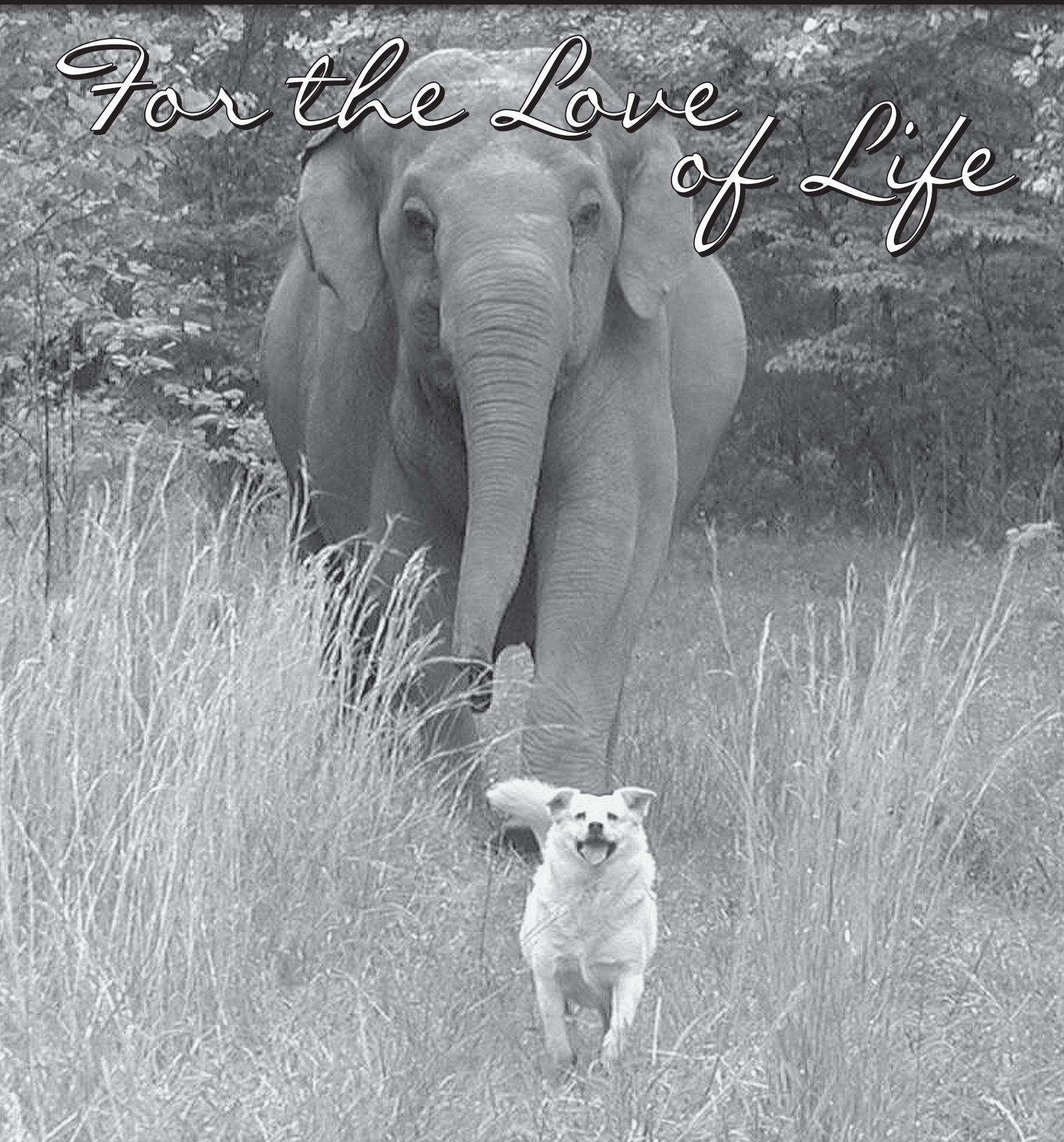


For the Love of Life



Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened.

—ANATOLE FRANCE

For the Love of Life

THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE, USA

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give a fair consideration of views.* —The Editor

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PROTECTIVE OF HER DEAR ELEPHANT FRIEND. (SEE THEIR STORY ON PAGE 12.)

From the President's Desk BY NANCY SECREST

“A union of those who love in the service of all that suffers,” the motto of the Theosophical Order of Service, includes love and service to animals.

Some of us serve animals in professional capacities as veterinarians, trainers, groomers or providers of animal care products. Others advocate for animal rights. Many of us are vegetarians, thereby practicing ahimsa (harmlessness) toward animals in our daily lives. Some of us have joined the TOS' animal healing network sending healing thoughts and intentions to sick or injured animals. Those of us who share our lives with pets express publicly our special bond to those animals, accepting responsibility for our pets' care and well-being. All of our pets age just as we do. With age comes thoughts of death and end of life care.

My kitty, Sylvester, is nearly eighteen years old. That's about a hundred in people years. Last week Sylvester scratched his eye. He has an allergy. To what, we have never been able to determine, but it causes him to itch. He takes meds for the itch, steroids, which help, but he still scratches sometimes. Normally, he aims for his neck. This time he missed.

His eye became squinty and runny, and we called the vet. Let me rephrase that. We tried to call the vet. After several phone calls, a visit to his now vacant office and questioning another nearby vet, we learned that Sylvester's veterinarian had retired. Some notice and a return of medical records would have been nice, but oh well. The other vet was happy to take over, but had no available appointments for three days, and suggested the animal emergency hospital.

There we learned that Sylvester has an ulcer on his cornea. The ER treated that, and sent us home with meds, a very stylish funnel shaped collar that Sylvester just loved (yes, that's sarcasm), and the knowledge that he has a heart murmur. A few days later, the new vet followed up on the eye injury. She also took blood, urine and x-rays to assess kitty's current state of health.

Sylvester was born a feral kitten, part of a litter of three, from a mother who was most likely born feral herself. His mama regularly prowled our neighborhood stalking the mice and birds that kept her alive and avoiding close encounters of the human kind. A rather ugly cat, her mottled gray and brown coat looked like vomit. Her half missing left ear attested to the rough life she lived. We first met her and her litter when she moved them under our



TOS PRESIDENT
NANCY SECREST

house. Kitty mamas tend to move their litters several times to keep them safe from predators. I liked watching the antics of the kittens while they chased butterflies or played together, and her little training sessions with her brood. I put out food to keep her from moving them again. It worked.

One day she led the kittens to a wood pile next door for a mouse hunting lesson no doubt. You may not know that kittens must be taught how to hunt by their mothers. They are not born with the knowledge. One kitten, whom we named Abby (later changed to Abner), lagged behind. He stopped at the fence, his mama and his litter mates nowhere in sight. What a set of lungs! He mewed and mewed until mama came back. She climbed over the fence, picked him up in her mouth and returned to the wood pile to continue the kittens' lesson. They were medium haired domestics by breed with soft, shiny fur. The litter included Abner who was black and white, a gold tabby female whom we named Precious, and Sylvester. Although Sylvester is a very elegant tuxedo cat with white boots and mittens, he proved to be the wildest of the three.

I knew they were weaned when the kittens attempted to eat from their mother's dish. Sylvester, the alpha male, batted the other two away from the food. The little upstart tried the same with his mother, and found himself rolling across the porch like a ball of yarn. He didn't try that again.

One day Precious stood up on her hind legs, leaned against our screen door, looked in and sneezed. With that sneeze and the fact that they were weaned, I decided to try to catch the kittens. I didn't think that much could be done for their mother. She was just too wild, but the kittens had a chance at a good life in the care of people.

I rigged a trap inside the house, baited it with food, opened the door and waited out of sight. It didn't take long for the food to attract Precious. Once she was inside, I closed the trap. I'd already set up a room with a litter box and food where I let her out, closed the door and left her.

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She went nuts, literally climbing the walls and running around and around the room looking for an escape. The next day, I entered the room, threw a towel over her so that I could pick her up and cradled her in my lap, rocking and singing to her for about an hour before she calmed down. That was it. She was tame. We visited the vet whose treatment for her respiratory infection probably saved her life.

Abner was next, tamed within a day. Sylvester proved more challenging. He was lured into the trap and caught much like the other kittens had been, but he escaped. He did his wall climbing in our living room, and when my husband attempted to get him down from the top of our drapes blood was spilled, and it wasn't Sylvester's. Finally, Sylvester ran down and hid under a cabinet for about five days until he tentatively wandered out on his own. We pretended to ignore him for a while. Then, I wrapped him up in a towel so he couldn't scratch me and did the rocking and singing thing until he was calm in my lap. While Precious and Abner were fine with all people once tamed, it was years before Sylvester would allow anyone but my husband or me to touch him. He hid whenever we had company until just a few years ago. The vet was an exception. He must have had some special vibe that Sylvester felt and trusted.

The vet had suggested that I try to catch the mama cat in the same way that I had caught her kittens. He said that if I did, he would spay her for free, and then I could return her to "the wild" as it is useless to try to tame an adult cat that is truly feral. She was a tough little queen, but I did manage to

trap her, this time using a cat carrier so that she could be transported safely. I later learned that most vets adhere to a spay/neuter and release program for feral cats in an attempt to reduce the cat population.

Precious and Sylvester continued to live with us. Abner went to my mother-in-law who gave her to a



NANCY AND SYLVESTER

friend in need of a companion. She introduced Abner to the cat show world where he won prizes. Precious went missing a number of years ago. A little neighbor boy found her collar about two blocks away and returned it to us, but we never saw her again. Sylvester has been with us for eighteen years. Other than the allergy and some tooth extractions, his health has been perfect, until now.

His new vet confirmed the heart murmur and explained that it could mean heart disease or a problem with

a valve. He may need to be referred to a kitty cardiologist. The results of the blood work, urine testing and x-rays are in too. He has some arthritis, no surprise at his age, his aorta is misshapen and one kidney is enlarged. The vet suspects kidney disease, but it could just be an infection that can be treated and cured. We'll know which by the end of this week. Regardless, all of the medical attention focused on Sylvester this week has made me think of our animals, our pets, and their end of life care.

Animals cannot give advance health directives. They must rely on us to act in their best interests. Animals are often euthanized if their owners feel their pets are suffering too much, or if treatment has become cost prohibitive. The latter is an unfortunate but realistic fact of life that pet owners must sometimes face. Most of us would go to great lengths to preserve the health of our pets, but many cannot afford the costs once really serious illness is diagnosed. Pet insurance does exist, but Obama Care did not reach into the animal world and, unfortunately for Sylvester, those with preexisting conditions are excluded from applying.

So, what then? Will treatment for Sylvester stop when we can no longer afford it? If we do need to stop treatment, will he suffer, and if he is suffering, will we opt to end his life or choose to ease any pain and allow him to die naturally? These questions came to me while I held Sylvester in my lap. I can only hope that when his end does come, it will be quiet and pain free. Perhaps he'll be sitting in my lap purring, being petted and thinking about chasing butterflies. **TOS**

The Reason Why

BY RADHA BURNIER

The Theosophical Society imposes no restrictions on the lives of its members; they are free to adopt any lifestyle that suits them. The obligations members take upon themselves, voluntarily of course, are indicated by the Objects of the Society to which they subscribe while enrolling themselves.

A question occasionally arises about the dietary norm adopted at theosophical centres, conferences, summer schools and so forth, where only vegetarian food is made available. Now and again a member remarks that HPB herself was not a vegetarian, implying that Theosophy and vegetarianism are unconnected.

Theosophy, however, is the recognition, followed later by full realisation, of life as one indivisible whole. For the smallest as well as the greatest forms of life, there exists only one form of sustenance and energy, by whatever name it is called. The unitary nature of life is the basis, not only of the First Object of the Society, namely universal brotherhood without any distinctions whatsoever, but also of the other Objects. The heart of every great religion is unity which when lived, is love. All the profounder perceptions in the fields of philosophy and science are also converging towards this central truth. And as each person enters deeply into his or her own consciousness and understands how Nature works, the truth and beauty of the unbreakable whole illumines human consciousness.

Therefore, when arrangements are made for conferences and other events on behalf of the Society, in accordance with the foundational principle of the

oneness and sacredness of all life, food that causes the least injury and harm is chosen.

