

Epilogue
by James Taylor
President of The National Humane Education Society

A few years after publishing *For the Love of Animals*, Mrs. Briggs joined other NHES staff members and traveled to Massachusetts to attend a No-Kill Conference. I believe the year was 1995, and Mrs. Briggs—who happens to be my grandmother—was around 86 years of age. There came a moment during one of the workshops when I turned to Mrs. Briggs to find her leaning forward in her chair, smiling broadly, and listening intently to the speaker describe various ways to increase adoptions. Mrs. Briggs' eyes never wavered from that young speaker during the entire workshop—and the smile never left her face.

When the workshop was over—and Mrs. Briggs had finished clapping—I commented to her, “Grandmother, you smiled throughout the entire workshop and you’re still smiling. What makes you so happy?” She responded, “In the early years, all they ever talked about in the workshops were the best ways to kill animals. Here, they’re talking about ways to try to save animals, which is all I’ve ever wanted.”

Just as there has been a substantial change in the subject matter of conference workshops from the time Mrs. Briggs began her humane work in the 1920's to the 1990's, so too has NHES changed since Mrs. Briggs first wrote *For the Love of Animals* in 1990 until today—in 2008. All of these changes, which have been many, have served to decrease animal suffering and ultimately create a more humane world.

Since writing *For the Love of Animals*, NHES's membership has grown from 130,000 to nearly 400,000 men and woman across the United States, and so—too—have NHES's program services grown.

The Humane Education & Advocacy Program, which constitutes NHES's largest program expense, serves to educate children and adults about proper animal stewardship through:

1. creating and providing humane education presentations
2. providing informational services to supporters and the general public
3. networking with other humane organizations nationwide
4. creating and distributing humane education materials, both nationally and internationally
5. creating and maintaining relevant information on the NHES website and via email newsletters, and
6. advocating for animals by encouraging a multitude of private companies, law enforcement, regulatory agencies, and lawmakers nationally and internationally to adopt policies and laws that encompass the humane treatment of animals

In the early years, due to limited financial resources, our primary focus was on children and their parents. Today, while still focusing on children, we have expanded our audience to include professionals from all walks of life, such as social workers, teachers, guidance counselors, animal welfare staff, nurses, community youth leaders, animal control agents, law enforcement officers, attorneys and even some politicians.

I'm pleased to tell you that our flagship facility, Peace Plantation Animal Sanctuary, is still operational. Located in Walton, New York, Peace Plantation is one of a select few animal sanctuaries in the country that has withstood the test of time. Today, Peace Plantation continues its work to decrease animal suffering by reaffirming the intrinsic value of animal life through the provision of lifelong sanctuary for homeless animals—primarily hundreds of cats and kittens, a few resident dogs, and various farm animals. Since its creation in 1950, in addition to providing lifelong sanctuary, Peace Plantation has also worked to decrease animal suffering through adoption services. During the past 58 years, Peace Plantation has placed nearly 37,000 companion animals in quality adoptive homes.

Since the publication of *For the Love of Animals*, NHES further expanded its direct animal care services programs with the construction and operation of The Briggs Animal Adoption Center (The BAAC) and taking over the operation of Spay Today.

The BAAC is named in honor of Mrs. Briggs and her late husband, James P. Briggs. It is located 64 miles west of Washington, D.C., near Charles Town, West Virginia, and is one of the finest animal care facilities in the country—welcoming nearly 9,000 visitors each year. The BAAC provides Comprehensive Adoption Services for cats and dogs, which consist of:

1. animal rescue
2. veterinary medical care—including mandatory spay/neuter before adoption
3. socialization/rehabilitation
4. canine obedience training, and
5. delivery of all dogs to their new homes

The BAAC has a humane holding capacity of approximately 205 animals (80 dogs and 125 cats) on any given day. Since becoming operational in October 2000, The BAAC, in conjunction with the former NHES Comprehensive Adoption Services Program, has placed thousands of companion dogs and cats in loving lifelong homes.

Spay Today, which operates from The BAAC, became a program of NHES in 2001 and serves as a tangible example of NHES's endorsement of spaying and neutering as part of the humane solution to ending the euthanasia of healthy companion animals. Since its creation in 1994 with one part-time employee and two participating veterinarians, Spay Today has expanded its staff to include one full- and two part-time employees and now works collaboratively with an ever-increasing number of participating veterinary hospitals to provide low-cost spay and neuter procedures for companion animal owners who otherwise could not afford the normative fees for these services. In its 14-year

history, Spay Today has spayed/neutered 19,963 companion animals—of which 4,010 were performed last year; and we have every expectation that Spay Today will exceed 5,000 spay/neuters this year.

In addition to operating the primary programs noted above, NHES also serves to decrease animal suffering through its Alliance Partnership Program whereby NHES works collaboratively with and provides major funding to a select group of other reputable humane organizations. At this time, NHES Alliance Partners include (1) Operation Catnip in Gainesville, FL, www.operationcatnip.org, (2) Fern Wildlife Refuge in Winchester, VA, www.fernwildliferefuge.org, (3) Potomac Highlands Animal Rescue in Mathias, WV, and (4) Mid-Atlantic Horse Rescue in Chesapeake City, MD, www.midatlantichorserescue.org.) I urge you to learn more about our alliance partners and their good work by visiting them online.

I do hope that you have enjoyed reading about the creation of NHES and Mrs. Briggs' life. Today, even at 99 years of age, Mrs. Briggs is driven to continue her humane work on behalf of animals with NHES. Each week, sometimes two or three days a week, you will find her at The Briggs Animal Adoption Center petting a dog in the reception area, playing with a cat in the open cattery, or talking with one of the many visiting children or adults. She is a true touchstone for compassion.

Many years ago, a gentleman spoke the following words about Mrs. Briggs and I'd like to share them with you now, because they are as accurate today as they were years ago when they were first spoken:

As you get to know Mrs. Briggs, you realize she's probably one of the most truly altruistic persons the world has ever known. Qualities derived from the course of her life...her firm unyielding belief...and the wisdom that comes with being 88 [now 99] years old make her an extremely persuasive advocate for animals. Mrs. Briggs has always been a woman of modest means who cares little about money. The only time money becomes an issue is when someone needs something and she doesn't have it to give—then she is profoundly bothered. I think of her, in all seriousness, as the "Mother Teresa" of animals.

In closing, I would like to say this: When the day comes that Anna C. Briggs dies, those of us who know of her life's work with NHES, and there are thousands, will take comfort in knowing that due to her efforts, she left this world a better place for both animals and people than when she entered it. Although our individual accomplishments will pale in comparison to hers, we at NHES will strive to carry on her legacy of advocating for the humane treatment of all animals and the ultimate creation of a more humane world.

The final lesson of Mankind's evolution may well be—animals are sacred and deserving of our protection.

Anna C. Briggs