

Remembering Walter: CFA Allbreed Judge Walter Hutzler

Walter's World, a wondrous place full of vibrant colors and extravagant beauty, graced the Cat Fancy for half a century. Walter became a judge in 1971. He went on to share his world with countless fanciers over the ensuing years. He could captivate an audience and paint a picture with words and expressions. His uncanny ability to cut to the essence of a breed or a cat made a lasting impression on breeders and spectators alike.

On February 22, Walter took his world to the stars and the heavens are a better place. There is no better way to express the impact Walter had on so many of us than to share just a few of the tributes from fellow Cat Fanciers:

Russell

I still remember the first time I saw Walter judge. All I could say was "Wow! If I become a judge someday, I want to be just like him." He had the audience mesmerized with his flamboyant style and consummate showmanship.

Several years later, I did become a judge, and Walter and I became very good friends. Over the years, we traveled together to different places around the world. I especially remember my first trip to China. Walter was my companion. I was more than a little nervous. Walter was not. When we landed in Hong Kong and needed to get on a bus to take us to the Chinese border, Walter was always three steps behind me. "Not to worry, Russell; We will get there." The problem was we were now in China and looking for the bus to take us to Chengdu. No one there spoke English, and I was running around trying to ask where the Number 415 bus was. Eventually, I found it and Walter said "See, Russell, I got you where we needed to go." I just laughed and agreed. We boarded the bus and Walter immediately fell asleep. I, on the other hand was wide awake, because we did not know where to get off. After several long hours, we pulled into a bus stop, and there was a group waiting for us. Walter got off the bus and said "You see Russell, I knew you could get us here. Now let's go to eat. I'm not tired anymore, and I'm hungry." I just laughed, but admitted that, his having said that, I now had confidence in myself and was able to relax and enjoy the trip. Walter had a way of guiding me and giving me backbone.

I often went to meet Walter for lunch in the city. He would regale me with wonderful, interesting stories about his life in general and, of course, the cat fancy in particular. I didn't know that he sang opera, but he explained that he loved to sing and asked me if I'd like to go to an opera. Although I understood not a single word, Walter described the story in all its vivid detail, and I completely enjoyed the experience.

Walter told me about his near brush with the concentration camps; how he, his mother and his sister escaped Germany because his uncle was a government higher-up. Any story Walter told was fascinating because of how he told it. Walter taught me so much.

At one show, our schedules meant Walter saw many of the cats just before I did. Walter would get the cats excited and playful; tapping them on their heads with his bent straw toy and then send them over to me. It was a test of sorts, and he felt it made me look so much more interesting to have lively excited cats to handle.

David and I had him over to our house on many occasions. Walter also loved the parties Terri Smith would throw at her house in Northport. Walter always enjoyed the company and we had many good

times together. He would tell me to simply be myself and not let anyone tell me what to do. He was a wise man in so many many respects. I asked if he would take me as a trainee when I was going through my second specialty (LHs). He straight out said "No," because we were too close. He explained he wanted me at the beginning, not at the end. He said he wanted to mold me, but in our conversations about cats we would go back and forth about what we liked. He would always make me consider and explain my decision.

I was away at a show when his niece called to tell me Walter had been hospitalized. I had known for some time that he had cancer, but he was always upbeat. When I got home, I went directly to the hospital to see him. When I got to his room, there he was propped up in his bed. "Darling," he said, "I am so happy to see you. Let's go up to the rook; they have chairs there and we can talk." He told me then that he and Barney were going to his son's place. I know he really did not want to leave his friends and his beloved city, but he was too weak to live alone. He told me we would talk on the phone and we would keep in touch. I confessed how much I would miss him and our adventures. He knew how upset I was and he said, "Russell, we have many journeys in life and I'm looking forward to my next journey. I've had a wonderful life here and should be happy for me." I told him I loved him and that I would always remember what he taught me. I spoke to him a few times after that, but I could tell he was failing. Sometimes, he remembered me; sometimes not. However, the memory of those last words about the new journey he was beginning carried me through his death because I know wherever he is, it is still "Walter's World," and he is still doing what he does best; being a showman.

