

# PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

## Farewell, Phyllis Wright

*No animal advocate was more dedicated or devoted*

**T**he animal-protection community lost a friend and a leader on October 3 with the death of Phyllis Wright. As the many tributes received by the society eloquently testify, Phyllis was a shining light in the animal-protection movement and an inspiration to many who work in the field.

Phyllis's style of humor, blunt forthrightness, and dedication to the job at hand left an indelible impression on all who met her and worked with her. Her uncanny ability to cut to the heart of the matter and get the job done for the animals inspired efforts and achievements that would not have been possible without her encouragement and support.

Phyllis's love of animals was a constant throughout her life. Her life's work always involved animals; she worked with military dogs during the Korean War and later operated her own kennels. Later still she managed the Washington, D.C., Animal Rescue League and served as a board member of the nonprofit D.C. Tail Waggers Animal Clinic. Phyllis served as the Prince George's County animal-control commissioner for seven years, and was a founder of the Montgomery County Animal Shelter, in her home state of Maryland.

Phyllis joined the staff of The HSUS in 1969, and in 1975 became our chief liaison with animal shelters. In 1983 she was named vice president, Companion Animals, and served with passion and commitment until her retirement in 1991.

Once Phyllis arrived on the national scene, she never stopped moving. She traveled throughout the country testifying before state and local legislatures and speaking at professional meetings. She logged hundreds of thousands of miles inspecting shelters and conducting training workshops. Her intense influence brought animal-control and shelter professionals

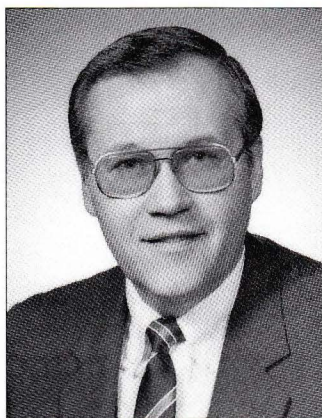
together in innovative and creative ways, enabling all she touched to know they were giving their time in an important and compassionate endeavor.

Phyllis was instrumental in nationwide efforts to improve euthanasia methods; at the same time, she worked diligently on pet-overpopulation control, which would lessen the need for euthanasia. Under her leadership, in 1978 The HSUS launched *Shelter Sense*, a publication designed to encourage and enable the hard-working people she cared so much about. The Animal Control Academy and countless other initiatives to increase the professionalism of animal-control and shelter-management personnel were begun during her oversight of the HSUS Companion Animals section.

Upon Phyllis's retirement, HSUS Chief Executive John A. Hoyt wrote, "No advocate for animals has been more dedicated or devoted to her calling than Phyllis Wright, and few will be her peers in the years ahead. She has inspired and motivated an army of people who have joined the battle of those seeking to free animals from abuse and suffering and create a world in which cruelty is replaced by compassion."

Yet her contributions, great and many as they are, do not tell the whole story. Her special gift resided in her spirit, in her love for animals and for the people who work to help them. This gift she freely offered to each of us in this movement, and it is this gift we share and pass on.

As we mark Phyllis's passing, we also acknowledge her presence in our continuing effort to protect animals. Surely her life reminds us that the work of our hands makes a difference and that the hours and days of our lives invested in caring for Creation and its creatures are efficacious. From the perspective of animal protection, Phyllis left this world better than she found it. I can think of no higher tribute. ■



Paul G. Irwin, President

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Paul G. Irwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.