

## **“The Grandcat”**

Submitted by Peggy Hannum, Lancaster, PA

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“Mustapha” was truly a “grand” cat, but closer to home, our grandcat, as in grandchildren, etc. We are a cat family. As a child I lived in the city, so dogs were out, but cats were okay. As our children grew up, we nurtured a series of, “Here I am on your doorstep; don’t send me away,” cats. Much time has passed, and when our children and grandchildren visit us from New England for several days, the trip details often are prefaced by “Can we bring the cat?” We keep a scratching post, and the caveat before a visit is: “Keep an eye on him or her and if they are even thinking of picking at a hooked rug, you have to roll all the rugs up and put them away.” Cats are very smart and may well have sensed the gist of Grandma’s warning. None of the grandcats has ever bothered a rug and our own cat of 28 years didn’t either. However, they LOVE to sleep on rugs and to curl up in a big rug on a stand.

“Musty” visited often, and when Jon Ciemiewicz came to our Lancaster McGown Guild to do a 3-day workshop on animals, the grand grandcat was a perfect choice for my project. Although she looked like a Maine Coon cat, she was actually a Norwegian Forest cat, and I have always loved those green eyes! I sent Jon a photograph and he enlarged it and transferred it to monkscloth for an 18” x 18” pillow. I wanted to dye this myself as I was fascinated by the blending of grays to black, brown to white, gray to brown and the in-betweens. First, I washed both black and white Dorr wools. I needed both of them “as-is” along with white for the dyed pieces. Going to my Cushing swatchettes, I was easily able to ascertain that the gray was Silver Gray and the brown was Brown Rust..

In order to have colors blend into one another, I did dip-dyes. I prepared 2 small pans with 1/4 teaspoon of each dye in boiling water with 1/8 cup white vinegar. Using a lot of different sized pieces of white, and with heavy gloves, I dipped the wools. To get darker grays and browns, I dipped these first. Then dipped some brown ends into gray to get that in-between brown/gray. For lighter blends, I did 1/3 of an end in brown, 1/3 of the other end in gray and lift them out letting them run together in the white center. Since they needed more heat to be colorfast, I laid similar pieces together in a large pan and baked them at 325 for an hour.

By looking at the photo, it was relatively easy to follow the contours as well as the colors of the fur, using a 3-cut. I hooked the whiskers in and then put the fur around them. If they are too wide, use a 2-cut.

During the workshop, I worked on the eyes, nose and mouth areas. The rest was just look at the picture and go! I chose Arline Bechtoldt-Apgar’s “White Linen” for the background as it has nice touches of color on the white. ( Formula: over 1 yard Dorr White, spot with 1/2. Taupe, 1/8 Old Ivory, 1/64 Ecu, in 1 CBW + 1/3 cup white vinegar. These are Cushing dyes.

Even though Musty, after 18 long cat years, is no longer with us, she has a prominent place in the cushion corner of the family room along with a dozen or so beautiful counted cross stitch pillows brought back from our many years of travel in the Middle East. Mustapha in Arabic means “The Chosen One.” However, her name came from the title of the featured song in the Queen album, *Jazz*. That being out of my league, I prefer the Arabic translation!