

Calendar

Salty Kitty Cat Fanciers' Show

Most people can name two cat breeds, three if you're lucky," says Maine Coon cat breeder George Eigenhauser. At the cat show this weekend, 37 pedigreed breeds will be shown and some will be for sale.

Maine Coons are big — the Saint Bernards of the feline world. "The girls average 10 to 12 pounds, the boys, 15 to 18," says Eigenhauser, whose Bonita cattery is named Eigenkatz. "They originated as a working breed in New England. Some were barn cats or farm cats. Others went with the whalers on their ships." Yankee traders took them on their voyages, too. "That's because you'd bring your year's supply of grain, and if rats got into it in the middle of the ocean, you were in big trouble." So all the seafaring nations bred some kind of seafaring cat. "And the reason that the Maine Coon became preferred

was because it could survive in a broad range of temperatures."

The folklore is that this bushy-tailed breed has some raccoon in it; that's where it got the last half of its name. "But they have the wrong number of genes," says Eigenhauser, who sells his cats for \$500 to \$1200, the higher prices for those destined to be show cats or breeding cats. "Every breeder would like every cat they breed to be a top show cat, but as a practical matter, pick of the litter is going to be one cat. The other four or five would be available as pets."

Selkirk Rex is the name of a new breed of curly-haired cat that Jan Mellinger raises at Spellbinding Cattery, also in Bonita. How new is new? "In 1988, there was a spontaneous genetic mutation," says Mellinger. "It was a kitty found in an animal shelter in Wyoming. The shelter gave it to a breeder, who decided to try it with a Persian, and the cat had curly kittens."

How curly is curly? "I have some that are extremely curly, like 'Afro' curly, and some with curls that are looser." Since the breed is so new, Selkirk Rexes still produce straight-haired kittens. Mellinger sells those as pets for \$150. ("They aren't showable.") The rest are \$400.

Suzanne Berrin raises North American Burmese at Bon Marché Burmese Cattery in Poway. They come in four colors: sable, champagne, blue, and platinum. Is the blue really blue? "The blue," says Berrin, "ranges from a light blue with an icy silver sheen — an overall silvery glow — to a medium

slate blue-gray."

North American Burmese are known for their heft relative to their (medium) size. People are surprised when they lift one for the first time. "The expression is 'bricks wrapped in silk,'" says their breeder. "They have a very well-developed body. They're very compact and athletic."

Berrin and her husband, Ken, have a dozen adult cats right now. "And then, when we have kittens, that's temporary. We raise the kittens until they're four months old, then we adopt them into their new homes at that age." Their pet-quality Burmese are \$600; their show cats range from \$1200 to \$2000.

