Chapter 3

Cyclone Tracy

Mclver, 25, amid the rubble of his home in Casuarina with his pet cat and bathroom sink.

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C.A.N.T. LETTER TO THE A.C.F. FOLLOWING CYCLONE TRACY

Following Cyclone Tracy, this letter was sent to the Australian National Cat Federation for inclusion in the National Magazine.

21st July, 1975

We did have a Cat Pavilion at the Darwin Showgrounds and last year the North Australian Show Society kindly installed eight overhead fans for the comfort of our cats, in the pavilion we stored our cages and some of our equipment, we purchased a stationery cupboard late last year and this was also kept at the showgrounds with our duplicator and old show catalogues etc. Needless to say, the pavilion went completely with the exception of a few poles in the centre, our stationery cupboard was tossed around, and with the result our duplicator is a write-off and with considerable damage to our cupboard.

Fortunately, most of our cages were folded on the floor, a wall fell on them and so they were saved.

Our Secretary at the time of Tracy was Mr. F. Phipps, and his house exploded under pressure, he had all the past Minutes of the Club, correspondence, Challenge ribbons and cards, Award of Merit ribbons and cards, members badges, prize cards, and everything pertaining to a Secretary in his home, the only things saved were one folder of Minutes for 1970, and last year's inwards and outwards correspondence, Tracy took the rest.

Mr. Phipps and his family were evacuated to Sydney, where they have settled and do not plan to return to Darwin, (a good Secretary sadly missed).

Our Registrar, Mrs. Rose Hagan, lost her home as well, but fortunately Rose had the Cat Club's filing cabinet stored under the house, we saved all our registrations - because of the force of the winds, water got into the cabinet, and Rose is now at the task of retyping two copies of all registrations and pedigrees, as mildew is settling in. (This is some task as there are over 900 cats registered with us). We plan to lodge one copy with our bank for safe keeping (we hope).

We have only lost one folder of litter forms. After Tracy, the Club decided to replace lost registration cards and copies of pedigrees for all owners who had lost their copies, for a small charge. So you can appreciate, our Registrar is a very busy person, but, I might add, full of enthusiasm.

The Club typewriter was stored at my home, and although my home was virtually untouched I got a lot of water in and the typewriter was U/S.

Mrs. F. Hawkins of Victoria did all she could for our Club immediately after Tracy and sent us another typewriter from Victoria that she had donated, she also sent us pet food through a friend at T.A.A., and this was distributed to the ones in need.

At our October Show each year, our yearly awards are made up such as: Cat of the Year, Longhair of the Year, Shorthair of the Year, Kitten of the Year, Breeders Trophy, etc. etc. These cups are held by the winners for the ensuing 12 months. Unfortunately, the majority of these lovely trophies have been lost.

In all, we have lost approximately $3,000.00 in equipment, trophies, etc. From Cat Families all over Australia, donations have been received to a total of $196.00, for this we are very thankful and can assure everyone we have more enthusiasm now than before Tracy.

As trestles are unavailable now in Darwin, we have gone ahead and purchased materials to make our own, this is a great expense but unfortunately unavoidable, as at our June show we had to have our cages on the floor. Our other immediate expense is replacing all our stationery, prize cards, etc.

Members have lost many valuable cats, and financial loss to them has been high, but not as great as the emotional loss.

We have been very grateful to receive, free of charge, from Toband Cattery in Victoria, a male Chocolate Point Siamese kitten, and from Tahleigh Cattery, also in Victoria, a Chinchilla kitten. These have been placed with Members and are much loved.

Many breeders have offered free matings, which will be of invaluable help to the Fancy and Members, as freight alone costs approximately $20.00.

We staged our first Cat Show on the 1st of June with an entry of 73 cats and kittens. We feel this was excellent, as our shows up to Tracy attracted approximately 120 exhibits.

We thank you all for your orders for our magazine on Tracy and trust you enjoy the issue.

Haidee Lowe, Secretary, C.A.N.T.

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BLAUMEISE CATTERY

(Reg. C.A.N.T.)

QUEENS

SHANJU FANELLA Blue Tortie Point Siamese.

GD CH GUANALANI GOLDEN IOLANTHE Cream Burmese.

CH BLAUMEISE APRIKOT BRANDIE Cream Burmese.

SOLITAIRE PAKIKI (IMP U.K.) Havana.

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Kittens sometimes available from the above queens.

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FOR SALE

RED BURMESE KITTENS - MALE

Sire: GT GD CH ZEMAT AMMON

Dam: CH BLAUMEISE APRIKOT BRANDIE

****

ENQUIRIES: J. R. SCHULLER,
P.O. Box 2062,
DARWIN. N.T. 5794

PHONE:
27 3864 (After Hours)

BLAUMEISE CATTERY - 1974/75 by Julian R. Schuller

Christmas Eve 1974 started off much as usual - lunch at an hotel with fellow workers, a dash to the nursery to pick up the two children, some last minute shopping and picking up husband from the celebrations at the hospital where he works.

The news that a cyclone in the area was now heading for Darwin was a bit of a surprise - "Well, I don't mind" says I, "It will make it cooler for eating Christmas dinner." There is nothing quite as frustrating as being faced with a huge Christmas dinner on a hot, humid, Territory Christmas Day.

As my father was returning to England in a few days, I was making Christmas something special and had asked some friends over for the meal. The evening was busily spent in preparations for the feast, punctuated by wrapping presents and half an ear being given to the cyclone warnings. At midnight, thoroughly exhausted, we went to bed, taking the radio with us. At about 1 o'clock, husband Helmut checked the presents on the living room floor and as rain was coming in through the windows, he moved them further over. A little later a virtual flood was pouring in, so, with towels and buckets, we mopped the floor and piled the Christmas presents onto the table.

A check on the children showed 3½ year old son, Wolf's bed to be saturated, so he was moved into our double bed.

Then the noise of the wind became really frightening, so I got baby Rikki from her cot and Helmut got Wolf from the bedroom in case he became frightened. In the meantime, I had moved the box containing mother and four 2 week old cream Burmese kittens from our bedroom into the kitchen. Neutered male (who didn't know the operation had happened), was in the bathroom and two females and one neuter were in the living room.

Suddenly, "Crash," a large piece of timber was forced through the windows by the wind, skittling the beautifully decorated Christmas tree - we retreated to the bathroom, 3 adults, 2 children and one cat. Luckily, this room provided one seat, on which I sat with the kiddies on my knee - we also had a gaslight standing in the washbasin. Soon, the pressure forced the trapdoor in the ceiling to fall down.

After a long while the lull came, and Helmut went to check on the windows, but was back soon and the wind started from the bathroom side of the house with greater fury.

"You'd better get in the bath," said Helmut. I had just managed to climb in with Wolf when, "Crash" - a piece of wood flew through the bathroom window and crashed onto the towel rail, bending the rail to the wall. The fact that I had just moved from the spot gave me a queer feeling.

Four of us crouched in the bath, now covered in glass and two inches of water, with the shower curtain over our heads. Tammy, the cat, was under the washbasin and father squeezed between the washbasin and the wall.

We stayed like this until 6 a.m., freezing cold, the baby having lost her pyjamas was blue, myself in tropical nightie wasn't much better - unable to get rid of the water out of the bath as I was sitting over the plug-hole and glimpsing lightning flashing through the trapdoor. The full significance of this did not strike us until we went to view the damage - the whole roof had gone and the ceilings had fallen in everywhere except for a small ceiling in the kitchen. Snug as bugs under this were the kittens and mum in their box on a small table, Peta, in his basket was a bit wet and neuter and female were under the linen cupboard in a sewing basket

quite safe. The second female was in a cupboard in the baby's cot which had fallen over. She must have been hurt, or in shock, as she died at a cattery within the week.

The aftermath of the cyclone was amazing and bewildering - my huge stud cage was sittin in the next door garden, the clothes hoist was flat on the ground, the Kombi van was festoon with power lines; roofing iron littered the road and gardens. The houses either side had lost walls, or were crumbling wrecks.

Helmut had to go to the hospital and report for work and I, with father and children, lived in our Kombi van parked at the local school down the road. I went to the house each day an gave the cats meat and water - I didn't mention them when the talk turned to shooting all the animals.

Then I was evacuated to Sydney - not even my husband knew and I had to leave the cats t fend for themselves. Luckily, Helmut came home a day or two later, found me gone and took the cats to a cattery about twenty miles out of Darwin. The kittens went to a friend, whose house was undamaged. The nine year old neutered male was missing. On one of his trips to the house, about a fortnight later, Helmut found Bixie, the old cat, sitting on the bed, looking quite well, so he was safe as well.

