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Celebrating ICONS of the CAT FANCY Connie Stewart



BY KAREN LAWRENCE

CONNIE STEWART - The first in our Icons of the Cat Fancy series

No-one can say it was unusual to see Connie Stewart accepting a National Winner award at the CFA annual award banquets ... it wasn't. She either bred a beautiful cat, or found the ideal cat to show, groomed it to perfection, travelled the world to cat shows, accumulated tons of points during the year, and received accolades at the end of the show season.

For 25 years, Connie campaigned cats – it was simply what she did. And, oh, did she ever enjoy doing it!

It was always such a pleasure to see Connie in a show hall, smiling, laughing and chatting with fellow exhibitors. She was a fun-loving person, and it was contagious.

It didn't matter if you were sitting in an airport club on the way home from a show, or climbing stairs to a mountain temple in Malaysia, admiring giant pandas in China, or snorkeling off some faraway beach – Connie made it an entertaining experience.

You never knew just where in the world she would pop up at a show, could be anywhere in the United States or Canada, or even Europe, the Middle East, or Asia. But, when she was there, you just knew that you were in for a treat to see what she was showing.

Grooming was Connie's forte – there was no-one comparable to her in presenting either an Exotic or a Persian to perfection. Her favorite specialty was white Persians, and you could count on no yellow spots, no eye discoloration, and not a hair out of place if Connie put a cat in your ring.

And Connie shared, often teaching her grooming tips and techniques to other exhibitors – sometimes sharing bathing regimens even in the wee hours of the morning in hotels. I'm told it wasn't at all unusual to run into Connie in a hotel hallway, in the middle of the night or early morning, arms loaded down with grooming supplies ... either on her way to, or back from, helping someone groom their cat.



Connie assisting with grooming a cat, at the first CFA Show in Kuwait

Connie was well-known for her love of the Persian, specifically the white, and during the 2000-2001 show season she showed one of her own breeding – GC, BW, NW Wishes Lyric – to CFA’s Cat of the Year.

Lyric was out of a tortoiseshell Persian that Connie had received from Omar Gonzalez, with whom she remained a lifelong friend and relied on for breeding, showing and campaigning advice. Rarely did Connie make a move in her acquiring, showing and campaigning without consulting first with Omar.

Lyric’s sire was a copper-eyed white, bred by Ron Mahoney and Dirk Flinchbaugh. His lines traced back to the famous Q-T Cats and Kitty Charm lines, while the dam traces back to the Candirand and Southpaw lines.

In 2006-2007, she attained Cat of the Year with a copper-eyed white Persian, GC, BW, NW Melosito’s White Owl, which she co-owned with the European breeder, Sergio Miguel Melo Guerra, and also with Frederic Gaspard.

In 2007-2008, she repeated Cat of the Year with another Persian, this time an odd-eyed white, GC, BW, NW Sunny Ridge Polar Express of Wishes, bred by Sharon Markus with whom Connie co-owned the cat.

In 2011-2012, she co-owned Cat of the Year, a black and white Exotic for a change, GC, BW, NW D’Eden Lover Pepito of Wishes. Pepito was the first cat from Europe to take CFA’s Best Cat award. Pepito was the son of a calico Persian, bred by Connie, who was CFA’s 25th Best Kitten in the 2005-2006 show season. His sire was one of the great lines of D’Eden Lover’s Exotic cats. He was truly an international collaboration, bred by Connie (USA), Frederic Gaspard(France), and Paolo Carnevaletti(Italy). He was co-owned by Connie with L. Battesti and M. Michel.



How most will remember Connie, running a cat at a show – on this occasion in Asia.

In 2013-2014, she once again showed a Persian to the Cat of the Year award, but a calico this time – GC, BW, NW Belamy's Desiderata of Cinema. Desiderata was bred by Monika Vowe of Germany, and Connie co-owed her with Blake Mayes and Dennis Adler.

In total, between 1990 and 2015, Connie was the owner or co-owner of an amazing 42 different cats shown to National Wins!



