

## The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals and The Canine Health Information Center

*Sue LeMieux*

The Orthopedic Foundation for Animals celebrated its 40th Anniversary in 2006. Since its inception, the OFA has evolved from an organization whose focus was hip dysplasia to one that collects and disseminates information on a broad range of orthopedic and genetic diseases in animals, and in addition, receives funds and makes grants to finance research in many areas of animal health. The OFA also establishes programs designed to lower the incidence of orthopedic and genetic disease, including the groundbreaking Canine Health Information Center, or CHIC, a program with enormous potential to help change the future course of genetic disease in dogs. Regular DR contributor Sue LeMieux investigated the OFA and CHIC in a two-part series.

### How It All Began

John Olin, a well-known industrialist, philanthropist and sportsman, had a great love for sporting dogs. He founded Nilo Kennels in East Alton, Ill., in 1952, where he bred, trained and campaigned many outstanding representatives of different sporting breeds.

A man of vision and action, when Olin recognized that hip dysplasia was a common and debilitating disease in many breeds he gathered a group of individuals together to discuss ways to eliminate the disease. The initial meeting, held in the fall of 1964 and attended by representatives of the Golden Retriever Club of America, the German Shepherd Dog Club of America and the veterinary community, led to the organization of the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals, today commonly known as OFA.

According to Dr. E. L. Kozicky, who attended that first meeting and is a member of the current OFA board, "The subjects discussed at the first meeting were genetics, environmental stresses, nutrition, infectious agents, and hormones. At first the committee thought that the primary effort would be toward genetics." A second meeting was held at the Cornell Club in New York on Oct. 12, 1965. All but two who were at the first meeting were present, along with four new faces, one of them then-AKC Executive Vice President Alfred Dick. A third meeting was held at the Spring Club in New York in March 1966. Members of the group wanted to move in three directions: basic research through biochemistry, research on hormonal relationships, and clinical research and the development of a Control Registry for hip dysplasia. In Dr. Kozicky's opinion, all three approaches were incorporated.

The OFA bylaws were written by attorney Walter J. Hartman from the firm of Isham, Lincoln and Beal in Chicago, and approved by John Caruthers, legal counsel for the Olin Corp. OFA was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation by the state of Illinois on July 7, 1966, and that status has remained a hallmark of the organization. OFA's current CEO, Eddie Dziuk, stresses, "We take our non-profit status very seriously. Funds generated at OFA are donated to canine health research initiatives and scholarships through organizations such as the AKC Canine Health Foundation and the Morris Animal Foundation. We are especially comfortable with these two organizations because of their scientific peer review processes and track records."

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