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THE BOMBAY

'Patent-Leather Kid with The New-Penny Eyes'

by *Nikki Horner*



GRC Road To Fame Return to Shawnee, female Bombay. Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker. Ow: Nikki Horner. CFA's Best Bombay 1987-88 and 22nd Highest Scoring Cat Nationally and 2nd Best Bombay 1988-89.

The Bombay's origin is written without conjecture inasmuch as I am the originator of the breed. Cat breeding to me is an artistic endeavor. You could say all breeders are artists striving for a living masterpiece of fur.

The Shawnee Cattery was established in 1945 and I have worked with a number of breeds including both Burmese and black American Shorthairs. As I looked at these two breeds, I had a vision of what the combination could look like: a black Burmese with copper eyes. I envisioned a cat with the Burmese musculature and the black coat and gold to copper eyes of the American. With its lithe, muscular carriage and the beautiful sheen of its black coat, I named these mini-panthers Bombay--for the black leopard of India and the city of Bombay.

A People-Loving "Panther"

The Bombay is a cat with superior stamina, prolific and healthy. As a bonus, I wound up with a silky coat that invites caressing. The feel of the mature show cat is an experience one does not forget. You'll find that the Bombay enjoys a gentle caress as much as you like stroking its fur, because other "side effects" of the Burmese/American cross are a remarkable intelligence (Bombays are the model for feline curiosity) and a people-oriented personality much like the Burmese. I do believe, however, that the Bombay isn't quite as vocal as the Burmese.

The Bombay is neither standoffish nor a shy wallflower. It wants constant attention and will (pardon the expression) "dog" your footsteps for it! Both

Bombays and Burmese can become very bothersome in their attachment to their owners and their desire for constant attention. They want to be in the center of everything! They go so far as to hover over the water while you're cleaning up - and some of them will even get in the water to be with you while you're bathing. I had a Bombay that often, and of her own volition, joined me in the bathtub. Some Bombays are real waterbugs. If you doubt it, just ask Dick Graves. He told me that his cat Reve has taken showers with him - honest!

Quite often I have to shut myself away from them to accomplish a task. Once a lady returned a Bombay to me with the comment, "I wanted a pet, not a shadow." That was a learning experience. I avoided such future "refunds" by telling prospective owners beforehand, and in complete detail, about the cat's traits and personality.

Late Bloomers

To the general public, Bombay kittens look very ordinary. The magnificence of the cat-to-be does not begin to emerge until kittens are about four months old, when they develop sleek, shiny coats and penetrating eyes. This delayed duckling-to-swan transformation does not elicit instant attraction from prospective kitten owners. Typical comments on a kitten before it gains its coat and eye color include, "It's just an ordinary black cat!"

or "My Aunt Susie has one just like that, but she found it at the Humane Society."

Bombays mature very slowly. The earliest sale should be 12 to 14 weeks, and even then their quality is difficult to assess. Show quality may not begin to be evident until six to seven months. A rough coat may transform itself into a short, sleek and shiny coat covering a well-muscled body. I've known of the best not maturing to really win until a year or 18 months, and they continue to mature and improve with age.

While the Bombays are slow in developing external breed characteristics, they are precocious when it comes to breeding: some are sexually active as early as five months, though seven to eight months is the average. The Bombay's relatively early sexual development is a result of its hybridization.

Bombays are very easy to groom and exhibit. The cats have very good appetites, and with good nutrition and grooming they are very rewarding to exhibit.

Creating a Breed

In the beginning, black being dominant over sable, I had more black kittens than I dreamed of, but no waiting market for these little half-breeds.



*GRP, CH, NW Ratatat's Betty Boopers of Djas, spay Bombay.
Br: Sharon Knight. Ow: Dick & Jay Graves. CFA's 6th Best Cat
in Premiership 1987-88.*



*GRC, CH Road to Fame's Mabel Black Label, female Bombay.
Br/Ow: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker. CFA's 10th Best Cat 1982-83.*



Nikki Horner with Tom Dent at CFA's 1989 Annual Meeting, receiving Tiki's Bombay award for the second year.



*GRP, GRC, NW, Djas Cajun Reve Fille of Rataat, spay Bombay.
Br: Dick & Jay Graves. Ow: Dick & Jay Graves & Sharon
Knight*

They were very prolific and without genetic defects. I'd bet my hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, had more little black cats per capita than any other city in the world!

