seat the entire way - no one even knew she was there. Upon arrival at O'Hare, two hours before we had left Seoul, Mod Daeng saw snow for the first time.

While we had a wonderful adventure in Thailand and have obtained a nice girl who will hopefully provide a positive benefit to the overall health of our chosen breed, we do not believe that imports from Thailand will, by themselves, solve our problems with genetic diversity. Even with all the generous help we received, we could easily have come home empty handed. Dr. Lyons also suggests that we would need to bring back at least one cat for several years in a row. If we want to create, improve and maintain working relationships with Thai breeders to create a constant stream of available cats, we will have to keep going back, and we will have to take turns absorbing the time and financial costs involved. This is not something that we, the authors, can do alone. We need to make a long-term commitment to the process or choose another source of outcross cats.

About Renee and J.D.:

“We discovered Burmese in 2002, when J.D. decided he really wanted a Burmese kitten. After doing lots of research online and in books, we finally got in contact with a breeder up in Minnesota, and made the first of several trips north to visit her cattery with the intention of buying a kitten. As pet buyers, everything looked great and we bought a kitten from Annie Slawik, Ansata Cattery. That kitten was Ansata Mousse.
“Renee attended a local show, and saw Annie at the show, and thought, gee this looks fun. So, with her guidance, we entered Mousse in her first show as a kitten in autumn of 2002. We had no expectations of success, and Mouse surprised us by getting a few best of breed ribbons over her competition, a lovely sable girl bred by Toni Woolard and owned by Michael England. We continued showing Mousse at local shows until she granded in premiership.

“About two years later, Annie offered us a top show quality cat to show, and we thought that sounds like a fun idea, and that led to us getting Sarmicel’s Lucky for Me, a sable neuter. “Luke” loved to show and loved people. So showing him was easy! At that time, it became apparent to us that many of the Burmese breeders in our area were retiring, or just getting rather up there in age, and some prominent Burmese breeders had passed away. We realized that we had become the only exhibitors of a Burmese at shows in our area. This was not how it had looked at the beginning, to us. Losing breeders means you can lose the breed. We thought maybe it might be time to raise some kittens.

“We got started breeding, but our motivation was always helping the breed continue long into the future. Shortly after we started breeding we joined several cat clubs, and soon moved into putting on shows. Renee has served as a show entry clerk, show manager, and show secretary for multiple shows. J.D. has served as a show secretary and show entry clerk. Renee has been the Webmaster for the NABB web page since 2004, so for 6 years she has helped keep it updated, and in some cases it’s a daily task keeping on top of those rescues. Last year, we took on the task of editing the NABB newsletter. Renee served 2 years as NABB secretary and is embarking on 2 more. Both of us also work full-time. So, you can see that we are both people who step up and get the job done.”

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Renee Weinberger and J.D. Blythin
Catizen Burmese

Videos of Renee and J.D’s trip can be seen at:
http://www.youtube.com/user/curiamagna

MOD DAENG’S JOURNEY CONTINUES

by
Nancy L. Reeves

If you had told me a year ago that I would have a Suphalak from Thailand living with me in the summer of 2010, I would have been delighted but not entirely surprised. For as Renee and J.D. were in the final phases of planning their trip, I was beginning to plan my own journey to Thailand. It was only when I contacted Martin Clutterbuck, author of Siamese Cats: Legends and Reality, that I learned about Renee and J.D’s trip. And rather than duplicate their efforts, instead I offered my help and support. We hoped they would be able to acquire two breeding pairs, one for them to work with and one for me. But as it turned out, they were only able to find one Suphalak female, Mod Daeng.

Renee and J.D. are contemporary breeders and I am a traditional breeder. While we may not agree on certain aspects of breeding Burmese, nonetheless we share common goals -- to assure a healthy future for the breed that we love. It is my hope that we can also set an example for our colleagues on how traditional and contemporary breeders can work together to strengthen and preserve the Burmese cat. Because Renee and J.D. are expecting a baby in August, they were kind enough to send Mod Daeng to...
Mod Daeng’s Journey

me to first breed to traditional male(s), and their offspring will be shared with traditional Burmese breeders. When they are ready to have her back, Mod Daeng will be bred to contemporary males and those offspring shared with contemporary breeders. It is unfortunate that it is difficult right now to find Suphalaks to import, but that does not mean we should be discouraged from trying again and developing relationships with breeders in Thailand. In the meantime, we are lucky to have Mod Daeng to work with.

One of the people most helpful to us in this project is Dr. Cristy Bird. Cristy, a research scientist who has studied the dynamics of nutrition, genetics, and cancer in various human populations, is also an avid proponent for the preservation of Southeast Asian cat breeds. She has traveled to Thailand many times since 2001, served as editor for Martin Clutterbuck’s book on Siamese cats, and she authored the final chapter of that book. Cristy has also imported Wichienmaat or Siamese cats from Thailand, and is one of the founders of the newly established “Thai” breed in TICA, which helps preserve this ancient breed in its original form in the west. In addition to helping Renee and J.D. contact breeders and others in Thailand, including a local veterinarian, she also had important advice on export procedures, what tests to run before bringing her back, and critical steps in isolating and transitioning Mod Daeng to a Western Diet. Most recently, she helped us obtain three judges’ signatures needed to register Mod Daeng in TICA. Our heartfelt gratitude to Cristy for all she has done.

When I started my quest, I was not familiar with the term “Suphalak,” and have since found that it is also a new word to many if not most current Burmese breeders. It is a term that has fallen into disuse over the years, but you will see in some of the articles in this newsletter that it is by no means new to Western breeders, nor is the term “Thong Daeng” or “Copper Cat”, also a Southeast Asian name for what we have come to know as Burmese. It is important for readers to understand that in Thailand Suphalaks or Thong Daeng come in two varieties -- sepia and mink -- and they have for many centuries. And of course the mother of our Burmese breed, Wong Mau, was herself a mink. According to Dr. Bird, “Wong Mau was either a natural mink cat from a randomly breeding population in SE Asia -- not a hybrid, just the result of thousands of random breeding between thousands of random native cats. Alternatively, Wong Mau may have been a purebred Suphalak. In that case, she was not a hybrid either. She was a proper example of the Suphalak -- which can be either mink or sepia. It is only in the West that minks for a while were hybrids. As the Tonkinese breeders like to say, the Tonkinese breed simply put back together what Westerners in early 20th century deliberately teased apart. In the native land, sepias and minks belong together.”

And so, 80 years after Wong Mau came to California, another Suphalak, Mod Daeng, is here to help with the genetic diversity of the Burmese breed. At the time of this writing, Mod Daeng has been bred and we are waiting eagerly to see if she is pregnant. As some of you know, I have started a blog which can be found at:

http://moddaengjourney.blogspot.com/

Now that I am finishing this issue of the UBCF newsletter, I hope to post more regularly about Mod Daeng and her continuing journey. In conclusion, I offer an excerpt from an article by Daphne Negus, a former Burmese breeder who I will be interviewing in the next issue of the newsletter. Daphne herself went to Thailand in 1968 to acquire Korats to help strengthen that breed. The following is taken from her article on her trip which can be found at:

http://pawpeds.com/pawacademy/history/korat/

“The ancient and famous ‘Smud Koi’ or Papyrus Book, in Bangkok’s National Museum, shows, in color; paintings of favorite cats of Thailand, each described by a verse. The top one is an all black cat. Next is the Supalak . . . which is considered a very lucky cat . . . ‘Supalak’ cats, or Thong (gold) Daeng (red) actually means Copper colored cats. Supa means good, beautiful, progressive; lak or laksana means characteristic. Hence, Supalak cat means a cat of beautiful characteristics.”

