

My Life with Animals



Memoir by a Friend of Animals

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Table of Contents

Introduction ...	3
Goggie ...	4
Little Mouse ...	7
Awakenings ...	9
Minouche ...	10
Susi ...	12
Alma ...	18
Brindle ...	21
Bulli ...	25
Peter & Moon ...	28
Oak branches ...	35
Owen ...	39
Alpha, Bob, Sissi, Max & Ray and Devil ...	43
They do not know what they are doing. ...	49
Mimmi the skunk ...	52
Erika ...	56
Froggy ...	64
Hansi ...	67
Mimmi the raccoon ...	70
Maunschi ...	74
Photo credits ...	77

Introduction

Most of my life was spent with and for animals. Animals fascinate me and I have always observed them without preconceived ideas about them. They taught me much about the mystery of life and about myself. I have a deep reverence for animals, be it small or big ones, wild or domesticated ones, cold-blooded or warm-blooded ones, insects, birds or mammals. They are wonderful creatures; I feel privileged to have spent so much of my life with them.

There was always a spontaneous urge in me to do whatever possible to alleviate the pain and distress of animals and provide them with living conditions that foster their well-being. Developing a mutual trust relationship with them not only has been a deeply touching experience but it also is the foundation upon which I interact with them; mutual trust is the energy vibration that allows us to communicate with animals and understand their unspoken needs for physical and emotional well-being.

This book was written without any special intention. Maybe it will inspire readers to see the beauty in animals and feel their inherent connectedness with them. That would make me happy!

I am very thankful to my wife Annie, my daughter Catherine and to Cathy Liss, president of the Animal Welfare Institute, for editing and polishing the text; it's now readable.

Mt. Shasta

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Goggie

When I was 12 years old, my mom allowed me to get a budgie. I named the little bird Goggie. He very quickly became tame, sat on my finger and liked it when I gently tickled him behind the ear.

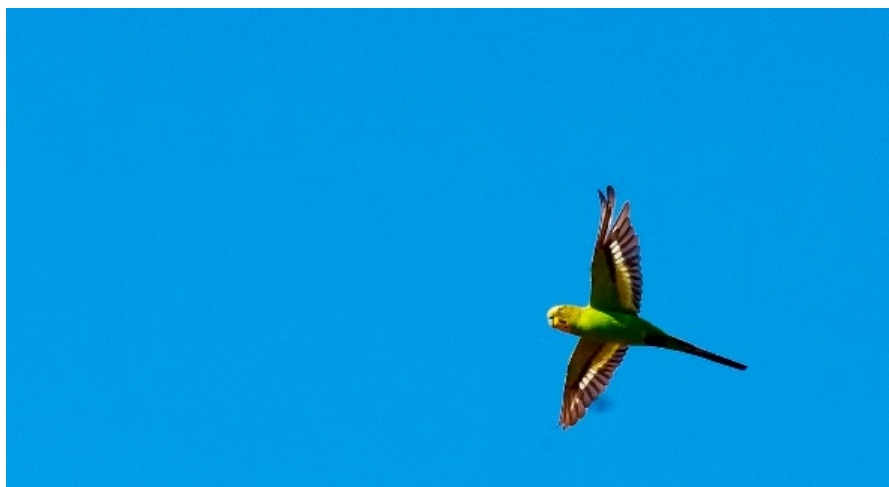
It didn't feel right to always keep Goggie in his cage, so I let him come out, fly around and explore the plants of the living room or sit on my shoulder. When I wanted him to fly to me, I didn't call his name but whistled a brief melody. He memorized the melody quickly and imitated it in his own way; I would whistle, he would respond and fly to me without fail. Whenever I was at home, Goggie was free to come out of his cage. Typically, he would sit on my shoulder and stay with me wherever I was; I made sure that doors and windows were closed when I was home.



When I was at school, Goggie had to stay in his cage. He connected with me—i.e., my energy—even when he could not see me. He would start calling with our whistle melody when I came back from school and was still 100 meters away from home. He somehow knew that I was around even though he couldn't see me.

I always whistled back and the two of us would keep calling each other until I got home and opened his cage and the two of us would have a little welcome ceremony, with Goggie sitting on my hand and gently nibbling the tip of my nose. He would vocalize now very softly—intimately.

And then came the realization that Goggie needs to be really free, free to fly outside, high up in the sky just like a budgie in his natural environment. Since Goggie responded to my whistling very consistently, I was confident that he would not fly away once I put his cage outside and opened the door. Well, that's what we did: I brought Goggie out on the veranda and talked to him while opening the cage door; in his typical manner, Goggie did not fly out but he climbed out and up on the top of his cage. I continued talking to him "if you want you can take off and fly up in the sky and check out how it feels to land on a branch of one of the big firs of the neighbor." He was not really sure what to do; he just looked around, and then without any warning jumped into the air and took off—he was in his element! He didn't just circle around; no, he flew on a bee line high up and disappeared. I knew he wouldn't be lost but walked in the direction he flew and



then started whistling. It didn't take more than five minutes before I heard Goggie's whistle; we called each other back and

forth until I saw him perched on a branch in a tall bush. I waited a few minutes to let him enjoy his new experience. To get him



back home was easy; I just walked back while whistling, and when I reached Goggie's cage, he swooped down and landed on top of the cage; he jumped on my finger and we walked back into the house. In the evening he climbed into his cage and waited for me to shut the cage door and put the silk blanket over the cage so that he could go to sleep.

From now on, Goggie got his kind of supervised outings on a regular basis. Two incidents remained in my memory: One time he aroused the curiosity of a group of sparrows; they followed, perhaps even chased Goggie, but Goggie flew much faster, so he could easily 'escape.' Another time, Goggie was caught in a thunderstorm while he was perching on one of the neighbor's firs. In a split second, it started raining buckets; it rained so hard that Goggie could not fly away. He got pelted by rain. After a few minutes the downpour was over; Goggie was soaked but managed to follow my whistling back to the house. There was no doubt, he was relieved to be back home!

Little Mouse

Fluffy down material spread on the floor was evidence that a mouse had made the attic of our home her domicile. The family's down comforters were traditionally stored in the attic. Rather than finding another place for the bedding, it was decided to get rid of the mouse. My grandfather was in charge of this project and decided to simply place a baited mouse trap in the attic, wait one night and then dispose of the mouse killed in the trap. As a 14 year-old boy, I was appalled by this tactic but had to agree that it was not good to have our winter down bedding used as summer nesting material by a mouse. I pleaded with my grandfather not to use a deadly trap; he gave me one week to get the mouse out of the house dead or alive. This was my chance!

One of Goggie's cages—he had one for inside and a second one for outside the house—got redesigned in such a way that its door functioned as a guillotine that could be operated from a distance with a string. I got prepared to spending the next few nights with the little mouse right under the roof in the attic.

Unprocessed sunflower seeds were waiting for the mouse in the open bird cage. I crawled into my sleeping bag on the air mattress and listened, listened and listened until I woke up next morning with all the shells of the sunflower seeds nicely spliced and the seeds along with the little mouse gone for the day. The next night I was determined to keep awake. Round about midnight the little mouse appeared! She climbed into the cage, heard the movement of my hand and out she jumped. I must be much, much more careful! So next night, I kept alert for about two hours until there was some rustling in the cage; she is in, but I remained motionless for a few minutes so that she would have no reason to get suspicious. And finally, I released the string from my finger tips and the guillotine door closed—click! Little mouse trapped alive, perhaps not happy but at least not dead. It was early



morning at dawn; the mouse was obviously alarmed being confined in an empty cage. I got up, took the cage and quietly left the house and walked over the bridge to a big field where I released the little mouse next to a hay barn. It's difficult to say if a mouse can be 'happy.' I am sure this one was happy, very happy. She climbed out of the cage the moment I opened the door, dived into the lush vegetation of the meadow and disappeared.



My grandfather was impressed, perhaps even relieved about the happy ending; I knew it would have bothered him to trap the mouse and then bury the dead little body.