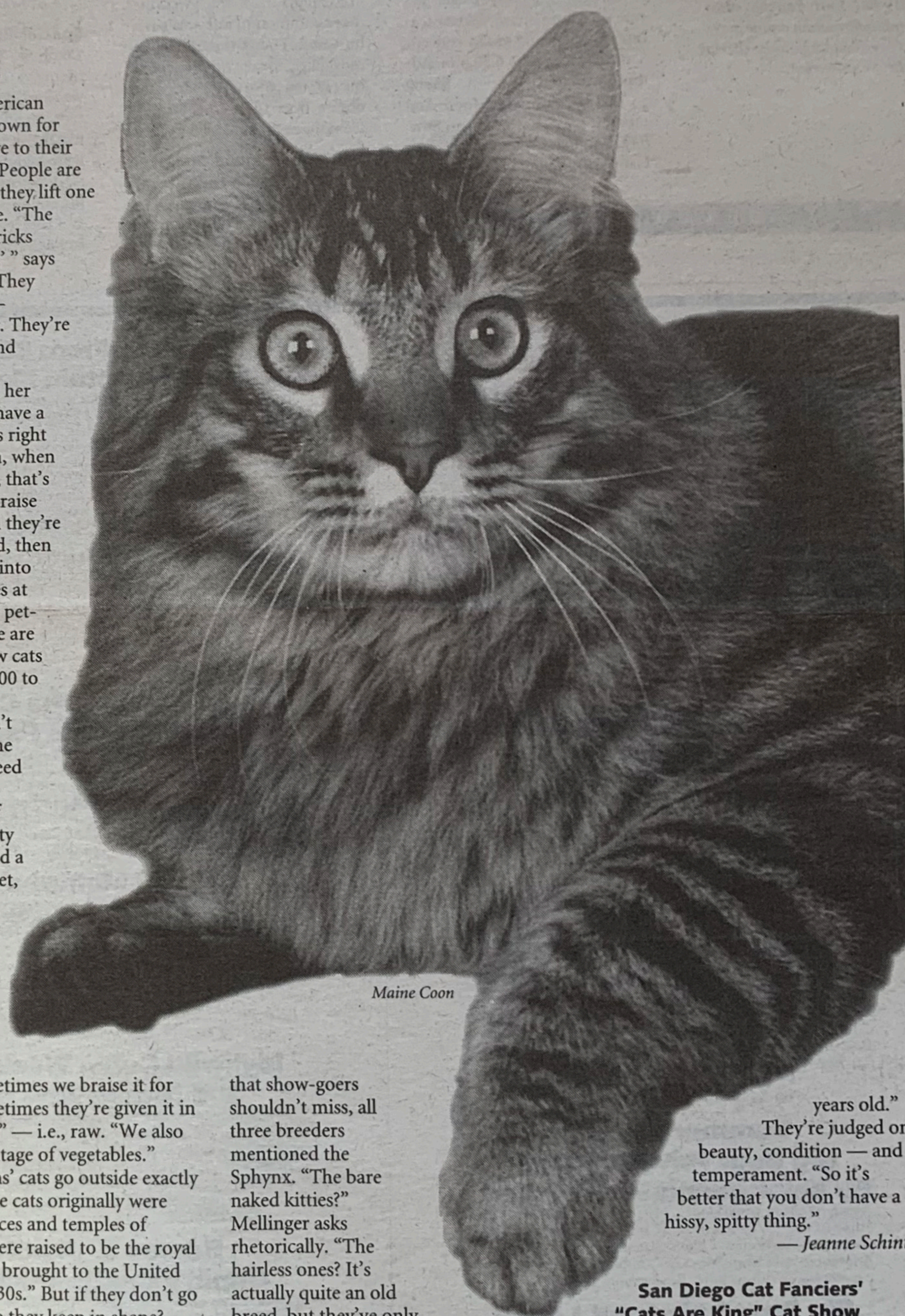
Dinner isn't Meow Mix at the Berrins'. "We feed them a combination of premium-quality canned food and a natural-food diet, which means the foods the cats would have eaten in nature. They get a lot of fresh steak. We grind it ourselves. Sometimes we braise it for them, and sometimes they're given it in its natural state" — i.e., raw. "We also mix in a percentage of vegetables."

The Berrins' cats go outside exactly never. "Burmese cats originally were kept in the palaces and temples of Burma. They were raised to be the royal cats. They were brought to the United States in the 1930s." But if they don't go outside, how do they keep in shape? "We have several six- and eight-foot cat trees. We have an upstairs-downstairs house. They enjoy jumping. When you're walking through the room, they'll jump on your shoulder. They love to be up high." Does all this activity take place in the Berrins' own living space? "We have a separate wing where the show cats and young adults live."

Asked to name an unusual breed

that show-goers shouldn't miss, all three breeders mentioned the Sphynx. "The bare naked kitties?" Mellinger asks rhetorically. "The hairless ones? It's actually quite an old breed, but they've only been accepted by CFA [Cat Fanciers Association] for championship competition within the last year."

At the opposite end of the spectrum, some people will be showing ordinary "HHPs" — household pets. Unlike show cats, they have no required look. "The nice thing with HHPs," says Mellinger, "is that you get great big ones and little teeny ones, and cats that are four months old and cats that are 17



Maine Coon

years old." They're judged on beauty, condition — and temperament. "So it's better that you don't have a hissy, spitty thing."

— Jeanne Schinto

San Diego Cat Fanciers' "Cats Are King" Cat Show
Saturday & Sunday,
August 9-10,
10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Plaza Hall
Community Concourse
202 C Street, downtown
Cost: adults, \$7;
children/seniors/military, \$5;
children under 6, free.
Info: 619-267-0787 or
www.sandiegocatfanciers.org

Local Events
page 81

Classical Music
page 95

Art Museums & Galleries
page 97

Theater
page 99

Pop Music
page 105

Restaurants
page 140

Movies
page 153

LOCAL EVENTS