

Save The Animals  
And Children



# Save The Animals And Children

by Wendy



Swiatek Press

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First Edition

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to all the animals on the earth,  
two- and four-legged ones

also published by Swiatek Press

*wake up – it's time for your sleeping pill*

*Take Back The Earth – The Dumb,  
Greedy Incompetents Have Trashed It*

*Press 1 For Pig Latin*

*This War Won't Cost Much –  
I'm Already Against The Next One*

*here's your free gift – send \$10 for shipping*

*Mirror, Mirror, On My Car*

*The Joy Of Life Cookbook*

## Introduction by Robert S. Swiatek

On too many occasions, we see people – two-legged beings – being compared to animals. Someone is said to be a *pig* or a *workhorse*. Others might be compared to a *fish* in their drinking habits while another is called a *shark* – and he’s not a lawyer. These aren’t very flattering comparisons. If someone is said to be as gentle as a *lamb*, she should be content, but that is an exception. In too many instances, the analogy is an insult even to the four-legged creature.

Many people underestimate the intelligence of animals, whether those in the forest, in any body of water or in the air. Perhaps they give their pets the credit they deserve in this regard, but they still may look down on them. This has more to do with the fact that Barney and Oscar are so close to the ground.

Some will say that four-legged animals can’t talk, but they certainly can communicate and don’t need to be told when to end a conversation. Someone was reported to have said, “Quit talking while I’m interrupting!” In our world today, too

many people seem to be speaking without saying anything. Animals are deprived of that opportunity.

In addition, the way language has been butchered, violated and abused, maybe more people should exercise restraint, or at least do it justice. We hear men and women dropping the last letter of words, using vulgar language – granted, it is a language, but not a very good one – unable to spell simple words and leaving out punctuation and verbs when they write, if they can write at all. Some people create their own words, and they're not writers. Those creative geniuses are allowed that option.

Certainly, four-legged creatures prey on other smaller animals, but they have to eat, or they won't survive. Some animals are vegetarians – that's why they're so healthy. Men and women with guns and bows and arrows also go hunting deer and wild turkeys, but in many cases, return with nothing for the kitchen table. If they bag something but do it only for the sport of it, that's not very nice.

Pets benefit their owners, but in return, those four-legged animals are fed, petted and receive more than that from their masters. The same can be said for the relationship between humans and the creatures of the forest. Everyone gets along and just as men and women can sense another by his or her actions, the same applies to the birds, deer and wild turkeys in the preserve and two-legged animals out



for a hike. This symbiosis also exists between man, beast and the ecosystem, where the tiniest organism as well as the massive humpback whale all contribute to the big picture. The loss of one element could spell disaster for the planet.

This is the first book from Swiatek Press that doesn't have my name on the front cover. That's why I'm writing this now. It's about animals and corporations that misbehave and pollute the earth. In the process they endanger all the animals – two- and four-legged ones. Though the setting is Western New York with all its health problems and toxic areas, sadly, other parts of the country and world are experiencing much of the same pain.

*Save The Animals And Children* is also about the intelligence of the former, which may be taken for granted or not even acknowledged. It's a book for children, a sophisticated one, not x-rated. You won't find vulgarity, violence, sex and gore here, but you should find some insight and experience a few laughs. Adults are welcome to read it, even if they aren't sophisticated.

I feel Wendy has done a good job in her first book. She's not famous, but just like Cher, Bono and Beyoncé, her last name isn't necessary. If any animal feels left out, it'll be in the sequel. Of course, those slighted could go to the library and ask the librarian for a book about their species.

If you liked the book, tell others. Don't stop

there. Become involved. Read, join environmental groups and make some changes in your life to save resources of the earth. Instead of driving or being driven somewhere, think about walking or biking. Every little effort can make a great difference in order to *Save The Animals And Children.*

# 1

As soon as Charles came home, Natalie said, “Pack your bags – I won the lottery.”

“Should I pack winter or the Caribbean?” was Charles reply.

It wasn’t long before Natalie responded, “It doesn’t matter. Get out!”

Those words didn’t really come from my mom and dad since Natalie – named after the actress whose last name was “Wood” – and Charles, who live in Elma, a suburb of Buffalo, New York, are woodchucks. Moreover, they love each other. Some creatures call my dad, Chuck, but I respect my parents. I’m Wendy. If my mom entered a 7-11 store and tried to buy a lottery ticket, the person

behind the counter wouldn't take her money, but her furry hide instead.

I begin with this incident because this is my first book and I need to keep you interested. My publisher said to always begin a book with something that grabs the reader. What my mom really said was, "Charles, we need to find a new place to live as some conglomerate will soon level our home and build high-priced condominiums."

This practice has been going on for years as animals, and people, too, are kicked out of their homes so that businessmen can make big money on overpriced housing units. The former residents can't afford to buy into the development and I don't have to tell you of respectable raccoons – there are some – beavers, wild turkeys, robins and deer and their chances of hanging around. For rats and cockroaches, that's another story.

"What should we do?" asked Natalie.

"Maybe we should talk to my cousin Phil, you know, the rodent who resides in East Aurora on West Blood Road. His mountain is quite spacious so we won't be intruding. All we have to do is bring him some wine and do a little digging."

I couldn't help but say, "But dad, wouldn't that be giving in to the developers?"

"Wendy, we appreciate your concern and never-say-die attitude, but we're hardly a match for the back hoes and earthmovers," said my mom.

“Dear, maybe we could do both by moving near cousin Phil while simultaneously not giving in. Doing the latter would mean getting organized and finding allies. We shouldn’t rule out help from two-legged animals,” replied Charles.

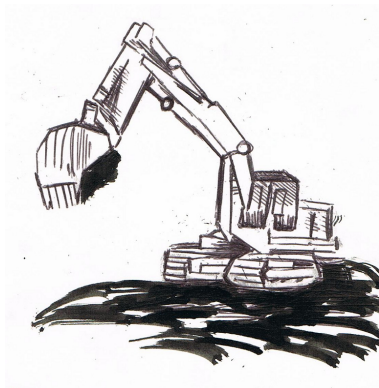
“I’m not crazy about rubber, but we could frustrate the corporations by chewing on some tires,” I said.

My mother replied, “Both of you are onto something.”

“Just when I thought our home was just the way we like it, along come big business to force us to move and start all over. I just realized that I’ll have to get a new set of tools,” said my father.

My mom knew it was close to that time, so she said, “Let’s head out for dinner. I found a nice patch of lettuce and carrots that should suffice. Who needs red meat? Besides, I think the owner’s gun is being repaired.”





## 2

I have a relative named Bucky who lives in the Pacific Northwest. You may have guessed that he's a beaver. From my cousin's name, you may be thinking of the comic strip character in *Get Fuzzy*, but he's not like him at all. He may not be that funny or Republican, but he's a decent person and a cousin somewhat removed – don't ask me what that means as I can understand brothers, sisters and cousins, but that's the extent of my comprehension. I think he works on building dams, but he doesn't work for corporate America or the government, so there's no concern about cost overruns. He does small projects since he carries no tools, and what he builds is fine with nature. Not only does it not impact the planet, it probably is good for it as he provides resources for other creatures. His work benefits his brethren in the forest.

When it comes to projects like the Hoover Dam and Boulder Dam, Bucky wouldn't have had a thing to do with either. Both have done more harm



than good over the long run. The flood problems in the Midwest a few years ago wouldn't have occurred except for the attempt to change nature by unnecessary projects such as the construction of dams.

Studies have shown that electric power can be generated without a single dam. All that has to be done is to harness the energy of a raging river in some way. A great example of this is something in our own back yard, Niagara Falls. No dam was necessary for the Power Project to harness its power. Granted, most rivers are a great deal calmer, but with a bit of ingenuity, electricity can result from any body of water that flows from one point to another.

William Kamkwamba is an amazing young man who generated electricity in his windmill project in Malawi. You can read about this in the book he wrote, with the help of Bryan Mealer, *The Boy Who Harnessed The Wind*. It's a wonderful story of love, genius, family, struggling people, ambition, hope and inspiration.