Awakenings

I always enjoyed being with animals, observing them and helping them but it took several shifts in consciousness before I felt their sacredness and experienced the oneness with them.

- When I was a boy, I loved to go fishing on remote lakes in Southern Sweden. It was a fascinating endeavor to cast the line over and over again, wait a bit and then feel when a fish got hooked and was vigorously jerking on the line, only to be pulled out of the water, released from the hook and quickly killed. This happened quite a number of times without me being aware of what I was actually doing. And then, one late afternoon on the lake, the question finally surfaced in my consciousness: "How would I feel if I were the fish on the hook?" This question shook me deeply; why haven't I asked this question before?! The answer was so blatantly clear. I woke up to the realization that the fish is a sentient creature just like me, who can feel pain just like me, who can experience intense fear and panic just like me, who has a strong will to live and who suffers agony when his/her life is imminently threatened. After this awakening, I never fished again; it would have been impossible for me.
- When I got my first job at the physiology institute of a professor whose enthusiastic lectures inspired me a lot during my veterinary studies, one of my assignments was to euthanize chicks during a two-week study for one of the researchers. In the beginning I was appalled, got a bit used to it and at the end was ashamed and horrified of what I had been doing. I then vowed to myself never again to consciously kill an animal or cause suffering to an animal—any animal, including insects. To this day, I kept this vow regardless of the fact that it has compromised my professional career; I don't regret this.

Minouche

During an internship in 1969 I was witness when a veterinary practitioner was asked to 'put down' an 'unwanted' kitten. I was appalled and told the owner that there is no need to have the animal killed, I will take care of the little creature.

Annie was a bit surprised by this new addition to our zoo. We were young students who had no income but were blessed with a one year old toddler, a dachshund, a budgie and an ever-growing herd of guinea pigs whose behavior I studied for my doctoral dissertation. Now we had to find a way to raise a kitten who depended on mother's milk. To our great relief, Susi our dachshund helped out.

When I brought the kitten home, I gently placed him on the woodchips of the guinea pig enclosure while Annie prepared a little milk bottle. Immediately, Susi jumped into the pen and investigated the newcomer with intense interest; she was thrilled and after a few minutes picked the kitten up, jumped back into the living room and up on her favorite armchair. She curled up and gently nudged the kitten until he was lying right next to her belly. When she looked at us she gave the impression of being very fulfilled; Minouche was her baby!



During the first few days we bottle-fed Minouche while Susi got more and more engrossed in 'raising' her baby, until she got pseudopregnant; her mammary glands swelled and started to produce milk. When this happened there was no longer any need to bottle-feed Minouche: He had a dedicated Mom who produced more than enough milk to keep him well nourished, content and growing.



Susi kept nursing Minouche for several months. It was Minouche, not Susi, who initiated the weaning process. When he reached the age of sexual maturity the 'little' tom cat had almost outgrown his foster mother but he still loved sucking at Susi's nipples.

Very gradually Minouche lost interest in milk but preferred solid food. Susi didn't stop lactating, so I applied camphor ointment on her mammary glands for a few days in order to get them to dry up. The weaning did not affect the affectionate relationship between Susi and Minouche and the two continued curling up together while sleeping on Susi's armchair.

Susi



Susi, a sweet little dachshund accompanied us on our life's journey for 17 years. In 1972 she came with us to Kenya where I had a teaching assignment at the university of Nairobi. There are a few stories about Susi that got embedded in my memory.

- I was sent to Kenya by the German government who took care of the family's travel expenses. I made clear up front that we will need to fly with an airline that will allow Susi to stay with us in the cabin of the plane during our flight from Munich to Nairobi. The tickets that were then sent to us were from Lufthansa, but Lufthansa's rules stipulated that dogs must be kept in the luggage compartment, a condition that we were not willing to accept on behalf of our little dog. So I returned the tickets and was ready to forget about teaching in Nairobi. It didn't take long before I received 'open' tickets which implied that I could chose the airline for our trip. KLM was the only airline that allowed small dogs in the passenger cabin. So we ended up flying with KLM from Munich to Amsterdam, and from Amsterdam to Nairobi with Susi sitting on our lap or—on the Amsterdam-Nairobi flight—sitting like a

little princess on an empty seat. She got a lot of attention from the flight attendants!



- When we arrived in Kenya, there was political unrest; the university was closed during the first five months of our stay in the country. We took advantage of this unexpected vacation and did many hiking trips on the numerous mountains. We had no intention to climb all the way to the top of Mt. Kenya but to one of its tarns at about 15,000 feet. We spent the first night in a small hut and had an early breakfast next morning before sunrise. The hike to the tarn was not difficult but it took us much longer than planned.
- Shortly before we reached the lake, the weather started to turn. Clouds moved in, the temperature dropped noticeably and it started to snow; it was already 2 p.m.



After a short break, we turned back. We had about five hours of daylight for the hike to the hut. The snow turned into a drizzle; we hiked all through the afternoon without making a break, but we were not fast enough: night fell at about 7:30 p.m. and we estimated another good hour to get to

the serpentines that would lead us down to the hut. Finally, we had to stop because we no longer could see the trail. Yes, we also talked reassuringly to Susi but we did not expect her to understand that our situation was precarious. And then, for no apparent reason, Susi resolutely walked on into the darkness ... and we followed her without rationalizing what we were doing. After a few minutes Susi made a sharp turn to the right, leaving the trail and heading down in a kind of straight line. There were hardly any shrubs so we could easily follow her. It took only about 15 minutes before we saw the black structure of "our" hut. We were stunned; how did Susi know the location of the hut and what had told her the route to take? She had saved us! We were overwhelmed with gratitude. Exhausted we got into our big sleeping bag, with Susi snuggled between the two of us.

- Susi was usually walking ahead of us when we were hiking. Often she would guide us when we had no trail but were bound to follow one specific direction in order to reach a goal. On one occasion, she purposefully misguided us. We were on a hike to the highest peak (Mount Satima) of the Aberdares; there was no trail, we had to remember landmarks along our ascent to the ridge of the mountain so we could find our way back down to the tent.

In order to get to the ridge we had to climb a rather steep slope of thick bog covered by high grass and shrubs. It was quite arduous to scramble up walls of soggy soil. Too much for Susi; she just couldn't make it. I carried her most of the ascent, lifting her up one big step at a time. It took us more than one hour to reach the ridge. From there it was an easy 30 minute-hike to the peak.

On our way back, we got into trouble, but we noticed it only rather late in the afternoon. The sun was already low,

but we enjoyed walking and walking until we realized that we had passed the landmark of the turn-off to the bog.

Obviously, Susi who was leading us had remembered her bad experience with the bog, so she simply ignored our scent at the turn off and continued trotting happily on the much more comfortable ridge until we noticed that something was wrong. We sympathized with Susi's avoidance maneuver but we had no choice. In order to find our way back to the tent before darkness, we had to turn back immediately to the turn off to the bog. To make it easy for Susi, I simply put her into my backpack so that we could speed up, bouncing, jumping and scrambling down to the bottom of the boggy slope. We reached our tent just before nightfall!

- The Ngong Hills were not far from Nairobi, so we went there quite frequently for a hike. As usual, Susi was free to go ahead of us. On one particular outing, she discovered a scent



and off she was to follow the scent trail into the brush. We didn't take much notice of her excursion and went on to the top of the hill, made a little break to enjoy the view into the

Rift Valley and returned back to our car, parked half way up the Ngong Hills. We got settled in the car and drove slowly down the bumpy dirt road. It took us a good hour to get down where we could get on a tarmac road back to Nairobi. Only then did we both ask the question: "Where is Susi?!" She usually lies on the back seat, but the back seat was empty. We must have been dreaming to not notice that Susi hadn't jumped into the car before we left. We both felt terrible and worried, turned around and drove back to the end of the dirt road where we had parked the car. We were driving like crazy, and when we got there Susi was sitting with a bit of a concerned look at the very spot where our car had been parked. What a relief! The lost child found, the family was reunited and so happy. Susi had probably gotten involved



in a rather extensive chase of the imagined rabbit, forgot all about her two food and love providers and missed the departure of the car. That she did the right thing and patiently sat on the parking place of the departed car speaks to her intelligence!