From the Smud Koi (as rendered by Khun Sunti for Daphne Negus): “The Characteristics of the Thong Daeng cat surpass the characteristics of all others in existence. Their coat color glitters like copper bright; Their eyes shine like the glittering sun on high; All harmful things will be driven away and all evils be converted to benevolence.”

I hope the newest Suphalak brought to the U.S., Mod Daeng, will indeed bring good luck to our breed!
TRIP TO THAILAND
IN SEARCH OF BURMESE

By Beatrice L. Wood

In the beginning of Summer 1989, I was asked by Mrs. Alcaras, President of the Cercle des Amis du Burmese, to translate Virginia Deal’s article, The End Of The Tale (United Burmese Cat Fanciers’ Newsletter, Vol. 25 No. 3, Winter, 1983). This article concerns the genetic difficulties of the Burmese. Its title leads us to believe that if something is not done to save the breed, the romance that Burmese owners have experienced will soon be over. The Burmese will disappear. We’ll see only the ends of their tails.

For those who don’t have a Burmese, and do not know its history, I shall have to make a little resume. In 1930 Dr. Joseph C. Thompson, a retired Naval officer and San Francisco psychiatrist, received from Rangoon, Burma a brown cat called Wong Mau. There being no cat of the same breed, she was mated to the nearest Malay cat type available, a Siamese male. The offspring were then bred with Wong Mau and amongst themselves. The products of these breedings comprised brown cats which were called Burmese (because of Wong Mau’s origin) and Siamese. It turned out that Wong Mau herself was a Burmese-Siamese hybrid.

“Possibly no cat has created such controversies, nor had so many learned biologists and geneticists analyzing and experimenting with its genetical composition. Its status as a breed, not as a new breed, but as the restoration of a breed, as we now know, are set forth in The Journal of Heredity, (organ of the American Genetic Association, Washington, DC), Vol. XXXIV No. 4, April, 1943, entitled “Genetics of the Burmese Cat”. A Burmese Is A Burmese Is A Burmese . . . . Charlotte Smiley; The Cat Fanciers’ Association, Inc., Yearbook 1938.

Since Wong Mau, it seems Burmese were imported into the United States twice, once during the war in 1941. Only one of them had descendants. Then in the 1978 several were imported from the Mahajaya cattery of Mr. Ruen A. Rajamaitri in Bangkok, Thailand. One of them, Mahajaya Toffee of Bowbell, imported into California in 1974, is still alive. He belongs to Ms. Ardith Elmore, Pandir cattery, of Scottsdale, Arizona and is still siring. Toffee was one of the judges and exhibitors at Oriental Hotel cat show include: back row, counting from left: 2nd—Mr. Anusorn

Sapmanou, judge; 6th—Mr. Somkiat Onvimon, judge; 7th—Mrs. Malee Rose, and just below her, Mrs. Wood.
the last. "Coppers" (as the Burmese are called in Thailand) 1/2 to be registered by CFA in the U.S. Since then there has been no new blood, and the breed is confronted with grave genetic problems, very explicitly described in Mrs. Deal's article. These problems seem to stem partially from the new American judging standards.

"In the '70's a new Burmese look appeared in the show halls. Some of the cats had a shorter nose and muzzle, and a rounder head than their counterparts, but the look considered more attractive by many cat enthusiasts came at a high price. The line responsible for the look carried with it a gene that led to serious malformations, including eleft palates, missing nasal tissues and skulls that did not completely close... In Great Britain, the GCCF made showing Burmese from this line illegal. In America, the breeders turned their attention to eradicating the gene." The Burmese, K.E. Segnar and Charlene Beane, Cat Fancy, September, 1989).

The breed is facing a crisis. Something has to be done. In my opinion, the best solution is to introduce new blood, not from another breed (which would change the characteristics of the Burmese, not only its appearance but also its so attractive personality) but on the contrary to look for new elements of the original breed.

When I contacted Mrs. Deal to find out the address of the Mahajaya cattery from where the last imported cats had been sent by Mme. Rajamaitri's daughter in 1976, Mrs. Deal asked Daphne Negus to help me in my research. Through Mrs. Negus I obtained a copy of her December, 1988 CAT WORLD giving names of breeders and other Thai personalities concerned with cat breeding. The four names mentioned in the article were: Mr. Chalermpol Suwankayasit, Mr. Anusorn Sapmanu, Dr. Somkiat Onvimol, and Mr. Pichai Vansasong the son-in-law of Mme. Rajamaitri who owned the Mahajaya cattery. He himself has nothing to do any more with cats. His wife had taken over her mother's cattery, but she died. The cats were given to the servants and disappeared.

About the same time I met a French researcher who had been living in Cambodia and Thailand during the past twenty-eight years. He came to see my Burmese, and told me he had seen some of them several times in Southeast Asia and that upon his return to Thailand, he would do his best to find these cats. It is then that he put me in contact with an American-Thai couple, Edward and Malee Rose, Chiang Mai cattery in Chiang Mai, Thailand. They wrote to me indicating that apart from Siamese, Korats and Alabasters, they also owned Burmese of European origin and Coppers.

Then Mrs. Rose told me about a cat show to be held on September 2nd, 1989 in the Oriental Hotel in Bangkok. Immediately I left with my Burmese queen, Caladenia, hoping she would be in heat at the right time so that I could have her mated if I found the right male. I intended also to buy two female kittens, one for myself and the other one for Mrs. Regula Preuov, the well known Swiss cat breeder. I flew to Bangkok via Air France and was allowed to carry Caladenia in the cabin. In fact, after some people got off the plane in Bombay, I had three seats to stretch out on. I put a leash on Caladenia so she would not wander off if I fell asleep. But she was so tender she decided to sleep with her whole head over my nose and mouth.

The show was held in a salon of the Oriental, one of the most beautiful hotels in the world. The morning was reserved for registrations, and the show was held in the afternoon. I asked if my cat could enter the show; she was immediately accepted. There, I was able to meet all the Thai cat world personalities—Mr. Chalermpol Suwankayasit, breeder of Vichien-mard (the name for Siamese); Mr. Anusorn Sapmanu, Judge and Senator in the National Assembly of Bangkok, also a cat judge; and Mrs. Malee Rose. She and her husband own the most serious cattery, according to the information I...
could gather amongst the different judges and personalities present at the show. She had arrived by plane in the morning from Chiang Mai with sixteen cats, each of them in a spacious cage in which they had travelled, to leave in the evening with eight prizes, among them three First Prizes.

There were about a hundred cats in the show, among them seven Coppers. Two female Copper-Burmese (considered as Coppers) were judged with them. Two Burmese were judged separately from the Coppers, along with other cats of a foreign origin. I am happy to say my cat won First Prize in this category, for which I am very proud. The other Burmese won Second Prize. The Burmese were honored.

Some Burmese and Copper Entries:-
37 Copper f. (daughter of Woot, m.) from Copper x Copper, mother of 38 and 39.
38 Copper-Burmese f. from Copper f. x Burmese m.
39 Sister of 38, daughter of 37 and Woot.
40 Ming. Copper m. from Copper x Copper
41 Burmese f.
(All above from Chiang Mai cattery).
13 Copper m. of unknown origin.
57 Copper f.
64 Caladenia, my Burmese f.
74 Copper f.