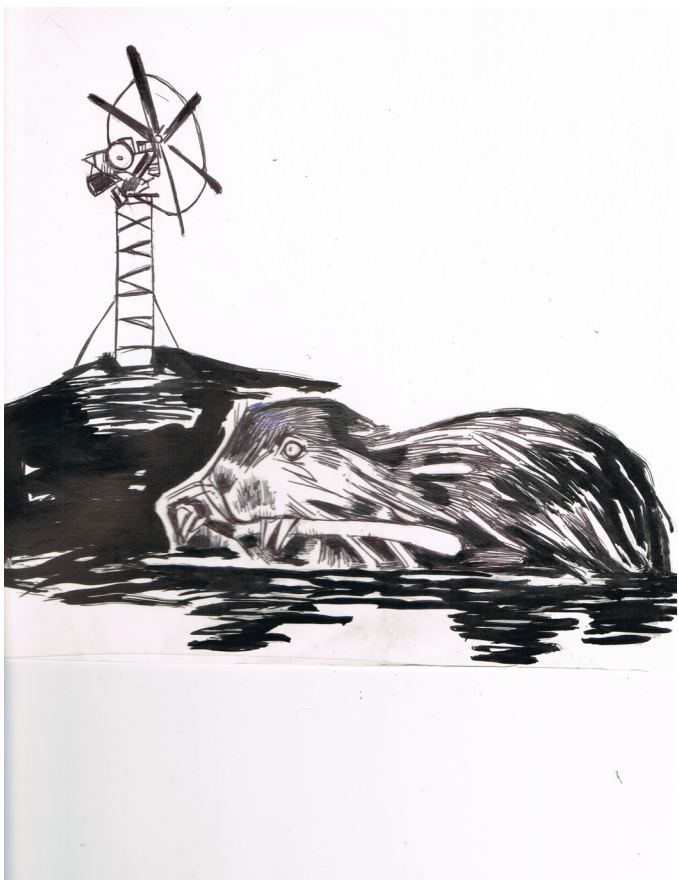
With those river obstructions, salmon have a tough time making the trip upstream – but somehow they manage. It's so much more of a challenge when a dam gets in their way. It wouldn't surprise me if on running into this obstruction, they utter the expletive that almost corresponds to its name – except they add an “n” at the end. Spelling does

count.

Before constructing any new dams, serious other options should be considered. Some of the dams can stay, with a small amount of remediation. This can save some money and make use of what's already there. In other cases, the best alternative may be to remove the structure. Each case demands different solutions.

Bucky offered this comment, "It's true that the construction of a dam does have some benefit to the area, but engineers never weighed in with the thought of what bad resulted from their efforts. Maybe a bit more planning and research could have convinced others that alternatives should have been considered."

A great story of the challenge that we have to control the number of dams built can be found in Bruce Barcott's 2009 book, *The Last Flight Of The Scarlet Macaw*. More will be related about that beautiful bird later. Sharon Motola challenges the corporate criminals as well as the government in Belize in order to save the habitat for this wondrous creature. Her struggle is filled with pitfalls, disappointment, but not without hope and redemption. You'll laugh, cry and be better after reading Barcott's gem, which you may find difficult to put down.





# 3

I have no brothers or sisters, but I have a few friends in the animal kingdom. Annabel and Purrrl live at the same address, having the same masters, Lucille and Hank. Annabel is a beagle and she might be a relative of the world's most famous one, Snoopy. Who wouldn't want to be a relative of that guy? Annabel lives in Buffalo and Purrrl is her companion. She's a tiger cat, but gentle as a lamb. Who says we can't all get along? Speaking of which, you may have heard Woody Allen's comment, "the lamb laid down with the lion, but didn't get much sleep." Some say that one of Purrrl's relatives is Garfield, whom you may have seen in the Sunday comics – I'm not so sure about that.

On occasion, humans are compared to animals, but that may be an unfair comparison. After all, men and women go after each other with knives, guns and weapons of mass destruction – I hope they stop at sharp instruments – killing each other. On the other hand, animals have predators, who need to eat to survive. If they aren't herbivores, they themselves are predators, who go after other creatures for nourishment.

Some humans doubt the intelligence of the animal kingdom, but numerous examples over the years prove otherwise. On one occasion, Annabel found Lucy on the floor one summer day – and she wasn't praying or playing craps – so she proceeded to the screen door leading outside and commenced barking. Annabel may be small but her bark is king-sized and Joe, the next-door neighbor could not help hear the yelping. He came to the rescue and saved Lucille, who fainted, but whose condition could have been life-threatening.

“Did you see that show about the danger that cancer poses to pets?” Purrrl asked Annabel.

“No, I didn't – I was in the kitchen since a beagle has to eat – three or four meals a day is a good start. What was the concern?”

“The air, water and land are contaminated by chemicals and toxins which can cause sickness and more dire consequences to four-legged furry pets. Since we're so close to the ground, we're more

at risk. Imagine how a dachshund feels,” added Purrl.

Annabel replied, “I noticed the Chemlawn guys spraying the grass in t-shirts and shorts, who seemed to have no concern for the chemicals they were spraying on the ground. Then they put up signs warning people to stay away for forty-eight hours or so. What’s wrong with this picture?”

“People want the perfect green lawn but don’t realize that adding toxic chemicals makes it imperfect. This is a case where *green* is not a good thing. A yard that has dandelions – there’s that reference to the animal kingdom again – wild strawberries, clover and wild flowers may even have a bit more color, but at least you can lay down on it.

“It’s safer for us critters, too,” added Annabel.

“Maybe humanity has reached the level of intelligence as exhibited in the 2006 Luke Wilson movie, *Ideocracy*, where the *brightest* person has the smarts of a butter bean. It’s not an encouraging picture.”

“It certainly isn’t,” replied Annabel. “There are too many instances of pets dying of cancer. I’m sure those in the wild are victims as well. The cause is obvious. What do we do about it?”

“I should become an indoor cat, but that wouldn’t protect me from the poisons inside any

house. Pressure treated lumber decks and blue vinyl siding may make a maintenance-free home, but each is a huge threat to the humans, animals and the earth. The arsenic in that kind of lumber is very unhealthy and dangerous. A house that is sided with blue vinyl that catches fire would devastate a large area. Besides, making that product poses huge risks to the workers creating it. Neither of those two products should be used in any building. In fact, both should be banned from the construction industry.”

“Thanks for the encouragement, Purrrl. Whenever I’m outside, I do my duty quickly, and by my actions send a message to Lucille and Hank about the chemical sprayed on lawns, fruit trees and gardens. Somehow I get the feeling that they are aware of the problem.

“That’s all we can do,” said Purrrl.







# 4

Just as people have friends and relatives all across the country – many of whom they like and get along with – I have other friends in different areas of Western New York. Dan and Denise reside in the Reinstein Woods and they are four-legged, related to those animals pulling Santa’s sleigh. Dan is a buck and Denise is a doe, and they do a great deal of hiding during hunting season – bow and arrow as well as shotgun.

Originally the private preserve of Dr. Victor Reinstein, who added ponds and more trees to the property, the state of New York assumed control of this 292-acre area off Como Park Boulevard near Bellevue, a section of Cheektowaga. That took

place in 1986 and that's the good news. The bad is that Bellevue is known for a stone quarry, a few landfills and an asphalt-producing facility. Led by Donna Hosmer and John Stonefield, who worked diligently for the Cheektowaga Citizens Coalition, people have been fighting these businesses for years and it has yet to end.

If you look at the high rates of sickness and death in the area – asthma, auto-immune disease, lupus and various forms of cancer, you will probably blame the industry in the neighborhood. The massive trucks hauling stone from the quarry run on diesel fuel, which isn't very healthy for anyone nearby. The particulates in the air cause asthma, which can be found at a higher rate than in almost any other location in the Buffalo area. Close to the entrance, which is the exit as well, can be found a day-care center. Neither the children nor the teachers are safe being there. Producing asphalt is harmful, too. Nearby, the landfills may be capped, but capped fills have been known to leak and emit toxic poisons into the air and water and onto the land, affecting the health of the four- and two-legged animals there. It is rumored that the anthrax-flavored desk of Tom Brokaw can be found in one of the landfills there – you may have thought he wanted it as a souvenir for his study when he retired. Environmentalists who care for the people and the neighborhood have even more damaging

evidence about those evil companies. These corrupt corporations continue with their lust for the almighty dollar, having no concern for the community.