We are all back at our home now, it has been re-roofed, but as yet has no ceilings.

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Home of Helmut and Julie Schuller - Tracy Style

Photo by J. R. Schuller

THE HOME OF MR. F. PHIPPS.

REMAINS OF LIVING ROOM

ROOF & BEDROOMS IN GARDEN

The family Kitchen

Mr. F. Phipps was Secretary for the Cat Association of the Northern Territory up until Cyclone Tracy came along.

He now resides in Sydney, with his wife, Doreen, his daughter, Kathleen, and their family of three "Sanette" cats.

Mr. Phipps is a great loss to the Cat Association of the Northern Territory.

Photos by B. Wilson

WATANABE CATTERY - 1974/75

by Rose A. Hagan

Having been in cyclones in North Queensland during my teens, I was naturally apprehensive at the thought of an approaching cyclone, but certainly not panicky. My husband, Peter and I worked like beavers that afternoon and early evening, as we faithfully followed all the cyclone precautions as broadcast over the radio. Looking back on this, our efforts certainly seemed futile.

At the time we had three generations of brown Burmese in the house. My most affectionate grandmother, Champion Anjou Suzie Wong, her daughter, Watanabe Alisa whom I had bred and her seven weeks old litter of four kittens. As well, there were my somewhat temperamental Seal Point Siamese, Gaetan Hashi, and her four Tonkinese babies of only four weeks of age, my male brown Burmese stud, Great Grand Champion Zemat Ammon, and a desexed female, Watanabe Boadicea (Cea), who I was minding for a friend for a few months. My girls and their babies were naturally in the house and we had taken a small cage upstairs for Ammon and had him comfortably housed. At this stage we felt we were more than prepared to weather it through, and, as all parents of small children on Christmas Eve, we went through the age old ritual of cake and beer left out for Santa, and once the children were asleep, the presents were placed beneath the Christmas tree.

Before 1 a.m., the wind was really raging and it was then we heard the first houses in our area start to go and the first twinges of fear started to edge on our minds. We gathered the female cats and their kittens and put them into the toilet, mainly because of our concern that windows would be broken and we did not want them hurt with broken glass. We had been warned that should the house start to break up, the toilet and bathroom were the safest place to be. We let Ammon loose, thinking he would stay close to us. As the walls started to tremble, we woke the children and all of us headed for the bathroom. A quick check on the toilet assured me that all was well there, but Cea, who, like all Burmese, is as quick as lightning, bolted out and into the bathroom with us. Ammon couldn't be found. It was pitch black outside, so we could see nothing, but the noise was extremely loud. There was no doubt in our minds by now that houses were collapsing and that ours would be damaged. We did not try to leave the bathroom during the night, because we felt that if we opened the door then the bathroom would collapse. The fear you felt during that night could never be really explained to anyone.

My husband and I, our two year old, and at that time, ten month old baby, were all in the bathtub lying in a few inches of water for five hours. The roof was gone, the ceiling had collapsed on top of us and the walls of the bathroom were opening and closing with the intensity of the wind. The noise was so great that I could only hear Peter when he shouted to see if we were alive, and he was only three feet away. The fallen ceiling stopped us from seeing each other. Both of us now felt the bathroom would go shortly and we had no idea how we would get off the high floor to the ground.

Before the ceiling fell we could hear the kittens crying - a most pathetic and upsetting sound, but we knew we could not go to them, as to open the bathroom door would hasten the collapse of our fragile and inadequate shelter. Finally, there was no further sound from the cats next door.

Cea took over in the bathroom during the night and insisted on not having her feet wet. She sat on top of me and the baby for hours, which certainly did not add to our comfort. Every time I tried to shift her, she bit me, so in the end she had her way. I vowed then that if we made it through the night, Cea was going on a diet the very next day - an event which almost came about during the days after Tracy, but not for the reasons I had been thinking.

At no stage did we experience the eye of the cyclone. When the wind died down at about

6 a.m., we thought this was the short break and we still had the second half to go. Thankfully this was not the case. It took Peter some time to get us out and we could scarcely believe the sight before our eyes. With the exception of one wall of the toilet and the bathroom and the kitchen walls, our house was reduced to a dance floor - lots of open space. Every home around us was the same - total destruction.

Then came the most tear jerking sound - a kitten mew. There they all were, eight very soaked kittens looking up at us. The two Burmese females quickly showed up, but there was no sign of Hashi or Amman. We found one cat basket undamaged and left the remains of our comfortable home, with the two Burmese and the eight kittens, to find shelter. I fully expected the kittens to catch pneumonia, but after some brisk towelling, they were full of mischief and the four Burmese settled in with their mother for a feed. I was hoping the four Tonkinese would feed from Alisa later that day. On returning to our house later that morning, Amman was sitting in what was left of his cage, busily cleaning himself, and later that day Hashi turned up.

Sitting in all that scene of destruction I felt content - ALL our family were alive.

I was evacuated with our two girls four days later. All the cats were housed in what was left of our car. This provided shelter, but they could not be confined here because of the extreme heat. Baby kittens and all were just running free in the open and they thrived on this treatment for two weeks while Peter ran himself ragged to get enough food for them all.

As soon as the Airlines were back in business, the girls and their babies were flown to Brisbane to me, while Amman and Cea went to Katherine to be cared for by friends.

My mother-in-law was somewhat taken aback to have eleven cats arrive on her doorstep. At the time, it appeared as if it would be at least twelve months before we could get back to Darwin. With no definite home in view, it seemed best to settle the cats into new homes. Once the kittens were old enough, all except one female were sold. Suzie and Hashi went to live with the parents of old school friends and have since been desexed. Alisa went to Mackay where she graced the showbench at Easter and won Best Burmese and Reserve Best Shorthair Cat of Show, so the cyclone obviously didn't affect her too much. Her new owner is quite delighted with her.

It was very upsetting to part with our cats, as they had been so much a part of our family. Our consolation was in knowing they all had good homes.

We are living in a re-roofed, damaged house now, but are glad to have the family all together. We are hoping that once we have a home of our own, we will add to our Burmese family of two and re-commence breeding.

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CYCLARD CATTERY - 1974/75

M. L. Orchard,
35 Graham Street,
STUART PARK. N.T.

Dear Cat Lovers,

I was one of the lucky ones who was on holidays from Darwin with my husband and four young children when Tracy struck.

The news of Tracy was broken to us about 10.30 a.m. Christmas Day in Melbourne, my first concern was for my friends and pets back in Darwin.

We had a friend, Don, caretaking our house, our Irish Terrier, two Seal Point Siamese, and one ginger and white domestic. For three days we tried every way to get news of them but to no avail, until on the third day a telegram from Darwin arrived which read, "OK - nothing left," signed, Don. How right he was.

My husband, Pete, returned to Darwin on the ninth day after Tracy, to find his workmates had been calling to our block looking for our animals, knowing well how much they meant to us.

Unknown to us at the time, Don had, during the height of the cyclone, let the Siamese out of the Cattery, which was situated under the house, thinking they would stand a better chance, as our home was being torn apart.

Pete's workmates did find my Seal Point queen, three days later, calling pitifully beside the overturned Cattery; she had come back home. They also found our dog, "Rastus" a good mile away, he had been killed by flying debris. Tracy had taken our nine year old friend. This left now, our other Seal Point and the domestic, "Cassidy," to be found.

My husband called there daily, but no luck, and I, of course, found it very hard to wait it out so far away in Melbourne. Part of our family was missing, and what joy there was when my Seal Point queen arrived by air in Melbourne to be cared for.

On my return to Darwin, three months later, I felt we had to keep trying to find our still missing cats, which prompted me to run advertisements in our "News."

It was surprising how many missing cats were being looked after by people, many of whom had never owned an animal until Tracy. Bless them.

Around 5 p.m. on the day of the first advertisement appearing, a family drove up with a Siamese wrapped in a towel and asked, "Is this your cat?" Yes, it was - how wonderful. Before we could thank or reward them, they left, saying, "We understand as we lost our cat also."

With tears running down my face, I cuddled and held him; he was so sick and smelled like death - he had been found two miles from our home. Next move was to the Vet and several weeks of treatment and tons of love to get him back on his feet. He was loaded with infection, scarred, hair falling out and petrified of anything and everybody.

Now, two months later, he is once more our lovable playful pet, joined now by my Seal Point queen, who was mated in Melbourne and has had a litter which has helped her to settle down. "Cassidy" is still missing and one cannot help but wonder - what was his fate? Perhaps someone has found him, and loves him, as we do.

Marie Orchard.

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Vanlowe Cattery

(reg. C. A. N. T.)