Their appearance? It is of course the question that intrigues everybody. In my opinion it is impossible to recognize a Copper from a Burmese. At the show I saw a Burmese female and a Copper female in adjacent cages. I could only differentiate them by their number. To utilize the American terminology, the type is traditional rather than contemporary, perhaps more English, although the head seems shorter than some English types. The top of the head was rounded, the ears far apart. The eyes were mediocre in colour, at least in those I saw. It must be said that there were no pedigrees, and some cats were from unknown origin. Two of them had blue eyes. The males were heavy, up to 5 kilos, the females 3 to 3.5 kilos. The colour varied from a light chestnut to dark brown. Their disposition was very sweet. A severe selection will have to be made. Faults such as knotted tails and white spots appeared sometimes.

Coppers can also be found in the ‘Week-end Market’ in Bangkok. I took some pictures, but they look like the sad and miserable looking kittens one can find on the quais in Paris.

Then I visited the Roses in Chiang Mai where the animals were healthy and well fed, with spacious, well-ventilated, clean living quarters in a big enclosed garden. The Roses sterilized those cats which were judged unfit for reproduction. All of them were vaccinated, except for FeLV, the preliminary blood continued—
To Thailand in Search of Burmese, continued

test not being available yet in Thailand). I left Caladenia to be mated with Woot, the male I considered the best. I saw some of his offspring, among them one of his daughters. She had received the first female Copper prize in the Bangkok show two years running. I set great hopes on the expected litter.

There were no Copper kittens when I was there. While there I mentioned being interested by two females from two other lineages than Woot's, in order to work with new blood.

The main problem in Thailand is the absence of pedigrees. However, I was told they intend to start some. Considering the personalities involved, for instance Mr. Anusorn Sapmanu, Senator in the National Assembly, one can realize there is a real effort to encourage cat breeding. Serious breeders such as the Roses register all their cats, indicating their origin, names, date of birth of the parents, weight at regular intervals, whether sterilized, sold, dead, and commentaries on their litters, faults if any. It is certain that breeders' pedigrees could be established and, eventually, a Book of Origin.

I was fascinated to find out there are still Burmese in Southeast Asia. I saw about twenty, but many more exist. I have high hopes for the fruitfulness of this trip. Though it was very hard for me to leave Caladenia behind the stake was important, it being absolutely necessary to be sure she was pregnant before she came home. I went to Thailand for the purpose of doing something for the breed. Coming back with nothing would have been too disappointing.

I believe the solution to the genetic problems within the breed is an injection of new blood of the same breed. I hope the future will prove me right.

Beatrice Wood
59 Boulevard Du Chateau, Neuilly 92200, France

Editor's Notes:

CWI thanks Virginia Deal for sharing the above photographs and report based on Mrs. Wood's account and letters which she sent to me with the author's kind permission to publish.

Caladenia had five kittens on November 16, 1989. In a letter to Virginia, dated January 17, 1990, Mrs. Wood wrote:

"...Last 2 weekends they were in a show and got 2 judgments Excellent, which is what I needed for them to be registered on an experimental pedigree. They were judged as Burmese: 1st judgement said: 'Harmonious litter of good type in general. The head is equally well tailed - rather good stop - top of head well rounded - colour of eyes not yet defined - good quality of fur and tonality - very good condition.' 2nd judgment said: 'Superb litter of 5 kittens of which 4 of a very beautiful sable colour-excellent condition-full of vitality.'

Virginia is sending pictures and writing about the litter--and about Burmese in the U.S.--for CWI September/October 1990.

References:

1 Ardith and I took Toffee, some of his offspring, and others to the February, 1979 CFA Board Meeting in Las Vegas for consideration of registration for the 'Bangkok Burmese'. Our presentation--written and actual--combined with a beautifully worded letter from Virginia Deal, met with success. Ardith's own Mahajaya Sai Thong of Pandit, imported from Mme. Rajamaitri's daughter in 1976, was not in the party as she was pregnant and safely at home.

2 Mme. Rajamaitri died in 1975. *I had visited her many times at her lovely Silom Road home in 1968 and had cooperated closely with Mrs. Jean Rose over the registration in the Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) of the Mahajaya cattery and cats over the years before and after my visit to Thailand to find and bring home more Korats. While her Siamese, Korat and Copper cats, and her Cocker Spaniel and (later) Australian Silky dogs were a great source of joy to my friends, this passion was not regarded with quite the same enthusiasm by her family.

3 In the 1970s a registry, with well designed, detailed pedigrees, was begun by Mrs. Ianthe Cormack working with Mme. Rajamaitri who kept meticulous records of her Siamese, Korats and Coppers. When Mrs. Cormack's husband was posted elsewhere by the British Government, the registry ceased. DN.

*My journey, and its success, are described in the CFA Yearbooks of 1969 and 1981.
Our Burmese community has been divided into two camps for so long that I believe we lost sight of our most important mission. As caretakers of one of the world's most precious cat breeds, Burmese breeders have a great responsibility: to assure the health and preservation of this wonderful cat for many generations to come. And right now we have an opportunity that we haven't seen for decades. Whether you are a contemporary or traditional breeder, at last we seem to agree that without restoring our breed to genetic health, the Burmese cat's long-term survival is at great risk.

There have been several turning points that have brought us to this place. Dr. Leslie A. Lyons' 2008 study of the genetic diversity of cat breeds showed us that Burmese have the lowest of all breeds except Singapuras. That year Dr. Lyons also made recommendations on how to restore diversity. Then this past February, the CFA board approved three changes in our Burmese standard and show rules that many thought would never happen. This gave hope that the board in the future might also approve other and more significant changes for the betterment of our breed. Finally, Renee and J.D.'s trip to Thailand to bring back a Suphalak sparked a discussion of what other steps we can take in that direction.

Dr. Lyons has pointed out that modern cat breeds have been developed within a very short time, most in the last 100 years. Although we know that Suphalaks have existed for centuries, the modern Burmese was developed with only a few foundation cats. For contemporary lines, there is an additional bottleneck in that all current contemporary lines trace back to one cat, Good Fortune Fortunatas. Thus our breed started with low genetic diversity, and though cats have been brought in from Thailand over the years, this has not happened often enough to solve that problem.

Geneticists uniformly point out that breeds with less genetic diversity are at a greater risk. When there is little gene variation within a species, healthy reproduction becomes difficult and a population can become increasingly vulnerable to disease. Cheetahs are an example of an extremely inbred cat species. Approximately 10,000 years ago, all but one species of cheetahs died out. This in effect resulted in a population bottleneck, and close relatives bred together in order to keep the species going. This low genetic diversity continues to create reproduction problems for cheetahs -- currently, only about 5% of cheetahs survive to adulthood. It also has made the breed susceptible to disease, and just a few years ago one colony of cheetahs was decimated by feline infectious peritonitis.

Some are concerned about the loss of Burmese type through outcrossing. One only has to look at photos of Mod Daeng to wonder how long it will take to shorten that nose. But when placed in the context of our greater, long-term purpose, how soon outcross offspring can achieve success in a show hall is insignificant.

