

Ferret Owners Bond Through Laughter

Ferrets bring their owners together with other ferret enthusiasts, and the good times roll.

By Rebecca Stout

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When large numbers of ferret people gather at a ferret event, anything can happen. Anything. Unique people tend to have unique experiences. And let me tell you, some of these ferret-related experiences can be whoppers.

At the Ferret Association of Connecticut's Ferret Frolic, visitors were in for quite a shock when Tamara von Ouhl showed up to participate in the day's activities with an unusual ferret.

Photo courtesy of Rebecca Stout

Patty Asheuer's Santa Troll is one of the more outrageous ferret stories I've heard.

"I washed one of my dark-eyed whites to ready it for the whitest ferret contest," von Ouhl said. "Sadly, I rinsed with a [hair] rinse that was to take out the yellow/brassy color. Well, I ended up with a pretty, pastel-purple ferret. Lucky it was around Easter! Make sure any rinses are for animal use, not for people."

Sometimes, it's not the ferret, but the owner that can be quite surprising. When asked about her favorite memory, Francine Prager, a Florida resident and board member of the International Ferret Congress, brings up a rather interesting memory. "One of the things that stands out was Dr. Karen Purcell belly dancing at our [IFC] reception and then taking everyone into the bar where she got a group of attendees, including veterinarians, to belly dance with her."

Ferret people have a wicked sense of humor, and many of their jokes are quite random. Barbara Clay, director of Rocky's Ferret Rescue and Shelter in Parkton, Maryland, recounts a wild story that occurred years ago a day after the shelter's Oktoberfest. It happened when a group of attendees walked to the river at the back of the farm that's home to the ferret shelter to relax.

"A beloved ferret community member, Millie Walls, arrived in a guerilla costume," Clay said. "I had no idea who it was, and I ran from her. She scared me so!" The memory is bittersweet to Clay, however, because Walls died a few years ago. "She is with us in spirit at these events, and lets her presence be known," Clay said. The year after Walls passed, a double rainbow appeared over the Oktoberfest. "We all took it as a sign from our Millie!"

The most outrageous story ever might be from Patty Asheuer of Pennsylvania. Asheuer is a member of the American Ferret Association and was on her way to help put on the AFA's Winter Nationals ferret show one year when she was stopped by the police. Nothing too strange about that, except for the fact that Asheuer had the Santa Troll and eight reinferrets on the roof of her truck. Santa Troll? Reinferrets? Asheuer explains.

A friend made the Santa Troll about 10 years ago. Asheuer now owns Santa Troll. "He goes on the road with me for the holidays. I put him on top of my Explorer Thanksgiving weekend, and he stays on until New Year's. I get so many looks; it's hilarious. Even the truck drivers honk their horns when I'm on the road. I'm trying to figure a way to put lights or Santa hats on them. That's Santa Troll and the eight reinferrets."

The stories can be silly, crazy or bittersweet, but nothing quite compares to the bond that is created among ferret lovers. I always refer to ferret people as my extended family. They understand what I hold dearest to my heart — the love of animals ... the love of ferrets. We are a different kind of people and, ironically, our personalities often reflect ferret traits. Fun, impulsive, creative, passionate, eccentric, energetic, loving, playful and insanely crazy are among the many adjectives some people use to describe ferret lovers. Among each other, we can be ourselves and be accepted unconditionally.