Alma

When we lived in Kenya we took the opportunity to study the behavior of a free ranging Boran cattle herd. At the beginning of this 7-year project in 1974 the herd comprised 34 animals of both genders and all age classes. They lived on a 8,000 ha ranch where they were free to go wherever they wished. After a day of grazing, the cattle returned to a boma consisting of a circular acacia branch-barrier which protected them from predators, mainly lions. A herdsman released the animals at sunrise.

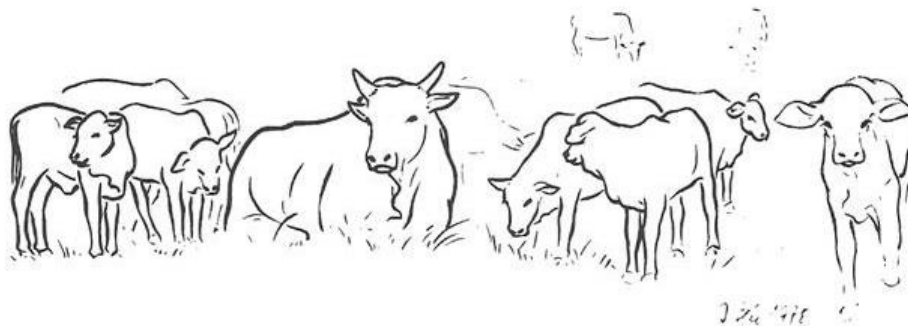
Throughout the seven years, it was Alma who then led the herd 2-4 km to a grazing area in the morning, to a water tank at noon; here the herd would spend a few hours in the shade of acacias. When Alma got up and slowly walked away, all the other animals would also get up and follow Alma who would lead the herd to another grazing area at mid afternoon. In the late afternoon the animals would start gradually moving in the direction of the corral with Alma leading them; at about sunset they came into the boma for the night.

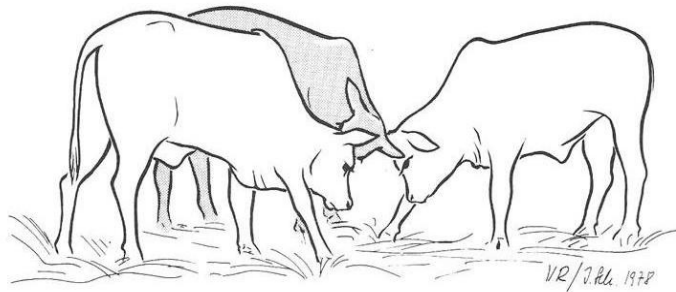


Alma was the respected leader of the herd, but she was not the most dominant member of it. She was a very friendly and very sociable cow. No one of the herd was groomed by other herd members as often as Alma, and Alma reciprocated the grooming most of the time.

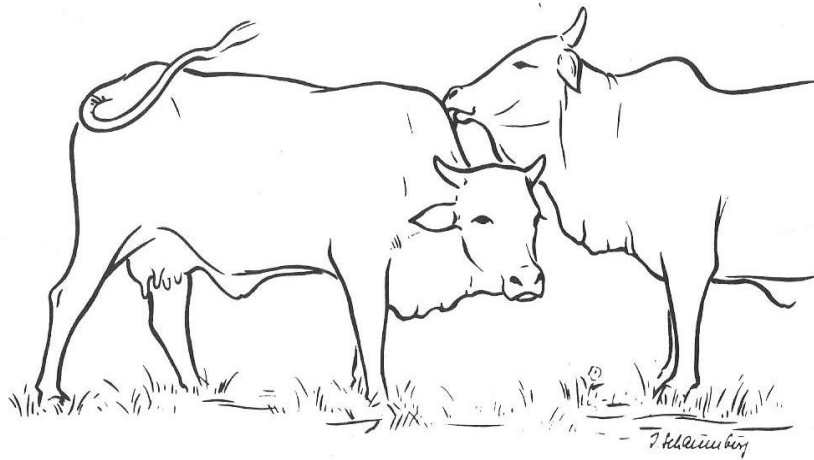
In the course of the seven years no animal was removed from the herd; no animal died. This made it possible to assess long-term social relationships among the members of the herd:

- Mother cows develop affectionate relationships with their offspring—both female and male calves—that last beyond the natural weaning process when the calves reach the age of 7-14 months.
- The cattle family is not only kept together by the mother-offspring bond but also by the bond between siblings who typically prefer each other as grazing and as grooming partners. They also spend the night in the boma close to each other.
- Before they are weaned, the calves spend most of the day in a kindergarten that is protectively guarded by a bull or by a barren cow. During that period, the calves play with each other





a lot and develop mutual preferences for specific play partners of different families. These early friendships are amicable social links between different families. They are very long-lasting; Laura and Roberta, for example, became friends during their time in the kindergarten in 1974. We confirmed their friendship relationship in 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1979: The two preferred each other as grazing partners and grooming partners throughout these 5 years.



My academic career was derailed in 1981 after I published our findings in a book and concluded that "in cattle husbandry, livestock should be only kept in such systems that meet the species-specific social needs of the animals, i.e., enough room, freedom of interaction with other herd members and as far as possible a constant composition of the herd." In retrospect, I am grateful that this derailment happened; it opened up new horizons in America not only for me but also for Annie and Catherine.

Brindle

As a family we conducted a comparative study between 1978 and 1982 with a herd of Scottish Highland cattle who lived in a 5 ha enclosure that was part of a nature park in which a herd of red deer was kept.

Brindle was the highest ranking cow; she was a very gentle animal and quickly became a friend of our daughter Catherine who not only spent much extra time with Brindle but also recorded ethological data of the herd.



The rule was that the cattle have to stay in their enclosure at all times. Unfortunately, the relatively small grazing area was insufficient; supplemental hay, straw and/or silage was provided 1-3 times per week only from October to March. It was frustrating to see the animals lacking fresh grass during the dry summer months. I finally decided to make it possible for them to get access to the abundant grass of a very large meadow on the other side of the fence during the night hours.

I also had a very good relationship with Brindle, so I figured out a simple positive reinforcement training program to have Brindle not only lead the herd through the open gate out of the

rather barren enclosure to the lush meadow at night but also bring the herd back into the enclosure next morning. In order to get Brindle's attention I whistled or/and called her name.



The cattle would already congregate close to the gate in the late afternoon. At dusk, when no tourists were likely to show up, I called Brindle by her name; she was already waiting for that signal and walked towards the open gate, with the rest of the herd following her to the meadow and starting to peacefully graze all night long—if they wished.





Early next morning I whistled. Regardless of whether the herd was in sight or out of sight, Brindle always listened and, after a short while, would start walking in my direction with all other herd members following behind her. It didn't take much time for them to come into their enclosure. I would reward all of them with a treat, usually raisins or apples, and be ready for breakfast with Annie and Catherine.



In the course of the four years it happened only on one occasion that our scheme was witnessed by another person. Early one morning, a tourist came along while Brindle was leading the herd from its secret night excursion back to its fenced-in enclosure. The lady was alarmed when she saw all these long-horned creatures still at a safe distance from her. She didn't feel quite safe, so she took her umbrella and vigorously waved it in the direction of the beasts, who stopped walking and looked kind of surprised at the agitated two-legged creature. Brindle gave the impression that she couldn't trust her eyes; she tilted her head to the left, to the right and then focused intensively on the human who obviously threatened the herd. Finally she started moving in a straight line towards the lady who by now was petrified. That's when I had to intervene; I whistled and called "Brindle, Brindle, come here; time to go home!" Immediately, Brindle turned away from the presumed enemy and walked in my direction with the other herd members following their leader back home; what a relief! I rewarded them all, especially Brindle with raisins and many strokes.



