



Re-elect
GEORGE EIGENHAUSER, JR.
CFA Director at Large

You may have seen me at CFA shows but not know my name. You may know my work in CFA, but this may be the first time you had a face to put with the name. Let me tell you a little about me.

I began going to CFA cat shows in 1990 with some breeder friends and enjoyed the “family” atmosphere among fellow cat lovers. I started showing Household Pets and became hooked. I have had a CFA cattery and have been showing Maine Coons since 1992, producing a number of Regional wins.

I have had the pleasure of serving you on the CFA Board for nearly ten years, six as CFA Southwest Regional Director and the last four as Director at Large. I am Secretary of the Winn Feline Foundation, member of the CFA Legislative Committee and CFA Legislative Coordinator. I’m a member of the Maine Coon Breed Council and CFA licensed ring clerk. I am active in several CFA clubs, show production, and of course breeding and exhibiting.

I became involved in feline legislative issues in 1981. I was appointed to a citizen’s advisory board to oversee the county department of animal control. I learned first hand of the Animal Rights activists’ desire to eliminate pet ownership. Since becoming part of CFA I have continued to fight against the endless attempts to make our hobby extinct.

CFA is facing serious challenges. Many of these challenges are precipitated by falling registrations. We have all watched registrations decline, year after year. Registration income had been the “bread and butter” of CFA, funding most of our programs. Each year brings a new decline in income, which has been answered with a new round of budget cuts. We have had to learn to do more with less. Efforts to produce new sources of funding by reaching outside the fancy are promising but will take time to fully realize.

People have many theories why registrations are down. Some people say it’s attacks from the animal rights movement or the economy. People have observed broad changes such as the ageing of the fancy, the urbanization of society or changes in our priorities. No matter what the cause one thing is certain: we can not continue with business as usual. It’s not your fault. But we must all be part of the solution.

As the world enters the Information Age, CFA is in the fortunate position of having information as our main product! We are a registry of cats, that is our core business. But

what is a pedigree but information? We must adapt our business model to meet the new reality.

We must invest money to update our software and improve operations. Our next priority should be a move to online business. The Internet has created an information culture and people are accustomed to doing business online. Exhibitors see online entry as an entitlement and demand no less from CFA for registrations. We have to make it easier for people to use our services and we must reduce costs. We can not let 20th Century brick and mortar thinking keep us from moving ahead. We must consider decentralization of operations and move online to save money while preserving services.

To meet future challenges CFA needs transparency and accountability from our leadership. Transparency is needed to ensure a proper functioning of the decision making process. A closed system will always produce bad policies because it is not accountable. Many in CFA today feel they have no voice in how it is operated. Others feel they are kept in the dark about key facts, particularly financial information. How can we ask you to be a part of the solution if we can't be straightforward with you about the problem? It is time to open up CFA to the scrutiny of everyone who shares our values. We can no longer afford to ration out information on a "need to know" basis. Many people in CFA feel that they have no voice or that their opinions don't matter. They matter to me! We need your help and your ideas if we are to meet these challenges.

We need a hard-copy alternative/supplement to the online Almanac. It may be one publication with different means of delivery. We have already discussed a modified version of the online Almanac with improved printability. People could more easily print out their own copies, or perhaps order a hard copy for a fee. After all, if we can have show rules online, but still sell a hard copy, why can't we find a similar solution for the Almanac? Or, it may be better to have a quarterly, plain paper publication. Regardless of how we proceed with our publications, we must adapt CFA services to our market, not the other way around.

The Mentor and Ambassador programs are critical to CFA. There is an old saying: "Treat a customer well and he will tell a friend; treat him badly and he will tell 10 friends." Today's gate may be tomorrow's fancier, but a bad first experience can be the end of interest in the cat fancy. But these programs are just the start. We must change our corporate culture to become friendlier and more helpful so that we can retain people who have shown an interest in becoming part of our CFA family. A bad first experience can be the end of a "newbie's" interest in the cat fancy.

We must open many doors into CFA, such as Junior Showmanship, Veterans Class, Agility and Household Pets. We must be committed to the growth and future of CFA in Europe and

throughout the international community, as well as North America and Japan. International Division growth remains one of our greatest, underdeveloped resources. We need a focused public relations effort to “brand” CFA in the minds and hearts of the general public.

CFA can introduce new breeds while maintaining the uniqueness and integrity of our present breeds. We must learn to be inclusive and still keep within the essence of what makes us unique in the cat world.

As we try to grow CFA as a household brand we can not lose sight of our breeders, our exhibitors and our member clubs. Shows cost more to produce; exhibitors struggle with rising costs as well. Our clubs and exhibitors are having a harder time making ends meet. No matter what the future may bring for CFA, we can not forget our member clubs. Without them we are doomed to fail.

We need to focus our attention on breed recognition and local honors programs. While I applaud anyone who achieves a National Win; many people who show CFA have yet to grand their first cat. We need to treat everyone in the fancy as if they are important to CFA, because they are.

During my ten years on the CFA Board, I tried to be the voice of the typical breeder and exhibitor and speak out for “the little guy.” They are the backbone of CFA as well as our future. I have opposed cuts of CFA services that benefit the “rank and file” breeder and exhibitor. While I am not afraid to make the hard decisions and reduce the budget when times are tough. I fought against cutting programs necessary to CFA’s continued growth and success.

We must honor CFA’s commitment to the Winn Feline Foundation and to support this worthy cause in both good times and when CFA’s financial situation is not as good. What brings us all together is our love of the cat, which should not be abandoned for temporary profit.

Let’s work together to move CFA into the future. The time to start is now! When you cast your vote for CFA Director-at-Large, please consider me. If you have any questions, or have input to share, please contact me at: geigenhauser@allmail.net, or phone at 530-742-6153. Thank you for your support.