AT STUD: GT GD CH AMBERRIDGE BEYAN (27)

BELTANA APOLLO LAD (24)

QUEENS: REDWYTON SUNSHINE SUSSIE (16)

VANLOWE BRIGETTE (27)

Prop: Mrs. H. Lowe,
P.O. Box 4386,
DARWIN. N.T. 5794

Telephone: 81 6827

BELTANA
CATTERY

AT STUD: STILLMEADOW TAFFY (24)

QUEENS: GT GD CH TINSEL ELITE LASS (24)

BELTANA PREMA DONNA (24)

ENQUIRIES WELCOME AT ALL TIMES

PROP: G.M. JOYCE,
38 Trower Road,
MILNER.

PHONE: 854474

WANLOWE CATTERY - 1974/75 by Haidee Lowe

We had a cyclone warning about two weeks prior to Tracy and like many others was hoping this one would pass us by.

My daughter and I went into town Christmas Eve to do the proverbial last minute shopping, we were home just before 9 p.m. and the way the wind was blowing I started to get concerned about my place of employment. The building I work in has two large plate-glass windows in front, so I phoned my boss and he met me there about 9.15 p.m. We moved all the office records into the middle of the warehouse (fortunately, as the windows did go), and were home by 10 p.m.

We moved all my cats, 17 in all, including two boarders, in from the enclosed verandah where they are usually caged, to the living room.

Living with me is my mother, daughter and a friend, Jenny Naylor. We sat in our lounge room until 2.30 a.m., when the eye came over; we ventured out and there did not appear to be too much damage in our area, although part of my enclosed verandah had given way.

We proceeded with mops and buckets, to mop up some of the water from the bedrooms as a few of the louvres had been broken, mainly by flying debris. We were in the main bedroom when we heard the cyclone coming back, the noise is something one will never forget in a lifetime, the door to the bedroom had shut and we had to force it open because of the pressure that was building up in the room; we tried opening the louvres on the opposite side, as instructed per the media, but they would slam shut as soon as opened. We knew we had to get out of that room as there were louvres both sides and no protection at all.

With the door finally opened, we made for the bathroom, only two cats were loose and these went into the bathroom with us, the other 15 were secure in cages in the living room still and we had covered the cages as best we could, to protect them.

We sat on the floor of the bathroom until 6.30 in the morning and the noise was terrifying, we could hear homes lifting and debris smashing all around us. I was fearful the louvres in the bathroom would go, hurting one of us. Jenny and I changed a couple of times prior to 2.30 a.m. and our wet clothes were the only thing we could use to shield ourselves. We were too terrified to venture out for anything else.

From all the noise I did not expect to find the rest of the house standing when we emerged at 6.30, but thankfully the house was intact and all cats well and unharmed.

My neighbor lost half his roof and as they were away on leave, we had to salvage what we could and pack into other rooms.

Christmas Day! By noon we had 18 people living in the house, 17 cats and 3 dogs.

The cats went outside to the verandah after some patching up had been done, and the dogs into some of my spare cat cages.

Food for the animals was the immediate problem. I had about 80lbs in my freezer, but without power, knew this could not be kept. Thankfully, the ice works got going and I was able to use all I had, when this ran out our dear friend, Mrs. Flaris Hawkins, F.C.C. Victoria, freighted tinned meat up to us, plus vitamins and flea powder, and we were very thankful.

I was boarding two black part Siamese cats for six weeks after the cyclone and I did not

know if I would ever hear from the owners again. Fortunately, about 1 a.m., about a week after Tracy, they arrived for their cats, having a permit for one day. They found only their bedroom standing, so managed to get their clothes and car, collect their cats and then headed out of Darwin.

Brigitte Wilson and I finally traced Robyn Eldering in Sydney and asked if we could salvage anything from her home for her. She accepted our offer and we managed to salvage all that was salvageable. Whilst we were doing this, we found pets, presumably left behind - Brigitte took home a ginger domestic with two kittens and I brought home a black and white domestic which looked as though she could be nursing, but we could not find any kittens. We made the trip every day, after work, to salvage Rob's gear, and two days later Adam and Simon Oaten found the kittens in a cupboard in the house next door; the poor little mites would not have been more than a week old. They were promptly delivered to mum and all was well. After several enquiries in the neighborhood, we located the owner of the black and white, and he called and collected them from my home.

I took Julie Schuller's cream Burmese and four kittens in, as their house was a mess and Helmut was living at the health stores. Thankfully, they never looked back and had the run of my bedroom.

Brigitte and I, together with Evelyn Mitchell, salvaged what we could from the secretary's wrecked home, in the way of Minutes, etc., collected the Registrar's filing cabinet from Rose Hagan's deflated home, and we were in business again as a Cat Club. We held our first meeting at DI and Bob Oaten's borrowed quarters, elected an Acting Committee and we were on our way. Our first show is to be held on 1st June, in classrooms at the Ludmilla School. Halls are non-existent at present.

Before I close, I will mention Wayne and Annette Graham. Annette was our treasurer, Wayne, a past chairman. Wayne and Annette left Darwin soon after the cyclone for Tasmania; Wayne returned to Darwin one month after Tracy, to collect some personal items from what was left of their home. When leaving Darwin after Tracy, their Cameo longhair (Bicardi), which they had bred themselves, could not be found; on Wayne's return, he found her under debris in the house - yes, she had survived. A trip to the Vet, antibiotics, injections, etc., and she was on her way to becoming what she should be. Wayne only stayed for one week and drove out; Bicardi, still too weak even to be flown out, stayed with me for approximately six weeks. When I went on R & R leave, I took her to Sydney and put her on a flight to Tasmania. Wayne and Annette were lucky to get her as we had all become very attached to her - (What? With 15 cats and wanting more?)

In closing - I would not like to experience another cyclone and I came out of it much better than a lot of others.

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Mike Wyatt puts temporary roof on.

House broken in half at Fannie Bay.

Two houses demolished by Cyclone Tracy.

Photos by B. Wilson

Cyclone Tracy certainly demolished a lot of homes, wrecked cars and lost an untold number of cherished family possessions, many of them were priceless and irreplacable. Tracy also cost lives and caused a vast amount of suffering, to humans and animals alike. Yet she was not able to kill the spirit, nor dampen the will to succeed. The devastation left in her wake has been cleared away, and a new Darwin has arisen.

DONRENOR CATTERY

(Reg: C.A.N.T.)

Specialising in the Korat, the silver blue cat with the Thai Passport.

QUEENS: KHEILAN FIROSI (IMP UK)

DONRENOR ROTCHARNA

****

STUD: YOWIE NOM PON KUSA

****

These beautiful kittens available to selected homes.

D. K. & R. J. BOOKER,
24 Jacksonia Circuit,
NIGHTCLIFF. N.T.

PHONE: 854658

Redar Cattery

AT STUD: BLAUMEISE TOPEKA (32c) Cream Point

Son of GD CH Nahida Sigismund of Western Australia.

Topeka has excellent temperament, good colour and type.

QUEENS: CH SHANJU TORTI NYMPH (32b 11) Blue Tortie Point

DAWONGA TABATHA (24b) Chocolate Point

KITTENS AVAILABLE EARLY 1978

ENQUIRIES WELCOME: D. BRACKENREG & P. LEE,
Lot 1865,
Bagot Road,
LUDMILLA. N.T. 5790

PHONE: 843888 (B.H.)

DONRENOR CATTERY - 1974/75 by R. Booker

Xmas Eve and great excitement amongst the children because tonight Santa comes. We've had a cyclone warning and are feeling concerned but trying not to let the children know.

They go to bed at their normal time, and we hope they will settle quickly so that the last of the gifts can be wrapped and put under the tree. We are feeling pretty jaded after the pre Xmas round of parties, and look forward to getting to bed as early as possible in anticipation of the 5 a.m. awakening we will have with the children.

We're still living in our caravan, but have the Xmas tree set up in the lounge of our nearly completed house. It looks lovely all lit up with lights and all the presents underneath it.

By 10 p.m., things are really getting rough. Friends have come with their dog, to sit the cyclone out with us, rather than stay in their caravan. Soon after, a power line comes down in our street, and that's the end of the lights. We light the kero lamp and prepare to sit it out. Husband decides he will go to sleep and goes inside the van with the children, while I sit and wait and wonder how much worse it can get. I'm not going to get undressed and go to bed for any reason. By 11 p.m., it's getting rougher by the minute and we're not due for the eye of the cyclone for hours yet. The wind is so strong that it is impossible to stand outside. I wake husband and tell him to bring the mattresses out of the caravan and put the children back to sleep in the house. The mattresses and the children go into the bedroom and the cats into a smallish cage in the kitchen. Of course, the children see the gifts and have no intention of going back to sleep. All they're concerned with is opening up their presents.

