

Linda Iroff Bids Farewell To The International Ferret Congress

Retirement from the International Ferret Congress approaches for Linda Iroff, co-director and treasurer.

By Marylou Zarbock

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Linda Iroff, left, and Rebecca Stout are all smiles, even though someone mysteriously left fake animal poop at Iroff's table during the Ferret Symposium in Pittsburgh.

Attendees of the ferret symposium in Pittsburgh on November 7 to 9, 2008, were treated to many amazing moments and surprises during the event. Perhaps one of the biggest surprises was the announcement that Linda Iroff is retiring from the International Ferret Congress at the end of the year.

As a co-director of the International Ferret Congress, Iroff seems to be everywhere at these events. Always on hand to smooth the way, she's a soft-spoken person who gets things done — and she's got a wicked good sense of humor. Need someone to act like a ferret? Call on her! Although Iroff never volunteered for anything like the IFC before, she and other IFC committee members have done amazing things for ferrets.

How It Began

The first ferret symposium was organized by Randy Belair and took place in Toronto in 2000; it marked the first time ferret owners got together just to learn about ferrets, according to Iroff. It wasn't a show and it was more than a meeting; Iroff and many others attended. Afterward, Iroff said she talked with other attendees about how wonderful it was. They all wanted to do it again. Those people included Bill Gruber, Judy Cooke, Shelby Kimura, Troy Lynn Eckart and Betty Janner. They formed a committee to make it happen.

At the start, they called themselves the International Ferret Symposium Committee. In February of 2002, Las Vegas was the setting for this organization's first ferret event. People who attended loved it. "We decided it was pretty cool and wanted to keep doing it," Iroff said.

Julie Fossa, Judy Cooke and Iroff incorporated the International Ferret Congress in April 2002. "Basically, we've been going ever since," Iroff said. Several years have passed since then, and quite a lot of work has been done. "I've been doing this for about eight years now, and it's time to rest."

Iroff's duties have been pretty much the same since the beginning. She is the IFC treasurer and one of the main organizers. Other duties include being registrar for events and hosting the IFC website.

Moving Toward Retirement

"I've known since the summer that I was going to be leaving," Iroff announced it to the committee and has been passing some of her duties to others so they get experience doing it before the next symposium. Arranging for the continuing education credits for veterinarians who attend and getting the T-shirts made are just two duties that were handled by others instead of Iroff at the most recent symposium.

"I expect the IFC to continue as before," Iroff said. She noted that discussions are ongoing regarding a replacement.

"I don't plan to entirely disappear," Iroff said. "I do not plan to miss April and Travis' wedding!" April Pietriacovo and Travis Livieri got engaged at the Pittsburgh symposium and are discussing possibly being married at a future symposium. They met in 2005 at a previous IFC event.

Iroff said that one of the most disheartening aspects of putting on a symposium comes immediately after one ends. After going through all the tremendous work and stress required to make the event a success, she just wants to rest afterward.

People who attended, however, are so excited that they immediately want to know when and where the next symposium will occur. Iroff understands that burst of excitement, she felt it herself after the Toronto event; but, as an organizer of the event, her excitement is tempered with fatigue.