Bulli

After having decided to study the behavior of North American bison I was warned by experts: "If you really want to observe bison, make sure you can run fast, very fast! Bison are unpredictable and extremely dangerous." Having no experience with these animals, I took these warnings to heart but was not deterred to look around for a bison herd and get a feel if I could perhaps find an agreement with the animals so that I can be with them and take notes of their behavior.

I located a herd of 21 bison in 1983 and obtained permission for my ethological project. The herd was kept in a 40 ha paddock close to the North Saskatchewan River, Canada. Not challenging fate, I made my first observation at the feeding site, separated from the indeed fierce-looking beasts by a sturdy fence.



When they noticed my presence, the bison got nervous and slowly moved away out of sight into the woods. While I was pondering my

problem, the whole herd emerged and traveled single file back in my direction. I could hardly believe my eyes! Although I was fully visible, the bison were not at all alarmed but continued their procession and soon started feeding hay right in front of me. We were separated from each other only by a few feet, and I was glad to have sturdy wooden bars between us.

After having safely observed the bison daily at the feeding site for three weeks, I felt confident that they would tolerate me among them. They were grazing about 100 feet away from me when I quietly but with determination climbed over the fence into their compound. They all stopped grazing and looked in my direction, stunned by what they saw; the stranger was no longer on the other side of the fence but on their side of the fence, and he was talking reassuringly and moving very, very slowly towards them. To my great amazement and relief the whole herd calmed down within only a few minutes and continued grazing. They seemed to no longer pay special attention to me. From then on I followed them on their daily rounds.

The bison got so used to me that they showed no apparent reaction to my keeping them company while they were grazing, interacting with each other, loafing or resting. Taking records of their behavior at a close range was very easy, actually enjoyable.



I always parked the car next to the feeding area where I would climb over the fence and visit the herd. Usually, the animals were far away and I would have to look for them. To make sure that the herd knew that I was approaching, I talked to them from far and once in their area positioned myself always in such a way that all of them could see me. Since I was not an unpredictable intruder I did not present an imminent threat, so I gave the bison no reason for threatening or even attacking me throughout the whole year of my study. In fact, it was a very peaceful experience to be accepted by these magnificent animals as a harmless friendly visitor.

Obviously, the North American bison are wrongly reputed as being mean and unpredictably dangerous. Their reaction towards us is like a mirror of our own demeanor. If we don't provoke them with unintelligent behavior, we give them no reason to feel threatened and resort to self-defensive aggression.

Bob the second ranking bull became my friend.



Peter & Moon

Until the early 80s it was commonly assumed by the biomedical research industry that rhesus macaques are very aggressive animals who don't tolerate each other when they are confined in the same cage; therefore it was a standard practice to keep rhesus macaques socially isolated in single cages. When I saw this during a job interview at a primate research center in 1984, I was shocked; several hundred macaques, all imprisoned in single cages. It was a disturbing experience to see so many highly social animals locked behind bars with nothing to do but embrace themselves, sitting in a hunched position with the head bent down gazing into nothingness, repetitively biting themselves or banging against the cage wall for lack of companionship.



It was a depressing sight, a disgraceful situation. How can biomedical investigators pretend to do 'scientific' research with 'social' animals whom they deprive of social companionship? Such

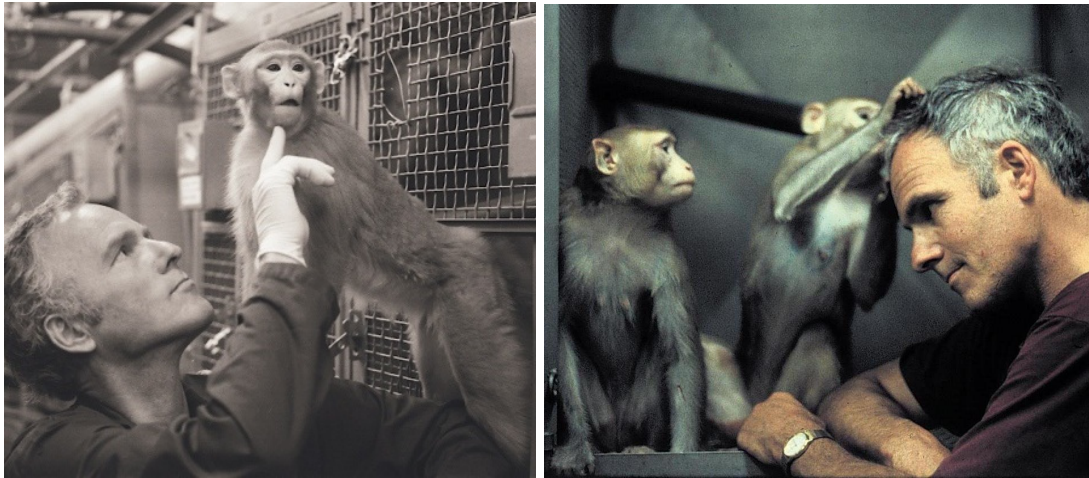
animals are not real social animals but artificial models imprisoned in distressing living quarters. I was determined to change this ethically and scientifically unacceptable situation if I were offered the job as ethologist and attending veterinarian of the primate research center.

I did get the job, and I did bring about change for the animals. During the first year, I studied the behavior of rhesus macaques who lived in a breeding troop at the primate center. Through this experience I learned how the animals are dealing with artificial confinement:

- Stable dominance-subordinance relationships were the very basis of the group's relatively harmonious living together; subordinate animals respected certain "rights" of dominant partners, e.g., access to a limited resource.
- Adults of both sexes were inhibited to show overt aggression against infants and juveniles.
- Juveniles were not yet competing with each other for dominance status.

By making use of these ethological observations, I was able to transfer more than 90% of the center's approximately 700 single-caged rhesus macaques to compatible pair-housing conditions within a period of three years.

- I established compatible cage mate pairs of previously single-caged juveniles by introducing them in the same cage without any preliminaries. Bobby and Circle were the first ones whom I transferred from species-inadequate single-housing to compatible pair-housing in 1985. The two were friends for many years; they accepted me also as their friend who visited them often, gave them raisins and tickled them under the chin.



Some juveniles were assigned to neurophysiological studies which implied that the animals carried cranial implants. These little fellows were especially in need of companionship to comfort one another. I paired all 40 of them without any complications.



- Other juveniles were introduced to single-caged adults to form compatible pairs. Billy was the first juvenile whom I introduced in 1986 to an adult single-cage male rhesus macaque. Experts warned me that such males are vicious, hence not suitable for living with another animal, especially a

vulnerable little kid. George proved them wrong: He cradled Billy right from the beginning. This big guy did not show any



signs of viciousness toward his new companion who gave the impression of feeling secure and protected in George's arms. Naturally, George also groomed the little one who reciprocated this gesture after he had lived with George for a few weeks.

- Previously single-caged adults of the same gender were first given the opportunity to establish clear dominance-subordinance relationships in double cages in which they were separated by grated cage dividers that allowed them to see, smell and hear each other without physically interacting and possibly injuring one another. Most pairs did establish clear rank relationships under these conditions; in order to avoid possible territorial antagonism, these new pairs were then released into a different double cage without divider. The

new home cage had a privacy panel installed that allowed partners to take food and eat it without seeing one another; this arrangement prevented possible food competition. If partners failed to establish a clear rank relationship during the familiarization period, they were not paired with each other but tested with different partners until proper matches were found.

Transferring the research center's rhesus macaques from single-caging to compatible pair-housing arrangements was not associated with serious aggressions but it made them truly 'social' animals. They interacted with each other in a species-typical manner and stopped exhibiting signs of frustration, especially self-injurious biting; sharing favored food was a reliable sign that two new cage companions were compatible—here Moon and Peter, the first pair of adult males formed in 1987.



Having a cage companion was particularly important for aged animals—here 26 year-old Sissa grooming 35 year-old

Senila—who had lived in social deprivation for almost all of their lives, and also for those animals who were assigned



to potentially distressing experiments—here Claire and Claudia, both assigned to a neurophysiological study, sharing apples with each other.