Donna Fuller and Connie Stewart at Awards Night

Connie would occasionally agent cats that belonged to her friends. She didn't care that they were competition – if she could help a friend, she would. During her 2001 campaign with Lyric, one of those agented cats was a Russian Blue belonging to Connie's good friend, Donna Fuller. Judging assignments kept Donna from an extensive campaign schedule, so Connie took Tsar Blu's Zinata along with her and Lyric for several months.

Lyric ended up as Best Cat and Zinata was 6th Best Cat, and Connie enjoyed every minute.

Connie and her cats became a fixture at the Los Angeles Airport, with the TSA agents accustomed to seeing her every weekend, often inquiring where she was headed or asking how the cat had done at the previous show.

In Connie's words, from the 2008 *CFA Yearbook*:

"Since out on the West Coast we just do not get the high count shows that would give me what I wanted, it meant traveling east every weekend. Some people have questioned my sanity and some people think I must not have a life. Well, I am here to tell the people who say this, you are probably right. I am a little crazy; and as far as having no life, that may be true, but I love this life! I love the traveling. I love the people that I meet and I love the thrill of competition. CFA has given me so many memories and I would not trade my life for anything."

And Connie almost always wore her beautiful gold "National Winner" necklace at shows – she was almost weighted down by the number of 'years' that dangled from it for each of her National Wins.

Connie had an extremely generous heart, mentoring several young Asian girls, having them live in her home and giving them an opportunity to learn the English language, among them Aki Tamura and Eri Takano. Counted among her best friends was another young Asian woman and her husband, Suki and Matthew Lee of Hong Kong



THE CAT SHOW
IN MEMORY OF CFA LEGEND
CONNIE STEWART

OCTOBER
28TH & 29TH 2017
NIEDERNHAUSEN
8 RING SHOW

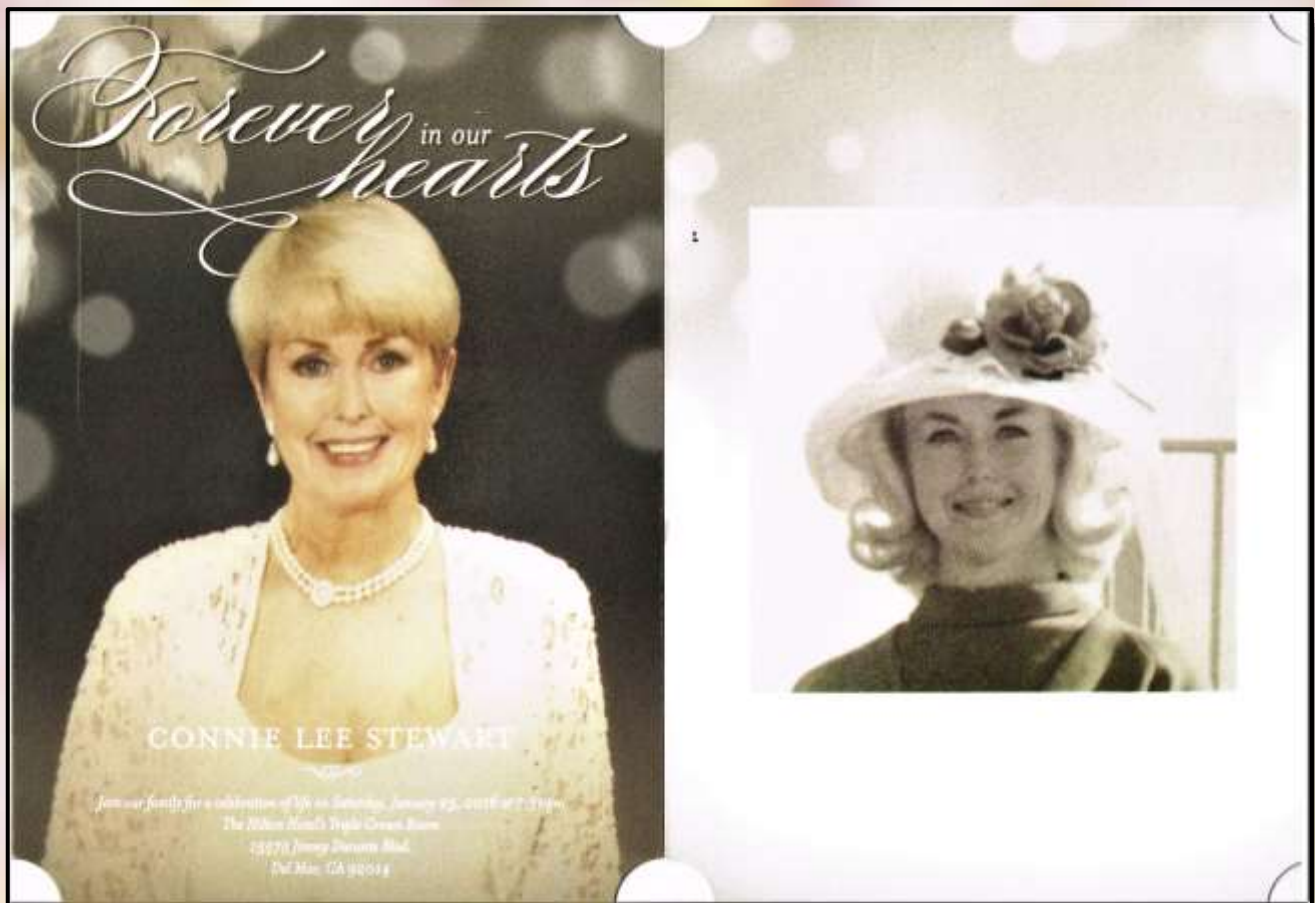
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Remembrance Show Catalogue, Germany, in 2017