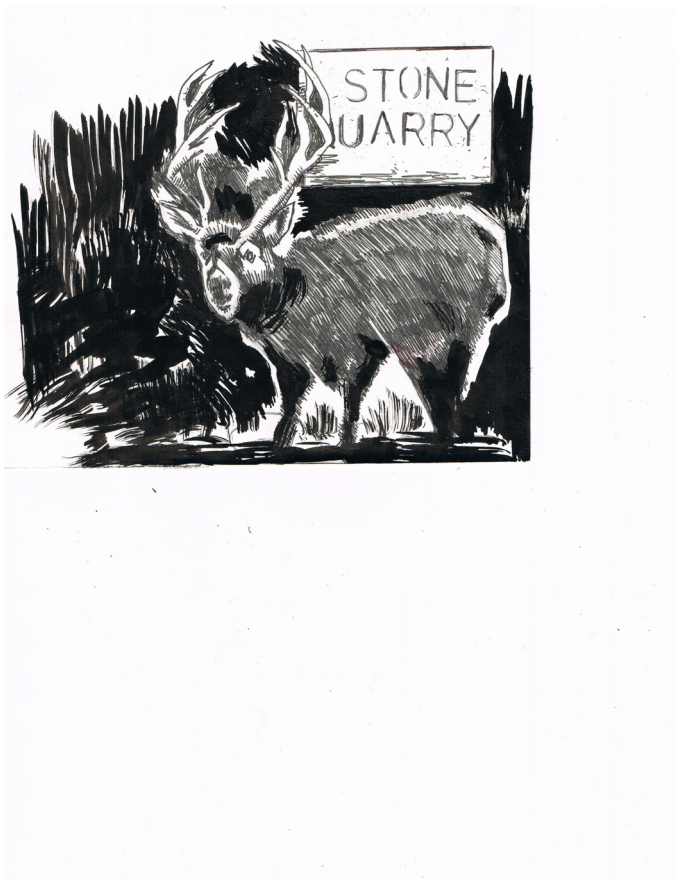
“Dear, why is the quarry still operating? It was supposed to stop operations years ago, and yet, Buffalo Crushed Stone has been seeking to expand for who knows how long,” said Dan.

“We’re a few miles away and the woods afford us some protection, but I’m not sure how much since we’re downwind. If that’s not bad enough, we have to put up with the town killing off our friends. If the corporations don’t get us, the government will. Maybe we should move,” replied Denise.

“You know how much I hate moving. We could do that, but that would just be giving up. We figured out how to survive during ‘bring a deer home for dinner’ season, so we can probably come up with some action to force these companies to close up shop in Bellevue and leave forever.”

“I hope those thieves clean up the mess they left and pay for damages. There’s probably room in the jail for them, too,” added Denise.

“I don’t think too many people or animals will complain about a bit of overcrowding in the penitentiary,” said Dan.



# 5

In a town northwest of here sits the Tonawanda coke plant – and they don't produce beverages. My mom says we have too many friends, but I think you can't have enough of them, including Tom, his better half, Tina and their offspring. They live there and are allergic to gunpowder, so they make themselves scarce around Thanksgiving. They're very mild mannered, classified as wild so I need not tell you what type of animals they are. If you haven't guessed by now, they're not fond of cranberry sauce, stuffing, pumpkin pie or Dallas Cowboy football on the fourth Thursday in November.

“Honey, if you could name a perfume after the smells in Tonawanda, compliments of industry,

what would it be?” Tom asked Tina.

“Bloomin’ benzene,” replied Tanya, the pair’s oldest.

“That stuff is nasty and carcinogenic,” added Tina. “The unfortunate fact about so many polluted areas here, as well as nationwide, is that even if all of these industries were shut down and the areas remediated, who knows how many years it would be before humans or wildlife could safely live there?”

Besides our four-legged friends, there are others who feel the same way as my family and Tom and Tina. Erin Healey is the director of the Clean Air Coalition of Western New York. A Buffalonian who graduated from City Honors High School and Swarthmore College, she has a degree in political science – but we won’t hold that against her. She is part of an activist group that has its sights on the Tonawanda coke plant, owned by JD Crane.

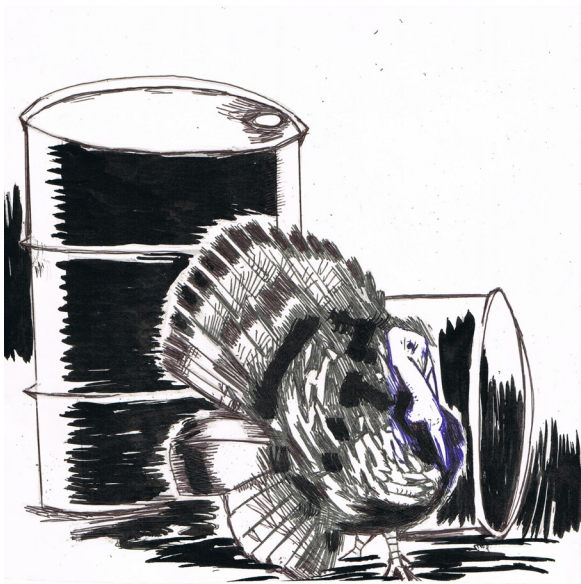
Sadly, industry has done so much harm to the area – the land, air, water, the people and the animals – that few would want to reside there. Yet, if you own a home in Tonawanda, it may be difficult to move. Besides, would you move to Love Canal – more on it in a later chapter – or Cheektowaga? If you leave the state, you could settle in Woburn, Massachusetts, home of the problems highlighted in the movie, *A Civil Action*,



starring John Travolta. What about the warmth of the south in Texas or Louisiana? You could move to cancer alley and could probably buy a house there for a song.

If you don't mind pigs – who doesn't like barbeque, except for the even-toed ungulates within the family suidae – North Carolina has enough farms with the accompanying odors and waste products to remind you to either bring a clothespin for your nose or check your olfactory senses at the door.

Maybe Tonawanda isn't that bad after all.  
Yeah, it is!



# 6

“Technology may have given mankind many great things, but unfortunately they came at a great cost,” Tom added.

Tina responded, “Building bridges, tunnels and the interstate resulted in the deaths of a few workers. Whoever told you ‘work can’t kill you’ was a bit misguided. Don’t forget those who died in the coal mines or laborers who may have only been rewarded with black lung disease so they could retire early.”

“The nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island in eastern Pennsylvania and at Chernobyl cut short the lives of too many good people. The amount of cancer and sickness today in parts of Russia is more than any country should have to suffer,” chimed in

Tanya.

“Don’t forget all the accidents brought about in extracting natural gas from the ground as well as oil, that one resource that seems to be in everything – especially in the Gulf of Mexico, thanks to that BP situation in the spring of 2010. I thought the company was going green, but maybe their intention had something to do with that stuff in their wallets,” murmured Tom.

Tina said, “You may not want to eat any Gulf shrimp for some time, or any other seafood for that matter.”

“And I thought that fish was supposed to be good for you – rich in omega-3. Now sea creatures as well as birds and other wildlife are loaded with another type of oil.”

Sadly, many of these disasters could have been prevented if more precautions were taken and corporations followed regulations, rather than ignoring them.

In many instances routine inspections were either haphazard or not done at all. Even so, when it comes to coal, there never will be such a thing as clean coal, no matter what the *experts* tell you. When you consider those huge machines that remove the tops of mountains in search of that black gold, there’s just too much devastation to the earth, especially when companies leave huge messes and don’t restore the area to what it once was. The

workers don't seem to be a consideration when CEOs open a mine.

Because of the mess the Exxon Valdez created as well as other numerous oil spills that have occurred – that recent one in the Gulf may be the worst one ever – it seems that oil isn't the answer either. Forget about nuclear power. Besides the two mentioned fiascos – much too kind a word here – what about the accidents that were covered up? The clincher for the end of that idea may be the fact that nuclear power has been around going on three-quarters of a century without a solution as to where to store spent nuclear fuel.

People swear that the energy source of the twentieth-first century could be gas but that poses a few problems too. The process of obtaining gas from the ground involves hydraulic fracturing – also known as hydrofracking, hydrofracturing or simply fracing – which is nothing more than a method for bringing gas out of ground. There's a problem with that because companies want to take shortcuts in the procedure, and have no concern about leaving a mess. It's even worse as these corporations pollute the earth in the process, and our precious water supply is put in danger. In the consideration of nuclear, gas, oil and coal, precautions may enable the process to continue, but in obtaining each of these, there are too many problems and too much danger to our planet.