Kathy

I keep thinking about my dear friend, Walter Hutzler, and I have greatly enjoyed the stories and pictures that have been shared as we remember him. I first came across Walter as a newbie exhibitor of a brown and white Maine Coon in the early 90's. The first time Walter saw my cat, he bopped her on the head with an old feather, got down and looked straight into her face, and then snarled at her. I wasn't exactly sure what to think, but I learned that the word "feral" meant "good." As I got more involved in the cat fancy, I began to work with Burmese cats, and I found that Walter had a special fondness for these little brown cats. He often said when judging a Burmese that if he were stranded on a desert island with only one cat, that cat would be a Burmese. When I got my clerk's license, I started clerking for Walter every chance I got, because I found him so entertaining, and I loved to hear him talk about the cats. One day, he started talking about losing his Burmese and how incomplete his household was without one. I had a great little neuter, Cleveland Browyn, who needed a home, and Walter was glad to take him. Walter kept me up on Cleveland's activities and told me how much everyone loved to see him skating around the neighborhood with Cleveland in a backpack. Cleveland had some offers to be in a commercial, and Walter was quite proud of him.

After Walter retired from judging, I regularly sent him boxes filled with bags of Starbucks coffee. He loved it and would always comment about what a luxury it was for a man on Social Security. (As a Starbucks employee, I got a free bag of coffee every week.) The last box I sent him arrived just as his son was moving him to Colorado. I never heard from Walter after that, though Russell Webb occasionally brought news from his telephone talks with Walter.

Everyone who knew Walter knew how special he was. A dinner with him was such an entertaining

treat. Watching him judge and talk about the cats was a marvel. Walter followed his heart; I saw him use five Cornish Rex in a final once. We were fortunate to spend time with him on this earth. There will never be another like him.

Garden State

Today we sadly have to say goodbye to a beloved member of our cat fancy family, retired CFA Allbreed Judge Walter Hutzler, as he crossed over the rainbow bridge. Spectators at our Garden State Cat Shows may remember Mr. Hutzler judging in one of our rings, many times through the years. Walter was quite the showman, with such a flamboyant style, that truly put the cat on the center stage and drew your attention to his judging ring.

RIP Mr. Hutzler!

Vicki

So saddened to hear of Walter Hutzler's passing. He was truly a one of a kind. I loved listening to him describe the cats in his finals and had the pleasure of traveling with him on foreign judging assignments. Walter had a passion for life and a fabulous vocabulary. You will be so missed.

Cyndee

You can't see his face in this picture, but Poopsie's look says it all. I am sad to hear that Walter Hutzler passed away this weekend. He was always a showman behind the judging table and a hoot to listen to if you happened to be sitting near him at dinner. I did not know Walter personally, but always enjoyed watching him judge.

He gave Poopsie 2nd Best AB kitten that day in a competitive class of kittens. She would not play with his toys, so he pulled the straw out of his drink and swatted her gently on the head with it. Thus the funny photo.

I will always remember him fondly and CFA has lost another wonderful member of our feline family :(

Akma

Just heard the news that our beloved judge, Walter Hutzler had passed away. He surely will be missed by many. He was "the" celebrity @ hollywood star in CFA. I could still remember when I first met him during the CFA International Show in San Mateo California in 2006. His judging and finals were always filled with suspense, but extremely fun! He knew exactly how to please the crowd with his exceptional style. I'm glad that I had the opportunity to bring him to Malaysia to judge in our MyCATS Show in 2010. RIP Walter & my condolences to his family!

Beth

I was heartbroken to learn the news that the Cat Fancy has lost one of our most highly esteemed and one of my most favorite judges and people, Walter Hutzler

Always a champion for our beloved Siamese, Walter shared a knowledge, flair and showmanship which was truly unmatched!

When your Siamese made a final in Walter's ring, it was always special!

