Autobiographical Notes

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Animal Rights

Perhaps my heritage has something to do with my involvement in the the animal rights movement. I like to think so, even though my ancestors were not involved in trying to improve the world for animals.

I see my concern for animals and their rights as coming from a tradition of a sense of justice and respect for others ---justice in the sense of fair and just dealings with others.

For example, Jefferson Burr Kenyon, a Baptist preacher, and his wife Rhoda Callender Kenyon, my great grandparents, were basically law-abiding people. But they chose to break laws and risk their lives out of concern for the rights of others. They were operators of the Underground Railroad, helping escaping slaves on their terrifying journey through Pennsylvania, New York, and on into Canada. I

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am proud to be descended from them. My interest in the history of the abolitionist movement probably stems from the oral history of their involvement I heard as a child.

Another ancestor, Samuel Callender, was one of sixty Virginians who served as George Washington's body guard in the Revolutionary War and also helped sew together the tattered uniforms of the troops at Valley Forge. I am opposed to war, but hold Samuel Callender's memory in deep respect. He was disowned by his Tory father, who never again spoke to him or permitted him to set foot on the family property.

My own parents overcame harsh religious opposition in order to marry. From them I inherited a strong dislike for prejudice and a natural inclination to take the side of the hurt, oppressed or shunned.

My parents were very fond of animals and had respect for them. When we were children, animals were not part of our family, because my mother believed that animals had special needs and young children could not be expected fully to understand them. Among the people she admired were George Bernard Shaw and Irene and Vernon Castle, incidentally.

My first awareness of animal suffering was at the age of four or five. My mother took me to a zoo. As we entered we saw a large white rabbit, transfixed with fear, in a cage with a snake. Within a second or two the snake began swallowing the rabbit. As we left in horror we could see the outline of the rabbit's body as the snake was swallowing it. My mother never again entered a zoo. I did, many years later, only to collect evidence for a legal case the International Society for Animal Rights, Inc., pressed against the City of New York, charging

numerous violations of the state anti-cruelty statutes in the City's operation of its three zoos.

I was never discouraged by my parents from taking a stand. The first stand I recall taking about an animal was in the tenth grade when the biology teacher announced that we would dissect calves' eyes. I refused and walked out and with my parents' encouragement substituted French for biology. (I hadn't yet made the connection about the food we all ate.) Not long afterward I found a Hearst newspaper on a train and learned for the first time about vivisection. I was horrified, having no knowledge that such a practice existed in a world that for me was loving, kind and somewhat sheltered.

Years passed, and I recall no event during those years concerning animals. I went to New York to study drama, soon deciding that either I had no talent or was too shy to persevere long enough to find out if I did.

I went job hunting and was offered the opportunity to become Publicity Director for a Park Avenue Hotel.

In that job I met people prominent in many fields, nationally and internationally. In my spare time I served as social secretary to two matrons who lived in the hotel when in New York. I recall one of them inviting me to a fox hunt on her estate in Virginia. I declined, shocked that someone who seemed kind and gentle could be involved in such a thing.

Media people were kind and helpful, knowing, because I told them, that the publicity field was new to me. Before long I was offered two additional accounts. I was the envy of my friends. But I desperately wanted to escape

the career in which I found myself, knowing there were serious things to be done in the world---but I didn't know what I should be doing.

I made occasional trips home to Pennsylvania. On one visit I took a walk and for the first time saw the local animal shelter. It was

closed that Sunday more than 30 years ago but I looked in and was appalled at the conditions. My involvement in the movement began that day.

A few years later I went to the kill floors of slaughterhouses from New York to the western coast of Canada to observe slaughter methods in order to be able to testify for "humane" slaughter legislation. It was painfully apparent to me that "humane" slaughter was a misnomer. Although I stopped eating meat after the first kill floor, I continued to work for "humane" slaughter because at that time--much less enlightened than the present time--it seemed all that one could do. The American Meat Institute had convinced Americans that they had to eat meat to survive.

My consciousness kept expanding. I went to laboratories in the middle of the night. I went on escorted tours of laboratories and dealer compounds with a tiny camera and a concealed tape recorder. I read research journals. I went to airports to inspect shipments of 1700 monkeys per plane and counted the dead and dying in order to file a protest with Customs, the only agency that had any applicable

regulation. The airlines thwarted that by throwing dead and dying overboard before the planes landed.

