

A Matter of Energy

Our success at any job, individually or collectively, is largely a matter of energy. First, there's physical energy. How many miles can we drive? How many days a week we can work? And how many nights can we stay awake without collapsing?

Pets & Wildlife

By Roger Caras

Then there is psychological energy. That is a little more complicated. How many tears can we shed and still retain an effective level of useable anger? How forceful can we be in a hearing? A debate? A fight? Some people refer to this as *soul*, others as intelligence, and still others as emotions. It is all three—and then some extra ingredients.

If my original premise is right, success at any job depends in large part on the amount of physical and psychological energy we can bring to bear on the task. Rationing of energy is the key. How judiciously we use what we have decides the issue.

It is my second premise in this column that those of us who flatter ourselves with the label *Humanitarian* had better consider this matter carefully. I think we are not always judicious and I think we sap our own strength by wasting our own energy. That hurts our cause—specifically the animals we care about suffer because of it. Not one of us has the right to take force, power and chances for success away from any fight the outcome of which will spell the difference between agony and well-being, peace and terror for the animals we have sworn to protect.

And how do we come to waste this energy? By being self-righteous, by fighting among ourselves, by being, at times, so holy that we will not sit and talk with people with whom we do not agree. I have seen this and so have most of you.

Take hunting. Some time back I shocked some members of The HSUS at a conference by saying I counted a number of hunters among my friends. I met with hunters regularly and I was as exposed to their thoughts as they were to mine. I did not condemn everything they did, nor can I in all honesty say they are wrong in *everything* they believe. Many hunters work for *some* of the same ends I do. I will not deny my cause that energy by being so right on other issues that I will not sit down and talk quietly

and rationally. Not every conversation accomplishes good and not every confrontation, however well intentioned, lowers a barrier, but I certainly have never known one-to-one-ism to hurt.

I do not like what trappers do. And, I do not like the business of furriers. However, I have sat with both. I do not like puppy mills but I listen to what their owners have to say. There is much about rodeo that I detest (*not* all of it, just some of it) but I correspond with rodeo officials and I have lunched with them. (Other social barriers have kept me from enjoying the intellectually stimulating company of coon-on-a-log folks so there are corners I have missed.)

There are members of the humane community who are frauds. I avoid them. And there are members (and some leaders) of our cause that are hang-fire between frauds and sincere workers. They do some good, but they claim too much. I don't deny them. I sit with them. There are people in the research world who use animals badly, but I sit with them because I learn from them. They are, I think, quite willing to learn about our concerns.

I am not suggesting that any principles be sacrificed or even softened. I hold now as I always have to the single premise that guides me (and you have heard it before,) *It is wrong to cause pain and it is wrong to cause fear. Allowing either when it is within your power to stop it is as bad as causing it.* If you can accept that then you must ask yourself, How can I practically bring the most energy to bear on the problem before me? I would suggest that (1) you enlist any energy from any outside source you can find. And (2) you conserve your own energy by directing it to the problem and not to the other people pulling on the same rope even if some of them are only using one hand. To continue with the rope analogy and to go back again to enlisting whatever aid is to be had, if I were drowning and someone tossed me a rope, I would grab it. I might be surprised if I looked up and saw the Devil on the dock, but I would still take the rope.

I think the animals would benefit if many of us stopped being so almighty right and spent more time enlisting and judiciously applying all the energy there was to be had.

