

points of view

Love of animals may mean killing some off

DEBORAH THURMAN loves animals. On some days she may kill scores of cats and dogs, kittens and puppies. If you find that hard to imagine, you may be part of the reason that she and others like her are doing the killing.

Thurman is the shelter manager for the Anti-Cruelty Association in Detroit. It's on Joseph Campau, not too far from Buddy's Pizza where Thurman and Aggie Monfette gave me a quick education in the world of cats and dogs while we munched on a vegetarian pizza.

Monfette is an investment counselor in Bloomfield Hills and is also secretary for the Birmingham Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce. She is also a sucker for animals, a

volunteer at the shelter and persuasive enough to talk me into a sweltering summer ride into Detroit in a car without working air conditioning.

The lunch was fine and the shelter visit was informative, but that's not to say the day was totally enjoyable. Hard truths aren't as easy to digest as a cheese and mushroom pizza.

THE STORY of stray, unwanted, neglected or abused animals is not pleasant. Some of the stories are obviously despicable: It is not unheard of for people to buy puppies, chain them in the backyard and then forget them; as the scrawny dog grows, the collar chokes it.

Some of the nightmare is not so



Rich Perlberg

obvious: Pets are not spayed or neutered and people believe that all their unwanted pet problems are solved by dropping cats and kittens off at an animal shelter.

This last point is one of the most troubling, controversial and emotional. The Anti-Cruelty Association is not one of those shelters that vows never to destroy animals. Such a policy is misleading, harmful to ani-

mals and impossible, says Thurman. Yes, she says, some shelters won't destroy. But, she says, they must then either seriously overcrowd their facilities, keep animals cruelly caged for long periods of time, or eventually refuse to take animals.

"And then they come to us," says Thurman.

Although there are some people who are plain and simple rotten to animals, the major problem, according to Thurman and Monfette, is that there are too many animals.

THE NUMBERS: Theoretically, a single female dog can be the start of 4,372 dogs over seven generations. That's nothing. Two uncontrolled breeding cats plus all their kittens'

kittens could add up to 80 million cats in 10 years if none are ever neutered or spayed.

These are theoretical numbers, but they point to the explosive potential of the animal population. With those numbers in mind, you can see that the 40 or so animals at the Anti-Cruelty shelter must rotate quickly. That rotation can happen in two ways: a home is found, which happens rarely, or the animals can be killed, which happens a lot.

The room where they are killed is clean and bare. Those who do the killing do not turn cold, mechanical or unfeeling. They are gentle and caring and many have written touching and sad articles about the ordeal. But their emotions are shelved

when it's the animal's turn to die. The dog or cat is gently held and stroked. In many cases it is treated better than any other time in its life. And then it dies peacefully.

"The last thing the dog or cat knows is that it is loved," says Thurman.

Does this mass death bother you? Then get your dogs and cats spayed or neutered. And tell your neighbors to do the same thing. The problem isn't what the shelters do with animals; it's what people do, and don't do, with their pets.

A 10-mile walkathon Sunday starting at the Belle Isle Nature Center will raise money for the Anti-Cruelty Association. Call 891-7188 for more information.

See the beauty in midst of a mess

THE YOUNG man crossing Grand River Avenue on his unicycle was a refreshing sight, especially during the mad, mad morning rush hour.

He didn't seem to mind the noise and traffic. He continued his ride, arms outstretched for balance. He was smiling.

While most people were out jogging, running or walking, this young man was doing something a little different and letting all of us in on the fun. Whoever heard of going for a daily unicycle ride?

Maybe he's starting his own trend. But what remains imprinted on my mind is not the joy of the moment, but the man's precarious balancing act as he waited in the middle of the intersection for a rude and impatient driver to turn in front of him.

THE DRIVER obviously paid no attention. Her goal was to get there as quickly as possible whatever the price, despite that the cyclist had the right of way.