There are American Burmese breeders who have already worked with more genetically diverse Burmese lines (crossing American with European lines in TICA), and they have reported greater vigor and size in the kittens born to these matings, as well as larger litters. Reducing the number of generations before cats with European lines from other registries can be registered in CFA would be another way to incorporate greater genetic diversity. There are two other breeds recognized in CFA that are genetically Burmese and would be other logical options for outcrosses: Solid Tonkinese and Sable Bombays.

It is interesting to note that the Korat population is smaller than Burmese, but Korat breeders deliberately undertook a careful breeding program, importing Korats from Thailand every few years, and this has made a significant difference in the health and genetic diversity of the breed. This is a program that Burmese breeders should examine and emulate.

Finally, opening the breed to outcrosses could potentially increase the number of Burmese breeders, as current breeders develop working relationships with breeders of outcross breeds. A greater number of kittens would also increase the client base and the pool of potential exhibitors.

As we continue to discuss this, it's important to remember that no Burmese breeder would be required to outcross, it would be up to each individual. But denying outcrosses to the breed as a whole likely will result in continued deterioration of genetic diversity, health, and fertility. I hope that all UBCF members, and other Burmese breeders and exhibitors as well, will support the current efforts underway to help the genetic diversity and health of our breed. Let us not remain in the past but seize this opportunity to create a healthier future, not only for ourselves but for our beloved Burmese cats.

Nancy L. Reeves
GENETICS OF THE BURMESE CAT

JOSEPH C. THOMPSON, VIRGINIA C. COBB, CLYDE E. KEELER*, AND MADELEINE DMYTRYK

THE first “Burmese” cat (see Figure 10) was a female imported into the United States from Burma by the senior author in the year 1930. Its bodily confirmation and behavior were typical for native Malay cat stocks, best represented in America by the Siamese variety. The Burmese was not recognized at once by the fanciers as a new breed, but suffered for some time the ills of being considered by most persons as an “off-colored Siamese.” This explanation sounded very plausible to owners of Siamese who knew that usually the body color of the Siamese darkens with age and varies to a certain extent with the seasons of the year. To make matters worse, the first Burmese cat did not breed true, but threw both Burmese and Siamese kittens when mated to its nearest available Malay cat type, the Siamese (see Figure 13D).

Two of the present authors (C. E. K. and V. C. C.) at once recognized the first Burmese cat as belonging to a new “incipient true-breeding variety.” On the basis of crosses made by the senior author and through a paper (by C. E. K. and V. C. C.) in 1934 one of us (V. C. C.) proposed1 to the Cat Fanciers Association that the Burmese be recognized as a new color variety for show purposes. Agitation was continued until its acceptance in 1936. Burmese are now eligible for registration in the Association Stud Book.

Further crosses by the senior author produced the foundation pedigree of the breed, shown in Figure 11. In this chart it will be noted that, starting with the imported Burmese cat, Wong Mau, containing one gene for Burmese and one gene for Siamese, and by mating this to a Siamese Tai, it has been possible to establish a Burmese variety that has bred true for three generations.

The official standards2 for Burmese call for a Siamese conformation, a chocolate brown body color with seal points, and topaz eyes. The kinked tail common to so many Malay cats has not been bred out of Burmese stock and is generally present.

It was recognized that Mendelian segregation of two coat colors was taking place in crosses of the imported Burmese to a Siamese male, as will be seen in Figure 13D. The light colored kittens always developed into typical sealpoint Siamese cats with china blue eyes, and the dark kittens all became Burmese cats with topaz colored eyes. There were no intermediate color gradations observed.

From crosses of this sort made by the senior author there resulted 11 Burmese males, 16 Burmese females, 11 Siamese males and 10 Siamese females.

Mr. Mel Friedlander mated a Burmese female with a Siamese male. This cross produced four Siamese and four Burmese.

One of us (V.C.C.) crossed a Burmese female to a Siamese male. There resulted three Siamese and two Burmese. In all, such crosses have produced a total of 34 Burmese : 27 Siamese.

Because these four segregating classes were present in relatively equal numbers, it was suspected that they represented a monofactorial backcross involving one contrasted pair of autosomally borne gene alleles, or that some independent autosomal gene manifest only in the presence of the Siamese pattern, was converting certain genotypically Siamese kittens into Burmese.

It soon became apparent that all genes involved must be autosomal because of the numerical equality of the sexes in both Siamese and Burmese categories. Thus, the possibility of the genetic complication of sex-linkage was readily dismissed.

It had been shown previously by two of the authors (C.E.K. and V.C.C.) that

*The Edgewood School, Greenwich, Connecticut.
the gene producing "Silver" or "smoke" (Figure 13C) in cats is an allele or alternative form of the same gene that produces the Siamese coat pattern. Both silver and Siamese coats are affected by temperature and age, and both types have points darker than the body color. This is more evident in the non-agouti or non-tabby form, namely, smoke.

From the results of these experiments, coupled with the fact that the Burmese also has dark points and that the body coat darkens with age, it appeared that Burmese might well represent a physiological intermediate between silver and Siamese. If a physiologically intermediate stage between these two coat colors, it appeared probable that it might be an allele. The breeding experiments were henceforth conducted to test this hypothesis.

If Burmese represents an intermediate allele between silver and Siamese, we can make the following predictions:

1. When Burmese is crossed to normal intensity (Figure 13B) all of the offspring will exhibit normal intensity of pigmentation.

2. When pure bred Burmese is mated to Siamese, all the kittens should be Burmese.

3. All Siamese segregates from crosses involving Burmese should breed true for Siamese.

4. When Burmese (whether purebred, or hybrid for Siamese) is mated to silver or smoke, the offspring should all be silver or smoke rather than tabby or black, as is the case when animals bearing two Mendelian coat colors due to genes at independent loci are involved.

The studs Pak Kwai Mau (Siamese segregate of the first Burmese, Wong Mau by a Siamese sire, Tai Mau) has sired more than 500 kittens of Siamese queens. All of these kittens have been Siamese without a suggestion of Burmese. Nor have the authors ever heard of Siamese cats having Burmese ancestry, throwing Burmese unless mated...
with Burmese. These facts are in line with prediction No. 3.

Burmese has been outcrossed to cats of normal coat color intensity. All the kittens so produced were of normal intensity. This confirms prediction No. 1.

It was learned that where there was opportunity for the Burmese gene to enter a cross from both parents, there might be in addition to Siamese kittens, two shades of Burmese kittens (Figure 12). The lighter of the two shades developed into the coat color of Wong Mau. The darker shade developed into a darker body color.

It is well known that in rabbits, rats and mice an animal showing a member of the albino series of allelic coat colors will be lighter when hybrid for a lower allele than if purebred for the given first allele. Aware that we were probably dealing with alleles of the albino series in the cat, we suspected that these two types of Burmese represented animals purebred for the Burmese gene (darker) and hybrid for the Siamese gene (lighter), respectively. A cross of dark Burmese to Siamese yielded only Burmese kittens, in keeping with prediction No. 2.