In *The Key to Theosophy* HPB says: When the flesh of animals is assimilated by man as food, it imparts to him physiologically, some of the



RADHA BURNIER

characteristics of the animal it came from. Moreover, occult science teaches and proves this to its students by ocular demonstration, showing also that this 'coarsening' or 'animalising' effect on man is greatest from the flesh of the larger animals, less for birds, still less for fish and other cold-blooded animals, and least of all when he eats only vegetables.

The enquirer retorts, "Then he had better not eat at all?" to which the answer of the Theosophist is stated by HPB:

If he could live without eating, of course it would. But as the matter stands, he must eat to live, and so we advise really earnest students to eat such food as will least clog and weight their brains and bodies, and will have

the smallest effect in hampering and retarding their inner faculties and powers.

There is thus good reason why at officially organised gatherings of the Society, the food provided is vegetarian. The minimum harm is done to other creatures; and respect for life — the life which is not 'ours' or 'theirs', but one — is maintained. Plants do not have a nervous system and do not suffer pain in the same way as more evolved creatures which do have it. One day, if some other form of food derived from minerals, or even air, is at hand, that may be preferred at officially organised functions! Oriental traditions suggest this possibility.

All the while, individual members remain free to follow their own course in diet, for a lifestyle based on unity must be the result of intellectual conviction or intuitive realisation and not of dogma.

Conditions were very different in HPB's days. The enormous cruelty of intensive farming and profit-oriented genetic manipulation did not exist then, nor did the vast and urgent ecological issue of expending grain and water on breeding animals as a business. The intellectual reasons against systematic practice of cruelty, ecological imprudence and wrong notions about health care are strong. It is to be hoped that increasingly TS members and others will come to intuitive recognition of the unity of all life as the only sure basis of universally beneficent action. **TOS**

— Reprinted from "On the Watch Tower" in *The Theosophist* August 1996

An Inside Look at Animals BY NANCY SECREST

An interview with Robyn Finseth

Does your dog have an aura? What does it look like? Does your cat seem really “familiar”? Perhaps this isn’t your first lifetime together. Do animals have souls? Do they reincarnate? To give readers a more metaphysical view of animals and perhaps answer some of these questions, *For The Love of Life* spoke with theosophist Robyn Finseth, who was born with the gift of clairvoyance, about her special view of animals. We talked with Robyn about animals’ auras, indications of group



ROBYN FINSETH

souls and some ideas about animals and reincarnation. The following article is based on that interview and includes excerpts from it.

Robyn is a second generation theosophist. Northwesterners, her parents, Ken and Bea Lawrence, were Portland lodge members and went to Camp Indralaya on Orcas Island, Washington. Robyn and her sister Donna started going to the camp when Robyn was eleven and Donna fourteen, always enjoying the atmosphere and the friendships

they made. Robyn was fortunate in that her parents were both sensitive and helpful in understanding her gifts. Other Portland theosophists and family friends, Anna Berkie and Edith and Perry Karsten helped her to understand her abilities. At Camp Indralaya, Robyn met Dora Kunz who helped her immeasurably to clarify her path and teachers. Dora, a former president of the Theosophical Society in America, authored the book *The Personal Aura* published by Quest Books. Dora’s brother, Harry Van Gelder became Robyn’s main mentor, however, and remained so throughout her adult years. Harry Van Gelder, clairvoyant in his own right, is well known among theosophists, especially in the northwestern United States, Canada and Australia, as an outspoken theosophical teacher and as a healer. It was through his influence that Robyn herself became a chiropractor, incorporating some of Harry’s healing methods into her practice and making good use of her gifts on a daily basis.

Robyn, an attractive blond with sparkling blue eyes, spoke with a self-assured quietness born, I suspect, from many years of meditation and life experience. One could see strength in her stance and the set of her jaw, and sensed the gentleness of her healing touch in the graceful movement of her hands as she talked. Robyn leaned forward with intention as she began. What she shared with us was drawn from her life experience beginning with her early childhood when she first became consciously aware of her “real sight.”

“This whole article is based on

my experiences and what little I drew from others. I do not profess to be an expert on anything but what I see. Let’s be real clear on that because I don’t want someone to be insulted by this and say ‘Oh, no, she doesn’t know what she’s talking about.’ I may very well not know what I’m talking about. However, I do know my own personal experiences and consequently they are mine to share.”

AURAS

An aura is a field of luminous radiation or light that surrounds the human body and depicts a person’s general personality, current emotional state and indicates health. Besides humans, other animals and plants have auras. Even rocks have a slight vibrational field. Auras appear cloud-like, filled with a variety of colored light around our bodies. In humans they are quite intricate with various layers and colors that can expand to twenty-four or forty-eight inches from our bodies. Compared to those of people, animals’ auras are very basic and usually do not expand. If an animal’s aura does expand, it’s only from four to six inches from the body. Expansion occurs with an extreme emotional response.

“We also have the intellectual capacity of understanding [that an animal lacks].” It could be called a sense of awareness. The human aura also expands to connect with others. “When you are giving love your aura is expanding towards that of another person. Even though a dog is very excited and happy to see his owner, his aura just tends to be fluffier and

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does not expand as much to touch his owner's aura. If the auras touch, it's the person's aura that is expanding to touch the dog's aura rather than the reverse."

All of us are fascinated by the colors of the aura and what they say about us and others. The colors in a human aura can vary throughout the color wheel. Books such as *The Personal Aura*, by Dora Kunz, give general indications of what various colors mean. Here too, "Animals' auras are more basic, with the predominant colors usually being either a pink, green, or brown, some yellow and occasionally blue. While the colors in human auras can sometimes appear "marblely," [or muddled] the colors in animal auras are more clear.

"When animals are happy, their auras are all rosy and fluffy. The pink indicates love. Sometimes there's a little red mixed in with it. A bit of 'Gee, are you going to be happy with me now? Are you sure you're okay, or am I okay? Did I do anything wrong?' Red in an animal's aura indicates agitation. It can also be present if there are jealousies toward another pet, such as 'so and so has more than I do.' There's a little bit of yellow too. So, there's also a bit of thinking with an animal. Green is earthy and indicates our life's work in the human aura. This is true for animals as well. We all know that different breeds of dogs were bred to perform different 'jobs' such as herding, guarding, retrieving or pulling. If an Alaskan Husky, for example, is pulling a dog sled or a guide dog is leading a visually impaired person, their aura would be predominantly green while performing this work. A cat's aura is



WHEN INTERACTING WITH A HUMAN, IT IS THE OWNER'S AURA THAT EXPANDS TO THE ANIMALS.

green when it is hunting. Occasionally blue can be seen in an animal's aura as well. Blue indicates devotion. In the case of an animal the devotion would be toward its master.

"Animals' auras don't have the muddy colors that ours can have like when we are depressed. Not that an animal can't be depressed, it's just that when they are depressed their auras tend to be just brown. They're not so "marblely." There's also a circulation in the human aura. I always talk about it as water going down a drain, but it doesn't go down the drain neatly. It goes down 'expandedly', in reverse, a counter-clockwise motion, and it expands or spreads like mud. It looks like mud, kind of oozy.

"Animals also have an etheric body just like a human." The etheric body is seen as the layer of the aura closest to the physical body. As it mirrors the physical, it can show indications of physical illness or distress. It is colorless, and appears as a narrow

layer of light around the body. "Our etheric extends [from the body] probably three to four inches. In a dog or a cat it is more likely to extend one to three inches maybe, at the most. The etheric looks like feathers. My dad always called them feathers. It's not smooth, but a bit more ruffled. Animals' [etheric bodies] also have 'feathers,' again not as big as ours, and when they are depressed, the little feathers are flat and they look gloomy. They feel gloomy, and their auras are brown."

One color, Robyn said, that she had never seen in an animal's aura is black. Black in a human aura indicates hatred or evil. Animals do not feel this emotion and are not evil. They simply are what they are, in the moment, at all times. "Even if an animal is in attacking mode, its aura is not black. It is actually terrified so its aura is red [indicating agitation], and gray [indicating fear]. Fear is icy. Fear is gray. I've never seen a rabid animal, but

even then, I don't think its aura would be black." A rabid animal is sick and possibly confused, not evil.

Being in the moment, there are no grudges with animals. An animal that has been abused may hold a memory that manifests as fear and a lack of trust. All of us can see that in their eyes or in their cowering stance. But, "There's no judgment, do understand that, no judgment with animals. Animals don't hold grudges."

We asked Robyn if this lack of judgment may be one reason why people are often more comfortable around animals than around other people.

"Oh yes, yes, they feel accepted. We all want unconditional acceptance. We all want it, and we have difficulty giving it to ourselves, and if you can't give it to yourself, you certainly can't give it to another human being." Sometimes we find it easier to share an unconditional acceptance with our pets. "A dog is eager to please. So, a dog is emotionally more satisfying to most people because they are eager to please, and their whole world centers around if they are pleasing you. So there's an eagerness [that we find appealing]. Their little tail wag is coinciding with their pink aura. There's not a lot of middle ground in the auras of animals. They are either pink [happy], or brown [depressed]. Even with kitties, there's not a lot of middle ground.

"So, cats, interestingly, are different than dogs. Cats just by their nature are more intelligent. Their auras are a little more yellow. They're figuring, and they're thinking and they're cunning and so you can say that [in this way] a cat is more intelligent than a dog. You can say that a cat is clairvoyant which makes sense, but I think dogs are too. I think there's a level of clairvoyance.

You know, it's sort of like their smeller is better than ours. I think probably their 'sight' is better than ours too. I knew someone who worked in a nursing home, and they had animals that lived in this nursing home. They had a particular dog who would announce who was getting ready to die. It would jump on the bed and not leave for any reason until the person passed. I find that fascinating."

GROUP SOULS

Our theosophical literature puts forth the premise that while each human has an individual soul, animals have group souls. A group soul means one

However, when we pet our cat and hear it purr, see our dog's tail wag when we enter a room and see the trust and love in our pets' eyes, don't we wonder who's helping whom?

soul for a number of cats, another for a number of dogs, lions, birds, bees, etc.

Dr. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Anthroposophy, agreed with this premise and related the group soul concept to fingers thrust through a screen. On one side of the screen we see the individual fingers. However, the actions of the individuals are directed by the hand to which they are all joined — the group soul. When we watch individual animals, many of them appear quite clever. However, he went on to say, "Look at the birds in flight, how they sweep over the different regions, and how well-ordered they are; how in autumn they go off, in their flocks, to some

warmer climate, coming back again with the Spring...If we watch a beaver building, we see there is more wisdom in what it builds than in the greatest engineering feat. And the intelligence shown in the way the bees work has also been the object of study. . . behind this work is the spirit of the beehive. The single bees all belong to one personality, in the way that our limbs belong to us — only the bees are more spread out than our more closely connected, more compact limbs." The wisdom in this ordering comes from the group soul. ("The Group Souls of Animals, Plants and Minerals", a lecture given by Dr. Rudolf Steiner, Frankfurt-on-Main, 2nd February, 1908, GA 98, <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19080202p01.html>).

Robyn spoke of bee hives as well. Her observations concurred with Steiner's. "Bees are fascinating because they really don't appear to have any intellect other than the intellect of the hive. Ants have the same feel to them and so do cockroaches or any of the other nesting type insects."

Besides the group connection on the soul level, animals who live in herds, hives or other kinds of groups also have a kind of group consciousness within their herd or hive that often includes a hierarchy. Robyn told us that, "When I was a young girl, I was at my grandma's ranch. She didn't have cows, but lots of others did. It was very obvious who the head cow was as she appeared to lead. I don't remember the colors in their auras. I just remember them [their auras] being more like tentacles, like they're kind of all related. So, I think if Bessie, the lead cow, felt fear, then Gertrude, in the back, felt fear. I've seen a herd of deer as well and they are the same.