During the next hour, the force of the wind and the rain steadily increase. The water is pouring through the ranch-sliders and louvres and I am using my dirty washing to try and mop it up and keep everything dry. I've discarded my jeans, as they're soaked, and I'm working with a car blanket wrapped around me. We hear the flashing on the roof start to rip away and husband assures us that we'll only lose the flashing but the roof will hold. I look out the window and there is our 2½ ton caravan slewed around on a 90 degree angle. When husband sees this, he realises we're in trouble and only now starts getting concerned.

There is a terrific crash in the bedroom and we hurry to see the cause. The big window has blown in, showering the children with glass. Luckily, no cuts. Husband decides it is time to look for safer shelter and goes out into the teeth of the cyclone. It seems like hours, but it is only a few minutes till he's back safely. He tells us that we'll stay put for the time being, but if things get worse we will go to the house behind us. They have already lost all their windows but there is one central bedroom which should be safe. We can hear the roof ripping off sheet by sheet, with unimaginable noise. The ceilings start to sag with the weight of the water and it is only a matter of time before they explode inwards. More glass is exploding all the time and we're all very frightened.

Husband decides we must move now and the children start to scream. We tell them they must do as we say or they will die, and there isn't another sound from them.

In a lull in the wind, husband shepherds all three children into the house behind us. I follow with a cat basket in each hand, and just then a terrific gust of wind catches me. I dig my heels in and shout for help. The blanket is snatched away by the wind and it is taking all my strength just to brace myself. Husband comes to assist and we're safely inside.

We sit shivering in a corner of the bedroom and watch the ceiling fan screaming around. It's going faster than it ever did by electricity. The ceiling starts to come in and we fear the fan will come loose and decapitate someone.

Sara, one of my feline babies, made the trip across the backyard in an open basket and is soaked to the skin. I'm very much afraid she's going to finish up with pneumonia. Friend suggests I put her in the other basket, with her two arch enemies, for warmth. This is good sense, but, from previous experience of the three of them together, I am afraid they'll kill each other. Anyway, she has a better chance of survival this way, so with much trepidation, in she goes. Silence. I can't believe it, but haven't much time to dwell on it.

Husband goes out again, and this time I'm sure I'll never see him alive again. He returns and tells us we're going next door. He has pushed over a six foot fence as though it's made of paper, to allow us to get through without having to go on the street.

Safe again, and wonder of wonders, a completely dry room. An administering angel, the lady of the house, finds dry clothes for everyone and dry towels with which to dry the dog and the cats. This will do us for the rest of the cyclone, and we all settle down to wait it out.

Very soon there is an eerie quiet and we realize that we are in the eye of the cyclone and that when it comes back it will be equally vicious and will hit the house on the side we are sheltering in. An elderly couple have taken the opportunity of the lull to come into the house from the flat where they had been sheltering under a bed for two hours. No roof and no walls. They are given dry clothing and then the men go into conference in the corner. By now there are 8 adults, 5 children, 2 dogs and 4 cats sheltering in the house.

Within about twenty minutes, we can hear the wind screaming from miles away, as it approaches us like a locomative gone mad, and, "Crash," we are back in the teeth of it. We all move into the bathroom and toilet and in no time are drenched to the skin again. Something has sliced a great gap out of the roof over the hallway and we are looking up into the inky blackness of the sky and the missiles screaming overhead. The brick wall under the hole in the roof starts to crumble and the men fear we will be buried under the walls if any more comes in.

Another search for safety and they take the torches with them. Indescribable anxiety while awaiting the men's return. We women are all sure they'll be killed, but must show no fear in front of the children. At last they return with the news that we must cross in front of the previous house we had sheltered in and go to the block of flats on the other side. There are six flats and one downstairs is still virtually intact.

Two men from the flats have returned with our men to assist us all across and we steel ourselves to go out again into the cyclone. We go out of the front door, across the terrace which is littered with broken glass, across twenty feet of open space and over a three foot wire fence, around the front, down the side and into the flat. Most of us have no shoes, and how we made it with no serious cuts is a mystery. Once inside, we find about 25 other people already there. There is a single bed in the bedroom and one of the women takes our five children in there and puts them to sleep. There are two little tots sleeping in the shower recess in the bathroom and no floor space left in the entire flat. We sit together and wait it out. The wind and the rain start to slacken off about 5.30 a.m., and we await the dawn.

The sight that meets our eyes with the dawn is unbelievable. Everywhere we look is devastation and destruction. Cars are overturned, power poles are lying on the ground, and, most unbelievable - solid brick, immovable buildings, are heaps of rubble. The comment is made that it looks worse than Hiroshima after the bomb. Another shocked comment is that half of the population of Darwin must be dead. The men set off on a search and rescue operation, and wonder of wonders, although there are some nasty injuries, everyone in the area is accounted for.

Once everyone is satisfied that all are safe, the subject of food comes up. Everyone goes

to their wreckage and brings all the food back to the flat. We have dragged our gas barbecue out of the debris and it works, so, on go the steaks and the rain water we have collected for coffee. No one is very hungry, but the coffee is well accepted by all.

We look at each other and wonder what is going to happen to all of us. Here we are, with no accommodation, no water, no power, no radio or telephone, no communication whatsoever, and only the wet clothes we stand in. We can only wait and see, but in the meantime, everyone wants to find out what has happened to their friends living elsewhere in Darwin. All usable cars are started and everyone leaves. Husband doesn't want to take the children so I stay with them. By 5 p.m. I am nearly frantic. I imagine he has got through the cyclone only to be buried under the wreckage of some house. Finally, he returns and, with him, the rumour that the cyclone has turned and is returning. All our friends are alive and safe.

We look around us, and decide to seek safer shelter in one of the big buildings in the city centre. We gather up the children and the cats, a blanket, some hot cans of salt drink, and head into town. At 8 p.m., we finally finish up in the court-house. We all lay down on the blanket on the floor and children and husband go to sleep. The wind is starting up again and I am too nervous to sleep. About 10 p.m. it starts raining and I discover we have no roof over us. The water is pouring down the stairwell and into the room we're in. I find a broom and start sweeping. I keep this up until 5 a.m., when husband and children wake up. All my efforts hadn't kept them dry.

In the light of dawn, we see that there are dozens of other homeless people sharing the building with us. Still nobody knows what is happening, as there is still no communication whatever with the outside world. We realize we can't spend another night here, so seek out a friend who husband had seen on Xmas Day. His company workshop was pretty well undamaged, and we hoped that maybe, we could stay there.

After two nights without sleep, and virtually no food, to say the least, we are pretty distraught. There is a bottle of brandy in the car, which had survived the cyclone, and we decided it might do us good for medicinal purposes. Normally, neither of us can drink spirits, but by 9 a.m. that morning, we had done justice to half a bottle of neat brandy.

Our friend takes us to a house in Berrimah, where the owner takes us all in without question. In all, there were 9 adults and 8 children in that small house for four days. Not to mention our 2 cats and our friends' 2 cats and 8 kittens.

Food for the cats is a problem, as my pampered darlings have been used to eating fresh beef only. Tinned pet food was an insult to them and in the end I managed to persuade them to eat some baby food. They drank great quantities of diluted Carnation milk and I'm sure this is what stood them in such great stead.

Even though we had a dry place to shelter, there was to be no sleep for another four days. Lists of people to be evacuated were being called over the radio, which was now operational, and I had to stay awake throughout the nights listening for my children's names to be called. During the day there were mountains of clothes to be dried and meals to be prepared, as well as the children to be looked after, while the men were away clearing debris and re-roofing houses.

On the morning of the 29th., after five sleepless days and nights, it was announced that no more evacuation lists would be announced, and those requiring evacuation, should go to a pick-up point and register again and await their turn. We dressed the children in the one set of good clothes they had, and, with the one case between them, took them to the school at 7.30 a.m. We waited, and waited, and waited, and by 6.30 p.m. that evening, the children

were all extremely dirty, hungry, and miserable. The youngest had a middle ear infection; the second, nasty sores all over, and the oldest was looking decidedly miserable. We thought it was just shock and the thought of parting, but we were to find out later that the poor girl was coming down with the mumps.

Finally, they were loaded onto a bus and then onto a plane, we were told they would arrive in Brisbane at 10 p.m. that night. We watched the plane take off, then went into the G.P.O. and lined up for the telephone. We phoned our relatives on the Gold Coast and told them what was happening, they assured us there were no problems and they would pick the children up as soon as they arrived.