Connie fell ill with complications of her diabetes while at a show in Germany during the fall of 2015, and never recovered. In mid-December, I remember being in Asia and sharing excitement with Donna Fuller because we'd received word of Connie's health recovery and expected imminent return to the United States. Only days later, the announcement of her sudden passing on December 23, 2015 took us all by surprise and was greeted with shock throughout the cat fancy. Connie's many friends around the world mourned her and expressed their grief on Facebook, pouring out their hearts in tributes and memories. As Vicki Nye said at the time: -

"Lots of sparkle and joy left the show hall when we lost Connie. She was the most determined person I knew – she would find a cat, make a plan, and follow through."



Connie's Remembrance Service Card

Connie's life was celebrated on January 23, 2016 at the Hilton Hotel in Del Mar, CA... fittingly, the night before the San Diego Cat Fanciers show at which Connie was normally a fixture. About 40 of her friends and family gathered to share remembrances; a tradition that is still shared by several of Connie's friends every Friday night before the Del Mar show.

CONNIE STEWART'S NATIONAL WINNERS IN CFA

1990-1991

GC, BW, NW Wishes Glad Rags
Copper-eyed white Persian
13th Best Cat

1995-1996

GC, BW, NW Furfrenz Nice'N Easy of Wishes
Black Persian
2nd Best Cat

1996-1997

GC NW Ronkirk Liberace of Wishes
Copper-eyed White Persian
2nd Best Kitten

GC, NW Briar-Mar Powder of Wishes
Copper-eyed white Persian
4th Best Kitten

1997-1998

GC, NW Briar-Mar Powder of Wishes
Copper-eyed white Persian
5th Best Cat

1998-1999

GC, BW, NW Wishes Musicman
Copper-eyed White Persian
3rd Best Cat

GC, NW Wishes Serenade
Copper-eyed white Persian
20th Best Kitten

1999-2000

GC, BW, NW Wishes Powder Sugar
Copper-eyed white Persian
4th Best Cat



GC, NW D'EDEN LOVER LOLLIPOP OF WISHES
Brown spotted tabby & white Exotic - 2nd Best Kitten 2006-2007



GC, BW, NW BELAMY'S DESIDERATA OF CINEMA
Calico Persian - Best Cat 2013-2014

CONNIE STEWART'S NATIONAL WINNERS IN CFA (continued)

1999-2000 (cont.)