"I've never seen a slaughter, so I

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can't imagine. I'm sure that's just horrible. Harry [Van Gelder] always said that the reason we don't eat meat is because you can't take the terror out of the meat. So, you are consuming that terror, and that just made sense to me. The hardest thing for me now is when I drive to work...when the trucks come by with boxes of chickens...that are going to some slaughterhouse. The



A FLOCK OF BIRDS TAKE OFF AT DAWN. ALWAYS A SOURCE OF FASCINATION, FLOCKS SOMEHOW COORDINATE INDIVIDUALLY TO WORK AS A GROUP. IT IS THE GROUP SOUL IN ACTION.

feel of it is just horrible. They all know. So even though they are not bright ... they know when they are dying."

REINCARNATION

In her article, "Have Animals Souls?" (*Theosophist*, January, February and March, 1886) H.P. Blavatsky compares and contrasts the concepts of various religions, philosophies and scientists regarding the existence of souls in animals and whether or not individual animals reincarnate. Contrary to the generally expounded theosophical thought that individual animals

do not reincarnate, in this article Blavatsky brings to view and supports the ideas of a number of philosophers and churchmen, not the least of them St. Paul, that "The souls of animals are imperishable" (Leibnitz) and "Holy scriptures hint in various passages that the brutes shall live in future lives." (Dean, the vicar of Middleton, 1748).

Robyn's experience with animals bears this out. "I know that everything incarnates, and I don't understand

incarnation well enough to know if we go from this animal, to that animal to this human. And, I don't think that if we are really bad people we become cockroaches (please excuse any disrespect towards cockroaches). I think that if we are really, really bad

we might just blow up and never incarnate again. That's the only thing that makes sense to me. What happened to the Hitlers of the world? Did they not just blow up and they're just gone?"

EVOLUTION

Living with people helps animals in their evolutionary journeys. They benefit from the love and affection that we give them, and you might even say that we act as "role models" for their future lives. "We had a German shepherd, a pair of shepherds,

and the male was a very difficult animal. When I did a reading on him, I discovered that for several lifetimes he had been a guard, an attack dog, and this was his first incarnation out of that world. I knew how important it was that we were in his life. So, they evolve. In other words, his lineage [i.e. past experience] was that of a trained killer, and so he had a very difficult side to him, and I know we helped him this lifetime. In the domesticated animal world we are important."

Most of us have had pets in our lives that stand out from the rest. Even though we loved all of our pets, one might have been of special importance. "So, I wonder also do we, as human beings, bring that pet back into our lives? I don't know, but it makes sense to me, especially if you've had a pet that you were extremely fond of and you — just knew each other."

The evidence from clairvoyants like Robyn and others overwhelmingly agrees that animals, as well as plants and perhaps even minerals, do have auras. Animals' auras are less intricate than those of humans. That corresponds with their natures which are more "in the moment" and less intellectual and emotional than those of human beings. Animals are also not as individualized as humans and are overseen by a group soul — a wisdom that guides species behavior. Our pets' evolutionary journeys are affected by their interactions with us which helps them to learn, grow and evolve. However, when we pet our cat and hear it purr, see our dog's tail wag when we enter a room and see the trust and love in our pets' eyes, don't we wonder who's helping whom? **TOS**

To Ziggy with Love

BY ANANYA S. RAJAN

My love for elephants started with Ziggy. Ziggy, born in Asia around 1917, got his name from Florentz Ziegfield, a vaudeville producer. In 1920, Ziegfield had bought the elephant from John Ringling, founder of the Ringling Circus, as a present for his six year-old daughter. After Ziggy trampled through Ziegfield's greenhouse, Ziggy was sold back to Ringling who then sold Ziggy to Singer's Midget Circus. It was here that Ziggy bonded with a man named Charles Becker and was taught many of the tricks that animals are taught in performance circles, including smoking which audiences found amusing. It was while working with this particular circus that Ziggy was considered "difficult."

By 1936, Ziggy who was over ten feet tall and weighed six tons according to different reports, was bought by the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago. A trainer name Slim Lewis was assigned to Ziggy. In 1941, while Ziggy was going through a musth period (a surge in testosterone levels that lead to highly aggressive behavior not necessarily for mating), he turned on his trainer, almost killing him. Lewis pleaded for Ziggy's

life and won, but Lewis left the zoo after the incident. For nearly thirty years, Ziggy was chained to a wall in an indoor enclosure away from the other elephants. He did not see sunlight until 1970 when he was "released from his sentence," as Sara Jane Goodyear from the Chicago Tribune so rightly stated. At the time, a campaign was started by the new zoo director to build Ziggy a facility that allowed him free access to and from his stall without much human

contact. It was completed in 1971. In March of 1975, Ziggy fell eight feet into a moat that separated him from the zoo visitors. He laid there for 31 hours, injured, with little human contact until he was able to lift himself up, climb up a makeshift ramp, and walk back to his enclosure. He died in October that year. He was 58. Almost half his life was spent chained to a wall.

I remember Ziggy and the chain well. And I remember thinking as an innocent child that if someone could just love him as much as I did, he would not need to be chained. His accident and eventual death was a childhood memory that has not left me. The story still makes me tearful because what I felt as a child, I can finally put into words as an adult. Ziggy was a child when he was taken from his mother, shuffled from one place to another and not really wanted

or loved. Made to behave in a manner that was not part of his nature, he was eventually punished and put in solitary confinement because he was deemed a "bad" elephant.

Thankfully, we are learning more about elephants with the hope that through research and education, we can inform the world about these



FROM 1972 — STANDING OUT IN THE SUN AFTER NEARLY 30 YEARS INSIDE, ZIGGY IS RELEASED FROM HIS CONFINING QUARTERS. DESPITE HIS NEW FREEDOM, HE IS STILL CHAINED.

incredible beings before we lose the joy of seeing them roam the forests and savannahs of Africa or the jungles of Asia. According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) there are around 470,000 to 690,000 African elephants and 20,000 to 25,000 Asian elephants left worldwide. The WWF states that less than 20% of the African elephant population is in protected areas, so there is constantly the concern of

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To Ziggy with Love

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poaching. Before the banning of ivory, 8 elephants an hour (70,000 a year) were killed in Africa. Between 1979 and 1989 the African elephant population went from 1.3 million elephants to 600,000.

As many people know, one of the biggest problems that elephants face aside from poaching is environment. An adult elephant can eat anywhere from 200 to 600 pounds of food and drink up to 50 gallons of water a day. According to one source, in the US, it costs \$113,000 a year to feed an elephant. This means that they need land where they can graze and roam. Given their size, for an elephant to be still or stand in the same place is not healthy. Their body, like any animal's, needs to move. When foraging for food, a wild elephant may travel up to 50 miles.

When researching information for this article, I was surprised at the number of organizations that support the conservation of elephants, as well as the number of stories about elephants that are making news. Many websites do not come from the indigenous regions where the majority of elephants live. One website, www.elephants.se, is from Sweden and works to provide as much up to date information as possible on elephants. Though not particularly aesthetic, the website has a database that keeps track of the number of baby elephants born in the world. They also have a Facebook page "Elephant Encyclopedia" which has a solid following. Another good website is the National Elephant Center



AN AFRICAN ELEPHANT FAMILY ROAMS THE SAVANNA. AFRICAN ELEPHANTS ARE DISTINGUISHED FROM ASIAN ELEPHANTS BY THEIR TUSKS AND THEIR LONGER EARS.

Elephants, like humans, have great affection for their young and one another. They also grieve the loss of people, elephant friends, and other animals.

www.nationalelephantcenter.org, a non-profit in Florida "managed by a board of accredited zoo directors, wildlife advocates and conservationists nationwide." The National Elephant Center houses three elephants on 225 acres of land with plans to increase their population and staff. Their website states that nothing like what they are planning has been created before, but The Elephant Sanctuary (TES) www.elephants.com in Hohenwald, Tennessee is the largest natural habitat refuge for elephants using 2700 acres and housing ten Asian elephants and two African ones. As a general rule the Elephant Sanctuary houses only females. To provide sanctuary for male elephants would mean creating an entirely different facility to accommodate their needs.

Within the last twenty years, the emotional intelligence of the elephant has been a topic of study. Contrary to Simon and Garfunkel's line about elephants being "kindly but their dumb" in their song "At the Zoo," elephants are far from stupid. Interestingly, this tends to be a Western bias. Many people who live in Asia and Africa have always considered elephants to be one of the most intelligent creatures on the planet. In India, when a person has a good memory, they are said to have the memory of an elephant because elephants do not forget. Elephants have been known to remember a person they haven't seen in decades as well as whether the relationship with that person was a positive or negative experience. They also remember other elephants they had bonded with as babies or adolescents but from whom they were separated. One of the most heartwarming (and tear-jerking) YouTube videos is the reunion of Shirley and Jenny at the Elephant Sanctuary after a separation of over 20 years.

As many people know, elephants are matriarchal. With African elephants, herds are made up of about 10 individuals, but family clans can form, bringing as many as 70 elephants together. This, according to WWF, is typical for the savannah elephants. Herds are smaller for the forest elephants. Asian elephant herds are often smaller in size as well with just 6 or 7 individual elephants to a herd. For both species, the birth of a little one is a herd event. The baby will normally stay close to its mother, but will be cared for and

protected by all the elephants of the herd. It may even nurse from another cow elephant if its mother is not available.

Male baby elephants generally stay with their mothers and the herd until they reach puberty which, like a human, is anywhere between 12-15 years of age. They will leave the herd to find a mate and explore life on their own making the transition from their herd quite fluid. Males are generally not big enough to compete for a female until they are about 20 years old.

One of the biggest concerns facing elephants in captivity is their decrease in lifespan. Researchers, commissioned by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), wanted to determine scientifically if elephants in captivity really did not live longer than their counterparts who lived in the wild. After a six year study, it was found that the life expectancy of an elephant in a zoo was often cut in half when born, bred, or captured and placed in a zoo. The reasons stated were obesity and stress. Kept in unnatural surroundings and unable to get the exercise they need, such circumstances wear on these gentle giants, emotionally and physically.

Dr. Gay Bradshaw, the founder and executive director of the Kerulos Center, started the field of “trans-species psychology” through her study of wild elephants who suffer from symptoms similar to what would be deemed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in a human. In 2009, she wrote the book *Elephants on the Edge: What Animals Teach Us about Humanity*, comparing traumatic situations humans face with traumatic situations elephants face. The reactions of the two species were the same. Publishers Weekly’s review of her book sums up the argument perfectly, “In the end, anthropomorphizing isn’t the issue; Bradshaw says that instead of giving animals human feelings, we should observe that they have feelings that correlate with what we may feel in similar circumstances. With its heartbreaking findings and irrefutable conclusions, this book bears careful reading and consideration.”

As researchers continue to study these magnificent creatures, science continues to prove what many animal lovers knew all along: elephants, as well as many other animals, have feelings, emotions, and are really not all that different from human beings. As a child I knew this about Ziggy because to me he seemed withdrawn and sad. To me it seemed like he was not loved. Elephants, like humans, have great affection for their young and one another. They also grieve the loss of people, elephant friends, and other animals. A website from South Africa called Elephants Forever www.elephantsforever.co.za provides stories that



UNLIKE THEIR AFRICAN SISTERS AND THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS, FEMALE ASIAN ELEPHANTS DO NOT NORMALLY GROW TUSKS. THEY MAY GROW “TUSHES,” WHICH ARE ONLY VISIBLE WHEN THE MOUTH IS OPEN.

show the bravery and compassion elephants have displayed to humans as well as other animals over the years: such as an elephant fighting to save a baby rhino while the mother rhino continues attacking the elephant; and a forest elephant refusing to drop a log in a hole where a sleeping dog lies; and an elephant that comes to the rescue of a rancher who is injured by the matriarch. Such stories seem incredible, but they are true.

When I was first introduced to The Elephant Sanctuary website, I could not stop watching the videos. And I encourage you to do the same. TES, through their videos, caregivers’ reports, and EleCams do a wonderful job of allowing the public to witness the compassion and joy the “Girls” bring to one another and their staff. Many sanctuaries now no longer allow the public to “visit” the elephants, and rightly so. How many of us like being on display? For the elephants it is no different and after what they have gone through, it is time we allowed them to be who they are and live in a world that is harmonious, safe, and loving. After all, isn’t that the world we ourselves desire to live in? **TOS**

Meet the Girls! BY ANANYA S. RAJAN

A hearty thank you goes out to the Elephant Sanctuary in Hohenwald, Tennessee who was kind enough to give permission for us to use photos and stories of some of their family members. The TES is a non-profit organization that provides refuge and individualized care to rescued elephants in the US.