Where two Burmese, each hybrid for Siamese, were mated, the 3:1 ratio was observed. The verification matings by one of us (M.D.) gave 20 Burmese : 5 Siamese. When these 20 Burmese were divided as to color phase there were found 3 dark and 17 light. We actually

COLOR VARIATION IN KITTENS

Figure 12
These three grades of pigmentation of the Siamese and Burmese coats are shown in the kittens. Left to right: thoroughbred Siamese, hybrid Burmese × Siamese, and purebred Burmese. The heterozygote carrying both the Burmese and Siamese alleles is intermediate in color.
At the present time four alleles of albinism are known. These are shown here. The lightest form is the Siamese \((A)\). Next in intensity of pigmentation is the Burmese \((D)\), the kittens shown are segregating for Burmese and Siamese pigmentation. The smoke or silver pigmentation \((C)\) is intermediate between Burmese and the full tabby or black pigmentation \((B)\) shown here in a Persian kitten. A color intermediate between Burmese and Siamese has also been reported, and complete pink-eyed albinism would also be expected to be a member of this series.

### Conclusion

Thus, we may conclude from the results of all our genetic tests that:

1. The Burmese is a distinct, new coat-color variety of the domestic cat, having a sound genetic basis, in that dark Burmese will breed true.
2. The Burmese coat color is based upon the possession of a pair of Burmese genes (dark color phase) or of a single Burmese gene and its Siamese gene allele (light phase).
3. Burmese and Siamese genes are sharply contrasted in their effects, there being no intermediate grades of coat color observed, and Mendelian ratios being found in both F\(_2\) and backcross matings.
4. The Burmese gene represents a fourth identified allele in the albino series which, naming the genes in order of diminishing pigmentation produced, are as follows:
   
   1—Normal intensity (Tabby or Black)
UBCF has a newly updated website. Our thanks to Brian Tripp for his work as webmaster and to the UBCF members who provided photos and other materials. The website will continue to be updated with information both for the general public and for UBCF members only. Please visit the website at:

www.united-burmese.org

**Thompson et al: Burmese Cats**

2—Silver (Smoke)
3—Burmese
4—Siamese

**Postscript**

A color variation darker than ordinary Siamese was discovered by Lelia Volk of Honolulu to be segregating in her Siamese strain. This was examined by one of us (C.E.K.) and found to be intermediate in color between Burmese and Siamese, and hence we suspect the Hawaiian variation to represent a fifth allele in the albino series. It is so near Siamese in color, however, that it will probably not be perpetuated as a distinct variety and hence the possibility will probably not be had of checking its genetic relationships. At least one intermediate allele between the one producing an intensity similar to that of Burmese and the one producing Himalayan is known in rabbits, and a similar gene (extreme dilute of Detlefson) is known in mice. These facts seem to make our suspicion of the Honolulu variation representing a fifth albino series allele in cats seem even more plausible.

**Literature Cited**

2. Standards for Burmese privately printed by Cat Fanciers Association.
**Opening Statement: Willa Hawke, President:**

I am absolutely delighted that all of you are here for this, our first meeting since the "new UBCF" was revived. It took us a while to get together because we are spread all over the country and all over the world. That's something we should be proud of, the fact that we have so many members from across the globe who are united in our passion for healthy Burmese cats. I hope this will be the first of many gatherings for the "new" UBCF, and that over the next year or so there will be meetings in every region as well.

We have made a lot of progress the last couple of years with our newsletters, which has helped us get the word out about UBCF and our mission to help our breed flourish. And I'm also very pleased with the work that has recently been done on our website, united-burmese.org, which will be a fantastic resource for us. More about that later.

Yes, we have made progress but we still have many challenges ahead of us. If we are to be successful in helping our breed be healthy and grow, we must do it together. For UBCF and our beloved Burmese to thrive, we must not only stick together, but also share breeding lines, avoid conflict, show our beautiful healthy Burmese every chance we have, and find ways to expand our pool of breeders, and grow our membership, including pet owners.

Educating pet owners and the general public, our fellow exhibitors, and the judges in the various registries about our mission is also critically important to the success of our ventures - but this must be done in a proper way. We have some ideas on how we might accomplish this and I hope we can brainstorm tonight on those and other ways we can make progress in that area.

**Introductions: All**

**Treasurer's Report: Art Graafmans, Treasurer:**

Balance 12/1/2009: $3,457.42
Newsletter Printing - Autumn 2009: ($254.40)
Newsletter Printing - Autumn 2009: ($ 96.88)
Balance 6/21/2010: $3,106.14

**Secretary's Report: Prudence Dorazio, Secretary:**

The 2010 membership drive was not conducted in January, and instead, it will be conducted this summer for the overall 2010 year. Apologies were made for this delay due to illness. All members for 2009 are counted as current members in good standing until the 2010 membership drive is complete. We have approximately 70 members.

**Discussion of Agenda Topics Submitted by Membership, Led by Willa Hawke:**

* Genetic Diversity / Potential Outcrosses: Please be aware of Mod Daeng, a recent Thai Import Burmese-type cat. Several members raised their concerns about low genetic diversity in the Burmese breed and potential related health issues. The idea of permitting outcrosses in CFA to European Burmese was suggested by some members.

Art Graafmans asked the Membership to please save this topic for the CFA Burmese Breed Council Meeting on Saturday, June 26, 2010. This topic will be covered extensively and Mod Daeng will be presented for viewing.

(Please refer to the CFA Breed Council Minutes submitted by Art Graafmans, CFA Burmese Breed Council Secretary.)
June 24, 2010 Meeting Minutes

* Review of the UBCF Mission Statement: Brian Tripp asked the question of how each of us supports the UBCF Mission Statement. The UBCF Mission Statement was read aloud and a written Russian translation was provided by Natalya Gnatyuk.

* Promotion of the Burmese Breed: A suggestion was made by Brian Tripp and Suzanne Berrin to publish a UBCF advertisement in Kittens USA and Cats USA with link to the new UBCF website. From the UBCF website, links can be provided to individual catteries wishing to be listed. Agreement was reached to support this from UBCF treasury as a trial, if possible. Brian will provide information to Willa Hawke and Art Graafmans.

* Genetic Diversity / Burmese Pedigree Requirements in CFA: Several members raised the topic that the CFA requirement for an 8-generation pedigree to register a Burmese cat will make it difficult to register potential outcrossed cats (due to the amount of time required to produce 8 generations) as well as cats from other feline registries that do not currently have records of pedigrees that are 8-generations deep. There were suggestions to lower the requirement to 3-5 generations.

Art Graafmans asked the Membership to please save this topic for the CFA Burmese Breed Council Meeting on Saturday, June 26, 2010. This topic will be discussed as a possible ballot topic. (Please refer to the CFA Breed Council Minutes submitted by Art Graafmans, CFA Burmese Breed Council Secretary.)

* The "Barrington Gene": Claire Lamontagne is curious about the so-called "Barrington Gene". Is there such a gene that can influence the Burmese coat color, producing especially light colored champagne and platinum coats?

This phenomenon can be seen, but we do not know the answer about whether there is a special "gene". Does anyone in the membership know?

* New Thoughts and Ideas: Jenny Nelson, Regional Director for Region 5, submitted a high level concept for a small, competitive multi-association Burmese Breeders Cup show at a resort in the Ozarks to help build networking and membership in Region 5. She also shared her thoughts that UBCF might act as a registry of pedigrees for members who wish to experiment with outcrosses to promote the health of the Burmese breed.

UBCF Members Natalya (Natasha) Gnatyuk and her husband Alexander (Sasha) Goncharov of Lyuboburm cattery, Moscow, Russia
* The FIP Genetic Study at UC DAVIS / SOCK

**FIP:** Nancy Reeves reminds us to please send in samples for this study. YES, samples are still being collected. The study is asking for samples for three groups: 1. cats that have or have died from FIP (taken before or after death), 2. cats related to cats that have FIP or have died from FIP, 3. cats from lines that have not experienced FIP for three generations.