# 7

“Perhaps the United States should follow the lead of other countries and work on alternative energy sources. In Europe, wind and solar are replacing those fossil fuels and even some of our states are moving forward with other ways of heating, cooling and traveling from place to place,” suggested Tanya.

Tom added, “This country has a great opportunity to lead the nations of the world away from fossil fuels. Look *fossil* up in the dictionary and you will come up with, ‘a person whose ideas are out-of-date,’ which precisely describes the CEOs of oil and gas companies. They just don’t get it.”

“Darling, not only would this approach help

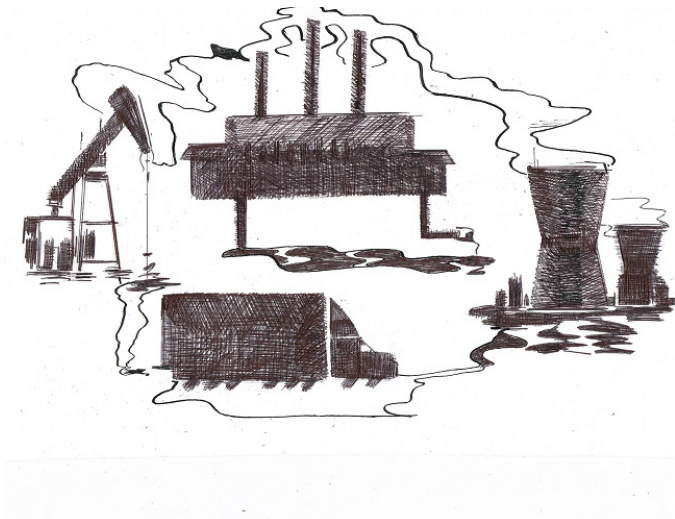
save the planet, it would benefit many people with creation of high-paying jobs, even for illegal aliens.”

“Besides, many people feel that not only can we get involved with wind, solar, geothermal and bio-diesel, American ingenuity can develop other processes – not even in anyone’s mind, now – that could even be more beneficial. The initiative just needs to be taken to get moving on all these wonderful possibilities.”

“One choice that shouldn’t be made is for ethanol – a really dumb fuel whose very creation may be more of a detriment to the planet than oil or coal. That’s hard to believe, but it’s not a good investment since you don’t get out of the process anywhere near what you put in. In addition, if you check the time when companies were cranking up ethanol production, you’ll note that food prices jumped because one food supply was detoured into making a fuel for cars, while people couldn’t find corn in the supermarket,” responded Tina.

Tanya offered this, “Why not use waste products – trash that is just headed to the landfill – for energy sources? You’ve heard of enterprising people running their cars on unwanted grease from the restaurants that cook chicken wings. Also, there’s a great deal of methane at the dumps that may be able to be converted into energy.”







# 8

Some of my friends can fly but they're nowhere near as large as wild turkeys. You can find many robins in Lewiston, including Ralph and Rachelle and their brood. Robins aren't very fond of brown-headed cowbirds, who leave their eggs in the nests of robins, hoping for a surrogate to help with the hatching. In most case, these eggs are rejected by the robins.

Located north of Buffalo, Lewiston is a beautiful community for the arts, with Art Park – which hosts more great music than any fan could ask for – and the annual Lewiston Arts and Crafts Festival, held each summer. Niagara University can be found nearby, too, as well as fine theatre, good restaurants, and of course, Niagara Falls. These are the good things, but in the vicinity can be found

Love Canal and the huge Waste Management landfill, which is much too close to the homes. You can read about the once shy housewife who was concerned about the health of her family as well as that of the neighbors in *Love Canal: The Story Continues*. That woman is Lois Marie Gibbs, and she heads the environmental group, The Center for Health and Economic Justice (CHEJ), which is headquartered in Falls Church, Virginia.

The landfill is another story. A subsidiary of Waste Management, Inc., CWM Chemical Services operates the only hazardous-waste landfill in the northeast. People and animals should stay as far as they can from the area. However, because of all the toxic ingredients, there is a huge possibility of their leaking into the soil, air and water. This is one gamble that no creature should have to worry about. The Great Lakes are dangerously close to an environmental disaster just waiting to happen. Many people and animals rely on the Great Lakes for drinking water.

If you say that any landfill could contain hazardous materials – radioactive waste, harmful chemicals or just plain nasty stuff – you’re right on the money. And yet, where should it be located? Sending it into outer space isn’t a great idea, nor is dumping it into the oceans. Why kill off or contaminate a very important part of the food supply? Storing it someplace where no one lives

won't work, either. Some of those areas you know as the State and National Parks.

What then can be done? Animals generally don't have a polluting problem, except for flatulent bovines. The problem stems from homo sapiens – human beans. (I guess both the editor and proofreaders missed that one: it should be human beings.) The answer is simple, but not that easy. It's the four Rs: Reduce, Re-use, Recycle and Re-think. Downsizing – the good kind where people live with less – should help people to have less waste to dispose of, meaning less junk for the landfills.

Reusing and recycling work hand in hand. Reusing means not buying a new PC every time a new version of hardware makes the scene; it also implies not having as many pairs of shoes as Imelda Marcos. Recycling occurs when something can be used by others, such as children's clothes, which can be passed on down to others. Woodchucks don't have that concern. It also happens when a material can be used to produce another product. In the case of paper, the original may be able to produce more paper, of the recycled variety.

Rethinking involves using our brains and a modification of lifestyles. There's no need to go that far back and join my family in our cavernous dwellings, as we have no openings – pun intended – but small but significant changes can be undertaken. Certain sacrifices can be insignificant, but can made

a difference.







# 9

Woodchucks are also known as whistle pigs, land beavers and groundhogs. Puxatawny Phil is not related to us, but some of our cousins search for their shadows in early February each year. Most of our family are snoozing. Our scientific name is *Marmota monax*, and we are rodents of the family *Sciuridae*, belonging to the group of large ground squirrels known as marmots. We are vegetarians – probably even vegans – who survive on people’s gardens, weeds and flowers. We’re not quite omnivores, but there is little vegetation we won’t eat. Just ask homeowners. Because of these eating habits, we are quite healthy, although you wouldn’t think so from the way we waddle. Don’t be fooled as we can move quite fast when we have to since

we're allergic to bullets.

The reason we look like we should be contestants on **The Biggest Loser** most of the year – but especially in the fall – is because we need to store enough in our bodies to get us through the winter. Depending on where we reside, we may sleep most of the snowy season. We're not crazy about the cold so we just hibernate and completely forget about all the Black Friday and Boxing Day sales. By February, we may have lost as much as half our body weight – you would too if you fasted for so many months.

I mentioned my distant cousin Bucky earlier. Beavers are of the genus *Castor*, and they are primarily night creatures. Beavers are semi-aquatic, meaning they'll swim when they have to, but probably won't try out for the swimming team. *Castor canadensis* is native to North America – that's Bucky – and his kind are known for building canals, dams and lodges. I wonder if his family did the buildings in the National Parks for the tourists.

After the capybara, the beaver is the second-largest rodent in the world. Their dam projects are initiated for protection against predators. Around twenty years ago, the number of beavers in North America was about nine million, although it was once seven times that. This decline had to do with the fact that they couldn't join the NRA. Predators took their fur as well their glands, which are used

for cosmetics and medicine. Another factor in their demise was flooding, caused by lumber companies cutting down trees.

My friend Annabel is also described as a canine, more scientifically known as *Canis lupus familiaris*. Beagles are small dogs, members of the Hound Group – that sounds like an investment firm – and have been around for over 2000 years. They have an even temper and few health problems. Beagles are known for their keen sense of smell, which they use to track rabbits and other small game. Because of their size, they have to be on the lookout for predators, such as hawks who can swoop down to snatch them away from their masters.

Her friend Purrrl – she has so many *Rs* in her name because she knows Vanna White – is scientifically known as *Felis silvestris catus*. She is a few years old but her species has been hanging around humans for almost 10,000 years.