Although I was living in New York when I saw the shelter while visiting at home in Pennsylvania, I began doing volunteer publicity fundraising for the humane society on trips from New York. My involvement led to the American Humane Association inviting me to join the staff. I delayed a year and finally accepted the position, leaving New York and moving to Denver.

In less than a year I left the AHA to join Fred Myers and Larry Andrews, also former AHA staff members, in founding the National Humane Society (now The Humane Society of the United States).

While working for HSUS I became aware that I rarely met a fellow Roman Catholic involved in helping animals. A friend gave me the journal of the British Catholic Study Circle for Animal Welfare. I wrote two of its leaders, Dom Abrose Agius, O.S.M., and Father Basil Wrighton. With the naivete of the child in a Paul Gallico book who decided that the Pope should bless his ailing donkey, Violetta, I suggested to the two priests that we go to Rome to present a case for the animals and their right to better treatment.

I got off the plane in London, met the priests for the first time in the airport and off we went to Rome. Although we bent a number of ears on high-ranking Vatican heads, needless to say we were not accorded a personal audience with the Pope.

When I returned to the U. S., while still working for HSUS and living in Washington, where HSUS was established, I began forming

the National Catholic Society for Animal Welfare in my spare time. It was a lay, not official Church, organization and one bent on improving the Catholic Church's attitude to animals. A fairly deep study of Thomas Aquinas and talks with theologians brought the sobering thought that this was no easy task.

Trying to combine working for HSUS days and for the NCSAW evenings and week-ends became too much. And I found that the HSUS philosophy was not the one I had thought it would be. I left to work full-time for the NCSAW. Many people of all faiths and of none were enthusiastic about the organization because people concerned about animals noted a general lack of religious involvement in the movement.

When Pope John XXIII convened the Vatican Council "to open a window and let some air in," the NCSAW saw the Council as a possible means of bringing about a more enlightened attitude toward animals.

In 1961 Pope John gave a special audience to Monsignor Leroy McWilliams and Father Ambrose and gave his Apostolic blessing to the NCSAW.

We began organizing appeals to the Vatican during the Council from humane organizations in numerous parts of the world, including non-Christian countries. All beseeched the Vatican to urge more instruction on the humane treatment of animals, with specific pleas for an end to bullfighting in Catholic countries.

Our lobbying of the Vatican Sacred Congregation of the Council, one of the major offices of the Roman Curia through which the Pope governs the Church moved the Vatican to

sponsor a symposium on animals, with the proceedings to be published and made available in annals. The project, for which there were high hopes, never came to fruition, however.

Our lobbying efforts were not confined to the Vatican. We sought and obtained interviews with theologians and prelates who played major roles in Vatican Council I and II.

During a conference with a Jesuit theologian who was an adviser to the Council I suggested that an ancient Papal encyclical which unequivocally condemned bullfighting should be enforced. He became very angry and shouted, "You'll create a schism in Spain if you have your way!"

I sought an interview with a prominent Cardinal when he returned to the U. S. from Vatican II in an effort to enlist his help with our appeals on behalf of animals. He was very cranky, remarked that he was much worse off than the animals I was talking about and suggested that we needed to speak to all of society rather than to the Church.

He was so rude and unmoved by the suffering I had described that I got up from the table at which we were seated and started to storm out. He asked where I was going, and I replied that I was leaving. I struggled to open, and then slam, a heavy ornate iron door. A timid nun emerged to ask if she could help me in any way. I said, "Yes, please slam the door!" And I left. I later learned that the Cardinal's personal effort at the Vatican Council was to achieve an improved attitude by the Vatican toward Jews, and he had come home feeling quite discouraged.

My naive hope that the Catholic Church could be persuaded to show some compassion for animals was being swept away by a number of

harsh realities. The most emaciated animals I saw in all of Rome lived on the Vatican grounds, where they were tolerated for keeping the mouse and rat population under control. The pitiful condition of the cats seemed symbolic. Cardinals were bedecked in ermine for the most solemn Church ceremonials. Franciscans raised mini-pigs for laboratories. And of course I toured vivisection laboratories operated by Catholic institutions.