I made my findings public, hoping that they will inspire other facilities to pair- rather than single-house their macaques. In 1991, the United States Department of Agriculture specified in its revised animal welfare standards and rules that "Dealers, exhibitors, and research facilities must develop, document, and follow an appropriate plan for environmental enhancement adequate to promote the psychological well-being of nonhuman primates" and that this plan "must include specific provisions to address the social needs of nonhuman primates." I took this as a victory on behalf of the innumerable macaques who were forced to spend most of their lives alone in small cages. In the course of the last 20 years, social housing of caged macaques has become accepted by the biomedical research industry as the default housing arrangement.



Oak branches

It didn't seem right to keep hundreds of rhesus macaques in barren cages without a perch. I suggested to my senior colleague, who was my boss, that we install wooden perches to make it possible for the macaques to retreat to the 'safe' arboreal dimension of their living quarters. Well, being a newcomer I didn't yet know the rule: wood in macaque cages is a no-no. Why? Because the wood cannot be sanitized properly, hence is a potential hygienic and health hazard for the animals. That was it, rules are not there to be broken! I wasn't convinced and shelved my idea for later.

Not long after this failed attempt with wooden perches, it so happened that I visited a highly respected primate research center in Germany. In order to get into the animal quarters, I had to shower and change my clothes. Visiting the group-housed rhesus macaques I noticed with a bit of a surprise that the animals chewed on willow branches, ate the leaves and carried defoliated branches around. Isn't that against the rules?! I asked the colleague who gave me the tour how the willow branches are treated before they are brought into the animal quarters; I didn't dare ask if they also have first be showered. My colleague had a clear answer: We grow the willow on the grounds of the primate center, cut them and bring them to the animals. So simple! That really made me think. Just to be on the safe side, I also wanted to know if access to the unprocessed willow branches had jeopardized the animals' well-being and health in any manner. The answer was a clear "no". I was so happy to hear this!

One of the first things I did upon returning to the primate research center back in the U.S.A. was to share with my boss in great detail my experience with the non-showered willow branches in the living quarters of macaques at the German primate research center. Now I had an ace in my hand; my boss

agreed that the traditional rule against wood in macaque cages may, after all, be outdated. He gave me permission to make a trial with a few rhesus macaques, place branches that had not been sprayed in their cages and see what happens.

One of the animal caretakers had a farm with a large tract of unmanaged forest. He allowed me to get the branches I needed for this trial.

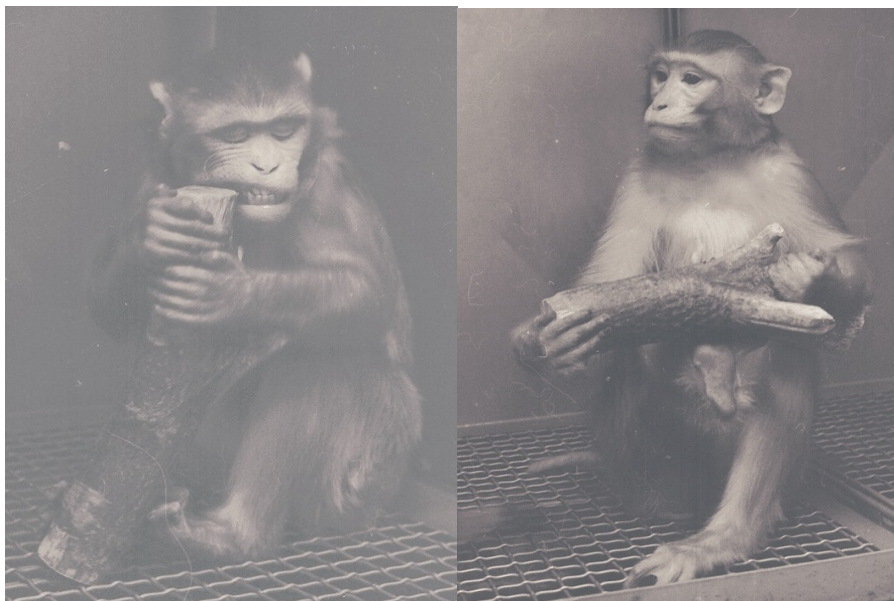
I spent a few hours cutting with a hand saw segments of fresh box elder branches for my little project. Box elder wood is relatively soft, so I was pretty sure that the animals would have a great time not only sitting on their perches but also gnawing them. And how right I was! They had a gnawing orgy, and the next morning I waded into their flooded room; the automatic flushing system had carried all the wood shavings into the sewage drain which got clogged with tightly compressed wood shavings. For a moment I was stunned but not really surprised. The box elder wood was soft and gnawing turned it into long wood strips. For me this was no reason to give up. I fetched the manual drain snake and got to work; what a mess, but I did manage to unclog the drain. I hosed down the room and figured out my next improvement plan.

To make it short: I tested quite a number of different wood species and worked many sweaty hours unclogging these darn drains, but finally hit the right wood. Gnawing disintegrates dry red oak branches into flakes that are so small that even large quantities get flushed through the drains without clogging them. I had won the battle! Now I could really start the trial.

In October 1986, I furnished the cages of 12 rhesus macaques with dry red oak branches, cleaned the branches along with the cages with warm water daily, disinfected once every two weeks and checked the animals several times a day.



In the course of two months the animals sat on the branches on a regular basis without any ill effects; they gnawed the wooden material extensively without any ill effects; no drain was clogged. These findings were so encouraging not only for me but also for my boss that I got started sawing dry red oak branches for all 700+ cages of the center. It turned out to be quite a job, which I did on weekends. I also cut short segments of dry oak branches



as an extra addition to the new environmental enrichment. The monkeys loved their gnawing sticks which they carried around, gnawed extensively and played with by rolling them over the mesh floor of the cage or by manipulating them.

I continued collecting behavioral data to demonstrate the positive effects of these enrichment items on the animals and presented the data at conferences and published them in professional and scientific journals.

During a national conference on environmental enrichment for nonhuman primates in 1991, consensus was reached that unsealed wood can be used for enriching the living quarters of nonhuman primates under the condition that common sense is used to assure that the material is properly cleaned and replaced as needed. For me, this was the end of the oak branch odyssey.



Branch perches and gnawing sticks have become commercially available for primate research facilities.

Owen

I was walking through the hallway when I happened to see Rosi—one of the attending caretakers of the rhesus macaques—through the slightly open sliding door of an animal room talking to a female rhesus macaque. I was curious, entered the room and saw Rosi holding a leg of that female in the partially opened cage door. Now I got really curious! "Hi Rosi, what are you doing with this girl?" He replied: "You know Viktor, I really feel bad taking blood samples of our animals in the customary way by restraining them on the treatment table and then inserting the needle into the femoral vein. The animals are so scared!" The venipuncture itself is probably not a big deal for the animals, but being removed from the familiar home cage and held down on their back in the treatment room must be a very frightening experience for them. They typically struggle and show unmistakable signs of intense fear.



Rosi inspired me to refine the standard blood collection practice. Rhesus macaques are intelligent animals, so I thought it should be possible to train them to cooperate, rather than resist, during venipuncture in their familiar home cages. I developed the following training protocol and tested it with several adult female rhesus macaques.

1. Establish a mutual trust relationship with the individual female so that the animal is not afraid of me, and I am not afraid of the animal.
2. Reward the female with raisins when she comes to the front of the cage after you have called her, and remains in front of the cage while you partially open the cage door and offer raisins on your hand.
3. Reward the female with raisins when she allows you to touch one of her legs through the partially open cage door.
4. Reward the female with raisins when she allows you to gently get a hold of one of her legs and, with gentle firmness extend the leg through the partially open cage door.
5. Reward the female with raisins when she allows you to puncture the saphenous vein of the extended leg.

Each of these training steps lasts a few minutes and is repeated as needed after several hours or on the following day.

It was very easy to train the first pair—Zip and Zap. Each of the two required less than a cumulative of 40 minutes until the goal of the training was achieved.