For each of these groups we need 100 samples (100 individual cats) for each group for each breed - that's 100 each group for Burmese for a total of 300 samples/cats. To date, UC Davis has received less than 200 samples total from ALL breeds. Dog breeders readily provide samples for canine research, so it is surprising that it is so difficult to get samples from cat breeders.

Even if a breeder or exhibitor has never experienced FIP, DNA samples are still wanted. Not only will these samples help FIP studies, but will be available for other studies as well, including HCM - Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy and the cranial facial mutation study.

For the future health of your Burmese and cats in general, please take a few minutes to visit www.sockfip.org, look under Davis FIP Studies (left hand side menu), and send samples for this anonymous study. The feline genome has been sequenced and it will unlock many doors but it can't succeed in accomplishing that without the DNA samples needed for research. Anyone who has questions or would like to be sent forms, q tips, instructions, anything that will help them collect and send samples, please contact Nancy Reeves at burmapearl@mac.com or sockfip@me.com

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* The UBCF Website: Our special thanks go to Brian Tripp, who kindly volunteered to develop the UBCF website, and it will go live in the next few weeks!

Please visit www.united-burmese.org. Please watch for posts by Brian on the UBCF Yahoo Group List for further information. Brian will keep stats on the website, including traffic and how people are reaching our site. IMPORTANT: Full Members may request a FREE advertisement for their catteries for the remainder of 2010, so please pay your 2010 membership dues during the drive this summer. A listing fee is planned for 2011.

* Upcoming UBCF Elections: Our special thanks go to Lauri Henry, who kindly volunteered to Chair the Nominating Committee for Officers and Regional Coordinators. Final nomination ballots will be submitted on July 1, 2010, and elections will be held in October. Thank you, Lauri!
CFA BURMESE BREED COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

JUNE 26, 2010 12:00 - 2:00PM
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

In Attendance: Connie Wardlaw, Priscilla Eldredge, Donna Stewart, Billie Stiffler, Renee Weinberger, J.D. Blythin, Cheryl Peck, Ambeur Johnson, Sunny Lodge, Sharyn Hauck, Sig Hauck, Phobe Low, Ernie Dorazio, Alexander Goncharov, Natalya Gnatyuk, Prudence Dorazio, Lorraine Shelton, Michael Henry, Lauri Henry, Kristi Graafmans, Fran Eiserloh, Suzanne Berrin, Brian Tripp, Marina Ivanitskaya, Olesya Kolosova, Becky Drew, Donna Hetherington, Art Graafmans. The meeting was called to order at 12:00 noon. Copies of the agenda slide set were provided to all in attendance and should be reviewed when reading these minutes.

BURMESE HEALTH SURVEY

Doctors Leslie Lyons and Susan Little were involved in the development and review of the health survey. They were both invited to come to the meeting but unfortunately neither one was able to attend. Art, therefore, presented the slide set provide by Dr. Lyons and integrated them into the agenda slides. The number of responses was relatively low with 26 responding out of 143 mailed. Art, who did the mailing, felt that there was many retired breeders in the mailing list and therefore, the low percentage of people who responded may be misleading. The results of the survey are outlined in the slides provided, along with Dr. Lyon's suggestions for the breed. The suggestion that the breeders reduce the extreme facial features to reduce the numbers of cats experiencing corneal sequestrums and ulcerations was met with significant disagreement from several of the attendees. One member requested that Dr. Lyons' suggestion be removed from the report. A number of different suggestions were then put forth to manage or prevent these conditions.

Dry FIP appears to be a growing concern for the Burmese. Dr. Lyons suggests that we participate more actively in the SOCK FIP project. Low birth weight and stillborns were also listed as a concern. Dr. Lyons felt that these issues might be improved with an increase in genetic diversity. It was noted by one of the attendees that not long ago, Dr. Lyons' group did a genetic diversity study that included the Burmese. This study found that the Burmese breed has the second lowest genetic diversity of all breeds, behind the Havana Brown and slightly better than the Singapura. Art mentioned that we would come back to this issue later in the meeting. Dr. Lyons also suggested that we start tracking un-descended testis and cardiomyopathy. She recommended that we use the Cat PHIR database at UC Davis to track these issues. Art remarked that when he talked to Dr. Lyons the week before the meeting, the PHIR database website was functional, but there is still work to be done, and she was looking for a programmer to finish the site. The PHIR database can be found at https://www.vgl.ucdavis.edu/PHIR/

Dr. Lyons noted that those who responded to the health survey and reported head defects, cherry eyes and/or dermoids, reported much fewer flat-chested kittens including pectus excavatum. She suggested that the traditional Burmese breeders should follow up on this finding. Other than to clarify Dr. Lyons' point, there was no significant discussion to this point. Dr. Lyons also commented that early kitten deaths appeared to be sporadic in nature other than some heart disease. She remarked that while a number of older cats died of renal failure, this is not unusual.

FIP RESEARCH AT UC DAVIS

Nancy Reeves forwarded information to the BC Secretary regarding the FIP research currently being done at UC Davis in conjunction with the SOCK FIP project. Dr. Niels Pedersen reported that they have received too few genetic samples, especially from the United States. They are focusing on the Burmese and Birman breeds for this study and have received a disappointing amount of participation. To date Denmark, which has a veterinarian actively working on the disease, has submitted nearly as many samples as the whole United States. The team at UC Davis requires a large number of samples from both affected and non-affected cats from outside Denmark to do comparative studies. At this point, samples are being requested from American and European Burmese, Sable Bombays, Solid Tonkinese and any other breed that is genetically Burmese. Dr. Pedersen reminded us that samples from cats that are healthy but related to affected cats are particularly important to submit. These include siblings, parents and their offspring.

The Genetics Lab at UC Davis is now fully engaged in FIP research. The SOCK FIP website, which helps to raise funds for this research, is gaining presence with the
various web search engines. SOCK FIP has also filed for non-profit status and continues to forward all donations to Dr. Pedersen's FIP work at UC Davis. There was little discussion regarding this topic other than there was consensus that we all need to increase our participation in this research.

**BREED STATISTICS**

Art presented some slides regarding the reported kitten births to CFA. These statistics represent the number of kittens reported in litter registrations. The number of Burmese kittens reported dropped from 987 in 2008 to 777 in 2009 (the most recent year for which data was available). This represents a 21% drop. This was compared to 17% drop for CFA as a whole. If viewed over a longer period, between 1998 and 2009 the Burmese saw a drop of 69.5% while CFA as a whole dropped 65%. When comparing the number of Burmese kittens to all kittens, Burmese represented 1.587% of the total in 2008 and 1.499% in 2009. This would indicate that while we are losing numbers (both kittens and breeders) we are not losing breeders to other breeds. Art also noted that given the difficult financial times, some breeders might be choosing to not register litters unless the litter includes a show cat. Other attendees agreed that these results were not unexpected and confirmed that they were aware of litters not being registered for financial reasons.