I remember remarking to my father that I wanted to obtain a copy of an audit report of the Vatican's holdings to find out where its money was invested. He thought it was an excellent idea, asked if I thought I were Napoleon and wished me well. Needless to say, I never got the audit report, and neither did a leading theologian who years later started on the same mission ever obtain one.

Closer to home than the Vatican, the NCSAW was making waves. The Archbishop of Washington was displeased by the NCSAW's publications on vivisection and demanded that all publications be submitted in advance for censorship. I went right on writing and publishing "How the NIH Spends Your Tax Money." The Archbishop took to phoning the office, leaving word with anyone who answered that "that woman is to stop publishing those materials!"

Meanwhile the Society's official publication, which contained articles on saints and animals and essays by Dom Abrose, who had moved from England to the United States to be actively involved in the Society, and by Monsignor Leroy McWilliams, the Society's first president, was submitted for censorship and each time was approved. The series on

NIH, not having to do with Catholic teaching, did not, in my judgment, have to be submitted to censorship. The taxpayers had the right to know how their money was being spent to torture animals and religion had nothing to do with that.

The NCSAW never gave in to the censorship demands and never held back in its attacks on the exploitation and suffering imposed on animals. We did add a subtitle to the name to make clear that the organization was a lay organization supported by people of all faiths.

The difficulty of the mission we had undertaken was very obvious by the time I made a speech to an international meeting in Spain in which I said that I believed it was not only futile but dangerous to try to involve the Church actively in the animal field, noting other causes for social justice in which the Church either never took part or joined in only after the public's sense of decency and moral values had been aroused. As I spoke, Spanish officials, military and clergy took off the earphones through which they heard the speech translated into their languages and put down the earphones with contempt. An American in the audience later said I was fortunate not to have been arrested as other Americans had been for less provocative speeches on other topics at conferences in Spain.

In 1972 the NCSAW became the Society for Animal Rights, Inc. The name was changed because the organization had broadened its purpose, and the original name was no longer relevant to its purpose. The Board was unanimous in its agreement that animals have natural rights and that working to achieve recognition of their rights was (and is) its goal. To the best of my knowledge, the Society

for Animal Rights (now the International Society for Animal Rights) was the first organization in the world to use the term "animal rights" in its name and as its purpose.

In changing the name and purpose of the organization we were reaching the same conclusion that the Cardinal had: we should speak to all of society, rather than to the Church.

I am proud that ISAR brought about the use of the term animal rights by the media. The first such usage was by The New York Times on July 19, 1976 in reference to ISAR's efforts to end experiments on cats at the American Museum of Natural History. In a by-line story reporter Nathaniel Sheppard, Jr. referred to the Society for Animal Rights and in the course of the story to the "animal rights groups." It was a milestone and a big improvement over such inappropriate terms as "animal lovers" and other such descriptions by media representatives.

It was the publication of Peter Singer's Animal Liberation in 1975, however, that launched the animal rights movement, a movement that was sorely needed to address the needs and rights of all animals. The animal rights movement does not suffer from the prejudices and sentimentality of the humane movement, in which I never felt quite comfortable.

The animal rights movement, built on a strong foundation provided philosophers such as Tom Regan, Peter Singer, Steve Sapontzis and others, is commanding respect and is making progress even though we may still be greatly outnumbered.

I am convinced that animals rights is an idea whose time has come and that the movement

will continue to advance, even though the pace can never be fast enough to suit any of us.

Henry Salt's Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress is totally relevant today, nearly a hundred years after it was written. Salt was ahead of his time. Is the current movement ahead of its time as well? I don't think so, partly because some progress is being made to publicize and correct injustices to human animals and in the process the public's consciousness is being made somewhat more sensitive. That in turn should make growing numbers of the public more sensitive to the needs and rights of nonhuman animals.

Media coverage of abused children, battered wives, abused aged, homeless people and other issues is a rather recent development and should make more people aware of the complete defenselessness of nonhuman animals in the face of the exploitation and abuse to which they are routinely subjected.

Our movement's needs are great. We need to enlist more people who, once enlightened, will join the effort for animal rights. We need more leaders and strategists.