They didn't arrive that night, as the Jumbo Jets can't land in Brisbane. They were taken to Sydney, where they stayed overnight and they didn't get back to Brisbane until 10 p.m. the following night. By this time our oldest daughter was well and truly sick with the mumps. Poor children. It must have been a terrible experience for them, being sent away from us to relatives, whom they had only met briefly five years before.

Once we were satisfied that the children were safely looked after, we returned to our home. How depressing. Months of work lying on the ground, and very little salvageable. However, we sifted through the wreckage and cleared away all the debris in nine days of non-stop work. For our shower each evening, we would drive to a fire hydrant on the highway.

By now we were utterly despondent and missing the children dreadfully. We did have noble thoughts of remaining and helping to rebuild Darwin, but at that stage, everything looked so utterly hopeless that we decided to pack up what we had salvaged and send it to Queensland; we would drive down and join the children, find a flat and work until the Dry Season, when we would return and start rebuilding.

Of course, there wasn't a dry carton or box in Darwin by this time, so we went around collecting abandoned garbage tins to pack our belongings in. It must have been one of the weirdest consignments of gear ever.

By the 8th January, we were ready to leave. We took any intact flyscreens out of our windows and covered the car windows with them, so the cats could have the run of the car while we were travelling.

The first day we drove through to Tennant Creek, after having spent about three hours and $100 in Katherine on emergency repairs to the car. We pulled into the caravan park at the Three Ways, spread our blanket on the ground and went to sleep. It was 12 p.m. and we were so tired that we didn't bother with eating and even the mosquitoes didn't worry us. The cats were very comfortable in the car, but there wasn't room for us.

At 5 a.m. the next morning, it poured. A rude awakening and a mad scramble into the car. We decided that now we were awake we might as well start driving. By about 9 a.m. the heat was unbearable across the Barkley and the cats were very distressed. The poor little things just lay on their wet blanket and panted. We saw a rain cloud in the distance and drove like mad things, for about an hour to catch up to it ..... What a marvellous relief, just to stand in the rain. The car had cooled down and the cats were much happier.

We arrived in Mt. Isa about mid-day, but weren't allowed to proceed without a Roadworthy Check. By the time we had complied with all the formalities, it was about 5 p.m. and teeming with rain. We had already been advised that there was only one road open and that needed extreme driving caution. We realised we stood a good chance of getting bogged and being forced to sit and wait for it to dry out, so we decided we'd try the Rail.

Before we really knew what was happening, the car was on the train, bound for Townsville. I was told I could take the cats on the train with me, which was a great relief. Here we were, no transport, filthy-dirty, unfed, and with five hours to wait before the train left. We walked into town, looking for somewhere to shower, but no luck. We bought an Esky, some meat for the cats, food for ourselves, and went back to the station to wait. Husband found a tap beside the platform and after dark we decided to have a 'shower.' Ever tried having a shower under a tap two foot off the ground, terrified all the while that someone will come around the corner? We managed it however, and felt much better able to face the train trip.

Much to our delight, at 11 p.m., only one hour over the estimated departure time, our train pulled into the station. There were about a dozen of us Darwinites, and we sent up a cheer when we found the carriage was a sleeper. The fact that it must have come out of the Ark did nothing to dampen our appreciation. We put down one of the lower berths, found a board to put across the front of it and this was to be the cats' cage for the trip. When we put them in there, we had two Siamese and one Korat. When they emerged at the end of the trip, they were all the same colour as the Korat.

The trip was the longest and most frustrating train ride I have ever had. It took three nights and two days to go as far as Charters Towers, where we persuaded them to let us have our car. The extra miles to Townsville were more than we could face.

Once off the train, another breakneck trip to beat the floods. We arrived in Rockhampton, after crossing numerous floodways, at about 10 p.m., only to learn from the radio, that the roads North, had all been closed since 6 p.m. Fools admittedly, but after the trials and tribulations of the past few weeks, we were quite sure we were impervious to anything.

The following day, we arrived in Brisbane, only to find that our children had been taken to other relatives 200 miles further South only that day. We were pretty dispirited, as we had thought our travelling was over.

However, that night we slept in a real honest to goodness double bed, complete with mattress, sheets and the works, and when we awoke in the morning, we were able to face anything. After sleeping on bare floors, polythene covered wet mattresses and on the ground, for over three weeks, it was a marvellous treat.

We set off in good spirits and by 3 p.m. that afternoon, were reunited with our children. I never would have believed I could miss them so much as I had and it was a marvellous reunion all round.

When I went to bed that night I felt all achey and tired, but put it down to the travelling and the strain we'd been under. Next morning though, I woke up with mumps. I was very sick, but again, extremely grateful that I had a bed to lie in.

While I was still getting over the mumps, we had news from my family in New Zealand that my mother was not too good, and that we should get over if at all possible. Mum had suffered a couple of heart attacks last year and we were terribly worried about her, knowing the anxiety she must have suffered while waiting for news of us. As it was six years since we left New Zealand, and the family had never even seen our youngest daughter, we decided we may as well go East and make the trip while we were this far South.

Back up, and back up to Brisbane. We boarded the cats at a marvellous cattery in Currumbin on the Gold Coast, called the Cats Whiskers, and set off for two weeks in New Zealand.

We hadn't booked our return date, as we thought we would do that when we saw how things were with my mother. Luckily, she was good by the end of the first week, so we went into the

Airline office to book our passage, but they informed us they couldn't give us a booking for five in under three weeks.

What to do now. We had already decided we were coming back to Darwin, and we had so many loose ends to tie up, as regards insurance, etc., and we couldn't afford to go any longer without earnings, so my husband decided he would come on back to Australia and drive through to Darwin by himself. We were to follow in two weeks.

Another extremely anxious time, while waiting to hear that he had arrived safely in Darwin, and at last I got the good news.

We flew to Brisbane on a Sunday and the rest of the trip up to Darwin on a Monday. Once my husband had rounded up our luggage and got us into the car, he drove over to the freight depot. I asked him why, and he said, "To pick up your cats of course." The sweetie had had

Photo by R. Booker

them sent up on the same flight as ourselves.

Now we are all back in Darwin, with only the memory of our terrible time and an immense amount of pride in the people of Darwin, for their courage during the cyclone and their fortitude and wit since.

It will be a long and frustrating time before all the wrecked houses - constant reminders of what has happened - will again be rebuilt, but if anyone can do it, it will be the people of Darwin.

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Home of Robin Eldering - Cyclone Tracy Style

Home of Robin Eldering - 1978 Style.

Photos by R. Eldering

SIRIKIT CATTERY

BURMESE , SIAMESE & REX OF QUALITY - HEALTHY , HAPPY, HOUSE REARED KITTENS.

"SIRIKIT" WAS THE FIRST CATTERY IN THE N.T. TO INTRODUCE THE DELIGHTFUL REX.

AT STUD: GT GD CH AMBERRIDGE ADAM (Brown Burmese) (Pictured above).

QUEENS: GAINSBOROUGH TOPAZ (Cream)
SARVAN CURLWAA (Blue)

STUDS: SARVAN PICOLA (Blue)
RASHI CRISPARIS (Cream)
AZULI BLACK NEMESIS (Pure Seal Point Siamese)

P.J. & P. ELDERING.
P.O. Box 3503
Darwin, N.T. 5794
PHONE 27 1283

DEBKIT CATTERY - 1974/75 by Robin Eldering

When Tracy Struck on Christmas Day, we had 15 pets in residence. As cyclones NEVER hit Darwin, we were totally unprepared to cater for so many animals in an emergency.

As the evening wore on, it was evident we were going to be hit by Tracy, so every pet was caged and all we could do then was sit it out and hope we'd all survive.

When Tracy finally ripped our house to pieces at 3 a.m., we hung on to each other, crawled through the debris to the safety of our car. We were unable to get to the cages to grab some of our family, and, as things turned out, this was the safest thing for them all.

Morning came and nothing was left of our house but rubble. Not one wall left standing, let alone the semblance of a house. Peter warned me, there was no chance in the world any of the pets could have survived and I was to expect the worst. Despite his fear, the house was searched immediately for any survivors.

To my absolute joy and amazement, he came down saying they were all still there and apparently safe, so he began bringing them down to the car. The first lot were in two wire carrying cages, which were indescribable - 2" deep water slashed around the bottom, with broken glass and revolting white plaster. How the cats were not cut to ribbons, we will never know. The bathtub and debris had obviously stopped the cages from being blown away.

Sahlma, my beautiful Blue Point neuter, was in one cage and quite unperturbed. He was cleaned and dried with ripped up sheets our house guest had left in his car. The next cage was a very sad sight, two tiny 10 week old Siamese kittens, who were already under vet care - one for pneumonia, the other with sinus trouble. The pneumonia baby was almost dead from exposure and barely responded to drying, the other mite was ready for a game within minutes of being dried.

