

Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

December 2002

Caring for Animals

By Aleta Daley Okolicsanyi

Mahatma Gandhi once wrote: "I judge the greatness of a nation and its moral progress by the way it treats its weakest members—its animals." That the Philippines has a long way to go in its treatment of animals is vividly evidenced by the continuing plight of countless defenseless cats and dogs. In both rich and poor areas, the population of stray dogs and cats are too high, resulting in overcrowding and various methods of killing the unwanted animals. How many of us have heard tales of finding kittens left to drown in a bucket or suffocate in a bag? These

are common experiences in villages like Magallanes, Bel Air, Dasmarias, and Forbes to name a few. In poorer areas, people share overcrowded shanties with numerous dogs and cats and dogs are sometimes beaten, killed, and eaten for special occasions. How many people injure themselves to the hungry and sick animals they see by reasoning that they are strays, and there are many hungry children and adults in this country?

Yasmin Jadwani, the evening's speaker, has lived in the Philippines since 1983. Born and raised in India, Yasmin received her Masters in International History from New Delhi University, married a third-generation Indian Filipino, and settled in Metro Manila. In 1992 Yasmin started her

"You haven't seen poverty until you've been to my country," Yasmin says. **"Yet on one of the busiest streets of Delhi you see stacks of bananas left for the monkeys as well as a simple, little shelter someone built for them."**

own business, Masbat Trading, which imports and exports fine textiles. Despite her many responsibilities, Yasmin has been a seasoned animal welfare advocate for the past fifteen years. Since 1992 she has been a lifetime member of Compassion Unlimited Plus Action-Bangalore (CUPA) in India and was formerly a member of the Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS). Coming from a poor nation, Yasmin has been challenged frequently on her commitment. "You haven't seen poverty until you've been to my

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Why do they behave that way?

...love of cattle translated directly into love of human life, not by symbol but by practice. Cattle had to be treated like human beings because human beings who ate their cattle were one step away from eating each other.

— Marvin Harris

A wide variety of cultural phenomena is explained by anthropologist Marvin Harris using cultural materialist theories. These phenomena include male supremacy and warfare, Christianity, food taboos. An illustrative example is his discussion of the phenomenon of the sacred cow in India, in his book *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches*:

"The tabooing of beef was the cumulative result of the individual decisions of millions and millions of farmers, some of whom were better able

than others to resist the temptation of slaughtering their livestock because they strongly believed that the life of a cow or an ox was a holy thing. Those who held such beliefs were much more likely to hold onto their farms, and to pass them on to their children, than those who believed differently...

Under the periodic duress of droughts caused by failures of the monsoon rains, the individual farmer's love of cattle translated directly into love of human life, not by symbol but by practice. Cattle had to be treated like human beings because human beings who ate their cattle were one step away from eating each other. To this day, monsoon farmers who yield to temptation and slaughter their cattle seal their doom. They can never plow again even when the rains fall. They must sell their farms and migrate to the cities. Only those who would starve rather than eat an ox or cow can survive a season of scanty rains." ■

Next MWF Meeting

When: Monday, December 9, 2002, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Jenny Wallum's home, 1665 Dasmarias Avenue, Dasmarias Village, Makati

What: Cheli Banta will speak about her current doctoral research that involves teaching poor Filipino children to use their innate musical ability to earn a living. A group of eight Grade 4 students (age 9 and 10) from Tondo will demonstrate what they've learned so far.

Bring: A contribution to the potluck dinner.

Jan. meeting: January 20, 2003



Voice of the Chair

By Lisa Kircher Lumbao

Desiderata

As the Christmas and New Year holidays approach and Muslims are celebrating Ramadan, it is a good time to reflect on the meaning of life and the way we approach our lives and live them. I'd like to share my favorite poem with you... "Desiderata."

My dad suggested I read it for my high school graduation ceremony, so I memorized and practiced it. But during the auditions, I looked up from the page and then lost my place when I looked back down! I guess that, or maybe the serious nature of the poem, was reason for the committee to instead choose speakers who talked about "what fun we all had in high school." Ugh. Years later my boyfriend (now husband) gave me a Desiderata poster on our second date...it was a sign we were meant to be together!

The poster, and the framed copy I now have on my wall, says it was found on the front of Old St. Paul's Church, dated 1692. But a little research on the Internet reveals it was written in 1927 by Max Ehrmann (1872-1945).

The confusion arose because in 1956, the rector of St. Paul's Church in Baltimore, Maryland, used the poem in a collection of mimeographed inspirational material for his congregation and failed to mention the original author. The copies had 1692 written on them because that was the founding date of the church and had nothing to do with the poem.

More evidence for the importance of acknowledging sources and respecting copyrights!! We try our best to do that with the MWF newsletter, honest!

Desiderata

By Max Ehrmann

Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.

As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.

Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit.

If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.

Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.

Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery.

But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection.

Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here.

Ababy is God's opinion that life should go on. Never will a time come when the most marvelous recent invention is as marvelous as a newborn baby. The finest of our precision watches, the most super-colossal of our supercargo planes don't compare with a newborn baby in the number and ingenuity of coils and springs, in the flow and change of chemical solutions, in timing devises and interrelated parts that are irreplaceable.

— Carl Sandburg

Remember This at Christmas Time

According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer each year, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter, usually late November to mid-December. Female reindeer retain their antlers till after they give birth in the spring. Therefore, according to every historical rendition depicting Santa's reindeer, *every* single one of them, from Rudolph to Blitzen, had to be a girl. We should've known. *Only* women would be able to drag a fat-ass man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night and not get lost. ■

The Manila Women's Forum

The Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, Treasurer, and Newsletter. **Penny Poole**, Programs, Newsletter. **Beaulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 818-2887 or 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com for more information about MWF.

kaWOMen

Selected and Edited by Beaulah P. Taguiwalo

Here's something that came my way recently, so I thought I'd end the year on this note.