TARRA

Tarra is an Asian elephant who was born in Burma (Myanmar) in 1974. At the young age of six months, she was taken from her mother and sold to an animal broker. Crated and flown by cargo plane, she was imported to the US, where she was kept in the back of a delivery truck during the day and on a residential driveway at night. Eventually, she became a source of entertainment for the zoos and circuses, as many elephants are, even learning to roller skate, and spent over twenty-years as an elephant on exhibit. This eventually came to an end in 1995 when she was retired from the public and allowed to live the life of an elephant at The Sanctuary.

Tarra may ring a few bells for some of our readers as she and her best friend Bella were featured on a CBS news segment in 2009. Bella, for those who don't know, was a mixed breed dog, who took refuge on Sanctuary land and became Tarra's right hand pup. Wherever Tarra was, Bella was not far behind. The two were often found roaming the land together or just enjoying a beautiful day in the sun. Watching videos of the two teaches us that we don't necessarily have to speak the same language to have a loving relationship with someone.

In 2011, Bella was attacked by coyotes. Her body was found by staff outside of their office. While no one but Tarra knows what happened, it is known that where Bella's body laid was not where she was attacked. Tarra,



SHIRLEY (L) AND TARRA (R) ARE OFTEN FOUND SHARING SECRETS OR PROVIDING COMPANY TO ONE ANOTHER.

however, was found with blood on the underside of her trunk. Staff believed she carried Bella to a place near the office so they would find her. Like anyone who loses a dear friend, Tarra showed signs of deep mourning. Her Sanctuary sisters provided support by staying close by, and comfort, at times sharing their food with her, to help her through her difficult period.

Today Tarra, The Sanctuary's "Founding Elephant," continues her matriarchal duties at The Sanctuary, greeting newly arrived elephants and being a source of comfort and gentle leadership to her sisters.

SHIRLEY

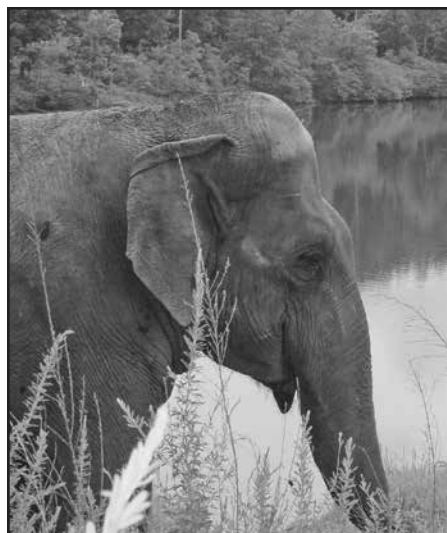
Born in 1948, Shirley turns 66 years old this year. (The Sanctuary recognizes her birthday in July, the month she arrived at her new home.) She is the oldest elephant at The Sanctuary. This

is quite remarkable considering the difficult life Shirley has had. Born in Sumatra, she was captured in 1953. In 1963, the circus ship that Shirley was on caught fire and sank. Luckily she was rescued, but suffered burns to her ears, head and back. After the fire, she and the two other elephants who survived the shipwreck, were put in trailers and transported to California where the circus owners lived. During the drive, the trailer met with an accident and all three pachyderms were thought dead. Shirley survived. She continued in the circuses and in 1977 was attacked by a bull elephant that severely injured her, breaking her hind leg. Shirley's leg never healed properly so she continues to walk with a limp. Shirley eventually was sold to the Louisiana zoo, her home for the next twenty-two years. As she was the only elephant at the zoo, her life

was rather lonely. In 1999, she was retired to The Sanctuary where she was greeted by her old friend Jenny. As mentioned earlier, the reunion is one that needs to be watched. Caretakers were uncertain how Shirley would react to seeing another elephant after twenty-two years. To witness the reunion reminds us that we all need companionship.

JENNY

Jenny was born in 1969 in Sumatra and captured in 1973. It must have been while working for the Carson and Barnes Circus that Jenny met Shirley, who Jenny would have looked to as a mother figure. Jenny's story much like Shirley's is one of abuse and neglect. She spent most of her life performing in circuses and was considered "useless" by the time she was 24 because she could not be bred. In an attempt to breed her, Jenny's leg was broken by a bull elephant. It was not treated and she walked with a limp. Considered worthless by her owners, she was dropped off at an animal shelter that took in dogs and cats, but picked up by a new owner, who sadly was unable to properly



BUNNY, THE OUTDOOR GIRL, PICTURED HERE ADMIRING THE LAKE AT HER TENNESSEE HOME.

care for her. Thankfully, the owner contacted The Elephant Sanctuary and a rescue fund was started to get Jenny home. She arrived in Tennessee in 1996, underweight with foot rot and feeling incredibly timid and unsure, until Tarra let her know she was safe and welcomed. Jenny passed away in 2006 after a long illness surrounded by Tarra, Shirley, and another friend Bunny who also arrived in 1999, the same year as Shirley.

BUNNY

Despite the bond that Shirley and Jenny had with one another, they lovingly welcomed Bunny and formed a trio. Born in 1952 in Burma (Myanmar), she was captured at the age of two and transported

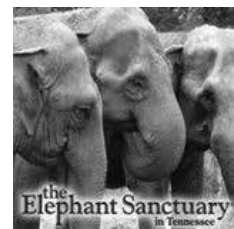
to the Mesker Zoo in Evansville, Indiana. She lived mostly alone in the zoo for over 40 years. As mentioned earlier, elephants have sensitive feet and being confined to standing on concrete unable to move creates other health problems for these beautiful creatures. The zoo realized their love for Bunny meant setting her free and she arrived at the Sanctuary in September of 1999.

Bunny was known as the "Outdoor Girl" because once at the Sanctuary, she loved being outside all the time. According to the staff at the Sanctuary, Bunny enjoyed her freedom so much she was sometimes difficult to find when it was feeding time. It apparently did not take her long to adjust to her new found freedom as she was heard cheerfully trumpeting through the grounds, stating her joy and approval of her new life.

After 10 years of enjoying her freedom, Bunny transitioned to even freer grounds in 2009 at the age of 58. Being the Outdoor Girl, she laid down outside under the blue sky, surrounded by her caretaker and sisters who kept vigil. The Sanctuary honors the natural cycle of things, so Bunny was kept comfortable and protected so nature could do what it needed. When her time came, she took two long breaths and quietly slipped away. While the death of any animal is sad, the beauty of Bunny's death was that The Sanctuary gave her a chance she may not have gotten otherwise, the chance to pass away from natural causes. **TOS**



SHIRLEY (L) AND JENNY WERE OFTEN PLAYFUL WITH ONE ANOTHER. THIS PHOTO SHOWS SHIRLEY'S HIND LEG THAT DID NOT HEAL PROPERLY.



On Service Animals

BY NANCY SECREST

Lions and tigers and bears? Oh my no, but how about dogs, cats, horses, birds and monkeys? Guide dogs for the blind used to be the only service animals we ever saw. These German Shepherds, and they were always German Shepherds, seemed to be the rock stars of the dog world, so smart, so “I’ve got it under control,” so in tune with their masters. Things have changed. Guides are still dogs, but other breeds, mainly Labs, have been added to the mix as have guide horses. Yes, horses. In recent years, miniature horses have been trained as guides for the blind. They also pull wheelchairs and act as a source of stability for those with mobility issues. Other kinds of animals have also been trained to assist with various disabilities. We now have Hearing Ear dogs, seizure alert animals, animals that prevent or disrupt destructive behaviors and those that give emotional support. Trained Capuchin monkeys now aid adults with spinal cord injuries and other mobility impairments by acting as a pair of helping hands to perform tasks that the individuals cannot do for themselves. Other animal helpers include small breed dogs, cats, and birds. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) supplies the official definition of “service animals” and recognizes only dogs in this capacity.

Emotional or psychiatric support, therapy or companion animals are labels that describe the tasks performed by some animals that, while not recognized as such by the ADA, are often called “service animals” by the general public. The title “companion animal” does not fall under legal definitions, and is generally accepted as another term for pet. For the purposes of this article, the term “service animal” is meant to include all such animals, as well as service dogs, unless specifically noted otherwise.

An emotional support animal provides affection and companionship for a person suffering from various mental and emotional conditions such as anxiety, depression, panic attacks, PTSD, fears/phobias and other conditions. There is no requirement for an emotional support animal to perform any specific tasks for disability as there is with a service dog and no specific training is required. These animals are meant solely for the emotional stability of their owners. While emotional support animals are not included under the protections of the ADA, the Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA) gives individuals the right to live with their emotional support animal regardless of any building or residence “no pet” policy, and the Air Carrier Access Act

(ACAA) allows emotional support animals on airplanes when disabled individuals are traveling. Some trains, buses, and taxis also allow service animals aboard.

Therapy animals need to be calm and well-behaved as they are taken many places, including hospitals, nursing homes, foster homes, homeless shelters, schools and places struck by natural disasters, where they work with their handlers to provide services to others. Therapy animals work with groups rather than individuals bringing comfort and joy to those who are ill or living under poor conditions. Again, they do not need any specific training and are welcomed at many such facilities with permission.

The Seeing Eye, the first US guide dog school opened its doors in 1929 and is now the oldest existing guide dog school in the world. In the 1970s, the concept expanded to the use of “service” dogs...

Collectively, all of these animals are commonly referred to as service animals, but the definition of a service animal according to the ADA is restricted to dogs who are trained to do work or perform tasks directly related to an individual’s disability. This means that the dog must be trained to respond to the special needs of a specific person caused by their specific disability. This shuts out emotional support and therapy animals, even if they are dogs, because these animals do not perform specific tasks related to specific disabilities or, in the case of therapy animals, because they work with groups of people rather than individuals. The ADA also requires that service animals be allowed into government and commercial buildings open to the public. In 2010, the ADA expanded this ruling to include miniature horses (at a height of 26” to 38” tall miniature horses are about the same size as a large dog), as well as dogs. These limits placed by the ADA have caused problems for some with disabilities who need or prefer another kind of service animal. Through the years various court cases have been filed in an attempt to change the ADA’s definition of service animal. So far, the only changes have been a tightening of the definition to specifically exclude “other species of

animals” and to add miniature horses to dogs as those that must be allowed in public buildings and on public transportation from which other animals may be barred. Appeals to the ADA for the expansion of its “service animal” definition continue, and debate over the suitability of certain species, such as monkeys, for this status has raised ethical and humanitarian issues.

Some states and localities have set their own rules for service animals, expanding the definition to include other species besides dogs, including emotional support and therapy animals, and, in some cases, requiring or suggesting certification of these animals. To qualify as a service animal, per the ADA, a dog does not have to be professionally trained nor does it have to be certified or licensed. However, with some states requiring certification, certifying opportunities abound on the web and elsewhere. Other states and localities require that the person simply have a doctor’s letter attesting to their need for a service animal in order for the animal to be allowed into their government offices and commercial establishments and onto public transportation. In some cases, specific businesses follow practices that allow service animals other than dogs on their premises. Of course, in all cases, the animals must be under the control of their owners and not cause a disturbance.

Just as some people unlawfully park in handicapped spaces, some pet owners who are not disabled, but simply want to enter businesses or ride on public transportation with their pet or companion animal, do so under pretense. Per the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division’s instructions to business owners, “If you are not certain that an animal is a service animal, you may ask the person who has the animal if it is a service animal required because of a disability. You may not insist on proof of state certification before permitting the service animal to accompany the person with a disability.” A pet owner, pretending that their pet is a service animal, who lies in answer to this question can easily get away with it since no proof is required. This unscrupulous manipulation of laws written to protect the rights of the disabled has the potential to hurt the cause of those who are trying to get their emotional support animals recognized by the ADA or their state.