The next load from the debris was indeed a miracle. Five cats and kittens had been in a 4' x4' x3' cage in my "Cat Room," the ceiling and walls had caved in on them, and being light plasterboard, had not crushed the cage, but had sheltered it. Every cat was dry and in fine spirits, but so much debris was on the cage that a hole had to be cut in the wire to get them out.

Downstairs, a huge 8' x 6' cage held three domestics - all wet and sorry for themselves, but otherwise safe.

Our only casualty was a beautiful, young, Blue Point stud. He had been brought upstairs for safety and placed in a 4' x 2' x 2' heavy cage in our bedroom. The cage and cat have never been sighted since. My husband and friends walked the streets looking for his cage, but to no avail. For many months, our very kind cat friends advertised and searched for him, but he has never been found. The most distressing thing is never knowing what happened to him and the fear and anguish he must have suffered.

All three dogs were unharmed, but were very wet and cold, and I feared pneumonia as they had to stay in their kennel when we went to the school, and it rained for quite a few nights after Tracy.

For shelter, we went to the unfinished Wanguri school. Naturally, it was a scene of total chaos and misery. Due to the fact that animals were hardly welcome under the circumstances - humans must come first etc. Animal lovers know the attitude, so I need go no further - we kept very much to ourselves. Fortunately, I am a hoarder from way back and had a fair few

cans of cat fish and Carnation milk.

By Thursday afternoon, streets in our area of Wanguri were cleared, and by midnight we had fled Darwin to save what we could of our pets. Due to a total lack of communication, the chaos had become even worse and "People In Authority," had informed us we were all to be evacuated and all our pets destroyed. We were also told that Martial Law existed and we had to do as we were told. In retrospect, we realise that whoever told us this rubbish was simply an egomaniac thriving on the tragedy.

Our reaction was pretty normal to an animal lover - over our dead bodies'. Our dear little VW was unharmed, so we made it into a travelling ARK. Then came the most horrible, traumatic problem during the Tracy aftermath - which pets to take? As it distresses me greatly to write of it, I shall be brief. I think I unconsciously chose the smallest and most amiable, as we ended up with 8 cats and one dog in the VW. 7 cats in 3 tiny Pet-Pak size cages and one cat tied to my wrist with torn sheeting.

When we reached Katherine, the little dog was left there, as he was going berserk and clawing our backs - he is now settled in Sydney.

Our trip can only be described as a nightmare. The heat was so intense we were sure we'd lose most of our cats. My husband had a nasty back injury, which made driving uncomfortable, so, like everyone else, we were mentally and physically in pretty poor shape.

At Tennant Creek, the Police Station lent us a cell (unoccupied!) to feed and exercise the cats. I thought they'd love this, but they leapt back into their cages, so it was not much of a break for them. It was then we decided to drive day and night, to reach Alice quickly and the night would be cool for the cats.

Every few hours we would stop, air the cats in the shade, clean their little cages and give them water and diluted Carnation milk. This was the only thing they would drink and we had to prevent dehydration. Naturally, the milk gave them loose bowels, so we had plenty of problems. I begged, borrowed and stole newspapers and ripped them up and put them in the cages and when desperate, the cats would use it as litter. As cats are so clean, this distressed them greatly and their distress added to our own, as I hated to see them so upset.

At Elliot, the little baby with pneumonia was left at the Police Station - I hoped they could save her, or at least, humanely put her to sleep, as she was dying. I think the gentle young policeman looked as weepy as I did when I thrust her pale lilac body into his hands and fled, crying, back to the car.

The only wonderful thing on the trip - besides the unbelievable kindness of the Australian people, was a tiny female cat we have called Bibi. Bibi is a Brown Burmese who only weighs 7lbs - she is a real "EARTH MOTHER." She had lost her litter of one kitten in Oct/Nov, but had been feeding the odd kitten prior to the cyclone. Now she took to mothering the lot - 5 in all, of all breeds and ages, some 5-6 months old, one domestic kitten, one Rex kitten, one teenage Burmese boy and two tiny Siamese kittens.

We would not allow them all in together, as she would be pulled to pieces, so, we worked them in shifts and she lay there in Seventh Heaven. Naturally, we kept her well topped up with fluid and food, so the dairy bar could cope and, most important of all, that she would not lose condition. We feel, that without her help, we would have lost most of the youngsters from dehydration. Her tender cleaning, and loving, would also have been a real morale booster to the littlies. To this day she is personality plus and more maternal than ever.

Finally, we reached Alice Springs and the help and care is very hard to describe. Everyone

was wonderful, we were not scorned because of the cats, but were given every help. Our billet was with an American family, and to them we owe a lot. Three days there, took the horror of Darwin from our minds, and the normal routine of living like people again instead of filthy, fleeing, refugees, gave us the ability to face the next stretch - Sydney.

This family refused to let the cats go to the SPCA and insisted they come with us, a small storeroom was given to them and the brood were free to move for the first time in five days. I took all babies to the vet for calcium shots, bought vitamins, etc., plus raw meat and they were all fine. I noticed by this time, the muscles in their back legs were wasting and I was worried at the long hot trip ahead.

Then came another hard decision. By the time we reached Alice, nasty fighting was breaking out amongst the cats. These cats were all sweet natured, but the heat and three to a cage, no exercise - and fighting is inevitable. For a short period it would be fine, but not for days and days of such conditions. The trip ahead was far worse than the one behind, so I decided the only way to save them all was to let some go to good homes. It was a very sad decision, as the two chosen, were my oldest ones and very affectionate. They were also the biggest, and this was quite a factor, considering my lack of space.

The SPCA helped and found wonderful new parents for the two Siamese neuters, we still correspond with the new owners and both cats are well, happy and very much loved.

That left five and as time drew nearer to leaving on the Ghan, I became more and more worried. At the last minute TAA came to the rescue and flew all five to my sister in Sydney. As things went, with breakdowns, etc., it took five days to reach Sydney and I hate to think of the condition of the cats had they stayed with us.

It was a very tearful reunion with my twin sister who was absolutely marvellous to us all. Lunacy runs in the family and she had her own ten cats and four dogs, in addition to four children. Nothing was too much trouble and we were at last able to relax.

She told us the ending to the cat rescue saga. With trepidation she went to the Airport to pick up the cyclone waifs. Naturally, she expected them to be in poor condition and mentally shot to pieces. First look seemed OK, and when she took them home, she expected them to bolt under the beds, as cats in new surroundings do.

Not the Eldering brood - they stepped out of their tiny cages, looked the place over, ignored ten pairs of curious eyes staring at them, thought this looked a pretty good set up, ate a huge meal and simply took the house over.

We hope to return to Darwin to live, but there will be modifications to our way of living. A van of sorts must be purchased, as next cyclone we leave town with all pets safely aboard. Never again do we lose beloved pets due to lack of space, and never again do we believe anything we are told by power mad fools.

The cats that we saved, we love more dearly than ever, as they are that much more special. I try to rationalise and enjoy the ones saved, but nothing can ever ease the ache for the ones we lost. This sad note is a fitting conclusion to how we coped with Tracy.

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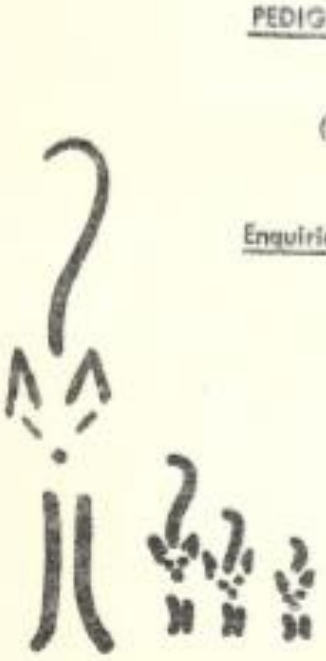

POWNEY CATTERY - 1974/75

by Mrs. D. O'Dowd

I wasn't going to leave them behind - no way - but how to take them? I would walk if I had to, but I didn't go much on that idea, also, cats are not particularly good at walking for 2000 miles! The dogs maybe, but not the cats.

The animals were not allowed to leave by air, but the children could go - so the children went by air and that left more room in the van for the tribe. The tribe grew and grew - there were the dogs, Sarah the Great Dane, Vanessa the Afghan, Sally the Cattle Dog, Bubsie the Boxer Terrier, and Fay, who is a middle-aged Chihuahua - Fox Terrier cross, and my cats - Witty, Deadley and Lichee, plus an assortment of kittens, four of Deadleys and one of Wittys. This lot was bad enough enough, but I collected one Bloodhound called, Daisy and three more cats belonging to a friend, plus one more of my own breeding that was returned to me.