Have we become more impatient? I think so, and our unicyclist's experience is just one example. It seems that as traffic congestion increases, our tempers flare at the same rate.

This "sitting and waiting" business conflicts with what we've come to expect — and what's expected of us.



Casey Hans

Have we gotten more impatient? I think so... it seems that as traffic congestion increases, our tempers flare at the same rate.

We must move along or get left behind.

After growing up in this area, I moved to a rural one for several years before returning here in the 1970s. Moving back hit me like a brick.

Even back then, the pace was stepped up, the traffic congestion bad, and the drivers rude. It hasn't let up.

Just where is it we're going, and what's the hurry to get there?

HOW MANY times do we leave

late, then get angry when we're trapped in a traffic snarl? Even when we leave late, we stupidly don't expect to arrive late.

I haven't decided whether we're giving ourselves too little time to get to our destinations, or whether our expectations are simply too high. This impatient attitude transcends traffic rudeness — people just seem to want everything yesterday. And we're all guilty of it.

Somewhat, we get caught up in the "too much to do, and too little time" syndrome, get to feeling sorry for ourselves and take it out on the next guy. It doesn't matter if that person is driving next to us on the road or in line in front of us at the store.

Somewhat, that impatience bubbles over and becomes contagious.

BUT THE medicine for that is within reach for all of us. What's important is not what we accomplish in our lives, but the path we take along the way.

It's not the big house, the great job or "having everything." It's the people with which we share these things, and how we interact with them.

It's taking time to see the beauty in the midst of a mess, like a lone unicyclist riding through a morning traffic jam.

Big enemy: the toughest challenge

LIVONIA'S KATHY Nettle dropped us a note the other day and shared a few of her feelings about a subject that has literally thrown our society into a frenzy.

In her own words: "It seems to me the smokers are always deferred to. Does a smoker ever go to a no-smoking area even if he's the only smoker?"

Kathy set the scene by recalling one that all of us have experienced over and over again. Four people go into a restaurant. The hostess asks "smoking or no smoking." The three non-smokers give way to the lone smoker.

Sounds familiar, that's for sure. She concludes: "I wish I could be less wishy-washy and more assertive about my environment and my wishes. Guess I need assertiveness therapy."

Now wait. Before we continue, I just want to set the record straight. This isn't going to be one of those megalomaniac lectures, berating smokers for their ways.

JUST THE opposite, as a matter of fact.

The problem goes far beyond that. You see, most of us are in the same boat as Kathy, smokers and



Steve Barnaby

non-smokers, alike. We just don't seem to have the intestinal fortitude to face the opposition.

The opposition, by the way, isn't the smoker. If anything, the smoker is the ultimate victim.

For all the noise that's made about the dangers of passive smoke, you've got to know that someone who is smoking 30-50-plus cigarettes a day is really the person at risk of developing all sorts of diseases — heart, lung and otherwise.

The real opposition is the marketers of the multibillion-dollar industry that for decades has successfully convinced millions that smoking is more than OK — it's the thing to do.

It's just another example of special-interest influence, the tail that

wags the dog of our society. It is an industry that is so powerful and influential that it receives subsidies from the government to make it even more profitable.

SMOKERS, FOR the most part, really can't help themselves. Now, if you've never smoked, you probably don't believe that. But it's true. Smoking is an addiction. Smokers are like alcoholics. Just one cigarette and they are once again hooked — even if they haven't smoked for 20 years.


Certainly, society has made some strides. Businesses are beginning to see the light — that smoking costs them money in health-care payments and time lost at work.

Restaurants, in particular, are bending to the pressure of a society that is fed up with being victimized. Now, I realize that Kathy Nettle had something else in mind when she dropped us her note.

But my advice, Kathy, is to fight the real enemy. Forge an alliance with that smoker at the next table in the restaurant. Numbers, in bodies and bucks, count in politics.

And the fight to make us a smoke-free society is one of the biggest of all political battles.

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