GUIDE AND SERVICE DOGS

The concept of using dogs to help the blind really began when veterans started using guide dogs after World War I. Today, America’s VetDogs, a nonprofit organization, calls itself “The premier organization providing assistance dogs



AT ONE TIME THE STANDARD DOG USED AS A GUIDE DOG WAS A GERMAN SHEPARD. TODAY LABRADORS ARE USED AS WELL AS OTHER BREEDS.

to disabled veterans and active service members.” The very first formal school for service dogs was established in Germany. The Seeing Eye, the first US guide dog school, opened its doors in 1929 and is now the oldest existing guide dog school in the world. In the 1970s, the concept expanded to the use of “service” dogs, rather than just “guide” dogs in order to assist individuals with various disabilities. Now service dogs, and other animals, guide the visually impaired, alert the hearing impaired to intruders or sounds, provide protection or rescue work, pull wheelchairs and fetch dropped items for their owners among many other tasks.

A guide dog’s training begins in puppyhood according to Service Dog Central, a community of service dog partners and trainers. Puppies destined to become guide dogs are placed with families who love and nurture the puppy, teach it good manners, socialization skills and basic obedience. When the puppy is about a year to eighteen months old it goes off to school. At the guide dog school, the dog learns directed guiding, obstacle avoidance and intelligent disobedience. Directed guiding teaches the dog the proper responses to the commonly used commands. Through intelligent disobedience a dog learns to disobey the commands of its owner if a danger that the owner cannot see is present, such as a moving car in his or her path. Obstacle avoidance is the trickiest and most important lesson the dog has to learn. The dog must learn to recognize an obstacle, even if it is overhead, and decide how best to go around it while preserving its and its owner’s safety.

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The disabled person must also be trained how to command and handle the dog. The two are then paired to learn how to work together. It costs \$50,000 to \$60,000 to train a guide dog. However, America's VetDogs provides the dogs free to disabled veterans, and The Seeing Eye guide dog school charges only \$150 for the owner's first dog and \$50 for each consecutive guide dog that may be needed.

MINIATURE HORSES

The Guide Horse Foundation was founded in 1999 as an experimental program to assess the abilities of miniature horses as assistance animals. The Foundation claims, "There are many compelling reasons to use miniature horses as guide animals. Horses are natural guide animals and have been guiding humans for centuries. In nature, horses have been shown to possess a natural guide instinct. When another horse goes blind in a herd, a sighted horse accepts responsibility for the welfare of the blind horse and guides it with the herd. Throughout history, Cavalry horses have been known to guide their injured rider to safety."

We appreciate and applaud these animals and the services they provide, but there is controversy. Dogs and cats have been domesticated for centuries and have long become used to living with humans.

Why would someone prefer a guide horse to a guide dog? Well, some people are simply horse lovers, others fear dogs or are allergic to them. Still others prefer a horse's calm nature or need their strength to pull their wheelchair or provide the support needed for them to rise from their chair. Horses live longer than dogs. The lifespan of the average guide dog is from eight to twelve years, while a horse lives between thirty and forty years or more. Most visually impaired people will outlive three or four guide dogs. Therefore, another reason given for the choice of a horse is that it saves the person from having to repeatedly suffer through the death of a loved animal. It also saves the time, energy and training costs of replacement guide dogs thereby making it less expensive in the long run to train

miniature horses as guides than to train dogs.

The Guide Horse Foundation trains guide horses and delivers them free-of-charge to visually impaired individuals. Miniature horses receive the same type of training as guide dogs in directed guiding, obstacle avoidance and intelligent disobedience, and, according to the Foundation, "Guide horses also undergo the same training that is given to riot-control horses making them less likely to be distracted and calmer in chaotic situations." The training ends with the horse being housebroken which is necessary per the ADA if the horse is to be allowed into public establishments.

Some folks object to using horses as guides on the grounds that they require special care and housing. However, in her article "Miniature horses get OK to be service animals," Sue Manning of the Associated Press, quoted Mona Ramouni who said, "As much work as she is — and she is a lot more work than a dog — I would not trade her for 10 dogs." Ms. Manning tells us that "Ramouni went blind shortly after birth. Growing up in Detroit, she could not have a dog because her devout Muslim family considered them unclean."

SERVICE CATS

Another animal new to the official "service animal" scene is the cat. Cats have long been recognized as giving comfort to their owners. Petting their soft fur and listening to them purr is calming and relaxing. Cat lovers would agree that their cats without even trying provide emotional support. Studies have shown that stroking a cat decreases blood pressure, and that the calming influence of a cat can extend the life of a person with heart problems. This is not a source of controversy. But are they service animals? The ADA says that the tasks a service animal performs must be specific and aid with an individual person's specific disability. Some cats have shown a natural ability to alert their owners of an impending seizure or to alert a diabetic owner of a drop in his or her blood sugar level and do so without training. This certainly qualifies as specific behavior for a specific disability. Several states do certify seizure cats and diabetic alert cats as service animals which allows the cat to accompany its owner into restaurants and other public venues and onto public transportation.

According to Itchmo: News for Dogs & Cats, at www.itchmo.com, "There is no organization that trains service cats." However, it is felt by some organizations like the Pets and People Foundation that they can be trained. "Pets and People provides help for people that want to train their own



AFRICAN GREY PARROTS ARE HIGHLY INTELLIGENT BIRDS AND CAN LEARN AN EXTENSIVE VOCABULARY. THEIR BEAUTY, GOOD NATURE, AND INTELLIGENCE MAKE THEM NOT ONLY GOOD PETS, BUT ADAPTABLE AS SERVICE ANIMALS.

cats...starting with a kitten is best. Using clicker training, a cat can be taught to alert the arrival of a seizure. Cats, just like dogs, have an innate sense of when seizures are coming. Kittens can also be taught to use a telephone when the owner is unable to call for help.” And, “To alert you the cat may paw at you or sit on your chest.”

BIRDS AS SERVICE ANIMALS

An article in the January 2009 *New York Times Magazine* by Rebecca Skloot entitled “Creature Comforts” talks about a man in St. Louis who uses an assistant parrot to help control his psychotic tendencies. In describing his condition, he said, “It’s like when the Incredible Hulk changes from man to monster. His vision blurs, his body tingles and he can barely hear.” The parrot keeps him from snapping. She rides around on his back, and when he gets upset she calms him down by talking to him. She says things like, “It’s OK, calm down, you’re all right,” and “I’m here.” The bird’s training was unintentional. Sometimes, when he got upset at home, the man would try to calm himself down using those phrases. The parrot picked it up, and the man began rewarding her each time it happened. He has had only one incident since the parrot began recognizing his change in behavior and works to calm him down.

MONKEYS AS SERVICE ANIMALS

It is easy to see why the human-like hands of a monkey might make it a desirable service animal for persons with spinal cord or other mobility injuries that leave them with

limited or no use of their hands. Monkeys, like humans, can reach for things, turn on lights, open bottles or other containers, pick up dropped objects, learn to dial 911, operate a microwave and many other tasks for which hands are helpful or even necessary. Monkeys also appear and act so much like little people that the bond or emotional connection created between a monkey and its human owner can be akin to that with a little brother or sister. A viral video by *The Boston Globe* shows this connection. It features Ned Sullivan who underwent a traumatic neck and brain accident. He has recovered some speech and movement, but still needs help. Kasey, a Capuchin monkey provides the helping hands that Ned needs as well as emotional support.

Kasey was trained at Helping Hands a non-profit organization that has trained Capuchin monkeys since 1979 to assist adults with spinal cord injuries. Per Helping Hands website, it takes three to five years to train a monkey at several different and increasingly complex levels. The training environment also becomes more and more home-like throughout the levels in order to prepare the monkey for life in the recipient’s home. While in training, monkeys are also potty trained. “When they graduate they can accomplish many tasks, are comfortable working with household items like refrigerators, CD players and televisions, and are familiar with manual and electric wheelchairs.” Upon graduation, the monkeys are given free of charge to the recipients with whom they have been matched.

Monkeys are among the most contested assistance-animal species. The ADA does not recognize monkeys as service animals, but some states do. A bill recently introduced into the Kentucky legislature that would recognize monkeys as service animals for in-home use, sparked controversy. Critics of the bill, including the North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance, feel that, as un-domesticated animals, monkeys are neither suitable nor desirable to work as human helpers. They say, “Monkeys do not belong in human homes, whether as pets or service animals.”

Critics point out that monkeys are unpredictable and can cause havoc if distressed and perhaps even injury to their human handlers. They point out that while dogs and horses have been domesticated for centuries, monkeys are still feral. Calm behavior and good judgment cannot be relied upon from monkeys as they are animals that do not react well in chaotic situations.

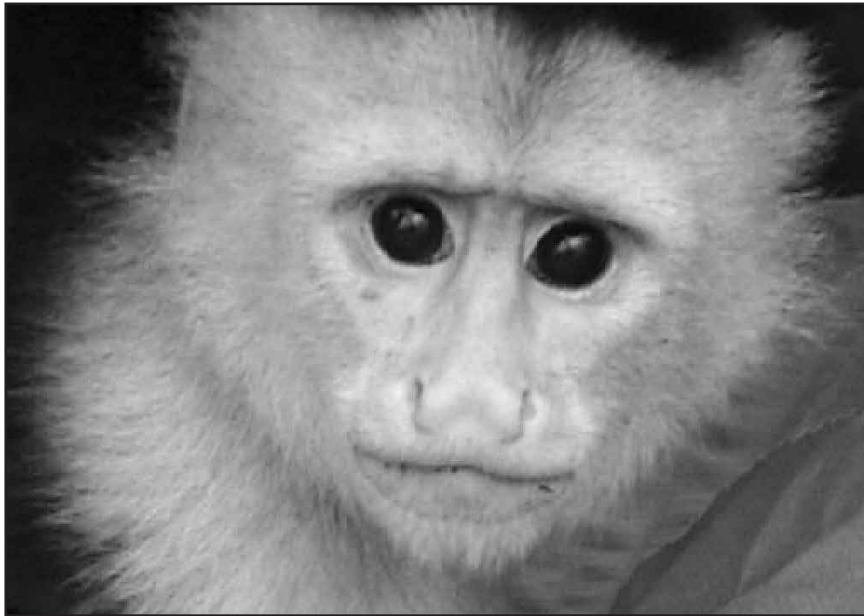
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Detractors also say that living in human homes prevents monkeys from the natural socialization with their own kind that they need. Per *Fox News First Newsletter*, January 21, 2014. “April Truitt, founder and executive director of the Primate Rescue Center, based in Nicholasville in central Kentucky, said the bill is well intentioned but misguided. She said it could expose both monkeys and their human owners

monkey whose helping hands assist a paralyzed person, a hearing ear animal or a guide dog or horse, these animals are valued by those they serve and their abilities amaze the rest of us. We appreciate and applaud these animals and the services they provide, but there is controversy. Dogs and cats have been domesticated for centuries and have long become used to living with humans. Whether service animals or pets, most are well treated, and few people would regard their employment as service animals as being detrimental to their well-being.



CAPUCHIN MONKEYS ARE OFTEN USED AS SERVICE ANIMALS AND KEPT AS PETS DESPITE MUCH DEBATE. WHILE TRAINABLE ACCORDING TO HELPING HANDS, WILDLIFE EXPERTS DISAGREE SAYING THEY ARE WILD CREATURES THAT CAN TURN ON THEIR OWNERS. MANY PET OWNERS HAVE THE ANIMAL'S TEETH REMOVED.

to potential harm. ‘Monkeys are not domesticated animals,’ she said. ‘They cannot be made so in one generation or in 20.’” In an ABC News interview by Gillian Mohney, January 18, 2014, “Truitt points out that the monkeys have all their teeth removed before being used in a home, and that they can turn on their owners violently.” This action might serve to protect people, but seems cruel and inhumane treatment of monkeys. While the use of monkeys as assistants may provide a wonderful benefit to those with spinal cord injuries, the practice causes an ethical dilemma between the benefit to disabled persons and the natural needs, rights and humane treatment of these animals that has yet to be resolved.

Whether a bird that alerts its owner to a pending psychotic break, a cat that senses an on-coming seizure, a

Horses may fare best in a rural environment, but some feel that miniature horses used as guides can adapt to an urban setting as long as they have a stall to retreat to and room to roam when off-duty. Others, some theosophists among them, who object to even the riding of horses, would see the use of horses as confining and unnatural. Apparently, the ADA disagrees with this view as miniature horses are the only animals, besides dogs, that they require be allowed access to governmental and commercial establishments.