I continued training a few more females to gain more experience before working with males. Adult male rhesus macaques had the reputation of being intractable, extremely dangerous animals who must be manually or mechanically restrained or chemically immobilized before a blood sample can be obtained from them without risk for the handler(s) to be scratched and/or bitten.

As it turned out, it was not at all problematic to train adult males to cooperate during blood collection in their familiar home

cages. Owen was the first male whom I trained; it took a cumulative of 29 minutes until he presented one of this legs and remained still while I punctured the saphenous vein and drew a blood sample; he was rewarded with raisins.



I trained about 50 rhesus macaques. Blood samples collected from animals who cooperated during the procedure in the home cage failed to show the physiological stress reactions that typically occur in animals who are removed from their cages and forcefully restrained in a squeeze cage out in the hallway or on a table in a treatment room, while blood is collected from them.

Alpha, Bob, Sissi, Max & Ray and Devil

During the ten years working with rhesus macaques in a research institution, I met quite a number of animals who left permanent impressions in my memory.

Alpha was the top ranking and oldest (23 years) animal of a 33-member breeding troop. She was respected by all so she had little reason to reinforce her dominant status. There was one situation where Alpha often lost her composure and got angry—but only for a minute or two. Alpha didn't like it when fighting was going on, especially when a low ranking animal was harassed by one or several higher ranking bullies.

During a 42-hour observation period, I witnessed 13 instances when Alpha terminated an aggressive dispute by interfering consistently in favor of the attacked victim who would run to Alpha, a safe haven. Sometimes, the victim would take a submissive posture in front of Alpha who would place a hand protectively on the victim's body while sternly looking at the attacker(s).



Bob was a 7-year old male of Alpha's troop. He was not an aggressive male but tried to be on good terms with the numerous females of the troop. He was the father of most babies. Some of them were attracted to Bob, would leave their mom and run over to Bob and cling to his belly. Even though this happened quite often, Bob was always a bit consternated. He wasn't quite sure if it was okay with the mother, so he remained passive, yet took a protective posture towards the baby. I never saw that a mother got upset when her baby was cradled by Bob. After all, he was the father, why shouldn't he also take care of the kid?!



I have seen a similar situation in a kindergarden, where the eldest young male would protectively cradle recently weaned infants. In this case, the young male was probably acting as a mother substitute for the kids.



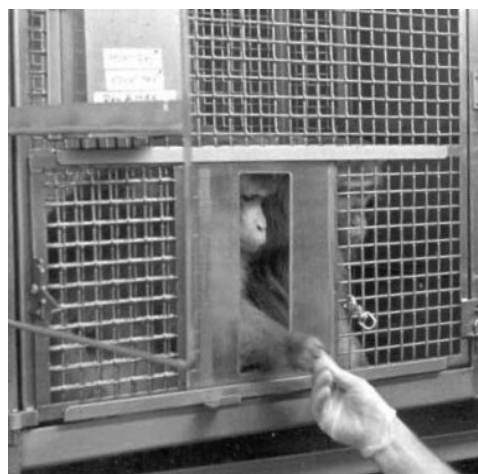
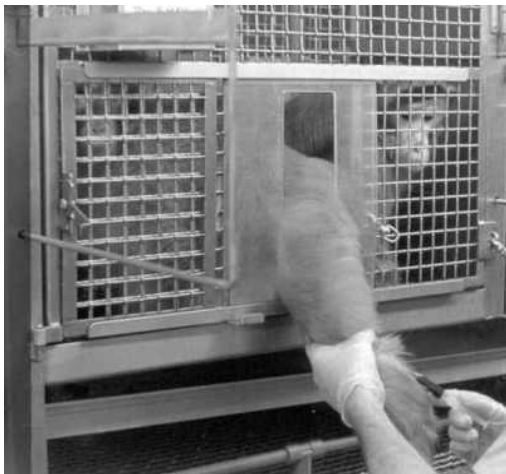
Sissi was a juvenile of Alpha's troop who always climbed/jumped on my shoulder when I visited the animals.



Did she come on my shoulder because she liked me or the treats?
Probably both!



Max & Ray were special friends for me. They were one of the first adult males whom I transferred from single-caging to compatible pair-housing in August 1989 when Max was 8 years and Ray was 12 years old. The two were also the first paired males whom I successfully trained to voluntarily cooperate during blood collection in their familiar home cage in May 1990; Max had a particularly good relationship with me and only a cumulative total of 16 minutes were required before he actively presented a leg so that I could take a blood sample from the saphenous vein. Ray was a bit shy so it took me 48 minutes before he presented a leg for blood collection.



Max and Ray had a remarkably harmonious relationship with each other. Max was more outgoing while Ray was more reserved. Ray was the dominant one of the two but I have never seen him aggressive against Max; he did not try to monopolize favored food such as raisins as a reward after cooperative blood collection. Max respected Ray's superior position and did not try to be the first one to get hold of apples or other supplemental food. In the course of five years that I followed their relationship I have never seen the two engaged in fighting; I have also never seen them grooming each other yet both gave the unmistakable impression that they liked each other's company.



Devil was a young single-caged male who gave me a lot of headaches. He was vicious and charged me from behind the cage wall whenever I dared to come close to his cage. Having no social companion was apparently very frustrating for him; he showed this by sham biting himself over and over again.

I made several attempts to transfer him to a compatible pair-housing arrangement with another male by first testing the two in a big cage where they were separated by a grated partition that allowed them to see, smell and hear but not physically touch one another. After three tests I gave up. Devil acted like a devil

and attacked the male on the other side of the partition with full force. Even much older and stronger males got no respect whatsoever from Devil; he hated them all and would have tried to kill them if they had not been protected by the grated cage divider. What to do next? I felt sorry for Devil; he was desperate to have a companion but didn't have the temperament to adjust to sharing a cage with another monkey.

Finally I got the right idea: Pair him with a little kid; the kid will block his fierce aggression but provide companionship.



Fortunately I was right. The moment little Billy slipped into the cage, Devil's attention was 100% focused on the kid who approached him; he reached out and gently shoved the little one onto his body and protectively embraced it. And that was the beginning of a very touching relationship. The presence of Billy turned the former monster into a mellow teddy bear. Devil became a different 'person.' He accepted it when I came to visit the two; he even took raisins from my hand, and he also stopped biting his thighs. The two were a happy pair for many years.

They do not know what they are doing.

I have spent most of my professional life working with and for animals who were kept in biomedical research institutions. Over the years it became very clear to me how it is possible that millions and millions of animals are treated without humane dignity and then senselessly killed in such facilities. A prestigious biomedical researcher concedes in a sobering article published in the acclaimed Journal of Laboratory Animal Science: "The investigator, above all, wants to pursue his or her research activities ... The academic and intellectual freedom to pursue these activities is crucial to the livelihood of any investigator. Most investigators think only briefly about the care and handling of their animals and clearly have not made it an important consideration in their work." Yet "all investigators consider themselves upstanding citizens of excellent ethical and moral character."

It has also been my experience that many biomedical investigators use animals as tools to pursue their careers but fail to consider that these tools are not inanimate objects but sentient beings endowed with feelings and a strong survival instinct. Yes, it is correct that many investigators don't care about the well-being of their research subjects; they label them with numbers and treat them accordingly as disposable objects.



In fact, the great majority of animals assigned to biomedical research—mice and rats—are not considered to be 'animals' in U.S. animal welfare regulations: "This term [animal] excludes: Birds, rats of the genus *Rattus* and mice of the genus *Mus* bred for use in research." This clause is convenient for the biomedical research industry because rats and mice can be treated like objects. It makes it possible for investigators to literally "use" and kill huge numbers of animals for their research while considering themselves upstanding citizens of excellent and moral character. I have cared for animals, including rats and mice, who were at the mercy of such investigators. It was a very painful experience. Why did I not quit?