We need to develop political sophistication, so that animal rights can show its strength by electing or defeating candidates. We need a presence in the building of candidates' platforms and programs. We need a White House Conference on Animal Rights. It would probably be of very limited, if any value in achieving any meaningful reforms in legislation, but it would be a valuable vehicle for bringing additional status and respect to the movement.

We need media committees to encourage

television writers and producers to include animal rights messages in scripts; to give praise when it is merited and to object when objections are in order, to encourage the print media to publish more investigative reports on the exploitation of animals and otherwise to have a presence in the powerful media world. Other causes have such representation.

We need a symposium on animal rights similar to the one held ten years ago at Trinity College, Cambridge. It was a great privilege to join with others there in signing A Declaration Against Speciesism:

Inasmuch as we believe that there is ample evidence that many other species are capable of feeling, we condemn totally the infliction of suffering upon our brother animals, and the curtailment of their enjoyment, unless it be necessary for their own individual benefit.

We do not accept that a difference in species alone (any more than a difference in race) can justify wanton exploitation or oppression in the name of science or sport, or for food, commercial profit or other human gain.

We believe in the evolutionary and moral kinship of all animals and we declare our belief that all sentient creatures have rights to life, liberty and the quest for happiness.

We call for the protection of these rights.

I find the people who have joined and are joining the animal rights movement to be deeply impressive. They live by their beliefs. They are selfless, and they are bright and determined. Such strength and character must, if there is any justice in an unjust world, help the movement to grow and prosper. And so I am hopeful, especially so

because I have seen the transition from the humane movement to a more profound animal rights movement.

When the Animal Welfare Act was before President Lyndon Johnson for signing into law, I led a demonstration in front of the White House, urging a veto of the bill because it was such an outrageous sell-out of animals. The enactment of that law was as great a set-back as the British (well-named) Cruelty to Animals Act of 1987.

Demonstrating in front of the White House for animals in the 1960's was considered very extreme, even by people in the humane movement.

The changing times were evident when 41 of us were arrested November 9, 1987 in a demonstration led by In Defense of Animals in front of the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, Maryland to protest the use of animals in psychological experiments.

I'm still a volunteer for that humane society whose shelter I happened to see more than thirty years ago. Recently I completed raising more than \$1 million for its building program, consisting of a Neuter Clinic (because I wouldn't help build a shelter unless a Neuter Clinic was built and functioning first) followed by a shelter, Administration Building and Adoptin Center.

That walk by the shelter so many years ago changed the course of my life. Once aware of the suffering of animals I doubt that anyone who becomes involved in the struggle for animal rights is ever satisfied with the progress one makes.

On the positive side, however, I am proud to be part of ISAR, which has a track record and is known for taking a stand without compromise.

ISAR has had some notable achievements, serving as a catalyst in repealing laws permitting or requiring the use of shelter/pound animals for experimentation. Success was achieved in ISAR's pioneering effort to repeal New York State's Metcalf-Hatch Act and to repeal Connecticut's similar statute. A law forbidding the use of shelter animals for experimental purposes was enacted in New Jersey, stronghold of the pharmaceutical industry, through ISAR's determined campaigning. And ISAR took a leading part in the campaign to repeal the Los Angeles ordinance which for so long had condemned shelter/pound animals to laboratories.

I'm proud of the pioneering work ISAR has done in the courts for birds and animal captives in zoos, against dealers in animals for laboratories and for animals destined for slaughter. We may not have prevailed in each case, but we did win some, and we also achieved standing and other significant legal principles which serve as precedents.

Literature is important to any movement for justice. ISAR has published two books: a reprint of Henry Salt's Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress and recently, Tom Regan's The Struggle for Animal Rights. We want to do much more in every way possible to prevent the exploitation of animals and to enlist public support for animal rights.

I'm grateful to be part of the animal rights movement and thankful that the movement now exists. Without it there would be little hope that the animals would ever be freed from all the forms of suffering to which they are so endlessly subjected. They are as enslaved and defenseless as human slaves were in this and other countries in the last century. I have hope that by the next century the liberation of animals will have begun. It will take a moral revolution.

Jim Barter, *Animals*: 1419
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