However, birds like parrots, and especially monkeys, are wild animals. Can they cope with living in homes? Does their service to us outweigh their right, and perhaps need, to live in their natural environments? Does the complex training of monkeys and the pulling of their teeth to protect humans impinge on their rights as free creatures and perhaps even border on cruelty? Do they pose a danger to the humans they serve? These questions have yet to be answered.

As a service organization, the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) recognizes and supports the rights of disabled persons to whatever aids they need to help them live as normally as possible, including service animals. As theosophists, the TOS supports the oneness of all life and thus comes down heavily on the side of animals’ rights to live a full life in their natural or domesticated habitats, free of human-imposed stresses and cruelty. When it comes to monkeys, and perhaps birds, we wonder if it is wise and humane to use these animals as service animals. **TOS**

Do Animals Have Rights? BY MORRY SECREST

A large percentage of the world's population believes animals have rights. Certainly most pet owners think so. Many folks treat their pets just as they would their children. For both, they willingly provide food, water, shelter, as well as attention, love, support, and medical care.

Most farmers and ranchers also agree, to a point. As long as it enhances their profit, they willingly provide the basic necessities and are required to provide medical care to their livestock.

But what about the gorillas and chimpanzees who resemble humans most closely?

The United States is one of the few civilized countries that still allow medical research on a group of mammals whose genetic makeup closely resembles that of humans, the great apes. The United States is the world's largest user of chimpanzees for biomedical research and has 937 individual subjects currently in U.S. labs. This, even though the Institute of Medicine (IOM) www.iom.edu has determined that the use of chimpanzees in medical research is largely unnecessary, due to the advancements in alternate research tools.

The Institute of Medicine is an American non-profit, non-governmental organization founded in 1970, under the congressional charter of the National Academy of Sciences. It is part of the United States National Academies, which also includes the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), National Academy of Engineering (NAE), and the National Research Council (NRC).

Its purpose is to provide national advice on issues relating to biomedical

science, medicine, and health, and its mission is to serve as adviser to the nation to improve health. It works outside the framework of the U.S. federal government to provide independent guidance and analysis and relies on a volunteer workforce of scientists and other experts, operating under a formal peer-review system.



MORRY SECREST

The Institute aims to provide unbiased, evidence-based, and authoritative information and advice concerning health and science policy to policy-makers, professionals, leaders in every sector of society, and the public at large.

Efforts by IOM and others are slowly bearing fruit. Officials are gradually recognizing that animals deserve some fundamental rights. Just recently, nine baboons previously used for scientific experiments were retired from that duty. They have been sent to the Born Free USA Primate Sanctuary www.bornfreeusa.org in Dilley, Texas. While this is a step in the right direction, the US still lags behind in animal rights efforts compared to other countries. Medical research on great apes has been banned in Belgium,

Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands and New Zealand. Spain and the Balearic Islands have granted great apes legal rights and Japan, Australia and the United Kingdom have laws that severely restrict the use of great apes in research.

In the US, a group of people have gone to court, trying to give a captive chimpanzee many of the same rights as a human being, and posing some very interesting arguments. A court case in New York State is arguing the question of whether a chimpanzee has rights as a *person*--not as a human; there is a distinction. They point to a precedent, set by the Supreme Court when it ruled that corporations have rights as persons.

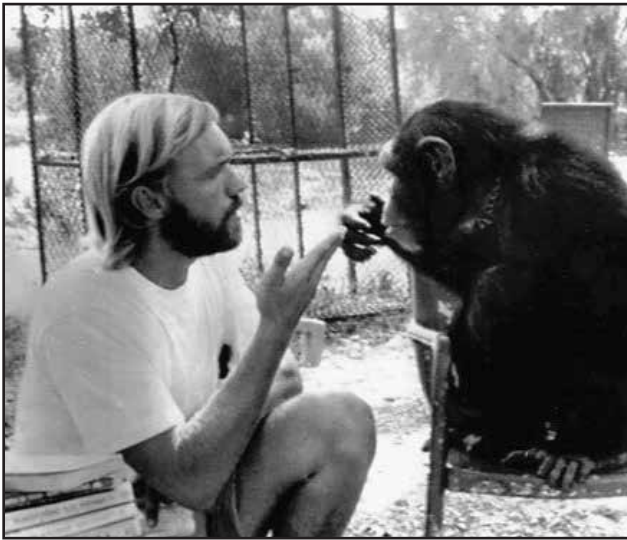
Chimpanzees entertain the masses in performances like the Ice Capades, serve as medical research subjects, and share 98.7 percent of DNA in common with humans. So the question arises why shouldn't chimpanzees be allowed to have lawyers? Following that logic, another effort is underway. The Chimpanzee Collaboratory (www.chimpcollaboratory.org) is a project uniting attorneys, scientists and public policy experts working to make significant and measurable progress in protecting the lives and establishing the legal rights of chimpanzees. The Chimpanzee Collaboratory was established in 2000 through a generous grant from the Glaser Progress Foundation. This group has drafted legislation that proposes to allow nonprofit groups to petition courts in order to serve as guardians for any chimp who is "subjected to the willful use of force or violence upon its body."

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Animal Rights

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One of the reasons that concern about chimp rights has grown is because of the growing number of chimps in captivity. The animals were bred aggressively in the 1980s for AIDS research. Among those championing the chimps' cause is constitutional scholar Laurence Tribe, a Harvard Law School professor. He and others have argued that chimps are able to use tools, interact socially, and teach their offspring. They point out that some chimps have learned sign language,



WASHOE WAS THE FIRST NON-HUMAN TO LEARN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE. THIS ALLOWED HER TO COMMUNICATE WITH HUMANS SHOWING HER ABILITY TO EMPATHIZE.

and are able to communicate at the same level as a three or four year old child.

By law, animals are "property," or "things" that do not have rights on their own. But some legal reformers, including Tribe, would like to see the legal definition of "persons" expanded to include chimpanzees. Chimpanzees are our closest genetic relatives. Of course, chimpanzees cannot file lawsuits on their own, but animal-rights advocates are proposing

that judges could appoint a human "guardian-at-law," to represent them in court, similar to the way legal guardians may represent children. With legal rights, chimps could seek injunctions to block researchers, animal trainers on movie sets, and operators of roadside attractions who might harm the animals either physically or psychologically. They could also seek damages for medical expenses, and their guardians could seek punitive damages against anyone who denies them their rights.

The concept of "animal rights" springs from the idea that some, or all, nonhuman beings are entitled to the possession of their own lives, and that their most basic interests--such as an interest in not suffering--should be afforded the same consideration as human beings. Advocates oppose the assignment of moral value and fundamental protections on the basis of species membership alone--an idea known since 1970 as "speciesism," when the term was coined by Richard D. Ryder--arguing that it is a prejudice as

irrational as any other. They agree for the most part that animals should no longer be viewed as property, or used as food, clothing, research subjects, entertainment, or beasts of burden.

How can one decide what rights an animal should have? Some people might say, "Animals shouldn't have the rights of a human being, because they cannot behave responsibly like a human being." Now, there might be some merit to this. An adult has the right to vote, the right to drink alcohol

(responsibly), the right to own property and the right to drive a car, and so on.

These rights are denied to one class of humans, without exception, and that is children. Children are denied the right to vote, the right to drink alcohol, the right to own property and the right to drive a car, all for good reasons. As they grow, and learn, they become capable of assuming the responsibilities of an adult and are allowed those rights. However, despite not having those rights, they are still entitled to the basic necessities of food, water, shelter, clothing, and a decent life without cruelty, suffering, or exploitation.

The question then arises, on what basis do we decide which animals have certain rights and which do not? Pets will always have the top rung of the ladder, because pet owners choose to treat their pets well. When considering all animals, criteria such as the size of the brain, their memory abilities, their social activities, their language skills, even their consciousness seem to fall short of a valid reason as to why animals should not have rights.

With regard to consciousness, a common theory of consciousness is that it is defined as the action of the brain. Consciousness, it is said, is simply what the brain does. Further, we know that our brain is an outgrowth of the animal brain. Anatomists tell us that the human brain, with the neo-cortex carefully lifted away, is identical in size and in function to the brain of common domesticated animals such as the pig. Psychological testing has shown that many of the functions used on a daily or hourly basis by humans, such as attention, object recognition, and even emotion, are fully functional in animals. It is not improper to think of humans as being first of all similar to other animals, just with a somewhat larger



DR. TEMPLE GRANDIN IS A PROFESSOR AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY. BORN WITH AUTISM, SHE HAS ALWAYS HAD A SENSITIVITY OF ANIMALS' EMOTIONS.

neo-cortex and with a large cultural component which must be learned during childhood.

Often times it is believed that animals are not self-aware. Self-awareness can be demonstrated through the use of a number of tests. For example, the mirror test will put a mirror before a test subject. A child over the age of, say, five years will quickly realize that the image in the mirror is himself. His behavior will be exploratory in nature, in which he makes faces in the mirror; and actively looks at his own mouth and nose. The child shows self-awareness. The same test with a chimpanzee will show that the chimp will also make faces and even explore his own mouth and nose in the mirror.

Many people agree that higher animals have consciousness and demonstrate the rudiments of social structure, problem-solving ability, and musical ability (in birds). Language, defined as transmission of information by sound, is done not only by humans but also by elephants, cetaceans and

birds. Some chimpanzees have been taught the rudiments of language. Some parrots are excellent mimics. Alex, the grey parrot, constructed his own sentences to issue commands to his owner.

Temple Grandin has written extensively in her books about animals, in a way which is both very scientific and very insightful. She describes, in her books, many insights into the way that animals perceive, and think. Grandin has done much to improve conditions in slaughterhouses for cattle. This is very pragmatic work. She does not think slaughterhouses can be eliminated, but they can be improved. And it is to this that Grandin has devoted her energies. A professor at Colorado State University, she holds a doctorate of animal science, is an engineer, a best-selling author, an autistic activist, and serves as a consultant to the livestock industry on animal behavior. As a person who grew up with autism, she used animals and her sensitivity toward them as a way to cope with her disorder. She wrote *Animals in Translation* in 2005, and *Animals Make Us Human* in 2009.

The theosophical perspective on animals is based on the concept of the oneness of all life. Often subsumed under the word Brotherhood, it stems from the idea that all life on earth springs from a single source. A closer look at the Buddhist source of this belief shows an intimate awareness of our own roots. We would not be here without the Great Apes. In that sense, then, they are our cousins, and it is reasonable to treat them as we would our own distant relatives. We should enjoy their company for brief visits, help them out during their times of need, but overall, just expect them to live their own lives as they choose, and let them be. Live and let live. Certainly,

we wouldn't steal from them or exterminate them.

Theosophy tells us that life lives in a stream. Just as there are those great beings who long ago went through the human stage, there are also those "less evolved" beings who are looking forward to going through the human stage in the future. Those beings are currently in the animal stage. If life is like a school, we might say that the fifth-graders will look forward to one day being sixth-graders and recall their own days as fourth-graders. There might be some condescension toward the third-and fourth graders, but there will also be some fondness. It is this attitude that the theosophical view encourages.

The Buddha said in one of his lectures that he desired to teach to all who are teachable. Some of his students interpreted that to mean animals as well as humans. Certainly the higher mammals may be included in that category. Some Buddhists think that an aspect of the individual human can, after death, reincarnate into another human baby body, but also could reincarnate into an animal body. Likewise, some animals could reincarnate into humans. Given the explosive growth of the number of humans alive on the earth in recent generations, I think it would be entirely likely that many people walking around today are in a human body for the first time. They may, according to some Buddhists, have recently been one or another animal. A pragmatic attitude might be along the lines of, "There is a possibility that I might reincarnate as an animal. Just in case that might be true, then I would think it prudent to assure that animals are well-treated, just in case." **TOS**

Beagle Freedom Project:

A New Lease on Life for Laboratory Animals BY KATHY GANN

The Theosophical Order of Service is pleased to offer support to the Beagle Freedom Project, an organization that rescues research animals being released from laboratories. The operating methods and ethics demonstrated by this group exemplify the theosophical ideal of recognizing the One Life in all.