It was not always easy! I entered the field of laboratory animal science as a naïve, innocent and inexperienced young veterinarian with a noble vision; I had no idea that compassion was not a default characteristic of scientists who do research with animals. When reality opened my eyes, I was angry, very angry. At first I found fault with the scientists who made use of animals for their ego-driven academic ambitions without taking their well-being into consideration; how can you misuse and then even kill animals?! I was righteous: my concern for animals was right, their lack of concern for animals was wrong—very wrong. I criticized the scientists not verbally but in my mind. The stronger my criticism was the greater became the resistance against my 'justified' attempts to correct the ways scientists housed and handled the animals of their research projects. It was a frustrating battle for several years until it finally dawned on me that it was not fair to condemn the scientists. They were actually not aware of what they were doing. The way they treated animals was the result of their conditioning; their upbringing and education had conditioned them not to have feelings for animals, while my upbringing and education had conditioned me to have compassion for animals. Nobody is choosing one's conditioning, so

nobody can be held responsible for it. This insight was extremely helpful. Now I had compassion not only for the animals but also for the scientists who misused them, and were thereby creating a subtle but permanent feeling of guilt that undermined their ease of mind and happiness. It was indeed the impression most investigators gave; they were tense, serious, extremely ambitious with no smile on their faces.

This shift in consciousness brought about a big difference in the effectiveness of my attempts to refine the traditional housing and handling conditions of animals kept in biomedical research labs. I analyzed all my refinement studies, presented the findings at conferences and published them in professional and scientific journals, always emphasizing that the improvements tested benefit both the animals AND science by reducing data biasing stress and distress reactions to traditional housing and handling practices. The battle had now turned into a win-win situation; I was very happy.



Mimmi the skunk

In April 2002 we moved into our home at the foot of Mt. Shasta, California. In October 2004 an unregistered tenant moved in without notice. We knew that somebody shared our home; every evening we heard a pretty loud rumbling noise right below our dining table. We had no clue what the meaning of this noise could possibly be. Some mice lived in the basement but there was no way for them to make such a noise; it sounded like somebody was banging rocks against rocks.

When I tried to investigate what's going on, I was blocked by the deck boards. Had no choice but do some deconstruction so that I could look under the deck. And what did I discover?! Some critter had scratched/gnawed a little hole into the corner of the base of our home to get into the so-called crawl space. An ideal, perfectly secluded and sheltered place for hibernation. But who was the uninvited guest?

We got the answer one evening when a skunk peeked through the window in front of our dining table; a skunk! We were thrilled but at the same time a bit concerned about the possible implication for our noses. Next evening we saw the skunk again on the deck, this time in company of another, a bit smaller skunk. Obviously a mother skunk—we named her Mimmi—and probably her daughter had moved into our basement and were in the process of rearranging the furniture, i.e., rocks in the crawl space; that explained the noise under our dining table.



Now I made a mistake. My thinking was: Being nocturnal animals, the two ladies will leave their apartment in the late evening, and I will then get to work and seal the entrance to their apartment with a huge rock; when they return in the morning they will already have been evicted. It didn't work out that way, but I had already sealed the entrance with a big rock and replaced the boards of the deck. Next evening we heard the usual noise again; Mimmi and her daughter were probably trying to move the big rock so that they could get out; they did not succeed. I had sealed the entrance too early, before they went out for the night. What next? We could not have them locked in the basement and let them starve to death; that would be terrible. There was only one way to deal with this dilemma: Keep the door to the basement always open so that mother skunk and daughter skunk were free to move in and out as they wished; at last they had the perfect apartment for the winter! They stayed several months ... until the robins started singing!

The door to the basement remained propped all through the autumn and winter—the water pipe close to the door froze in January. Quite often we saw the critters strolling on the deck in front of the dining table window. They were very, very beautiful, but we never tried to meet them—for a good reason.

All went well until one bitter cold night in January. Screaming and a biting smell woke us up. This was the bill for our naïve hospitality. Next morning, we were shocked to notice that a big foot print had joined the relatively small prints of the two ladies. We reckoned that a male skunk had taken advantage of the free entrance, sneaked into the basement, encountered strong resistance by the defenseless females but stayed anyway. Who could chase away a big male?! We don't know who sprayed whom. The extremely intense odor made us infer that all three skunks took part in the spraying. The pungent smell occupied the whole house for many days; it was not nice!

After this perfume display and screaming in the middle of the night, silence prevailed again. Fortunately, no more spraying took place.

The next question was: how can we get rid of the skunks? It was much too cold to lure them out and then shut them out; we had to wait until late winter when the temperature would climb to humane levels. This happened in early March.

Now we had to get all three of them out at the same time before we could close the door to the basement. In order to keep track of the three, we sprinkled a layer of flour across the step of the propped door to the basement every evening. We noticed right away that the biggest foot print was missing. The male must have left Mimmi and her daughter to find more welcoming females. Two foot prints had to be checked.

Strangely, there was always only one foot print leading out at night and one leading back in the morning. We couldn't close the basement door and leave it shut because there was always one

skunk still in the basement. This went on almost two weeks; these girls knew what we had in mind and played a game with us! They probably took turns for their nocturnal outings.

Finally, one very early morning when it was still pitch dark I checked the flour on the door step with my flash light; I saw two foot prints leading out and no foot print leading back in. Mother and daughter had an outing together and forgot to come home in time. I got them out, both of them; what a relief! I closed the basement door and made sure to keep it shut all through the spring. The skunks were evicted and it was not too cold for them to find a perhaps less cozy yet suitable shelter for the approaching spring season.

Needless to say, it was not difficult for us to always remember: close the door to the basement in the afternoon!



Erika

When we moved into our new home in Northern California, our 1-acre property was already occupied by a group of mule deer. The animals gave the impression of feeling completely at home. Several of their highways passed at a close distance of our new home in all four directions; there were numerous bowl-shaped 'beds'—the animals scratch the hard surface of the ground with their hooves, thereby removing stones and wooden debris and creating a shallow comfortable depression in the ground—under manzanitas and close to several apple trees that turned out to be one of the animals' major attractions during late summer and fall when favored food literally falls from the sky. Our property was an ideal home area for deer! The previous owner had been home-bound for several years, which means that the deer were practically never disturbed by humans; this was their home. Now we share the land with them and pay attention not to disturb or frighten them in any manner.

Susi was the first one who initiated physical contact with me after only a few months. I was sitting with my eyes closed in our backyard in the early morning before sunrise, when something nudged my chest. When I opened my eyes I looked straight into the eyes of a magical being. It was a most touching experience to have a wild animal approach me spontaneously in such a gentle manner. The encounter took place again the next day, and the next day again. I called this deer Susi; her daily visits turned into a routine ceremony that developed into a kind of love affair. In the course of time, Susi would even settle down right next to me so that I could caress and groom her. She made it clear that she loves to be scratched—also by Annie—especially behind the ears, gently under the chin and vigorously under the neck on the



dewlap all the way down to the sternal area between the front legs. Another preferred grooming spot was the tail head, on the left side and on the right side. She would arch her spine and take on a kind of blissed-out gaze. This was "heaven" for her and a beautiful experience for me.

Susi tried to become part of our family when she decided one day to visit us with her little son; the two were quite relaxed, and checked out each and every room. This was not what we had



in mind, so we gently guided Susi back to the open door through which she had come in. It was now up to us to make sure that both the front and the back door were always shut. A year later, we didn't pay attention and forgot to close the back door, and sure enough another deer—Teddy—came into the kitchen and from there into Annie's office. We didn't know that we had a visitor and when I walked briskly into the office, Teddy panicked and tried to jump through the closed window. Fortunately, the window glass did not break and Teddy was not hurt but calmed down when she recognized me and then walked back to the open door and out; we, and probably also Teddy, were so relieved! From then on, we took extra care to keep the doors closed—we had no more deer visitors in the house!

Susi's mother was Erika; she was the most senior animal of our property's deer family. Erika was a gentle, kind of meditative deer. She would spend hours chewing the cud while comfortably lying in one of the deer-sized beds right in front of the kitchen window. Like her daughter, Erika quickly lost all fear of us and enjoyed it when we groomed her. Occasionally, she also got raisins

which she never failed to accept and then chewed with gusto before swallowing them quickly in order to get some more.