Thank you for sharing your passion for cats, judging and life with so many of us!

This very sadly marks the end of a very special era...Walter was a true icon in the Cat Fancy who will always remain in our hearts

Barbara

In Remembrance of Walter Hutzler

I am not writing the usual cat story about Walter Hutzler in the wonderful world of the cat fancy.

I am writing about Walter the human being as I learned to know him.

It starts with a Russian Jewish immigrant, Gennady "John" Grichesky, who came to the United States with his wife, small child, mother, uncle and aunt with basically nothing. John worked over 16 hours a day to build a life for his family and only child. John sacrificed much of the young years of his son growing up to succeed here the the United States seeking the American Dream. Sadly, John's only child, at 16 years of age, crossing the street in Brooklyn, was hit by a truck and killed. Walter Hutzler stood by John during this horrific period. He went to temple with John and prayed with him. Walter went to the funeral, HELD John up as he cried and put his son in the ground. Walter sat with John and his family to morn the loss of this son. Walter actually embraced John during this period as John's father might have. Walter stood by John as 'they' touched so many of John's son's belongings in life as John cried about this loss and Walter listened and comforted him.

I thought it was the perfect time to show all who loved Walter how an extraordinaire human being he was in this story.

Teresa

Walter Hutzler. May you fly with the angels and may you be embraced and loved.

I am feeling very melancholy right now. So many dear sweet memories of you judging my cats and your friendship.

My husband still tells the story of you and Highlander Liam. An open at the big Cleveland Persian show in January. You made him best of breed, finaled him and made him best allbreed and best cat. The memory is still fresh in my mind.

Words cannot express how you will be missed. Your showmanship was like no other.

Anne

Rest in peace Walter Hutzler - You were a wonderful person and I will never forget your unique way of presenting each and every cat. My favorite memory of you was the Houston Cat Show in August of 2011. You saw your first mitted pattern Ragdoll and your presentation of this seal tortie point mitted female ragdoll was to be remembered. First, you looked at her and said WOW - WOW - Is this so - then placed her back in the judging cage.. Next, you pulled out your breed standard, which I was

shocked. Briefly taking a glance at the standard, and then another look at Blue Jean, you were amazed. As I held my breath for your next action, I watched you hang Best of Breed on my girl. However, the best was to follow as you called her back for a champion final making her your second best Long Hair Champion stating that this ragdoll came exceptionally dressed to the show and you held her up wanting everyone to see this beautiful tortie coat with her mittens, eye color and her body built like a male. The presentation of your final was captivating, genuine and sincere. This female ragdoll's name is Grand Champion Calirags Blue Jean of CajunDoll (the first mitted female ragdoll to Grand in CFA) Thank you Walter for your contribution to CFA as an Amazing Judge - you will be missed and remembered by many of us. My thoughts and prayers to your friends and family.

Mary

Yesterday, CFA Allbreed judge Walter Hutzler died. I did not know Walter personally, but he judged my cats many times and heavily influenced the look of the Siamese breed. I had to wait until tonight when I could get to my home computer to find the most appropriate picture of Walter that thoroughly explains his judging style. Walter would say he was looking for that "mean" look in a Siamese, although they are not mean. We knew what he wanted, he wanted to see the look in the cat's eyes that said "I don't give a flip who you are, I am a tiger and king of the jungle."

I remember being at shows with a class of Siamese, and we all held our breath as Walter surveyed the class. Instead of taking the cats out in numerical order, Walter always found the one that he thought the most striking and took that cat out first. Often, that was the top Siamese in his ring. I always felt that no matter what some judges thought of my cat, if Walter Hutzler and Bob Molino liked my cat, I was on the right track. I look at the current judging panel, and there is a gaping hole for Siamese and Siamese-type expertise without these two.

Today, I choose to remember the Walter Hutzler that loved the slinkies and was a force in the direction of the Siamese.

Anyone who knew him had a "Walter story" to tell... He touched the hearts and souls of people year after year and in so doing changed their lives.