**THE THAI IMPORT CAT - MOD DAENG**

Renee and J.D. brought the cat that they had imported from Thailand to the meeting for all to see. They discussed the process of making contacts in Thailand and their trip. They discussed the breeders whom they met and the cats that were available to bring back. Unfortunately they were only able to locate one cat, a female that they named Mod Daeng. There is an excellent article in the NABB newsletter written by Renee and J.D. regarding their experiences in Thailand and covers most of what was presented at the meeting. After completing their discussion, they presented Mod Daeng to the group and everyone had a chance to observe her. Renee and J.D. are seeking the approval of the Breed Council to allow Mod Daeng to be used in Burmese breeding programs as a way to expand our gene pool and its genetic diversity. After the presentation was completed, Prudence asked if anyone would have an objection to an outcross program, in general. No one objected and many people acknowledged that this would be a good idea.

**IS IT TIME FOR AN OUTCROSS?**

Art posed the question: Is it time to ask for an outcross? Dr. Lyons has identified that the Burmese breed has the second lowest genetic diversity of all cat breeds. He also noted that we are losing breeders and so our gene pool is shrinking. Based on the statistics presented earlier in the meeting, if current trends continue, we will continue to lose over 200 kittens born per year in CFA, and at that rate we will decline to zero in four years. Art asked how the other attendees felt about this idea and there seemed to be consensus that it is now appropriate to ask the CFA Board for an outcross. Art suggested the Solid Tonkinese, the Sable Bombay, the European Burmese, Thai imports and possibly others as a starting point for discussion. The European Burmese came up as having a potential problem. Specifically, the European Burmese breeders might be sensitive to having their cats identified with the American Burmese. The group agreed that the Solid Tonkinese and Sable Bombay were good candidates and that we should support bringing additional cats from Asia. Due to time constraints and the limited number of Breed Council members at the meeting, Art suggested that this discussion continue online.

**PEDIGREE REQUIREMENTS**

Art posed the question: Should the Breed Council request that our 8 generation pedigree requirement be reduced? From the last Breed Council meeting it was brought up that the 8 generation requirement was put in place to keep the red color gene from entering the American Burmese population. As we now know, the red gene is dominant and therefore always presents itself. This negates the original argument for 8 generations. Art asked, if we are going to ask for the number of generations to be reduced, how many should we ask for? It was commented that most established breeds have a 5 generation requirement while less established breeds having as few as 3. Lorraine Shelton suggested requesting a change to 5 generations would reasonable. Art asked the group if anyone felt that reducing the pedigree requirement was a bad move. No one objected and all agreed that it was time for this change. We agreed to continue this discussion online.

That concluded the agenda for the meeting. Art asked if there was anyone that had any other topics to cover. With no other topics, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm. Minutes submitted July 25, 2010 by Art Graafmans, CFA Burmese Breed Council Secretary.
Early Burmese

Wong Mau and Kittens

Wong Mau

Early Burmese Male Circa 1942

Early Burmese
A BURMESE IS A BURMESE IS A BURMESE . . .

Charlotte Smiley

Transported from the mysterious Far East, to the exotic San Francisco apartment of the late Dr. Joseph G. Thompson, quite an exotic in his own right, came little Wong Mau, "Mother Eve" to probably 90% of the Burmese in the United States today. All still trace to her, even though some newer Burmese blood has since been introduced.

Dr. Thompson was a Navy Medical Officer. He spent a great deal of time with scientific expeditions to remote places, and had a reputation with the Biologists through his work on marine fauna. Upon retirement from the Navy, he became a successful practicing psychiatrist in San Francisco. The fact that he had a reputation for certain striking eccentricities such as slave bracelets, haori coats, etc., was largely a method of self advertising at a time when the "couch" of the psychiatrist was not the well known panacea that it is today.

It is said that Dr. Thompson obtained Wong Mau from Frank "Bring 'em Back Alive" Buck, famous wild animal collector, and that the cat was an exhibit at a native carnival in Rangoon. (The late Billie Gerst, who took over Dr. Thompson's stock at his death, also told of seeing a pair in an Indian exhibit at the Chicago Exposition in the '30's). Early breeders believed that Wong Mau was a "sport", or a Siamese mutation. It is now believed that she had been stolen from a remote temple, and was indeed the little "Rajah" cat described by Major Finch in his article in Cats Magazine in the January 1948 issue.

According to Major Finch, who also brought a Burmese to the States, a little female called "Simbuni," Malay word meaning Mysterious, the presumption that the Burmese, or "Rajah" as it is called in the native temples is not a known breed is distinctly in error.

Major Finch was an Army Officer stationed in the China-Burma-India Theatre during World War II. During this time, he visited Buddhist temples in Prome and Mandalay, and saw the most beautiful Burmese cats in the world. In each case they were the personal pets of the head priest or abbot, and were referred to as "the Rajahs." To each Rajah was assigned a young student priest, whose duty it was to see that every whim and fancy was indulged. In his conversations with the old priests, he was assured that the Rajah, or Burmese, was an accepted Royal pet long before the Siamese cat honored the Court of Siam. They were treasured by the old Burmese Kings, and in the Royal Palace they also were treated as Royalty.

One of the interesting beliefs held by the Rajah fanciers in Burma is that Siamese developed from an Albino Burmese pair imported from Burma. According to Major Finch, this belief in Burma was universal with those who were familiar with the two breeds, including the owners of the Burmese sire and dam of Simbuni, on whose estate the Major had been a guest. This is an interesting switch from the theory sometimes advanced that the Burmese is a "brown" Siamese.

Apparent there is no record of descendants of Simbuni, but it is an entirely different story with Dr. Thompson's Wong Mau. Of necessity, she was bred to the nearest Malay cat type available, a Siamese male.

At the time of her acquisition, Wong May was thought to be a pure bred Burmese. One of her parents must have been a true breeding Burmese, according to Mendelian theory. Descriptions and photographs of Wong Mau supplied by Billie Gerst indicate that she was a rather small cat, fine boned, but with
C.F.A. YEAR BOOK, 1958

a more compact body than that of a Siamese, with shorter tail, a rounded short muzzled head, with greater width between rounded eyes. Her ears were large and erect. She showed no muzzle pinch. She appears in her pictures as a dainty, oriental looking cat, with neither the cobliness of a Domestic Short Hair, nor with the exaggerated length and raciness of a Siamese. There is a diversity of opinion regarding her eye color, some say golden, others indicate a turquoise. Some mention a locket, in other reports it has been skipped, if it existed. All agree that she had darker brown points (legs, tail, ears and mask) than her body color. Photographs indicate the dark points, proving little Wong Mau a Siamese-Burmese hybrid.

From Wong Mau’s first mating, two types of kittens resulted, one typical Siamese in every respect, the other type thought to be Burmese, as they were replicas of Wong Mau, dark brown in color, with dark points, and were sold as such at fancy prices. Needless to say, they did not breed true. When one of these brown pointed offspring was mated back to his dam, three types of kittens resulted, some Siamese, some brown with points and some solid brown, with little or no contrast in ears, tail, feet or mask. When these solid brown cats were mated together, only solid brown kittens resulted.

For a completely abbreviated genetical explanation, it can be said that a Burmese carries only brown genes, and a Burmese mated to a Burmese can reproduce only Burmese offspring — a solid brown cat. We know that if we mate a Siamese to a Siamese we always get Siamese kittens. It is equally true in the case of the pure-bred Burmese — like begets like.

