

Sally & I have only been CFA exhibitors for three years. It was never our intention to do such a thing, but when we made the decision to do it, we were hooked! Many thanks to our breeders, Carol Johnson DVM, Phd, Newbury Park, CA. and Virginia Wight MD, of Macon, GA. They, next to Cinnamon (Mericat Macon Cinnamon Rolls) are the real heroes. Without their guidance, advice, and support, we could have never done this.

We first met Cinnamon, a gorgeous red tabby American Shorthair male kitten, at the Chicago Show, February 18, 2006. He was just four months old and had already been in two shows. It was love at first sight when Donna Andrews of Atlanta, Ga. first brought him over to our benching cage and said, "Here he is!!" That weekend we could have sold him a hundred times. Every passerby wanted him and one child said, "He looks like candy!" Flying home to Wichita was a challenge because, "I hated my new carrier!" "All I want to do is get in my new Mom and Dad's lap and wrap myself around their arms." Just like a baby on the plane...that's all Cinnamon wanted...for us to just hold him. Five weeks later Cinnamon finished in all six rings at the Amarillo show and was third highest scoring kitten!! He also received several BEST, 2nd Best and 3rd Best Kitten awards in previous shows. Cinnamon was so proud...he wanted to ride up front with Mom and Dad and sleep in their laps during the 6½-hour drive home from Amarillo. That excitement was short lived. The following week, we noticed Cinnamon running around the house with labored breathing. His little chest would retract in and out with each breath. We rushed him to the Vet only to find out via CXR that his left lung was completely full of fluid. They tapped the pleural space for 150 ml of fluid! "Wow, I can breathe and eat, now!!" All signs pointed to FIP (Feline Infectious Peritonitis) caused by a corona virus, but the diagnosis was never conclusive. Cinnamon saw four different Vets (one at K-State) and we consulted with three additional Vets. We were devastated and heartbroken. We shed more tears than we care to admit.

Some of the best advice we received from any veterinarian, was Niels Pederson DVM, UC Davis, CA...the world's foremost authority on animal viruses. In one of his five emails to us, he said to give Cinnamon a good diet, minimize stress, lots of tender loving care and "miracles do happen!" In his career, he said he had seen three "self-cures." Diane Addie DVM, in England has devoted her entire life's work to finding a cure for FIP, which she hopes to accomplish within the next 10 years.

Determined, we decided to fight for Cinnamon's life, just as we would for our own child's life. Against all odds, we decided to pray---not think about praying---but really pray and take God and the promises of His Word seriously. The Bible says life and death are in the power of the tongue, so we would speak God's promises over Cinnamon's little body. He would jump up on my (Phil's) desk and flop down, right in the middle of the bills. Who could resist such a darling boy? And I would lay my hands on him and pray and cry, too. Just like the man who said to Jesus about his sick daughter, "Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief." One of our favorite verses to claim for Cinnamon was Ps. 107:19, 20. "They cried unto the Lord in their trouble and he delivered them from their distress. He sent forth His Word and healed them and delivered them from destruction." Every 10-14 days Cinnamon would go to the Vet for a thoracentesis. He was a real trooper through it all. He was never afraid to go to the Vet and would lie perfectly still on our laps the 18 mile drive.

When we first got Cinnamon, he learned his name within two weeks and was accepted by the rest of the Yust feline household in less than one week. He navigated our house as if he had always lived there and never gave us any of the usual kitten trouble like jumping up on the counters or tables or other naughties that come with kittenhood. He always knew exactly what he wanted to do and the other family members never pushed him around. Cinnamon was very strong, muscled, and broad like a bulldog from the front. His tabby markings were to perfection and he greatly resembled his older brother, GC, National Winner, Mericat Macon Bisquits.

Every day Cinnamon loved to run, jump, and play. He let us know that he loved life, too, and was determined to live. He was at his peak weight of 9.6 lbs. by the end of June and grew those first three months. In July, he developed a uveitis in his right eye and it was so painful, it interfered with eating. Before we could get a handle on it, he lost weight down to 8.6 lbs. Feldene, a Cox 2 inhibitor, made a big difference and he could once again eat better. Cinnamon was on several medications daily and never minded taking all those pills.

Our pet sitters, Jennifer Stiles and Courtney Franklin, were outstanding and took excellent care of Cinnamon while we were out of town. They even took Cinnamon to many of his Vet visits, which helped a lot, especially when we had to be to work so early in the mornings.

Most people and Vets would have given up on Cinnamon, as there is no cure for FIP. However, we believed he had just as much a right to live as anyone else. The last week of his life we kept him in our bedroom at night...he was never any trouble. He returned all the love he received and more! We were thankful he made it to his first Birthday on October 4. We really believed that if he made it to the 6-month mark, he would survive, but that did not happen.

"Cinnamon, you will forever live in our hearts and Sage, Trudy and Ellie's, also. They loved you dearly and were your soul mates. We all miss you every day and look forward to the day when we will see you...again...in our heavenly home."

Love Always...Mom and Dad!