From January 1966 to January 1972, twenty-seven Bombay litters (106 kittens) were born at Shawnee. What I couldn't sell, I gave to friends and to good homes as pets. When I tried to interest people in this new breed, the response was usually, "I'll wait until they are recognized, then I'll buy one. Progress went very slowly. I had no outstanding show cat since the breed was not accepted for championship. Try explaining this Catch-22 to a would-be purchaser, and there was no interest in owning a Bombay -- much less paying a good price for one.

Tracing the development of the breed reads much like a list of biblical "begats," but it all started with a few carefully selected animals. One of the Burmese used was a magnificent sable male, GRC Shawnee Casius Clay. GRC Shawnee Little Brown Jug and his son GRC Shawnee Col. Casey were two other Burmese males used extensively in the early breeding of Bombays. The black Americans used to supply coat and eye color were males GRC David Copperfield of Shawnee and GRC Shawnee Shot in the Dark. American females used include GRC Esquire Escapade of Shawnee, CH David's Black Onyx and Shawnee Obsidian.

Gaining Acceptance

Getting the Bombay to championship required extensive exhibition in the Provisional class. You pay a fee to enter, and the cats are merely brought to the rings to be handled by the judge and viewed by the exhibitors. Usually when this was done the owner would be called to the ring to give a short speech about the breed.

I also took the best Bombay specimens I had at the time to Annual Meetings to enable the Board members to view the cats. At the 1970 Annual Meeting in Niagara Falls, Jean Rose moved that the Bombay be accepted for registration, which carried unanimously!

Betty Barber, now residing in and operating Pet-Nanny of Indianapolis, deserves credit and recognition for her work and unflinching support toward the Bombay's recognition as a breed and gaining championship status. She assisted in the management of the cattery, accompanied me to the annuals to present Bombays to the Board, and helped exhibit 10 to 15 cats in many shows for several years.

The requirements for advancement from registration to Provisional status, including the formation of at least one breed club and the registration of at least 100 specimens of the proposed breed, were met by May 1974. As of May 1, 1976 the

Bombay was eligible to compete in the championship classes. Allowable outcrosses for the breed were black American Shorthairs and sable Burmese.

Bombays may still be bred "from scratch" by crossing Americans and Burmese. However, with the improvement of Bombays available today, it would be a step backward. The only reason for using black Americans today would be for outcross and added vigor.

The biggest obstacle in gaining recognition of the Bombay as a championship breed came from Burmese breeders. Not surprisingly, today you will find Bombay and Burmese cats advertised together -they go paw in paw.

Early Breeders

Patricia Taylor and I met at a show in Indianapolis in 1973. I had a beautiful Bombay female, Shawnee Bata Han, on exhibit. It was Pat's first cat show -- and love at first sight when she got a glimpse of Bata. Bata personified all I had bred for in the Bombay; she had it all. Later I sold Bata to Pat, along with a male, Shawnee Mozambique. From this pair a female was born April 5, 1975, GRC Kejo Kyrie, who was the first Bombay grand champion and who was also CFA's Best of Breed for

1977, 1978, and 1979. In 1978 Kyrie was 17th Best Cat in Pat's region. In 1980, Kyrie's son, Kejo Zanzibar, became CFA's first male Bombay grand champion. Pat sold Zanzibar to Joanne Pantaze of Austin, Texas, for whom he sired two grand champions: a female named Gotagato Jacqueline, who granded in 1981, and a male named Gotagato Tricky Nicky of DaNis, who granded in 1982.

In 1977 Sandy Sulloway and Johanna Kachler (Sankachi Cattery) were working with Burmese and needed a male. They drove to Louisville in their new van to pick up a male, but Sandy said when they drove home with a Bombay female (GRC Shawnee Ai Ai of Sankachi) they knew the Bombay was the breed they wanted to work with. "Ai Ai was so loving. She just attached herself to us. And those beautiful copper eyes!"

In the pre-championship days, I resorted to giving Bombays to people who promised to exhibit them and promote their popularity. One such gift cat, Shawnee Colorme Black, was given to a Florida exhibitor. Later by chance, breeder Herb Zwecker received a call from someone in Florida who was trying to locate a home for Colorme. Herb had previously purchased five Shawnee Burmese, which he successfully exhibited. Herb quickly accepted Colorme into his cattery, which began his



GRC, NW Road To Fame Moagley of Sultan's Pad, male Bombay. Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker. Ow: Shirley Marcus. CFA's Best Bombay and 11th Best Cat 1988-89.