In 2012, nearly 70,000 dogs were used in laboratory experiments, and about 96% of them were beagles. Why beagles? Because beagles are docile, forgiving and people-pleasing to a fault. Recently some laboratories have shown a willingness to release animals they no longer need or want for further experiments, rather than euthanizing them as is customary in the industry. This gives the dogs a chance to heal and find a happy, loving home.

Enter animal rights attorney Shannon Keith and a small network of rescue volunteers. In 2010, Shannon heard about a group of dogs being released from a research lab, and the Beagle Freedom Project (www.BeagleFreedomProject.org) was born. Since then, Shannon and volunteers have



PHOTO WITH PERMISSION FROM WWW.BEAGLEFREEDOMPROJECT.ORG

FRIENDS FOR LIFE — KEVIN CHASE WITH RAYMOND. KEVIN IS THE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS FOR BEAGLE FREEDOM PROJECT.

performed at least 25 rescues, freeing 171 dogs, 10 ponies, 9 rabbits, 3 pigs, 7 cats and 2 goldfish from animal testing laboratories...and the number of rescuees continues to rise.

Rescued animals are housed with foster families and receive badly-needed veterinarian care so they can regain physical health. Foster families help to initiate emotional and psychological healing while the



PHOTO WITH PERMISSION FROM WWW.BEAGLEFREEDOMPROJECT.ORG

THIS THREE YEAR OLD BEAGLE WAS ONE OF SIX DOGS FREED FROM A LAB IN COLORADO.

animals wait to be adopted into their forever homes.

Over the past three years, the Beagle Freedom Project has performed rescue after rescue, and has had great success in finding homes for these special-needs animals (laboratory animals are not house trained, are unfamiliar with how to be a treasured pet, and many suffer from PTSD and intense fear). The Beagle Freedom Project's success, I believe, is due in large part to the way in which they approach laboratories. They have written respectful letters to laboratories in the United States, offering to accept any animals the lab is willing to release. The offer is made with no judgment, no accusations, and with no danger of the laboratory being "exposed" or publicized. If any other approach were used, the laboratory would likely not be willing to release the animals.

In mid-December 2013, Kevin participated in his 25th rescue operation, freeing nine beagles from a Minnesota research lab. Raymond was one of the nine, and Kevin took Raymond home for the night. Raymond paced incessantly, stressed from not understanding his new environment, fearful about what might be coming next. Exhausted himself, Kevin wrapped Raymond in a blanket, held him on his chest, and they both settled down for a rest.

Kevin recalls, "The day's full events combined with

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Happy 80th Birthday Jane Goodall

Jane Goodall was born April 3, 1934. Her work observing chimpanzees in the wild has changed many facets of how scientists collect data on wildlife. As a secretary for her mentor and friend Dr. Louis Leaky, Jane was sent out to study chimps in Tanzania in the 1950s. Leaky hoped that by studying chimps in the wild, he could obtain a better understanding of human evolution. He was right. Through patience and persistence, Jane observed her chimp friend David Greybeard using a probe to retrieve termites from a mound. Tool making was considered to be something that happened during human evolution. But there sat Jane, watching intently as David and another chimp she named Goliath, tore large leaves into strips and turned them into probes to place down in the termite holes. The two chimps patiently waited and eventually pulled up the probe and snacked on termites.

This discovery would not have happened without the curiosity and patience of a woman whose love for animals did not surpass her own comfort and safety. Jane's work has opened new avenues for animals not only in the observation of animal behavior, but also in animal conservation, the emotional intelligence of animals, and the need for sustainability. Her program "Roots and Shoots" run through the Jane Goodall Institute www.janegoodall.org is a youth-led organization that allows "young people map their community to identify specific challenges their neighborhoods face. From there, they prioritize the problems, develop a plan for a solution, and take action." This not only empowers young people, but it also keeps them aware of challenges in their communities and makes them understand the need to take responsibility to create change.

What is extraordinary about Jane is her keen insight as a scientist, but also her immense heart. What drives her to continue her work, is her understanding of life's deeper aspects.

In her book *A Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey* published in 1999, Jane writes about a spiritual moment of awakening she experienced, one rarely admitted by scientists of her stature,

All at once the cathedral was filled with a huge volume of sound: an organ playing magnificently for a wedding taking place in a distant corner. Bach's



PHOTO BY MICHAEL NEUGEBAUER WWW.WILDCHIMPANZEES.ORG

JANE GOODALL SITTING WITH THREE CHIMPANZEES

Toccata and Fugue in D Minor. I had always loved the opening theme; but in the cathedral, filling the vastness, it seemed to enter and possess my whole self. It was as though the music itself was alive.

That moment, a suddenly captured moment of eternity, was perhaps the closest I have ever come to experiencing ecstasy, the ecstasy of the mystic. How could I believe it was the chance gyrations of bits of primeval dust that had led up to that moment in time—the cathedral soaring to the sky; the collective inspiration and faith of those who caused it to be built; the advent of Bach himself; the brain, his brain, that translated truth into music; and the mind that could as mine did then, comprehend the whole inexorable progression of evolution? Since I cannot believe this was the result of chance, I hate to admit anti-chance. And so I must believe in a guiding power in the universe—in other words, I must believe in God...

I believed in the spiritual power that, as a Christian, I called God. But as I grew older and learned about different faiths I came to believe that there was, after all, but One God with different names: Allah, Tao, the Creator, and so on. God, for me, was the Great Spirit in Whom we live and move and

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Jane

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have our being.

Understanding the unity of all life and the belief in a guiding power, has underlined much of Jane's work. As a child she was always fascinated by animals. One story from her website states that she went missing for many hours. Her parents actually called the police because they were unable to find her. Jane had tucked herself away in the chicken coop, quietly observing how chickens lay eggs. She was so excited with the discovery that her mother didn't scold her when she finally found her. Instead she let Jane tell her all about her discovery.

One of Jane's childhood companions was her dog Rusty. In her book *My Life with Chimpanzees*, Jane writes about the personalities, the minds, and the emotions of animals, as well stories of Rusty and her friendship with him. It seems from the stories told, Jane did not feel animals were any different than people. It is no wonder that she was at one time interested in Theosophy. The teachings must have provided her some kind of validation to what she was discovering for herself.

At the age of 80, Jane is still actively travelling around the world. On her website it states that she travels 300 days out of the year constantly talking to people about the need to take action so we can save the chimps in Africa as well as the environment that sustains us. We wish Dr. Goodall many more active days ahead and thank and honor her for the extraordinary example she has given so many of us and her tireless effort to make the world a better place. **TOS**

Recommended Reading

BOOKS BY JANE GOODALL

IN THE SHADOW OF MAN (with Hugh van Lawick and David A. Hamburg)

HARVEST FOR HOPE: A GUIDE TO MINDFUL EATING (with Gail Hudson and Gary McAvoy)

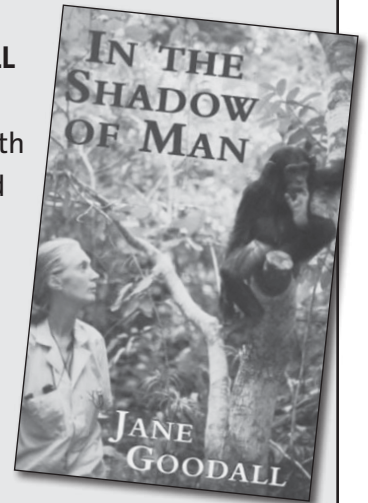
THROUGH A WINDOW: MY THIRTY YEARS WITH THE CHIMPANZEES OF GOMBE

HOPE FOR ANIMALS AND THEIR WORLD: HOW ENDANGERED SPECIES ARE BEING RESCUED FROM THE BRINK (with Thane Maynard and Gail Hudson)

THE TEN TRUSTS: WHAT WE MUST DO TO CARE FOR THE ANIMALS WE LOVE (with Marc Bekoff)

AFRICA IN MY BLOOD: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN LETTERS

SEEDS OF HOPE: WISDOM AND WONDER FROM THE WORLD OF PLANTS (Gail Hudson, Michael Pollan)



Beagle Freedom

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these new comforts of a soft cushion and a warm embrace triggered an instant sleep. For the hour he slept on my chest the reality of his trauma set in. I wanted so much to just make him better, to feel safe, but sadly know that we cannot undo the years of torment he has suffered in a couple hours or even days. His road to recovery would be a long one and he was just starting... but at least he's got this chance though."

Sadly, the vast majority of laboratory research animals will never have a chance at freedom and happiness. Recently, the Beagle Freedom Project introduced legislation

in Minnesota, Michigan, and California which would require that all taxpayer funded labs must offer their dogs and cats up for adoption through animal rescue organizations instead of summarily euthanizing them as is the current standard practice.

Here's something we can all do: "vote with your wallet" by buying products certified as cruelty free. Although the FDA still mandates animal testing on some products, it does not require animal testing on cosmetics. Yet, some companies still test cosmetic products on animals. Please make a monetary statement by purchasing only cruelty-free products. The cruelty of animal research stops...when it stops turning a profit. **TOS**

Where the Wild Things Are

BY ANANYA S. RAJAN

The wildlife found in our backyard can sometimes be our greatest teacher. When we are fortunate enough to have rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, and various types of birds in our yard, we step into a world that is different from our own. As we soon find out, the energy of a wild animal is very different from that of a domesticated one. Wild creatures tend to have a type of nervousness due to the need to be aware of predators. They don't relax



PHOTO: ANANYA S. RAJAN

MEOW MEOW, ONE OF THE FERAL CATS, SUNS HIMSELF ON THE HOOD OF A CAR.

while eating or foraging and often a noise will alarm them, sending them scampering or flying off. They also have their own way of communicating with each other that we often are not privy to unless we spend a great deal of time observing them.

It is said that by watching nature and truly observing it, we can learn more about ourselves than any book can tell us. Nature can be a great teacher if we allow it. What hinders us, however is our reluctance to give what we feel are human emotions and

qualities to the animals we see around us. But as we have discovered from the various articles in this issue, animals are far more like us than different.

While there are many examples of wild animals displaying immense compassion and empathy for their own and other species, the opposite is also true. Certain species may seem to care less for their young than we do, may seem a bit more cunning than we would like to believe ourselves to be, may seem to be more aggressive,

fearful, and so on. When we see these behaviors, we distance ourselves from the wildlife around us, believing ourselves to be more “cultured” or “refined” than them. But sometimes a trait in a particular animal we come across in our

backyard can be a wake-up call for our inner growth.

When I began working with a Native American elder who was a medicine man, one of the first things I was encouraged to do was to renew my relationship with nature and the wildlife around me. At the time, I was a stay at home mom and my mind was always focused on my children. As much I wanted to give my attention to other things, my children's schedules always came first. It became a pattern in my thinking that I was not aware

of until I started sitting in the woods at a forest preserve nearby. Despite meditating every day, I found myself initially unable to quiet my mind while in the woods. I would bring a blanket, find a secluded place under a big pine tree and just sit. I remembered doing the same thing as a child. Sensitive to different energies, I found the woods a soothing protective place to be. But life was now different. I was no longer a child. My mind was busy with schedules, homework, school progress notes, doctor's appointments, and so on. However the more I sat, the longer I sat; the longer I sat, the quieter my mind became. My reward came in the form of a deer that crossed my path unafraid that I was there. I was elated.

About a week later, I shared the story with my teacher who smiled and recommended the book *Animal Speak: The Spiritual and Magical Powers of Creatures Great and Small* by Ted Andrews. “You will be surprised to find out what that animal has to teach you.” I was taken aback. Here I was feeling happy that I had been quiet enough to have a wild animal get close to me, but there was more. I bought a copy of *Animal Speak* and read up on what the deer “medicine” had to teach me. In one of the last paragraphs, Andrews writes, “The deer leads us back to the primal wisdom of those old teachings. . . It may indicate, if the deer has shown up in your life that you have gotten too far away from the role that would be most beneficial for you at this time.” For me personally, this reminded me of the sensitivity I had as a child, my love of the woods, and a need for me to return to nature which I had unknowingly

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Wild Things

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moved away from.