This totalled twelve cats of assorted sizes, and five dogs - three of them being large. Now, I have a big vehicle, but cats do not travel well on the loose and therefore have to be housed - also, Vanessa can be cranky and could not travel with loose cats - and then there was the luggage! What seemed to be a lot of space suddenly became very small. I didn't have housing for twelve cats, also, other people's cats would not travel in the same container as my cats, or in with each other. This made things even more complicated.

Then I had a bright idea. One of the Darwin pet shops was destroyed by the cyclone and they used to sell a lot of birds which they housed in banks of cages. So I went down to town and, lo and behold - they were on the ground, but unbroken, so I looted two of these - one with two compartments and the other with three. Without the perches they were ideal but a bit small. No worries - better to be an uncomfortable cat for a week than a dead cat.

My vehicle is a commercial van, which I bought to accommodate the big dogs and the vast number of children that I seem to have accrued through the years (foster children), and I have the rear seat from a car in the back which makes it like a big station waggon. So I built up the foot space of the back seat to make it level, with blankets and pillows. This space did for the Dane and the Afghan with their great big long legs; the bloodhound came in the front with me and the two little dogs. I had to get the cages into the back and they had to be high, so that the cats could get enough air. The only things I could find to stand them on were my beautiful radiogram, a small chest of drawers and a little bedside cupboard, so in they went. You should see them now - the top of the radiogram looks as if it has been ploughed.

My Seal Point, Witty, was very heavily in kitten (black and white!) and objected strongly to three inches of water in the house and couldn't be found anywhere. After much searching, she was discovered living in a smashed up car, which was reasonable dry inside. She was very distressed by the cyclone and difficult to handle, so I decided to give her to a Mr. Fred Gray, who breeds Siamese cats 19 miles out of Darwin, if he would take her.

So I loaded up the cats and dogs and away we went. By the time I got to Mr. Gray's home, two cats had discovered how to open the cage doors and were frantically looking for a way out, and I was almost deaf from the cacophony of sound from twelve different cat voices! They did not think much of this travelling business at all!

Having delivered Witty and sealed the cage doors with clothes pegs, we took off again. At Pine Creek, I found homes for one very nice Chocolate Point male who had been returned to me by someone and my cattle pup, and also for the dog I had picked up along the way, which had obviously fallen out of some car. This lightened the load a bit. We got to Katherine that night and spent the night in the guest room of the Catholic Priest's home. Next morning - no

cats! All except the kittens had escaped! Horror! But Father Healey and I hunted and got them all back. On we went and suddenly, the Chocolate Point belonging to my friend, landed on the back of my neck. A clothes peg would not hold her in, so I tied up her cage with string, or thought I did, because in a few miles she was free again and no sign of any string. So once more I tied her cage up. A few miles on, she was free again, and again, no sign of the string. I decided she must have chewed through the string, so this time I tied up her cage with a Nylon dog's lead - unchewable! I put many knots in it to make sure.

At Renner Springs, one could see a massive electrical storm to the south, so I decided to push on because the creeks could flood and I might be stuck for days if I waited, so on I went, but too late - the creeks were up already, but I only had to wait most of the night until they were passable again and I arrived at Tennant Creek in the early morning - I had to have some sleep, so I went to a friend there and slept in their caravan for the morning, having first rigged up electric fans in the HI-Ace, so that the cats would not die of heat exhaustion. I only had three hours sleep, but when I awoke, no Chocolate Point cat - just an unravelled dog's lead! She had unpicked all those knots! All of them! I was quite unable to find her this time and had to go on without her. I had a feeling she would soon get a new home, as it was right in the middle of town, and I heard later that she did, in fact, two ladies were fighting as to who should have her.

The next part of the journey was a nightmare - I was so tired that I could hardly see and eventually slept by the side of the road about 80 miles North of Alice Springs - I was quite unable to drive any further, and got to Alice about 8.30 next morning. I had a son who was holidaying in the Alice and I spent a couple of days with my friends there. We advertised the kittens on the radio and within ten minutes they had all got homes, and, I could have found homes for many more.

The next half of the journey, was more or less plain sailing, as I was well rested and had only got five dogs and four cats! I delivered the Bloodhound to people in Roseworter in S.A., and the two remaining cats belonging to my friend, went to her sister in Elizabeth and a few miles further and my week long journey was finished.

- o 0 o -

LENNOX

QUEENS:

UMBAKUMBA GLENGYLE LASS (24)
UMBAKUMBA GLENGYLE STAR (24)
WATANABE HUON BRONZE (27)

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* TOPLINE STUDS USED

* HEALTHY, HOUSE REARED KITTENS SOMETIMES AVAILABLE

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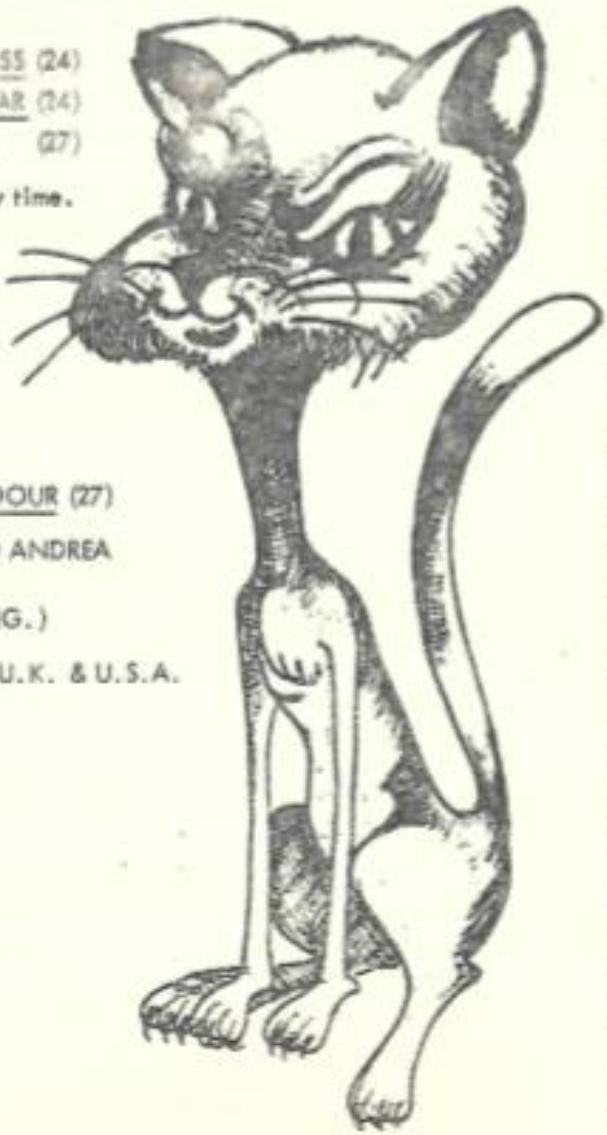

AT STUD:

GD CH CHUNTAO SECRET SPLENDOUR (27)

Sire: U.K. & N.Z. CH BELCANTO ANDREA CHENIER (IMP ENG.)

Dam: BELCANTO FEDORA (IMP ENG.)

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PROPS:

Bob and Marie Balzer,
P.O. Box 40843,
CASUARINA. N.T. 5792

BLAUMEISE CATTERY - 1978

by Julie Schuller

As Seal Point breeders, Blaumeise Cattery has not existed since the ravages of Tracy and the resulting chaotic situation.

Our beloved Seal Points are now just three desexed pets. Our stud was lost soon after the cyclone, one queen could not breed and was desexed and one queen died as a result of the cyclone. We have not been able to replace the cats lost and so our first love is, for the time being, just family pets.

Just starting out with cream Burmese at the time of the cyclone, we had a two week old litter when Tracy struck. Because of the conditions in Darwin after Tracy, it was impossible to sell the kittens for almost five months. The litter was comprised of three males and one female, the female was kept, more for sentimental reasons than for any promise she showed.

It was hard to mate the mother initially, because kittens couldn't be contemplated at that time, then, continued mating resulted in no progeny, until a situation was reached where the mother, "Goldie," just did not stop calling even after mating.

At the time of writing, she is on the pill and her future is uncertain. I feel that running with a stud might help, but this is not possible in Darwin.

"Brandie," the daughter, when old enough, was also mated, but no results. Finally, three months off her third birthday, she finally became pregnant to a male I had never used before.

Ironically, this occurred three weeks before I was due to leave on an overseas trip, so the kittens were born at a friend's place while I was away.

After the cyclone, many of us who had lost cats, had kittens given to us by Southern breeders. I received a lovely Blue Tortie Point, Shanja Fanella from P. & J. Archer in Victoria, a lovely little girl and a prolific breeder, she has kept my cattery "alive" since the cyclone.