Dan and Denise belong to the family *cervidae*, which includes moose, red deer, reindeer, roe and chital. Muntjac and water deer are from related families that are considered to be deer. The wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) is the same species as the turkey that people across the United States have at their dinner table on Thanksgiving Day. The larger birds are the males, who weigh from eleven to twenty-four pounds, about twice that

of the females. Besides the difference in weight, the males are distinguished by their *beards*, which can also be found on a few females. As in most species of birds, females have a great deal less color than the males.

Wild turkeys can run twenty miles per hour. That's almost flying, but they can do that too, at the rate of fifty miles an hour. These creatures roost in the branches of oak and pine trees, feeding on nuts, berries, grasses and insects. The little ones are called poults and their mom can lay fifteen eggs at a time, so they don't need to worry about what to have with ham at breakfast.

The robin (*Turdus migratorius*) is a member of the thrush family and loves to sing, especially when the sun first makes an appearance. Some say that seeing a robin indicates the first sign of spring. They can be found throughout North America, though they winter in warmer climates, like Mexico, California and Florida. Connecticut, Michigan, and Wisconsin claim it as their state bird. Robins search for beetles and grubs for meals and also eat fruits and berries. In turn, hawks, cats and larger snakes are the adult robin's predators.





# 10

“If we move to another location, isn’t that just like moving from the burner on a hot stove into a flaming barbeque?”

“You have a good point there, Natalie, since one area in Western New York has just as many environmental problems as another. Cousin Phil lives relatively close to not one, but two Superfund sites. One is down the road from him on Jamison Road near Seneca Street. You’ve probably heard of the Moog Corporation. The other is in town on Main Street in what used to be a dry cleaning facility. The latter may have restored stained clothes to their original beauty, but the chemicals used in the process didn’t help the planet, at all,” said Charles.

“Dear, refresh my memory about Superfund sites,” said Natalie.

“They were first created in 1980s by the United States government because of Love Canal and Times Beach in Missouri. Their purpose is to clean up toxic, hazardous waste sites – tens of thousands of them have been located since the fund was set up. The remediation is to be performed by the responsible parties – maybe *irresponsible* is the word that should be used here, since they caused the problem.

Wendy offered her thoughts. “It’s sad that these greedy companies pollute in the first place, but then don’t take care of the mess they brought about, thus leaving the burden on the taxpayers. The corporations should be opening their wallets for cleanup if they mess up the water, air or land areas because of their manufacturing processes. They did the damage.”

“If you live in the state of New York and really want to cringe, go to the web site [nypirg.org](http://nypirg.org) and enter your zip code. It will list the toxic sites close to where you reside. Entering a few different locations in the Buffalo area will reveal areas named Love Canal and Hickory Woods – they sound so pleasing – which aren’t good places for two- or four-legged animals,” replied Charles

Those two areas were built on toxic grounds. Not long ago Love Canal was declared safe to move



back into. I don't see the person who made this judgment buying a house there. Besides Bellevue, Tonawanda and Lewiston, there are a few other areas such as 898 East Ferry Street and West Valley, the home of nuclear waste. West Valley really should be moved before the entire water supply of the Great Lakes is affected. Not far away is Gowanda, an area that prospered because of a tannery. The amount of sickness in the area, especially cancer, is more than any control group experiences.

A not-so-nice endeavor began in the 1940s with the Manhattan Project, which built weapons of mass destruction (WMD). They weren't called that at the time, but bombs aren't very user-friendly. Western New York played a role in that horrible project and the results have harmed the environment, the people, their pets, deer, woodchucks, birds and other living creatures in the area. The effects are long lasting.

Natalie said, "I hate to spoil the party, but it's dinnertime. We can continue this discussion after eating."



# 11

One of the great things about my family is that when we go out to eat, we grab a few things from the land of our neighbors and don't have to be concerned about dinners charged to the American Express card. Also, Mom never asks me to wipe the dishes afterwards. That's the best part of it.

Returning to discussion of the Manhattan Project, Charles mentioned, "Unfortunately, most areas in the United States had some part in that fiasco, with the leaders being Rocky Flats in Colorado; Hanford in the state of Washington; Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Ellenton, South Carolina – the home of the Savannah River plant – and of course, Los Alamos, New Mexico. Building bombs gives at least a quadruple whammy since those upon whom they are dropped consider it an imposition on their lifestyle. Those who work making bombs suffer immensely because of the dangerous product, the process involved and radiation. Resources that could be used more wisely are wasted. If they aren't

used, what is done to dispose of them, as well as where do you ship the dangerous byproducts that result?”

Charles continued, “Besides the bomb building, there are other industries that contribute to headaches for the planet and those who live on it. The number of Superfund sites in the tens of thousands isn’t all from building WMD. We have a few industries in Western New York that you can find in many other parts of the country. Besides the tanneries, landfills, quarries and chemical companies, there are also refineries, paper mills, and drug manufacturers, all brought about by the advancement of technology and so-called *progress*.”

“There was mention made earlier of the area in the Texas / Louisiana region with so many of these businesses that it’s been called chemical alley – not to be confused with Chemical Ali. That part of the country doesn’t have a monopoly on bad places in which very few want to live,” said Natalie.

I said, “They’re everywhere.”

“You can thank capitalism for that and especially greed. If you had a billion dollars and could spend one thousand dollars every hour, it would take over a hundred years to run out of money,” said Natalie.

As you may have figured out, I always ask a lot of questions, so I asked, “How long do you think

it would take to do the tax return of that individual?”

Charles chimed in, “That’s not important, but you can see that no one should have so much money that they can’t spend it, while others are struggling to get by.”

“Dad’s right. How much can you spend?”

“I’m not so sure this idea of better living through chemistry was such a great idea, either. When someone mentioned that ‘plastics were the future,’ they knew something because it seems they’re also the future of our children and grandchildren, and it doesn’t end there. Plastic lasts forever, or close to it. As pointed out, blue vinyl is the worst of them,” replied Charles.

“Technology has done wonders, but too many times people who use it *wonder* why much of it is such a huge mess. Are cell phones really hazard-free? Many gadgets are so new that studies haven’t been done as to whether they’re safe. People swear by their computers while these same individuals swear at them in the den as they use them and experience frustration.”

“You could say the same about television and the automobile. Just consider how far the boob tube has come. We had the Golden Age of television and now we have high definition with hundreds of channels to surf through – which many people do – and all there is to watch are news-

entertainment, reality TV and other non-essentials. At least the picture is clear,” said Mom.

Charles stated, “When you talk about cars and trucks, we did have some great innovation, such as the Pinto, Yugo, Corvair and Edsel. You can’t find workmanship like that. Maybe I should add to this list the Prius and a few of the other products brought to you by Toyota. Is there any coincidence that many of the letters that make up the name of that company are found in the word, *toylet*?”

“When you mention criminal corporations, isn’t that a pleonasm? Readers, open your dictionary or google it if you don’t know what the word means.”

I added, “The news mentions one company after the other being investigated and CEOs being tossed into jail. At the same time the company makes huge payments to settle lawsuits and still claims that there was no wrongdoing. Yeah, right.”

“Maybe people – like us – who don’t read the newspaper or watch the news have the right idea. Most of it is bad,” replied Natalie.







# 12

Annabel is fortunate to have loving caretakers, but she also benefits from their technology in the living room. She told me about all those wonder dogs from the Golden Age of television, such as Lassie and Rin Tin Tin – they must have *Nickelodeon* on cable. Farfel wasn't one of my favorites because he was a salesman. He sang a commercial for Nestle's chocolate from 1953-1965, but should have known better. I thought Dreyfuss was cool even though his name sounded too business-like. He seemed so lovable, gentle and care-free, despite his massiveness. I wouldn't want to pay his food bills, though.

You can read the book by John Grogan, *Marley & Me: Life and Love with the World's Worst Dog*, whose title gives you a clue about the character of that canine. Marley is a lovable Labrador retriever – perhaps better described as neurotic – who wins over the hearts and minds of the author and his wife. You'll laugh and cry, but

one thing you won't forget is Marley.

Annabel loves *Mornings with Barney: The True Story of an Extraordinary Beagle* by Dick Wolfsie – isn't that name appropriate? Wolfsie is a television reporter who finds a stray beagle on his way to work and harbors him inside his house until he returns. Barney manages to devour some of the furniture and a few other things – he probably was just hungry – and soon the new owner is handed an ultimatum: either take the beagle to work or find him another home – preferably one with maximum security. Before long Barney is a TV celebrity, but he influences a great number of people, which you can read about in this delightful book.