Road to Fame's Luv It Black, male Bombay. Br: Her & Suzanne Zwecker. Ow: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker & J. & M. Williard. CFA's 2nd Best Cat 1985.



*GRC, NW Colchester a Man Called Hawk, male Bombay.
Br/Ow: Rita & Sandy Krebs. CFA's 8th Best Cat and Best
Bombay 1990-91.*



*GRC, NW Road to Fame's Instant Replay, male Bombay.
Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker. Ow: Larry & Karen Bullard.
CFA's 7th Best Cat 1985-86.*

work with the Bombay. In 1982, with Suzanne & Herb Zwecker's appetite for Bombays whetted by the addition of Colorme, they bred a black American, Black Jack, to a Burmese female, Road To Fame's Isis, a granddaughter of GRC Shawnee Route 66 of Road To Fame. This breeding produced GRC Road To Fame's Mabel Black Label. As a kitten she was best across the board at the Morris and Essex show in New Jersey. When she made three out of four finals in her first show as an adult, Herb & Suzanne began thinking about campaigning her. When in Mabel's first show as a grand she was second-highest scoring cat, they decided the judge who said Mabel was good enough to make CFA's Top 10 knew what she was talking about.

Mabel indeed was CFA's Tenth Best Cat for 1982-83 and Best of Breed. Before the next show season was a month old, the Zweckers bred Mabel to sable Burmese GRC, NW Kashmirian's Lord Lovatt, DM. This breeding produced a Bombay male named Luv It Black. By the time the kitten was six months old, Herb & Suzanne had plans to campaign him to Cat-of-the-Year. In the 1984-85 season, Luv It was ahead in the wins for Cat-of-the-Year, but as the count in Persians grew in the winter, a red Persian female gained ground and pulled ahead. Luv It ended the season as CFA's Second Best Cat and Best Shorthair.

Similarities and Differences

In May, 1976, when Bombays were accepted to championship status, the Burmese and Bombay standards were very similar. Each required a pleasing round head without flat planes; a full face that tapered to a short, well-developed muzzle; a visible nose break in profile; eyes set far apart with a rounded aperture; and medium ears set well apart and broad at the base, slightly rounded at the tips and tilted somewhat forward.

Body and color were more important in the Burmese (by 10 and 5 points respectively). Coat and eye color were more significant in the Bombay (by 10 points in each case). Although both cats were of medium size, the Burmese body was described as "compact" while the Bombay was "neither compact nor rangy. Otherwise, the standards were so similar that the two breeds seemed to be as one.

The Bombay standard has changed little since 1976. The phrase "without flat planes whether viewed from front or side" in the description of the breed has been replaced with the phrase "with no sharp angles." Two points each have been subtracted from roundness of head" and "full face and proper profile" in the description of head and ears, and those points have been allocated to "chin."

Furthermore a written description of the chin has been added to the standard. Finally, the points allotted to body have increased from 10 to 15, while the number of points for eye color decreased from 15 to 10, perhaps acknowledging the difficulty in obtaining copper eye color. However, the deep eye color is no more demanding than in Persians or other breeds. A Bombay with gold to copper eyes is acceptable. Copper eyes are, of course, more desirable. Green eyes are disqualifying.

The Burmese standard now contains a modification that suggests a slight breach between the breeds. Unlike the Bombay, the Burmese standard no longer specifies a full face "tapering slightly to a short, well-developed muzzle." The Burmese face, according to the current standard, should blend "gently into a broad, well-developed, short muzzle that maintains the rounded contours of the head."

Really, there isn't much difference between the Burmese and the Patent Leather Kids with the New-Penny Eyes. I feel both standards need some revision because what judges read and interpret in the standards results in wins given Bombays that meet the Burmese standard. This is exemplified in a study of the National Winners.

Rare, But Popular

There are very few breeders seriously working with the Bombay in this country. Though it is a minority breed, the Bombay is not the rarest. However, the registrations did not reach triple figures until 1989, when there were 114 registered. All the Bombays registered between 1970 and 1989 (1020 blacks and 43 AOVs) do not equal the number of Burmese registered in 1989 alone (1206). Considering the low number of Bombays registered, the breed has enjoyed remarkable success with seven National Winners.

Today if you seriously want a Bombay kitten, you may find yourself on a waiting list. Successful Bombay breeders rarely have the cat you want on the day you write or call.

