Natural Progression

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IN 1973, I saw a young woman named Jane Goodall speak about her work in East Africa. Dr. Goodall emotionally described the complex lives and distinct personalities of the chimpanzees she had come to know in the wild. By the end of her lecture, there wasn’t a dry eye in the audience—and my own eyes were wide open to the fact that these animals were not commodities to be used without regard.

Six years later, I became acquainted with The HSUS through my mentor, John Fish, who was responsible for writing and installing the software for the organization’s first computers. Like many others at The HSUS then and now, John was a behind-the-scenes master of economizing and organizing. He knew how to utilize every donated dollar effectively, and I admired him greatly. Tragically, John’s heart gave out suddenly in 1983, when he was only 42 years old. Stunned by his death but sensing the need to continue his efforts, I came to The HSUS to take his place.

Now 23 years later, I have had the honor to work under John Hoyt, Paul Irwin, and Wayne Pacelle—three visionary leaders who each inspire staff members to reflect on the greater goal of creating a truly humane society. Wayne reminds us to ask ourselves at the end of each day what we have done to improve the lives of animals. I take this very much to heart.

During my years with The HSUS, my responsibilities have grown and changed, allowing ever more ways to help ever more animals. Most recently, thanks to The HSUS’s union with The Fund for Animals, my duties grew to include oversight of our animal care centers on the East and West Coasts and at the Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch. At these facilities staff members rescue, rehabilitate, and provide sanctuary for animals in need. After many years behind the scenes, my position now includes working directly with the animals. I can’t overstate the satisfaction this brings.

Sometimes changing society seems a slow process. When that’s the case, I think back to the days when spaying and neutering pets was the exception rather than the rule; when shelters as a matter of course sold dogs and cats to laboratories for use in testing; when cockfighting and dogfighting were either legal or treated as minor infractions in most states; and when consumers rarely considered how meat and dairy products were produced. The HSUS has been a part of virtually every change, and I’ve been right there to help. Could there be a better way to spend one’s professional life?

When I look into the eyes of the three chimpanzees who have a home at Black Beauty Ranch, I am reminded of the importance of ending the need for sanctuaries in the first place. I also remember Dr. Goodall’s lecture, and I’m grateful again to her for getting me to think about the plight of animals all those years ago—something I now do every day.

—Katherine B. Liscomb, Vice President, Administration and Animal Care Centers

We collected more than 275,000 signatures in Michigan to secure a spot on the ballot in November to ban dove hunting in the state for good.

We led regional projects to protect box turtles and other animals from coast to coast.

We continued our Canada goose management program in cities across the country, and our Goose Tracks newsletter kept local volunteers updated on the latest developments. As part of our Reptiles as Pets campaign, we worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on joint materials to educate the public about risks posed by the pet reptile trade.

And with new sanctuaries and protective agreements established during the year, The HSUS Wildlife Land Trust is involved in the...