Before leaving our reporter Wolfsie, it should be noted that Annabel has wolves for relatives, since canines evolved from those animals. Just compare a wolf (*Canis lupus*) with a German Shepherd and you should see the similarity. Even the scientific names are almost identical. Werewolves aren't part of the family, even as cousins once removed.

Annabel told me about the wonderful movie of 1983, *Never Cry Wolf*, where the wolves were blamed for killing off the caribou herds. We don't have a television – I think we're better off – and my parental units wouldn't let me watch it if we had one, but my beagle friend has access to cable because of her masters, Hank and Lucille. What the

wolves were doing was going after the weakest of the herds and thinning them out. They probably would have died anyway, so this action actually strengthened the herd. Wolves do the same with other animals, specifically sheep.

Annabel said that *Never Cry Wolf* was a humorous, environmental movie that was insightful, amusing and worth a few stars. It's all about the planet and the animal kingdom as well as the greed of the corporations. Tyler, the two-legged scientist, was a true hero and friend of the earth – except for his culinary meal choices. However, we can excuse him for that since he was running out of food. His scene underwater was scary, but his beverage choice was all right.

The movie, *Ace of Hearts*, is based on a novel of the same name. Ace is the K-9 police dog who goes after people who do nasty things, such as steal jewelry and whatever they can find of value in homes. They don't need keys and are the worst example of pop-ins. Ace is smart and doesn't harm the thief, but only holds on to him until he can be apprehended. Usually, he won't even leave the marks of his teeth in the crook, unlike those of Jon Voight, which were left in the arm of Kramer in an episode of Seinfeld.

In the movie, Ace is played by two German shepherds – that's how intense the role is. Though the story is fictitious, there are numerous dogs in

real life just like Ace – many in law enforcement. Ace winds up being placed on death row for inflicting harm on a person who really is a thief. I won't give away the ending, so if you get a chance, watch the flick, which Annabel highly recommends.

A five-year old untrained German shepherd named Buddy, who is a resident of the city of Anchorage, Alaska, showed how smart he is in the spring of 2010. Ben Heinrichs encountered a fire on his land. His clothes caught fire, but he put it out by rolling in the snow. Knowing of the danger, Buddy summoned help. Alaska State Trooper Terrence Shanigan spotted our hero and followed him to the scene. Ben was slightly injured but without Buddy, the Heinrichs family would have lost their home. The latter knew that this German shepherd was gifted because on other occasions, he scared bears away while Ben was hunting. For his outstanding service, our hero received a big rawhide bone and stainless steel dog bowl.





# 13

Purrl mentioned a book by David Dosa, *Making Rounds with Oscar: The Extraordinary Gift of an Ordinary Cat*. It's a true story of a feline who resides in a nursing home in Rhode Island. He's not there because he's collecting social security or suffering from an accident, but because he cares about the patients. Cats may not all have nine lives, but they do have a sixth sense, and Oscar exemplifies that by his concern for the residents. He performs a service, without pay – all right, he gets some cat chow and is finicky – very similar to the good that is done at various Hospice places.

Dosa's book is about a one-of-a-kind cat, nursing homes and the transformation of the author, who really gets to know Oscar. Many words describe *Making Rounds with Oscar*, but perhaps the most fitting is remarkable. If you can't find the 2010 book, you can see our hero in the video at [parade.com/oscar](http://parade.com/oscar).

In the canine world, a nine-year old black

lab named Boo may not have the sight he once possessed, but that doesn't stop him from being a great teacher and healer. Boo is known as a therapy animal. He makes a difference around ailing people just by being in the room with them. He is gentle and caring. Young and old feel his presence. Sister Jean, a ninety-four year old resident in Ossining, New York, said very little and couldn't be reached by those around her. That changed when this black lab made an appearance. Sister Jean petted Boo, and before long spoke for the first time in years, uttering the words, "Hello, Boo."

Youngsters Erich Schneider and Christopher DiSilvio were also greatly changed when Boo entered their lives. Erich was having difficulty brought about by his many mistakes – he was close to tears – but after a few months he became a different person with more confidence thanks to our black lab. Christopher had severe attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) with a very short attention span. Meeting Boo resulted in his soon being able to sit for an hour without fidgeting. This lab is one wonder dog.

"You mentioned the animal kingdom, so I need to pass along the tale of a really cool Siamese, named Koko. This dude is the main character of Lilian Jackson Braun's novel, *The Cat Who Talked Turkey*. All right, so it's fiction, but it's an amazing and amusing story of a smart Moose County



journalist, Jim Quilleran, and his pet. Some people overlook the intelligence of four-legged creatures, but clairvoyant Koko's insight might convince these doubting Thomases otherwise."

Not to be outdone, Annabel offered, "If you're looking for a true story of a much larger cat, the U-tube video from a few years ago of a lion named Christian will keep you spellbound. Anthony Bourke and John Rendall take in a lion cub, who soon needs a larger place to roam. Fortunately, they find an area in London, where they live, that meets the satisfaction of all three.

"After some time, Anthony and John consider liberating Christian into the wild – specifically a nature preserve in Kenya. They hope that Christian will adapt and be strong enough to survive not only what awaits him in his new home but also the long flight to East Africa. They go through with their plans and Christian has a few problems at first, but he does fine. On a later visit to Kenya. John and Anthony can't seem to find their lion friend, but then they see each other. Christian stands still, but then moves slowly towards the two, eventually leaping into their arms in a show of love and devotion. This relationship was a fine example of a slight modification of our previous comment, 'They laid down with the lion, and all got some rest.'

"The change of scenery was good for

Christian, but that was the last time the two saw him. He may have met his end because of predators with four legs or those with guns – animal poachers. On the other hand, a lion lives into his twenties and Christian may have just died a natural death, since he was no longer a teenager at this last reunion. Besides the video, there was an Animal Planet special called *A Lion Called Christian*, and you can also read the book of the same name, written by Bourke and Rendall.

“The 1965 movie, *Born Free*, is also about a young cub, Elsa, who grows to adulthood under the watchful care of a young couple. She has a more difficult time adjusting to being in the wild, as all she wants to do is play. That may be because of her sex. As a result, the other creatures not only give her a rough time, she almost doesn’t survive the beatings they bestow on her. Finally, she attacks a warthog and they’re both at the dinner table, except that Elsa is the only one dining.

“*Born Free* is supposedly a true story, but it’s based on a novel. That doesn’t mean that most of it didn’t really occur. Insofar as Christian was real with a similar background and assimilation issues, there’s no reason why we can’t believe that Elsa lived on the planet.”





# 14

John and Anthony did a great job with Christian and there are other examples of truly wild animals and their masters. However, sometimes matters don't work out as well. In October of 2003, during a performance at the Mirage in Las Vegas, Nevada, Roy Horn of the duo Siegfried and Roy, was bitten on the neck by Montecore, a seven-year old male tiger. The animal had been trained by Horn since he was a cub. It is possible that Montecore was just trying to drag Horn off to safety after he fell. Horn had extensive surgery and was in rehabilitation for some time.

On February 24, 2010, trainer Dawn Brancheau was drowned by one of Sea World's killer whales. Tilikum, a six-ton orca, grabbed hold of Brancheau's ponytail while the trainer was lying on a ledge of shallow water. This happened in front of park guests. Despite each animal's training, tragedy struck.

Many people have exotic animals such as

pythons, crocodiles and iguanas for pets. In most cases, this is not a good choice for anyone to make.

In the Florida Everglades, there is a huge problem with the ecosystem because of the preponderance of pythons – most likely this was caused by someone dumping off one of their pets that was too huge to handle.

The island of Guam is known for its unwanted snakes. The brown snake became a part of the environment shortly after World War II, when Guam imported lumber from New Guinea. It is reported that the brown snake came as a bonus in these shipments. It was a silent invasion that no one paid much attention to until the 1970s, when the United States Fish and Wildlife Service noticed that several species of birds were no longer to be found on the island. In all, nine bird species and five lizard species became extinct because of these unwelcome visitors.