Conclusion

As I sort through old records and pedigrees, I marvel that the Bombay came to be. My woman-made breed has made me very proud. I was especially proud when I walked into the Purina/CFA Invitational Cat Show, with its sky-high ceilings, and I saw the banner gracing the Bombay section. I thought, by golly, with all the cats and wins I've had through the years, when I'm gone nobody's going to remember. But the Bombay will still be here. Viva la Bombay!

CHART OF NATIONAL WINNERS

SEASON	CAT	WIN
1976-77	GRC Kejo Kyrie Br/Ow: Patricia C. Taylor	Best of Breed
1977-78	GRC Kejo Kyrie Br/Ow: Patricia C. Taylor	Best of Breed
1978-79	GRC Kejo Kyrie Br/Ow: Patricia C. Taylor	Best of Breed
	CH Kejo Zanzibar of Gotagato Br: Patricia C. Taylor Ow: Joanne Pantaze	2nd Best of Breed
1979-80	GRC Shawnee Ai Ai of Sankachi Br: Nikki Homer Ow: J. Kachler/S. Sulloway	Best of Breed
	GRC Kejo Zanzibar of Gotagato Br: Patricia C. Taylor Ow: Joanne Pantaze	2nd Best of Breed
1980-81	GRC Argayle Minaxi of Sankachi Br: Arlys Peterson Ow: S. Sulloway/J. Kachler	Best of Breed
	GRC Gotagato Jacqueline Br/Ow: Joanne Pantaze	2nd Best of Breed
1981-82	CH Midnite Puccina Br/Ow: Lucia A. Pozzi	Best of Breed
	CH Road To Fame's Oh Calcutta Br/Ow: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker	2nd Best of Breed
1982-83	GRC, NW Road To Fame's Mabel Black Label Br/Ow: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker	10th Best Cat & Best of Breed
	GRC Sankachi Golda Meir Br/Ow: S. Sulloway/J. Kachler	2nd Best of Breed
1983-84	GRC Road To Fame Maybelline of Euphoria Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: Jeri & Mike Williard	Best of Breed
	GRC Road To Fame's Luv It Black Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: H. & S. Zwecker/J. & M. Williard	2nd Best of Breed
1984-85	GRC, NW Road To Fame's Luv It Black Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: H. & S. Zwecker/J. & M. Williard	2nd Best Cat & Best of Breed
	GRC Road To Fame's Anjemima of Euphoria Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: Jeri & Mike Williard	2nd Best of Breed
1985-86	GRC, NW Road To Fame's Instant Replay Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: Larry & Karen Bullard	7th Best Cat & Best of Breed

SEASON	CAT	WIN
1985-86	GRC Ratatat's Cajun Toot Toot Br/Ow: Sharon Knight	2nd Best of Breed
1986-87	GRC Road To Fame Mistrial of Lachateau Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: Robert & Lu Eggmann	Best of Breed
	GRC Ratatat's Cajun Toot Toot Br/Ow: Sharon Knight	2nd Best of Breed
1987-88	GRC Road To Fame Return To Shawnee Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: Nikki Homer	Best of Breed
	GRC Road To Fame Mistrial of Lachateau Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: Robert & Lu Eggmann	2nd Best of Breed
	GRP, NW Ratatat's Betty Boopers of Djas Br: Sharon Knight Ow: Dick & Jay Graves	6th Best Alter
1988-89	GRC, NW Road To Fame's Moagly of Sultan's Pad Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: Shirley Marcus	11th Best Cat & Best of Breed
	GRC Road To Fame's Return To Shawnee Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: Nikki Homer	2nd Best of Breed
1989-90	GRC Djas Cajun Reve Fille of Ratatat Br: Dick & Jay Graves Ow: D. & J. Graves/S. Knight	Best of Breed
	GRC Road To Fame's Wine and Roses Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: H. & S. Zwecker/J. & G. Philpot	2nd Best of Breed
1990-91	GRC, NW Colchester A Man Called Hawk Br/Ow: Rita & Sandy Krebs	8th Best Cat & Best of Breed
	GRC Road To Fame's Wine and Roses Br: Herb & Suzanne Zwecker Ow: H. & S. Zwecker/J. & G. Philpot	2nd Best of Breed
	GRC, GRP, NW Djas Cajun Reve Fille of Ratatat Br: Dick & Jay Graves Ow: D. & J. Graves/S. Knight	2nd Best Alter