Somehow We Survived

From the e-mail circuit

You are probably over thirty five if you get this. You lived as a child in the 60s or the 70s. Looking back, it's hard to believe that we have lived as long as we have.

As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags. Riding in the back of a pickup truck on a warm day was always a special treat. Our baby cribs were covered with bright colored lead-based paint.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, doors, or cabinets, and when we rode our bikes, we had no helmets. (Not to mention hitchhiking to town as a young kid!)

We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle. Horrors.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then rode down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes. After running into the bushes a few times we learned to solve the problem.

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on. No one was able to reach us all day. No cell phones.



Women's Voices, Women's Faces

If I had to give young writers advice, I'd say don't listen to writers talk about writing.

— Lillian Hellman

Unthinkable.

We played dodge-ball and sometimes the ball would really hurt. We got cut and broke bones and broke teeth and there were no law suits from these accidents. They were accidents. No one was to blame but us. Remember accidents?

We had fights and punched each other and got black and blue and learned to get over it. We ate cupcakes, bread and butter, and drank sugar soda but we were never overweight—we were always outside playing.

We shared one grape soda with four friends, from one bottle and no one died from this. We did not have Play Stations, Nintendo 64, X Boxes, video games at all, 99 channels on cable, video tape movies, surround sound, personal cellular phones, personal computers, internet chat rooms—we had friends. We went outside and found them.

We rode bikes or walked to a friend's home and knocked on the door, or rung the bell or just walked in and talked to them. Imagine such a thing. Without asking a parent! By ourselves! Out there in the cold cruel world! Without a guardian.

How did we do it?

We made up games with sticks and tennis balls and ate worms and although we were told it would happen, we did not put out very many eyes, nor did the worms live inside us forever. Little League had tryouts and not everyone made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment. Some students weren't as smart as others so they failed a grade and were held back to repeat the same grade. Horrors. Tests were not adjusted for any reason.

Our actions were our own. Consequences were expected. No one to hide behind. The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke a law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law, imagine that!

This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers and problem solvers and inventors, ever. The past 50 years has been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all.

And you're one of them.

Congratulations!

Please pass this on to others that have had the luck to grow up as kids, before lawyers and government regulated our lives, for our own good.



Caring for Animals (*From page 1*) country," Yasmin says. "Yet on one of the busiest streets of Delhi you see stacks of bananas left for the monkeys as well as a simple, little shelter someone built for them." Animals and humans live in comfortable proximity, which is underscored by the belief that we human beings belong to the earth and not the earth to us.

Yasmin and I started Compassion and Responsibility Towards Animals-Philippines (CARA-PHILS) a year and a half ago because we felt that an alternative approach was needed to the animal shelter focus of past efforts. Chances are that the animals in a shelter will never be adopted, so it is just a matter of time before they will have to be killed. Moreover, the best shelters are no substitute for a real home.

The goals of CARA-PHILS are two-fold: Animal Birth Control and Education. Our mission is to improve not only the welfare of these animals, but resolve the problems that arise from the human/animal proximity in the most humane and compassionate way: spaying and neutering. This solution also happens to be the most effective as experience in other countries like India and the United States has shown. Yasmin explained that in addition to the moral issue of euthanasia, killing unwanted cats and dogs has not proven effective in reducing the population. In ten years two cats and their offspring, assuming two litters a year with two kittens surviving per litter, can produce

80,399 cats. As for the average female dog, she can give birth to more than 120 puppies in her lifetime of 10 years. In 1993 Bangalore had 500,000 stray dogs despite its program to round up and kill dogs every month. After a large-scale spaying and neutering program was undertaken, the population dropped to 80,000—a much more manageable number for the city.

An important reason to decrease the population of dogs and cats is to reduce the incidence of rabies. Next to India and Sri Lanka, the Philippines ranks third in the world in having the greatest number of human deaths from rabies. As long as the animal population continues to increase, it will always exceed the number of rabies inoculations.

In addition to implementing a major spaying and neutering program, CARA-PHILS has been giving presentations at schools. The aim is to educate the young on the responsible and caring treatment of animals. Studies have shown that owning pets can be important in character development. Children learn to love unselfishly. Unfortunately, when a family doesn't take care of the pet properly, abandons it, or kills it, the children learn a very harsh lesson about what happens to the weakest members in this society.

CARA-PHILS' initial mission is to improve conditions for our domestic cats and dogs, and eventually the environment. The Philippines has the highest rate of loss of flora and fauna in the world. Yet how can a person

begin to care about the endangered Philippine eagle or the tarsier if he/she can't feel compassion for a dog or cat? These ordinary animals have been an integral part of the human community for thousands of years. In the meantime, CARA is working to secure a space where we can offer free spaying/neutering and low cost veterinary care; a van for a mobile clinic that can travel to the lower income areas; and to persuade the government to disseminate information about spaying and neutering.

"He who prayeth well, loveth well/
Both man and bird and beast/He
who prayeth best loveth best/All
creatures great and small/For the
dear God who loveth us/He made
and loveth all." Samuel Taylor
Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient
Mariner.* ■

*For more information about CARA,
spaying and neutering services, and
educational materials, contact
Aleta at 852-6808 or
okolicsa@info.com.ph or Yasmin at
638-5544 or masbat@asia.com.
Please note that they both have
rescued numerous dogs and cats
and cannot accommodate any more
in their crowded homes!*

*Aleta Daley Okolicsanyi is an
American editor and literary agent
who has lived in the Philippines for
four years. She is an animal lover
who comes from a long family
tradition of caring for and rescuing
animals.*

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