Some of these unusual choices for pets may look really cute at first, but the result may be environmental disaster because of overpopulating, or harm to the owner. Christian could have turned on Rendall and Bourke – luckily he didn't – and hurt either of them, even if unintentionally. Other species of wild creatures can injure their owners and others nearby, no matter what size. A better choice is a dog, cat or pet rock. That last choice – more a bit later – isn't that great an option since you'll get

no response from it. That may be exactly what some people want, and others deserve.

Annabel has great masters, but every so often she leaves them presents – unwrapped – that they never asked for and really don't want, despite the fact that she's housebroken. She does this because they leave her for extended periods of time and she misses them. Purrri, on the other hand, doesn't mind being alone as long as she has enough cat chow and water. Of course, she may be fine for a time, but does like someone to show up and pet her, especially behind the ears. Parrots, turtles and pet chickens probably feel the same way. In the latter case, she would rather not be placed in a pot of boiling water, even in the dead of winter.

What was stated earlier about cute exotic pets applies equally in the case of domestic little ones. Too many children want a pet collie or St. Bernard, but fail to realize that the animal is a huge responsibility. Promises are made, but it's not too long before a child forgets to give food and water to Spot, or to clean up pet deposits left on the kitchen floor. It might get worse as an offspring just becomes so lazy, he doesn't want to bother with Fang. This behavior may result in the parent being stuck with the job. She may not be too happy with the child and takes it out on Fang. This occurs more often than it should.

You've heard of animal abuse, well this is

the start of it, or could be. The more extreme cases have so-called adults mistreating a cat or dog. There's reason for Rover's revenge, which in turn could result in further beating of the animal. Amazingly, Fang could tear up DVD covers and get into the chocolate – this indulgence could kill him, and it affects many dogs in the same way – his owner could smack him gently, and our dejected dog might still come over to be petted and hugged. Animals can forget.

Even loving owners of pets can unwillingly mistreat Farful. Just by going to work for eight hours will do the trick. That's because Farful is alone in the house and wants some affection. Some breeds can be by themselves for longer periods of time without calling Dr. Phil. Christian handled it quite well, but after all, he is a cat.

In the 1970s, advertising executive Gary Dahl came up with pet rocks in answer to requests for a maintenance-free companion. Basically, a pet rock was nothing more than a stone, which eventually wound up with eyes. Each sold for about four dollars and came with a thirty-two page training manual. The fad lasted only a few months – I can't imagine any intelligent person taking that long to see through this lunacy – and the dog and cat food industry probably wasn't too pleased with the idea. The original pet rocks are difficult to find today, but you can go to the shore and find a rock or



two for a pet, if you so desire.



# 15

“The cowbird means well, but I should mention that the bluejay is even worse in his behavior. Those blue things are downright mean critters – others may say they’re just tough birds – and almost a match for Purrll,” said Rachele. Our feline friend may look calm and gentle, but I don’t think too many animals will pick a fight with her.

Ralph chimed in, “On the other hand, some of our relatives – not named Rodney – get no respect. I’m talking about the pigeon, who showers down more than perspiration on the people underneath. Isn’t that what umbrellas are for?”

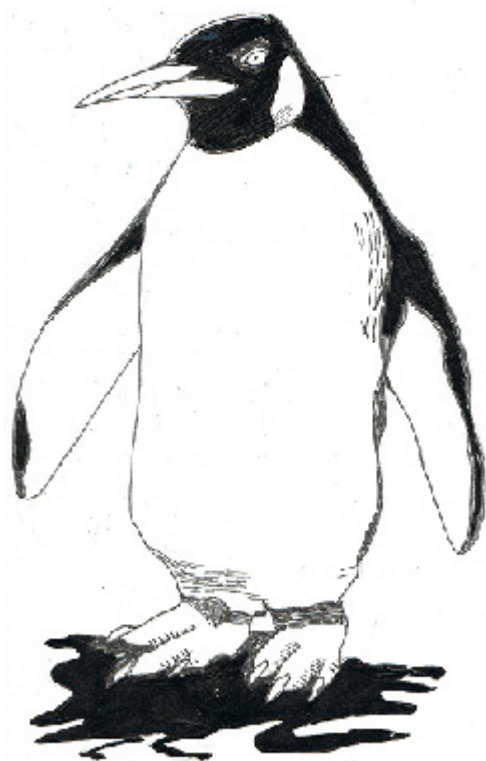
“Now you can read a book that sets the record straight on these much maligned birds. *Pigeons: The Fascinating Saga of the World’s Most Revered and Reviled Bird* by Andrew Blechman achieves some balance – although not in the manner of Fox News – talking about these ever-present animals. You will learn quite a few things about them besides their role in carrying important

news from one place to another without charging the exorbitant rates of the United States Postal Service,” added Rachelle.

“There’s another great work by Peter Watkins and Jonathan Stockland entitled *Winged Wonders: A Celebration of Birds in Human History*. The numerous species of birds – and there are more than one can imagine – are all touched on with wonderful stories that will inform and delight you.”

“Dad, you may not give a hoot about this one, but I loved Stacey O’Brien’s *Wesley the Owl: The Remarkable Love Story of an Owl and His Girl*. If you haven’t guessed, Wesley and the author are the two participants in the love affair and it will make you laugh and cry at the same time,” said Rhoda, Ralph and Rachelle’s oldest offspring.

*The Last Flight of the Scarlet Macaw: One Woman’s Fight to Save the World’s Most Beautiful Bird* by Bruce Barcott was mentioned earlier. It’s about a truly spectacular creature, who probably would do well on *Jeopardy* – talk about a smart creature!





# 16

By now I hope you see the connection between my family, friends – I include humans here, even though some of them need some finishing school – and the environment. There's no doubt that animals and people can get along and respect each other. This includes wild ones and domesticated ones – I should mention that I'm talking about animals as well. We all need clean air to breathe, clean water and unpolluted soil. Without these things, we'll all perish. We're all in this together – didn't Al Jarreau sing about just that same thing?

The environment is not unlike a computer system. The hardware is worthless if the software fails. Those of you who curse your PCs know what I'm talking about. Any system that has a flaw means that soon problems will arise and it will have to be fixed. Plants, animals, humans and all the other pieces are necessary. If the tiniest creature becomes extinct, it could mess up the balance in the

ecosystem, thus threatening its very existence.

One great example is the macaw, which thrives in the rain forest. It feeds on a tiny nut that very few people can break open, even with a nut cracker, but the macaw knows how to get it open. It indulges in the fruit and some falls to the ground. This in turn feeds other members of the jungle. The koala bear lives on eucalyptus plants. If this plant or the food for the macaw is wiped out, it could easily destroy many other species. Since some creatures are predators and other are victims, if there are too many deer or too many pythons, the balance could be upset and this could also have devastating effects on the earth. It may not take much.

Another tiny animal that flies is the butterfly, which lives a very short life. You can read about these delicate creatures in *The Dangerous World of Butterflies: The Startling Subculture of Criminals, Collectors, and Conservationists* by Peter Laufer. Their synergy with plants can't be ignored since they, like bees, rely on flowers for nutrients while simultaneously playing a huge part in the existence and well being of that other organism.

The Blue Morpho is another designation for the blue butterfly. A 2004 movie for all to see is *La Mariposa Azul*, whose title translates into the name of that species. Starring William Hurt as Alan Osborne, it is the story of Pete Carlton, a ten-year



old boy who is diagnosed with cancer. One of his wishes is to go to the rain forest to find the Blue Morpho. After hearing Osborne talk, he tries to convince the scientist to take him to the rain forest. Alan mentions that it may be too late in the year, as well as the fact that he doesn't handle children very well.

Eventually, Alan, Pete and his mother, Teresa, embark on Pete's dream. The movie is a magical journey of hope and redemption, and you'll have to watch it to see if they find the Blue Morpho. *La Mariposa Azul* is based on a true story, and it might change your life.

