ROSIE-ARTICLE 6

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| **HAVE BENGALS - WILL TRAVEL!**by Rosie Alger-Street |
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| In March 1993, Barrie and I attended the first-ever Bengal Congress in West Springfield, USA. We took over two brothers, Typhast Raindancer and Typhast Rainspots. These boys were destined to be at stud with Gene Johnson (now Ducote) and Karen Austin. At that time, we had such a small gene-pool in the UK that we could not use them ourselves. Gene and Karen persuaded us to bring them over to coincide with the Congress and enter them in the show before handing them over to them. The story below was written for the TIBS Bulletin and gives an account of our experiences and our delight in actually winning the Congress with Raindancer. |   |

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| Click on Bengal Kittens to Enlarge |

**Champion Typhast Raindancer** |
| When Gene Johnson and Karen Austin jokingly suggested that Barrie and I brought Typhast Raindancer and Typhast Rainspots to America personally, we laughed.We had tentatively negotiated with them that they run on the boys at stud in the USA, as the outlets for studs in England were still limited. The gene pool is too small to support many males and they looked too nice to neuter. However, in the negotiations we had certainly not envisaged the grandiose ideas they had in store for us! We had hardly said 'what a lovely thought' when they had not only arranged accommodation, but had also faxed all the necessary forms etc for the boys to be entered in the Bengal Congress.I was just getting ready to say that there was no way I could spare four days away from the cats, especially as I had two litters due, when Barrie informed me that he had had to book the tickets for a period of seven days, otherwise we couldn't afford to go, as there were no cheap offers for less than a week's stay!Once again, I was ready to forego the cost of the ticket so as to not leave my babies, when the next fax from America said that permission had been obtained for me to attend in the judging rings to observe TICA judging. That bribe I could not resist, so we arranged for trusted midwives with veterinary back up, and packed.When we got to Heathrow Airport, the security was strict and we were asked to take the cats out of their baskets while the carriers went throught the scanners. We were to carry them around the machines and return them to their baskets on the other side. It was a particularly busy time and the area was very crowded. As Bengal owners, you all will know how a Bengal would react to the situation... You've got it – 'Hello everybody! Here we are!' at the top of their voices! If someone had announced that the President wore pink knickers you couldn't have had a better reaction! A stunned, amazed silence, which is quite an achievement in a busy airport! Perhaps in America, where people fly their cats all over the place, no notice would have been taken, but they don't get too many Bengals at Heathrow, so the boys left England in a blaze of noisy glory.After an uneventful flight, we collected them with our baggage. We might as well have just taken them down the garden for all the fuss they made. A few purrs, a couple of quick washes, and all was right with the world – they were certainly not impressed with 'jet-setting'.New York in the rush hour was something again – especially as I'm a lousy map-reader. It wouldn't have been so bad if the car-hire company had given us a complete map, and I could have seen where we were going, but the small section available could have been in the middle of the Sahara Desert as far as I was concerned! So we saw New York. Anything that led out of the concrete jungle wasn't mentioned on my map, so we did a concentrated tour in a circle until I realised there was a flip side to the map, with a larger area detailed on the back. We then escaped and headed (I think) north! Needless to say, we were somewhat late arriving at the hotel in West Springfield. The boys hadn't made a murmur the whole way, which was more than could be said for Barrie, who was beginning to think that we might end up 'doing America' in one day!When we had signed in and taken our luggage to our room, we put Dancer and Spots in the bathroom with food and a litter tray, and now extremely hungry, went in search of food. On our return, we checked the lads to find they had made themselves at home. All the hotel towels haad been relegated to the floor, the toilet rolls, including the spare one, had been shredded and placed on top, and the boys were dead to the world, curled up in each other's arms on top of the pile – obviously they liked hotel life!The following day, we saw the local shopping mart, and waited for our friends, Gordon and Gene Johnson, to arrive. In the evening, we attended a fascinating talk on genetics by the TICA judge and geneticist, Dr Solveig Pflueger This was a real marathon on her part, as it went on for over three hours, but for us it was over far too soon, as her knowledge and observations were invaluable.Saturday was the start of 'The Show'. We had never attended an American Cat Show and at first, found it totally confusing, as the concept is quite different from the English way – where the emphasis is on total anonymity. It was hard to get used to exhibitors handling their own exhibits and the judges talking to the floor (not literally!). However, we came prepared to learn, and after a few mistakes we were up with the rest, rushing backwards and forwards to the various rings with the two boys. Sadly, we didn't realise about the points system until the second day – but Rome wasn't built in a day!When Karen Austin asked if I would like to sit in with the judging, I really appreciated the opportunity of learning about breeds I had up to then seen only in books, and certainly never handled at shows in England. I was most impressed by the showmanship and expertise of the TICA judges, and their generosity in allowing me to join them, for which I thank them very much. It was certainly one of the highlights of my trip.Another highlight was the amazing lengths they went to in order to provide us with spectacular weather. It was billed as 'the storm of the century', and kept us in the hotel an extra two days! However, the time was well spent, with Judges' Seminars and in-depth talks with Bengal breeders. A wealth of experience that we much appreciated.On the second day of the show, the boys were in the Bengal Congress. Typhast Raindancer was the Best Adult Bengal, and Mrs Mills' beautiful little girl was Best Kitten. The most amazed of all the exhibitors were us – we had brought them over to compete, not to win!We had by now been able to put faces to the names of various breeders we had heard of since becoming involved with Bengals. Suddenly, they were friends and they were congratulating us. Thank you all so much for making us so welcome. The trip had been more than worthwhile – the fact that Raindancer won was lovely, but more important was that we realised that we had a common bond that a few thousand miles of water couldn't separate – we all loved Bengals! |
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