"Brandie," not only turned into quite a nice girl show wise, but also became an exemplary "Mum," and I am now hoping to mate her again to a cream stud, her last mating being to a brown.

We moved from our old, cyclone wrecked house, into a brand new house, but have been unable to re-establish the stud cages, etc., we had before.

All in all, our experiences since Tracy, have been disappointing, but we haven't given up - yet!!!

-o0o-

Julie is a tireless worker for the Cat Association of the Northern Territory, as well as being a qualified judge, and it is to her and all Darwinians like her that I, "Dips me Lid."

-o0o-

Starline Cattery (N.T.)

SIAMESE CORNISH REX

STUDS: N.Z. CH & GT GD CH ROWANAI TABBY TABOO (Choc Tabby Point)
(Cat of the Year, Victoria)

GT GD CH STARLINE ARCTIC STORM (24c) (B.I.S. & Year Winner 74, 75, 76)

GT GD CH STARLINE SILVER PHOENIX (Blue Tabby Point)
(B.I.S. - Sire: GD CH Taiping Stanislaus 24a)

****

QUEENS: GT GD CH STARLINE TABBY TABU (Choc Tabby Point) (Sire: Taboo)
(B.I.S. & Siamese of the Year, 1977)

GD CH STARLINE SILVER OPHELIA (24c) (Sire: Stanislaus)

CH RICKMERE BLUE FIAMETTA (24a) (Sire: Stanislaus)

CH STARLINE BLACK VOODOO (Seal Tabby Point) (Sire: Bellaphron)

STARLINE BLACK MAGIC (24) (Sire: Bellaphron)

STARLINE DARK MYSTIC (Seal Tabby Point) (Sire: Chevalier)

STARLINE ARCTIC ELECTRA (Lilac Tabby Point)

****

REX: BAJIMBI CURLY CANDY (Blue/Cream carrying Si-Rex)
(Sire: Cat of the Year, N.S.W.)

STARLINE ROYAL BLUEFIRE (Blue)

STARLINE ROYAL CHARISMA (Blue/Cream)
(Sire: U.K. CH Watermill Royal David)

****

ENQUIRIES:

B. Theofylatos,
P.O. Box 38691,
WINNELLIE. DARWIN. N.T. 5789
PHONE: (089) 831291

[illegible] CATTERY - 1978

by Robyn Eldering

When I was asked to write a follow-up story to my contribution to the "CYCLONE TRACY SPECIAL" issue, I thought it would be easy. Now I realise to condense three years and two months of life after Tracy won't be quite that simple!

Darwin and her people are incredible!. To Look at Darwin it is very hard to imagine just three years ago we didn't have a town. Darwin is now thriving, beautiful new homes and buildings everywhere and our population is back to the 1974 figures. You see the odd remains of wrecked homes left, but overall Darwin is bigger and better than ever.

I re-read my story in the Tracy Issue, so I could pick up the threads again so as to write this article. Sadly it brought on a fit of the "weeps" and probably always shall. However, I firmly told myself, this was stupid, life goes on and as I have a full and very hectic life, especially cat wise, we will go on from there.

The first year after Tracy was spent in Adelaide. Despite hating the cold and suffering constantly from severe Hay Fever, my homesickness was allayed by the wonderful cat people I met in Adelaide.

For a whole year I soaked up the cat scene, made wonderful friends, and learnt a great deal and thoroughly enjoyed myself. Special people like Anne Ryan and Anne Fanning who not only taught me a great deal, but whose crazy sense of humor helped me so much when I felt really low. We keep in close contact, so many good friends resulted from the cyclone.

On the Darwin scene, Haidee Lowe, Brigitte Wilson, Evelyn Mitchell, DI Oaten and Julie and Helmut Schuller were indeed wonderful and constantly kept returning to our sad ruins and collected all the bits and pieces they could find worth saving and held them for us. A special thanks to Haidee Lowe for storing these odds and ends and sending them to us, as to lose your whole past is a peculiar feeling and to see an item you thought was gone forever was a real morale booster.

A very special person and friend was Florris Hawkins of Melbourne. I had met Florris twice in Darwin and we had kept in touch and she was truly wonderful to us. Bibi and Adam, my two Brown Burmese, were sent to Aunty Florris and she boarded them, free of charge for many many months. Adam was Luther's son, so went to a few shows in Melbourne and really scooped the pool. I believe there were a few sighs of relief when he finally went to Adelaide to live!

Florris became the Florence Nightingale for Darwin cats and begged, borrowed, and I don't doubt, stole, for the welfare of our remaining Darwin cats. Constantly, parcels of goodies arrived up here - food, vitamins, essential flea powders and other grooming aids, plus gear for shows.

A big thank you to the Breeders ALL AROUND AUSTRALIA who were so generous with their free matings to Darwin cats and many times free kittens, or kittens at greatly reduced rates to Darwin breeders. As can be imagined, the huge financial loss to most of us was rather crippling, so this generosity was much appreciated, and did a lot to get us all back on our feet.

The Cat Association of the Northern Territory is a thriving body. Our shows have a higher attendance rate than pre-cyclone years and the standard of cats is really excellent. As usual, the administration of the C.A.N.T., falls on few very capable and broad shoulders. It is my regret that I cannot possibly be involved with the Committee, etc., but with a full time job, huge family of cats, plus arthritus, I know my limitations. I just hope my copious articles for

our superb magazine and my husband and I helping out on show day is of some small help.

Now to Strikit - my husband said I could easily sum this up in one word - BANKRUPTCY! We all know what an expensive hobby cat keeping is, so I probably need not draw pictures. You know of Alcoholics and Drug Addicts, well, I am a Catoholic, so our family is a large one! Slowly, over the last three years, it has swelled to 17 cats and one geriatric Basset of 13 years. The latter we took on when she was 11 as her owner was going to shoot her.

The cats range from lovely fat domestics, to the more exotic breeds. Rex and Abyssinian, with Burmese, Siamese and Tonkinese in between. As I am not a mad keen breeder (cannot bear to sell the kittens, except to A1 parents), eleven of the cats are desexed pets and most enjoyable.

However, a small part of me cannot really desex the whole lot, so an odd litter or two is in residence now and again. I find, of all the breeds, the Rex has me utterly captivated and Strikit Cattery was the first in the Northern Territory to bring in this delightful breed. My dream is to see them capture other breeders hearts as they have mine.

We have been in our new home for 22 months and are only just beginning our outside runs. Without such a wonderful husband, I'd be the owner of 7 cats - not 17. Peter builds them superb cages, with shelves and scratching posts everywhere, plus wall runners. They are truly ruined. Into the bargain, he is a person with "Vibrations," and the cats adore him. I know I drive him demented at times, with my huge family, but he loves the cats so much he finds it hard to do much but feebly (and sometimes not so feebly) protest. Peter's special love is the underdog - the domestic, and I feel very strongly that all breeders or owners of pedigree cats should 'support' a domestic or two. All cats are such lovely creatures, it saddens me to see people keep only the "Elite" of the Cat World.

Most of the cats we rescued from the cyclone are still with us. Bibi, the little Brown Burmese, who mothered all the cats on that horrific trip, is the matriach of Strikit. After a few ghastly labours, I promptly had her speyed and life is bliss for us all. She is plump, beautiful, and a very forceful personality, and has Peter and I completely under her iron paw. Adam, the then teenage Burmese kitten, is now a very mature and sedate gentleman of four years. A big, socky, "mother's boy," who takes life very casually. He left Adelaide as the FASA "Top Cat, 1975," and his departure was summed up very well when a friend remarked, "We are very sad to see you and Peter go, but delighted that Adam is leaving Adelaide." We were so proud of Adam - a cyclone waif, who went - Darwin - Sydney - Melbourne - Adelaide, and back to Darwin, all in one year, and yet he was so gentle, stable, placid, and enjoyed shows. As a "local lad," who did well, he is a credit to his breeder, Di Oaten of Darwin. His first year in Darwin he went, "Cat of the Year 1976," and has been retired for the past 18 months. Adam is a house pet and revels in the luxury of this status. I realise how incredibly lucky I am, as few working studs can remain as house pets. He rarely, if ever, sprays and if he does, it has no odor. He is siring superb kittens, and is quite normal in all other respects.

With the advent of the fabulous, Websters Flu Vaccine, Strikit is no longer plagued with cat flu, as so many catteries all over Australia have suffered in the past few years. We look forward to a future in Darwin, living with happy, sleek and contented felines, the occasional lovely litter, and, let us hope, never again the terror of another cyclone.

-o0o-

Kercualle

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