As has been pointed out, animals are a great benefit to humans. I shouldn't have to remind you of the work of Oscar and Boo earlier. But two-legged animals help to make the lives of pets and inhabitants of the forest better simultaneously. You could say that one feeds on the other, not unlike a crowd at a show and the performers. A more specific example of this can be found in the 2000 book by Anthony Guglielmo and Cari Lynn, *The Walrus on My Table: Touching True Stories of Animal Healing*. Anthony does this through massage and his clients are horses, walruses and even a shark. With that last creature, you have to be careful. Nevertheless, a bit of rubbing and soothing resulted in a horse that hadn't won a race in some time becoming a winner again. The shark got a part

in *Jaws XV* – if you can't count in Roman numerals, those two symbols after *Jaws* represents the number fifteen. The walrus and other animals were a great deal better after Anthony worked his magic.





# 17

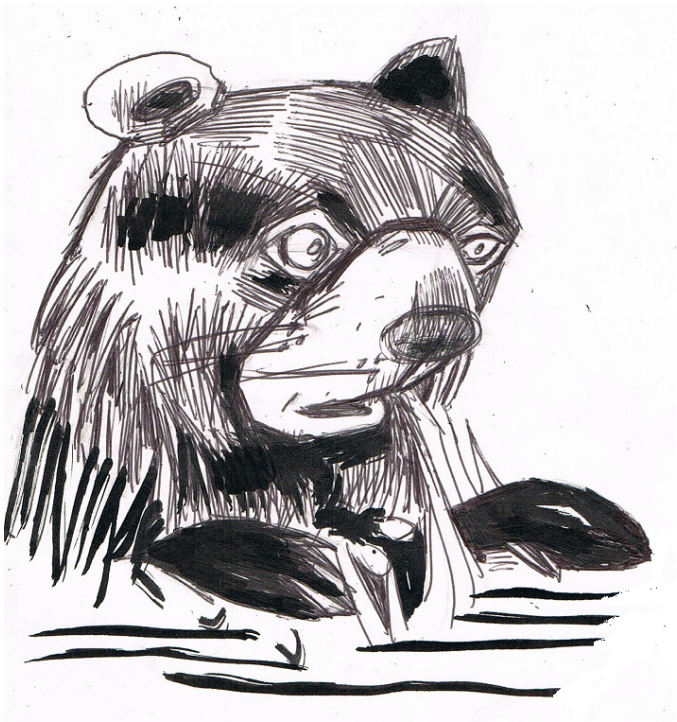
By now it should be obvious that four-legged animals – for the most part – get along quite well with two-legged ones. This may not be exactly true during hunting season, but even then, those carrying rifles admire wild turkeys and deer, and many enjoy just being out in the woods away from civilization. Those men and women probably find being up in a tree stand to be exhilarating.

A family's relationship with Fang or Garfield is a loving one – going both ways. Each member of the venture obtains something from it. As we have seen, a child offers the family beagle love as well as water and food. In turn, this creature brings calmness and has a soothing effect on the owner and his or her family.

An excellent movie about working together – people with other people and humans with the animal kingdom – is the 2005 movie, *Spirit Bear: The Simon Jackson Story*. Based on true events, this inspirational motion picture is the story of a

caring fifteen-year old boy who discovers that the rare white karmode bear that he sees is endangered by the lumbering industry, on the move to destroy the very place that Spirit Bear calls home. It makes a convincing argument that one person can effect a difference. Simon is deeply inspired not only by this beautiful animal, but by a few others around him. They in turn may have lost hope but instead were motivated by Simon, who stood up to the forest industry. These corporations have so many places to harvest wood, and should do so without so much destruction and in an environmentally sound way.

*Spirit Bear* illustrates the connection between man and animal. It also gives us hope and should convince each of us that one individual can make a difference. Obviously if a group joins in to help, matters will be that much easier to accomplish any goal. People and animals feed on each other – I don't mean it that way. In any event, it won't be easy, but great things can be accomplished. They probably wouldn't have been involved without that first initiation by a single individual.







# 18

One of the residents on West Blood Road is John Kuzinski. His house sits on about a half acre of land. Towards the back of the property is a mound that is the home of Phil, a cousin of mine. John doesn't have a gun, so Phil is safe and so will our family be if we migrate there. John is an environmentalist and at one time lived in Cheektowaga, downwind from the quarry, landfills and asphalt plant in Bellevue.

He heard about the condominium project and is well aware of the other toxic areas of Western New York, including the Tonawanda Coke Plant. He hasn't met Erin yet, but will soon when he travels to the meeting in the town north where she will preside over a grass roots agenda. He figures he can make a difference, but it wouldn't hurt to bring reinforcements.

He calls Frank and says, "There's a meeting in Tonawanda next week and I have an idea that might work. I can pick you up if you're interested."

“When is it?”

“It’s Wednesday night. Do you think Kevin, Donna and Randy would like to join us?”

Frank says, “I think I can make it. I can phone them and try to convince them to take part, but I’ll drive myself.”

“Email me and I will call a few others, Frank. Anyone else you can bring would help our cause. Talk to you later.”

John then emails Joe, David, Becky, Al, Karen, Barb and Greg with an invitation, including the date, time and location. He also asks them to spread the word. John exits his PC and then has some raw carrots, banana, Bartlett pear – that’s his favorite kind – and an orange and an apple for lunch and brainstorms a bit.

He realizes he has a few other people he should contact, so he starts by calling Barb of the *Buffalo News*. She must be on assignment, so he leaves a message. He also figures a few of the politicians should know of this gathering. After some consideration, he holds off doing that for the moment since he realizes he has some work to do.

After a short respite, he heads into the study to log onto his computer. He has a presentation to write, even if he will only use part of it. Being a part of a few grass roots groups, he remembered so much effort with so little results, so he must decide on a different approach. He isn’t a great sales

person, but knows that in this instance he'll have to be one. Fortunately, his idea may drag along others so he won't have to be the only one doing the selling. Some products sell themselves – they're that good – and this is exactly what needs to be done here.



# 19

The following Wednesday night, people began to gather in the fire hall in Tonawanda. It wasn't a standing room only crowd, but there were so many people that the meeting had to be moved to a bigger room. There was a great deal of interest, including radio stations, the press and a few politicians.

Erin Healey called the meeting to order by thanking all those who had sacrificed the evening to be there. It wasn't long that she mentioned the formation of a new coalition for Western New York, since the area had so many environmental problems. It would be called – on the suggestion of John Kuzinski – Save the Animals and Children of Western New York. Many participants already knew that already, and that's why so many were there.

Senator Burgess was thanked for his work on the planet and other important issues in Buffalo. He arose from his chair to comment, "We can make

this work and force those who polluted to clean up the mess that they were responsible for. Fines aren't out of the question and there's room in the jail for CEOs who don't cooperate. I also envision high paying jobs here for alternative energy projects as well as setting up – with the State University of New York – research on remediation and cleanup that would lead the country. This is necessary because of far too many Superfund Sites spread across our state and our nation. It's a great opportunity that we shouldn't overlook. Western New York has enough sunshine – I don't have to say a thing about the winds here over the last few months – to convince you of wind and solar projects. We shouldn't stop there, but move quickly to end our dependence on fossil fuels, once and for all.

“We're all aware of The University here and all their environmental involvement, especially the tireless efforts of Professor Joe Gardella. I will talk with my colleagues in Albany to see what kind of assistance can be procured to make this happen. I don't see why anyone should object in any way.”

“Thanks, Senator.”

Throughout the rest of the evening, more people spoke in agreement, insisting on tackling one area at a time – although others suggested that a few: Tonawanda Coke, West Valley, the landfills in Lewiston and Bellevue's concerns needed

immediate action and could be done simultaneously since they were quite urgent. The meeting ended in the prescribed time of an hour – a great idea for any meeting if they have to occur at all. Afterwards, people conversed and partook of refreshments and it was agreed that each neighborhood needed to enlist more men, women and children in this endeavor. The newspapers and politicians would contribute greatly, but students and anyone who cares for the earth were welcome.

Eventually those inside left, and outside the hall, there was an unusual gathering of birds and other creatures, including Canada geese, raccoons, ducks and a skunk. I was there with my mom and dad, Natalie and Charles. So was my cousin Phil, Dan, Denise, Annabel, Tom, Tina, Tanya, Ralph, Rachelle, Rhoda and Purrl. No Blue Morpho could be found, but if green was acceptable to you, you could spot a luna moth, another beautiful specimen. My distant cousin Bucky couldn't make it from the Pacific Northwest – all the flights were booked. As the people approached their cars, all the animals stayed. There was a great deal of hope. The moon was full and it was as light as day.







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