GC, NW Wishes Lyric
Copper-eyed white Persian
9th Best Kitten

2000-20001

GC, BW, NW Wishes Lyric
Copper-eyed white Persian
Best Cat

2001-2002

GC, BW, NW Wishes Bolero
Copper-eyed white Persian
2nd Best Cat

2002-2003

GC, NW Catsaftrat Star Fish of Wishes
Black Persian
4th Best Kitten

2003-2004

GC, BW, NW Briar-Mar's Haley of Wishes
Tortoiseshell Persian
8th Best Cat

2004-2005

GC, NW Couronne Magic of Wishes
Black Persian
3rd Best Kitten

GC, NW Argentovivo Juliet of Wishes
Brown patched mackerel tabby Exotic
7th Best Kitten

2005-2006

NW D'Eden Lover She's One of Wishes
Brown patched spotted tabby Exotic
15th Best Kitten

NW Couronne Casanova of Wishes
Red Persian
17th Best Kitten

NW D'Eden Lover One Star of Wishes
Calico Persian
25th Best Kitten

2006-2007

GC, BW, NW Melositos White Owl of D'Eden Lover
Copper-eyed white Persian
Best Cat

GC, BW, NW D'Eden Lover A-Paola of Wishes
Tortoiseshell Exotic
25th Best Cat

GC, NW D'Eden Lover Lollipop of Wishes
Brown spotted tabby & white Exotic
2nd Best Kitten

GC, NW D'Eden Lover Cookie of Wishes
Blue patched mackerel tabby & white Exotic
16th Best Kitten

2007-2008

GC, BW, NW Sunny Ridge Polar Express of Wishes
Odd-eyed white Persian
Best Cat

2008-2009

GC, BW, NW Chancery's L.A. Ink of Wishes
Brown tabby & white Persian
6th Best Kitten,
7th Best Cat

2009-2010

GC, BW, NW Chancery's Tyra of Wishes
Brown tabby & white Persian
2nd Best Kitten,
9th Best Cat

2010-2011

GC, NW Alemar's Love Bug of Wishes
Blue-eyed white Persian
5th Best Cat

NW Sunny Ridge Bipolar of Wishes
Copper-eyed white Persian
7th Best Kitten

2011-2012

GC, BW, NW D'Eden Lover Pepito of Wishes
Black & white Exotic
Best Cat



GC, BW, NW BELAMY'S ODETTA OF CINEMA
Dilute calico Persian - 2nd Best Cat 2014-2015

CONNIE STEWART'S NATIONAL WINNERS IN CFA (continued)

2011-2012 (cont.)

GC, BW, NW Ghattas Deusa of Wishes
Dilute calico Persian
25th Best Cat

GC, NW Cinema's Poetry of Wishes
Copper-eyed white Persian
7th Best Kitten

2012-2013

GC, NW D' Eden Lover Giulietta
Blue patched mackerel tabby & white Exotic
18th Best Cat

GC, NW Latin Lover Danube of Jiang Nan
Blue mackerel Tabby Exotic
5th Best Kitten

2012-2013 (cont.)

GC, NW D'Eden Lover Godiva of Wishes
Tortoiseshell Persian
12th Best Kitten

GC, NW Cinema's Obsession of Wishes
Copper-eyed white Persian
13th Best Kitten

GC, NW Cinema's Chanel of Wishes
Copper-eyed white Persian
19th Best Kitten

2013-2014

GC, BW, NW Belamy's Desiderata of Cinema
Calico Persian
Best Cat



GC, NW CINEMA'S LIBERACE OF WISHES
Copper-eyed white Persian - 12th Best Kitten, 14th Best Cat in Premiership – 2014-2015

CONNIE STEWART'S NATIONAL WINNERS IN CFA (continued)

2013-2014 (cont.)

GC, BW, NW Cinema's Valentino of Wishes
Copper-eyed white Persian
2nd Best Cat

GC, NW Cinema's Halo of Wishes
Blue-eyed white Persian
18th Best Kitten

2014-2015

GC, BW, NW Belamy's Odetta of Cinema
Dilute calico Persian
2nd Best Cat

2014-2015 (cont.)

GC, BW, NW Cinema's Don Juan of Wishes
Odd-eyed white Persian
10th Best Cat

GC, NW Cinema's Armani of Wishes
Odd-eyed white Persian
5th Best Kitten

GC, NW Cinema's Liberace of Wishes
Copper-eyed white Persian
12th Best Kitten
14th Best Cat in Premiership