Since the book was published, *Animal Speak* has sold over a half a million copies and those who use it regularly say that they feel it helps them become more aware of inner issues they may not be seeing and giving attention to. We live in a world of energy that connects us to each other and our surroundings. Animals have been teachers to many indigenous populations for centuries because of their close relationship with the earth and the natural surroundings they live in. By quietly understanding the various strengths and qualities of animals, we may find a closer connection to nature and, in turn, ourselves. It is said that when we are able to create this strong connection with nature, certain animals will be our guides or totems. Through these particular guides we are able to understand our own strengths as well the parts of us that

Having the grace 'to accept that which we cannot change and the wisdom to know the difference' is dexterity of the soul.

need improvement.

Many years have passed since that incident with the deer. I now live in a house surrounded by woods. Every day I am visited by deer who continually remind me to be gentle and never take anything for granted, even them. However, I am also humbled by the many other exchanges I have with the various creatures around me. When I moved into my house, I was adopted by three feral cats that have now become a part of my life. Cat energy, according to Andrews, deals with "mystery, magic, and independence." I found this interesting as I was living alone (independence), which allowed me to throw myself deeper into my spiritual life (mystery/unseen), and have a better understanding of my own latent powers within, which can be magical.

It has become apparent that where I live is where I am meant to be. On the day of my closing as well as every time I have had a gathering of people at my house, seven deer have made their appearance on the land. I first thought it was coincidence but then realized that they appeared at random times, not just morning and evening. I felt they were letting others know the land was blessed. This feeling was validated by a seer who visited the property and said rather casually, "This a healing place. Your land is blessed. But I am sure you know this already." I giggled and told her the story of the deer. She responded thoughtfully, "Hmmm... yes, your totem."

Every morning and evening, once the cats are done eating, a raccoon makes her way from under my deck and walks right up to me. I was wary of her at first, but we have since become good friends. In fact when I call the cats for food, she will often come running as well. Sometimes I will find her looking through the window of the door patiently waiting for food. According to Andrews, raccoons teach us "dexterity and disguise." As a homeowner, one must learn to care for things and maintain them. Dexterity is a must, even if it is the dexterity of picking up the phone to call a handyman! But dexterity is also about navigating or moving with grace. In life, are we able to move gracefully from one situation to another, or are we stomping our feet and digging our heels in the sand? We are often the only obstacle to our own happiness.



PHOTO: ANANYA S. RAJAN

A TEACHER OF DISGUISE AND DEXTERITY, "RACCOONIE" WAITS PATIENTLY (AND GRACEFULLY) FOR HER DINNER.



PHOTO FROM WWW.POINTBLUE.ORG

DEER "MEDICINE" CAN TEACH US GENTLENESS AND THE WISDOM TO NEVER TAKE ANYTHING FOR GRANTED. EVEN OURSELVES.

Having the grace "to accept that which we cannot change and the wisdom to know the difference" is dexterity of the soul.

Disguise is often thought of in a negative way. Granted it is when used as a means to trick or deceive others. But the mask of the raccoon can teach us transformation as well which is necessary for our own spiritual progress. Sometimes we need to mask or hide that which is sacred from the profane so it stays sacred. At the same time, the mask can remind us that to progress spirituality we need to be who we are and not care what the world thinks. In other words, to be authentic and not mask who we truly are.

About a year ago, my sisters and I decided to build a sweat lodge on the property. For those who may not know, a sweat lodge is a structure like a wigwam used for prayer, healing, and purification. We had all worked with indigenous elders and wanted to continue our work now that we had the land to do so. As we all came

from different teachings, we decided that we would build the lodge in one fashion, but the ceremony would be eclectic, taking from various traditions, but respectful of each one. This does not hold well for some teachers who are very rigid or orthodox in their ways, so we were a little concerned about the backlash it might produce from other communities. Despite having the blessings from different elders from various traditions, who actually encouraged us to start our community, my sisters and I felt trepidation about our new endeavor. We questioned whether we were knowledgeable enough to start a community, whether we were prepared to play the role of facilitators, and whether we honestly knew what we were getting ourselves into. Once a lodge is built and opened, it breathes its own energy and needs to be cared for. As it is a place of healing, the land around it needs to continually be sanctified through smudging and prayers. This responsibility lies with the person who has the lodge on their

property or a designated caretaker.

The spot we chose for the lodge was under a big oak tree next to a creek. On the morning of our first sweat, we decided to meditate for a few minutes by the water. There in the creek waded a blue heron whose teaching is "aggressive self-determination and self-reliance." I could have wept. Here we were so unsure about what we were doing and questioning ourselves despite the nods we were getting from elders, and there was a blue heron letting us know to stop questioning it all, rely on our own inner knowing, and pave our own path. Needless to say, our community has done quite well and everyone who attends seems to get what they are in need of. We have discovered that what most people are looking for is not tradition but unconditional acceptance and love, two qualities our community imbibes.

While I cannot explain the occurrences mentioned above, I refuse to believe they are coincidences. To me, it would be like saying the world is black and white. When we have a connection to nature, there is more color and joy to life that only those who experience it know. If we believe that there is a unity of all life, then even the smallest creature holds some significance to our human existence. It is up to us to understand that significance so we can understand our relationship to nature and then our relationship to ourselves. A good place to start is where the wild things are. **TOS**

From Our Scholarship Recipients

My name is Nicole Griffin. I am a member of the Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe of North Dakota. I was raised in Minneapolis, MN and lived there with both of my parents and two younger brothers. I have been a resident of South Dakota for the last six years, raising my children and working on my educational goal of becoming an RN. I have a fiancé of 13 years with whom I currently reside and together we have five beautiful children (3 girls and 2 boys, ages 1 to 12). I graduated from high school in 2002 in Minneapolis, MN. I also graduated from WDTI here in Rapid City, SD in 2009 with a diploma as a Health Unit Coordinator/ Patient care technician. I am currently in my 2nd year of nursing school here at Oglala Lakota College of Nursing in hopes of graduating this coming June 2014 with an AA in Nursing. I plan on working on my Bachelor's degree after I graduate to further my education.

I am currently working part-time as a nursing assistant while

attending school in Pine Ridge, South Dakota full-time. (I drive about 200 miles a day from Rapid City, SD just to attend classes weekly in Pine Ridge.) Life has not been easy for me although I have managed to make it this far and have no current plans on giving up. To obtain a degree in Nursing is like a dream come true for me and my family. I have struggled and struggled, but continued to stay strong with many hopes and dreams along the way. I have hit road blocks and shed many of tears along this journey of mine and now I can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. I have a huge support team behind me including my biggest fans who are my children. When I received this letter stating I was a recipient of your wonderful scholarship, I was amazed and shocked. I smiled and got teary eyed on my way home. I just couldn't believe it and was so anxious to let my family know of the great news.

This scholarship means a lot to me and my family. We are very thankful



NICOLE GRIFFIN

to your committee for choosing me as your 2014 scholarship recipient. I also want to thank your committee for working hard to make something like this possible for all the hard working students out there, your work and this gift is very much appreciated, again Thank You so much.

Pilamiya-Thank you.

Nicole Griffin **TOS**

My name is Amy Wilson. I am a member of the Oglala Lakota Tribe. I am the granddaughter of Chief Oliver Red Cloud, who was the Chairman for the Black Hills Treaty Council of the eight bands of the Teton nation. He was also a cultural teacher and spoke of education as important to our people's future. I am also the six generation descendant of the Itacan Mahpiya Luta (Chief Red Cloud; who during his career as War chief and Statesman, founded the Red Cloud Indian School that has educated our Lakota people for over 100 years.) I am 43 years old. I have two sons, Roman and Marcus. Roman 25, graduated from Red Cloud Indian School as a life career student in 2008. My second son Marcus is 20 years old and graduated from Flandreau Indian School in 2011. My only daughter Jorgana is 17 years old and is currently a junior at Red Cloud Indian School. I have been blessed with two grandsons, Kobe King

James, four years old and Marcus Vincent James who just turned two years old. I am also proud to say I have two beautiful daughters-in-law added to my family. My mother is Nancy Red Cloud Perez and my father is Richard Dick Orin Wilson Sr. I have 10 sisters and five brothers. I am a single mother and lived here on the Pine Ridge Reservation all my life. I plan on staying here to work as a Registered Nurse once I graduate and obtain my license.

I received my G.E.D. from Oglala Lakota College (O.L.C.) in September 1990. My first job was at Sioux Nation Shopping Center in 1989. I worked there for a couple of years until I landed a job at the Oglala Lakota Housing Authority in 1992 as a Residential Trainer Counselor. I excelled in that position and was selected to attend Occupancy Specialist training in Chicago, Illinois. I received a certification and started working as an Occupancy Specialist for the Housing

Authority. After five years I took my mother's advice and started college at O.L.C. in 1997. I found that I liked going to college, the atmosphere, the feeling of being productive, learning, and getting an education that would help me to better my life and my little family. I received my Associates of Arts degree in General Business in June 2000, with a G.P.A. of 3.75. I continued my education to obtain my BS in Business Administration in the following three semesters.

Almost two years after I graduated my younger cousin was in a car accident and became a quadriplegic. I received on the job training as a C.N.A. and started working as her personal attendant through a program called Prairie Freedom Center for Independent Living located in Pierre, South Dakota. I worked for two years. At this time my mother had fallen ill and was diagnosed with ESRD (End Stage Renal Disease) and had to be put on dialysis. I received training to help assist her with her treatments, medication administrations, and daily living. In 2002 I needed to find work, so with the skills and experiences I had acquired from helping my mother and cousin I was hired at the Black Hills Dialysis in Pine Ridge as a Patient Care Technician and during this time I became a Certified Hemodialysis Technician. I was grateful for this job which allowed me to help my mother and support my family. Towards the end of 2006 my mother had a massive heart attack and had to have a quadruple bypass. These events brought a lot of changes for me and my family. For one thing, I never thought I would want to work in the healthcare field and yet found myself with a deep satisfaction I've never felt with any other job, but after five years with the dialysis I made a choice to quit working in early 2007 so that I could help her transition from the rehabilitation center to her home. She passed away in April of 2007. I learned a lot from working with the dialysis--the disease process, the struggles the client and family endure, and the effects on the family, financially and emotionally. I felt the loss of a patient but also the joys of a transplant. But most important I realized that compassion is like a medicine to people who are ill and a driving force for people who help others.

These life changing events had deterred my earlier goals as I decided to stay in the healthcare field. During my mothers' illness, she was always urging me to go back to school. My mother was my biggest advocate for education at that time and I could still hear her saying "Amy, you could do and be anything you want to be because you are smart." I believe everything happens for a reason and I know that it hurt her that I put my education on hold because of her illnesses. I can still hear her encouraging me to go back to school as she has always done.



AMY WILSON

In 2009 I started working for the Indian Health Services (I.H.S.) as a Medical Support Assistant (M.S.A.). I really enjoyed the interaction with the clientele. It was satisfying to help others and I found myself wanting to do more. I

was intrigued by the roles of the nurses and the thought of helping others was instilled in me from long ago. As my mother pursued her education, my grandparents helped raise me. I was raised in the traditional ways. I was taught the most important values of being human; respect, generosity, courage, fortitude, and wisdom; by watching and listening to their words and actions growing up. I learned a valuable lesson: always help others in need even if you are having a hard time yourself. The feeling of sharing and caring is immensely calming. Again I made a life changing decision and decided to go back to school and become an R.N.

I want to be in a profession that I can help my community while I will still be able to support my immediate and extended families. I see so much suffering and the need for healthcare professionals right here on the reservation. I am determined to get my R.N. degree. I know I will be a good nurse. I am older and wiser in my decisions and definitely have no regrets to how my life has changed. I believe I will be an excellent nurse because of my experiences as well as my accomplishments.

I am honored to have been selected to receive this most prestigious scholarship for I do love helping others and wholeheartedly believe in "Service to our fellow humans and all of life on our planet." And I will proudly join the healthcare teams and be "a union of those who love, in the service of all that suffers."

I am honored to accept this scholarship that will help me during my last few months before I can proudly say I am an R.N.

Pila Maya ye! (Thank You).

Amy Wilson **TOS**

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