Possibly no cat has created such controversies, nor had so many learned biologists and geneticists analyzing and experimenting with its genetical composition. Its status as a breed, not as a new breed, but as the restoration of a breed, as we now know, are set forth in the Journal of Heredity, (Organ of the American Genetic Association) Washington, D.C, Vol. XXXIV No. 4 (April, 1943), entitled "Genetics of the Burmese Cat." Authors are Joseph G. Thompson, Virginia C. Cobb, Clyde E. Keller and Madeleine Dmytryk. Briefly, after innumerable experiments, it was determined and recognized that the Burmese belonged to a hitherto unknown true breeding variety. In 1934, it was proposed to the Cat Fanciers Association that the Burmese be recognized as a new breed for Show purposes. In 1936 they were eligible for registration in the Stud Book. But, despite the evidence submitted by noted authorities, as to the true status of the Burmese as a true-breeding, separate cat variety, there were some breeders who maintained that it was essential that Siamese blood be re-introduced every three years — the reason for this statement being rather obscure — at least in the light of modern Burmese breeding programs. Naturally CFA could not countenance such procedure, and in the ensuing controversy, the Burmese were denied the privilege of registration. It was not until 1953 that the Burmese were reinstated, and again acceptable for registration.

Possibly it was the best thing that could have happened, as it forced right-thinking breeders to set and maintain high standards. No one who purchases a pair of Burmese today will be confronted with the shock of hybrid kittens, the natural concomitant of the “Siamese re-introduction” myth.

There seems to be a great deal of confusion in the minds of the ordinary breeder as to just what constitutes a Breed. Zoologists classify animal life in minute detail, but suffice to say in the final analysis all known kinds of beasts are divided into Species and Sub-Species. In nature, these ordinarily interbreed more or less freely.
C.F.A. YEAR BOOK, 1958

Those who have made no special study of animal life are inclined to confuse the natural Species with the domesticated Breed. Some of the disparaging remarks directed toward Burmese by fanciers of longer domestically cultivated varieties would lead one to believe that their own breed of cat preceded Noah out of the Ark. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Even the origin of our other domestic animals is veiled in the obscurity of antiquity, subject to diverse theories. The origin of the cat is clouded with the maximum in obscurity, mystery as well as superstition.

Much evidence has been accumulated to prove that several wild Species have gone into the making of our present domesticated cats. No typical “Best in Show” Persian in ancient days swept into the Palace of the Shah — no BOC Abysinnian stopped at the Nile for a drink before resuming its pedestal in Amon-Ra’s temple, no Show type Russian Blue galloped over the snowy Russian steppes.

Many times new Burmese breeders have been heard to say that they would like to go to the Orient and return with a “native” Burmese cat. According to experts, familiar with Far Eastern psychology, the native “breeder” is a violent individualist, and did he have an archetype Burmese, would be utterly dissatisfied until he had produced an animal that differed from all other Burmese, aiming for individual peculiarities that his animals possessed, resembling no others.

This characteristic could account for the fact that few Burmese cats which have been imported are identical, other than in a general way. Point of origin, body and eye color are usually the same, but not always. This also explains in part why none of more recent imports owned by show-mine exhibitors have ever entered their animals in shows, nor have they ever been placed on exhibition, even though they would be a maximum attraction to so many.

When the word Breed is used by the naturalist, it refers to a large group of animals possessing to a recognizable degree similarity in type, size and color. The selections are presumably natural, influenced by environment and nutrition. Naturalists have catalogued thirty-five breeds of Cats; innumerous varieties.

When the Cat Fancier refers to a Breed, it is as applied to highly restricted, controlled breeding, as specified by the Show Rules of the Cat Fanciers Association. Our present Show Cats, be they Long Hair, or Short Hair, reflect the painstaking, selective breeding programs of countless, hard working breeders, who have given unstintingly of time and money to achieve a continuing increase in perfection. The Burmese cat is no exception — Burmese breeders are perhaps more dedicated than most to the improvement and advancement of the Burmese — particularly in view of their earlier set back.

CFA had the first good Burmese Standard, one that called for a cat far different from a brown Siamese type. Show Rules indicate exactly what is required. Rounded head, chest and eyes, of a golden hue, the deeper the color the better. Any trace of blue would rightly disqualify — and the almond shape and slant, so desirable in Siamese, is a fault. The profile shows an indentation. The body is dainty, but compact. When light shines directly into a Burmese eye, a turquoise color is reflected. With Siamese there is a red glow. In judging Burmese classes, a judge should be particularly careful to be sure that direct sun or artificial light is not distorting good golden eye color. According to Dr. Duval Jaros, breeder of both Siamese and Burmese, and one of the Bay area’s distinguished eye specialists, there is still another difference in the Burmese eye as compared to that of the Siamese. Burmese have the
ability to see out of the side, or corner of the eye, a faculty which the Siamese does not have. This probably accounts for the Burmese exceptional alertness.

In color, the Burmese is a rich, warm, seal brown, with a glistening shine like that of slipper satin. There is no color resemblance to the dull, blackish brown of earlier specimens. Peggy Ball, from whose Regal Cattery stem many of the All American winners today, believed this unattractive color, with its lack of warmth, was due to insufficient Burmese to Burmese breeding. Certainly it is a color very seldom seen in Burmese classes today. An extraordinary "velvet coat" mentioned by early Burmese fanciers seems to be lost. Presumably it would resemble in texture and length the quality of imported English "Rex" coated cats — without the curl. Major Finch, however, did not believe that this velvet coat was part of the genetic inheritance of the Burmese.

The Burmese is a small cat. Some have claimed that the breed is subject to "dwarfism." According to the Finch article, it is stated that the native Burmese are the smallest cats in the world. Modern breeders are likely to agree. Burmese are again appearing as smaller cats.

The disposition of the Burmese is so superlative that there be no "odious" comparisons. Quiet, gentle, playful, loving, companionable, intelligent, gorgeously decorative, inherently non-destructive, fearless, "almost" obedient, they are the real sociable extroverts of the cat family.

Their main requirement, actually a must — is your affection.

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**Burmese Rescue**

Through a variety of circumstances, some of our adult and senior Burmese find themselves without a home or in danger of losing their home. UBCF considers it an important responsibility for Burmese breeders and fanciers to spread the word about these at risk cats, or to provide direct assistance in obtaining new homes for them.

The Burmese Rescue Program provides a great service and plays an important role in helping at risk Burmese across the United States.

If you know of a Burmese at risk, or want to learn more about Burmese cats that currently need new homes, please contact the Burmese Rescue Coordinator at:

burmeserescue@yahoo.com
PLANNED FOR THE NEXT UBCF NEWSLETTER:

UBCF ELECTION AND BURMESE CLIENTS

Possible articles may include:

- Candidate Statements for October 2010 Election
- Interview with Denise Hall, Vindouro Cattery
- Interview with Daphne Negus
- UBCF Member Survey on Clients
- UBCF Member 2009-2010 Show Season Success
- Genetic Testing

THE MISSION OF THE UNITED BURMESE CAT FANCiERS IS:

- To create and develop interest and knowledge of the Burmese cat, and in the care, health and breeding thereof.
- To seek to establish markets for the breed.
- To cultivate acquaintanceship among members.
- To promote and advance in every way possible the interest of owners, breeders, and exhibitors of Burmese cats.
- To determine standards of the Burmese cat.
- To maintain, develop, and publish information concerning the breed.

If you would like more information about UBCF, or to become a member, please contact:

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UBCF NEWSLETTER  Volume III  Issue 1
Summer 2010  © 2010

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