

Meeting a Star!

By
Chris Stalker

It was at the beginning of the year when Helen asked me if I would like to be one of the Household Pet judges at the Kentish Cat Society show. I agreed on the proviso that I could persuade my friend and fellow Burmese breeder, Alison Baker, to act as chauffeur. It is over a 500 mile round trip to and from Kent (from my home in Cheshire) and public transport would have entailed too many changes of train. So, with a bit of persuasion and the decision made to travel the night before, Alison agreed.

Just before the show, Helen & John advised me that the society had managed to book a celebrity to do the final BIS judging of the Household pets – Liz Smith. Veteran actor Liz is a favourite of many both Film & TV viewers. Her roles include Letitia Copley in the Vicar of Dibley, Nana in the Royal Family and more recently, the voice of Mrs Mulch in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit Starring Wallace & Gromit and as Grandma Georgina in Charlie and the Chocolate factory. So the anticipation of a day's judging was enhanced by the prospect of meeting and stewarding for Liz.

On show day we were delighted to see the good entry of Household Pets. Their pens were in a small hall, adjacent to the main hall that also housed the awards boards and various stalls and stands. The cats were all of the highest quality and beautifully presented. It is always terribly difficult to make decisions, when the cats are all so appealing. Alison and I made friends with the felines that we were fortunate to have in our classes and finished judging, just before lunch.

After a very nice lunch in the judges' room, we had a saunter around the stands and bought up some nice Christmas cards and other goodies. The raffle had almost 60 fabulous prizes but sadly our tickets were not among the winning ones. Of course, we went to see the Burmese and then had a walk up and down all the rows of cats, containing well over 400 exhibits.

At 2.15, Alison and I were introduced to Liz. She was having a little rest and a relaxing manicure, courtesy of Fenella Marriott, on her beauty stand. We arranged to start the BIS HP judging at 3.00pm. By then, a large audience had assembled to watch the proceedings. The club have a special 'Best Whiskers' cup for members' cats to compete for and Liz was invited to judge this class, as well as the ultimate BIS. Liz chose Mrs Potter's Duke to be the 'Best Whiskers' winner and we then went onto judge the BIS. All the open winners were nominated and so we were literally spoilt for choice.

Liz was captivated by the lovely cats and thought they all had something special. However, the Dalton family's kitten, Percy was her ultimate favourite and she declared him to be BIS. We learnt that little Percy had originated from the Rhodes Minnis Cat Sanctuary and this delighted Liz as she is a great supporter of the charity.

The cameras then started snapping and young Percy was totally unfazed by all the attention and he posed very happily with Liz and I as well as with Christopher Russell, the Rhodes Minnis Chairman of Trustees. Percy's owners were abroad so he had been brought to the show by a family friend, who was very proud of her little charge.

Liz was a charming lady and she was very friendly and open. It was a pleasure to act as her steward. Liz personally addressed the audience and apologised for disappointing the runners up! After judging the HPs, Liz had a tour of the Pedigree cats with Assistant Show Manager, Kym Jarvis and Vanessa Marriott. Liz then kindly agreed to draw the raffle tickets and she laughed and joked with everyone as they scrutinised their tickets.

I really enjoyed meeting a star like Liz and it made my day even more special. My thanks to everyone for their hospitality and very warm welcome!

Percy's Story

For little Percy, the kitten, the Kentish Cat Society Show turned out to be a memorable day. He captivated all three Household Pet judges (Vanessa Marriott, Sue Barrett and I) with his endearing personality and a rather unusual coloured coat. This was his first ever show but one would never have guessed that, as he just revelled in being out of his pen and he willingly gave himself up to being cuddled! His coat is a mixture of blue tabby with white markings and has a lovely, close lying texture with a smokey blue sheen. He has it all – looks and personality!

Christopher Russell, of Rhodes Minnis, explained that Percy was originally one of eight feral kittens that were captured with three mother cats by the sanctuary's managers, near Canterbury. As a tiny kitten, Percy was almost impossible to handle but with lots of TLC, he gradually learnt how to trust people. The Dalton family visited the sanctuary and chose Percy to be their beloved pet. A family friend persuaded them to show Percy and she brought him to the show on their behalf, as they were abroad on business on the day itself. Lots of time was spent on mobile telephone calls, charting his progress during the day! Percy winning the show was a true 'rags to riches' story. This little chap at just 5 months of age behaved like a seasoned exhibit, and he is a credit to both Rhodes Minnis and his new family.