In the summer of 2004, our deer family lost two lactating mothers who had been nursing three fawns. What should we do with these orphans? At the time, Erika had two fawns—Tina and Toby. Since Erika was very close to us we managed with gentle and patient positive reinforcement training to have her accept the three hungry orphans getting their share of milk while mom was nursing her own twins. This was a miracle that we could not have expected, but it did happen. I took this photo in October when the twins (two left fawns) were four months old; Erika is



flanked by the three orphans Teddy, Mucki and Pucki who were six months old. Little Teddy developed a particularly strong bond with her adoptive mother who not only nursed but also licked and groomed her just like her own offspring.

We were mistaken when we used the name Teddy for the little fawn who was always full of beans, ready to engage in



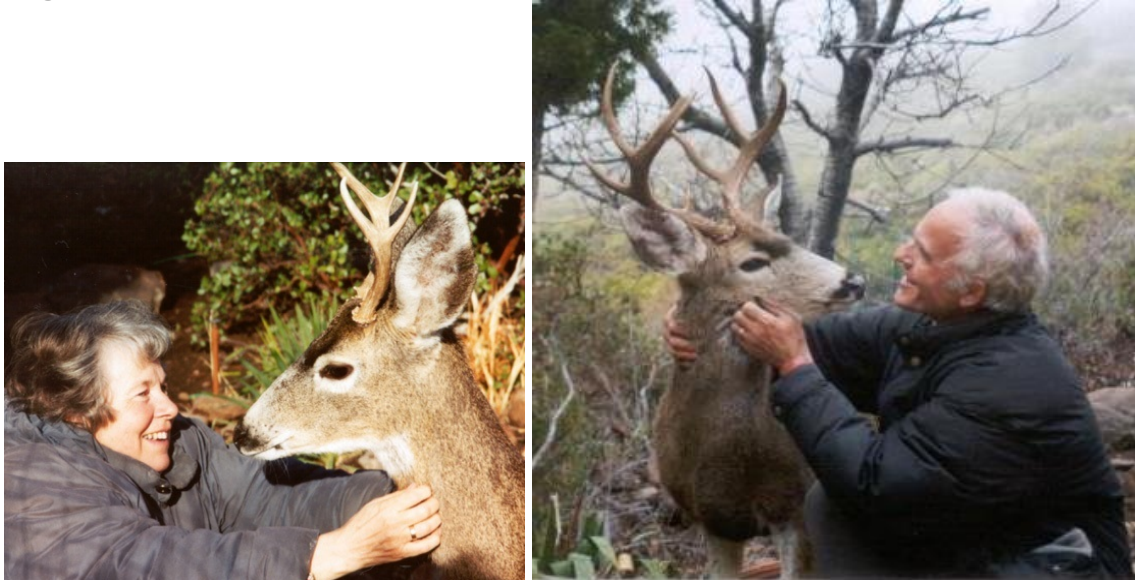
playful activities with other fawns and with us. It turned out that Teddy was not a little buck but a little lady. Annie took this funny photo when Teddy was 14 months of age.

Elli was Erika's second-born daughter. She had the gentle temperament of her mom and got very attached to us, just like



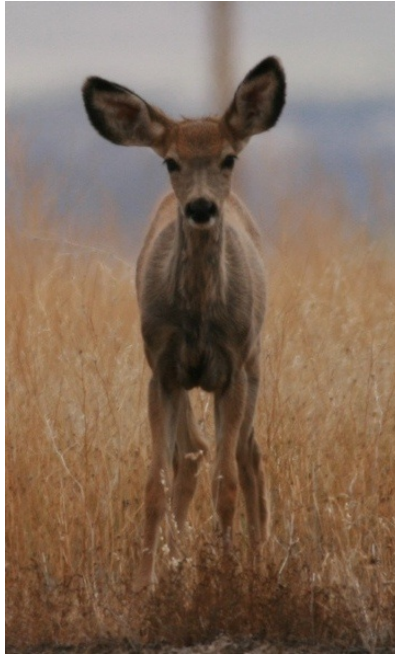
her elder sister Susi. The same is true for Elli's eldest son Jimmy. When he was a teenager, Jimmy developed a special

relationship with Annie; once he had fully matured he liked it when I met him on a walk and we spent some quality time together.



Deer enjoy it when they are groomed by humans provided they have developed a relationship with them that is not based on fear but on mutual trust and respect. That's probably the original, biologically normal, i.e., harmonious relationship between animals and humans.

In October of 2009, we noticed that Elli's 1 year old daughter was limping but could not see any signs of injury. Observing this kid for a few days, I finally saw that she had a kind of bandage around her right front leg right above the hoof. It took me a few days to get close enough to realize that the bandage was not a bandage but a 1.5 inch long section of a white PVC pipe. Obviously, the animal hadn't managed to get the pipe pushed back over the toes after she had gotten her hoof trapped in it. In the meantime the skin had started to react; it was slightly swollen, making the scenario pretty hopeless for this yearling. After much pondering I decided not to ask for help from the Wildlife Service but work with this little creature myself.



Next morning I was sitting at a nice spot with a gorgeous view of the mountain, when out of the blue Elli and her little daughter turned up right in front of me. This was a big surprise! I gave Elli some raisins and groomed her while attentively getting a close look at the yearling's leg. While reassuringly talking to both animals, I finally moved my right hand very slowly in the direction of the kid's leg; the kid did not seem to take any notice of my endeavor. Very, very gently but at the same time with great resolution I got hold of the leg, held it carefully and firmly in place while cautiously turning the PVC section with my left hand and pushing it slowly—very slowly!—to the rim of the hoof, over the rim and off the toes. To my utter amazement, neither the kid, who got the name Lilly, nor the mother budged during the whole procedure which took about three minutes. The two may even not have noticed what had been going on. Somehow, we three communicated on a non-verbal level to make this happen and save Lilly from painful and serious complications. Not surprisingly, she got very affectionate and she is now just like her mother one of

those deer who unmistakably loves it when you groom her, but she also likes grapes; in this photo Lilly was 9 years old.



To be and interact with wild animals who trust you is always an uplifting experience. This photo of Elli visiting us with her twins was taken in September 2012. Elli's look always made me smile.



Froggy

It was in October 2011 when a little tree frog decided to spend the winter in our living room on the window sill right next to my desk. This was not a good idea; how could the frog survive the winter without mosquitoes or flies? Assuming the little fellow was a male, I named him Froggy, took him in my hands and released him in a moist corner of the back yard next to a big rock and a pile of leaves. Next morning, Froggy was back on the window sill beside my desk! How the little guy found his way back into the house and up to his outlook was a miracle. It happened again the next day; I returned Froggy to the pile of leaves in the yard, only to find him back on the window sill the next morning. He was determined to stay for the winter but I really wanted him to find a more frog-appropriate hibernation place outside; what, if he starves to death indoors on the window sill?! Now, I got determined and evicted the little critter all the way down close to the compost area in the front yard. He will not come back to the house; it's much too far—that's what I thought! Well, I did not know frogs well enough, so my thinking was wrong; it took Froggy less than 12 hours to find his way back "home" on his window sill. Being a bit naïve—and still full of hope—I carried Froggy one more time out of the house and placed him in a perfect place for hibernation far away at the edge of our property. Now I learned it: I underestimated the "homing" instinct and/or stubborn determination of frogs; again, it took Froggy less than a day to "come home." That's when I gave up and accepted Froggy as my room mate; we became friends. Froggy even allowed me to gently—very, very gently—tap him with a finger tip under his chin. Did he like it? I don't really know. Perhaps he was just too lazy to move out of the way to avoid the contact with my finger.



He spent hours on end sitting on one spot, motionless, doing nothing. So it seemed, until I watched more closely. About half an inch in front of the tip of his nose was a tiny crack in the wood, and that was where his daily breakfast appeared: tiny ants; they came out of this opening and traveled safely past Froggy who remained motionless, patiently waiting. He didn't just catch an ant but waited until one of them walked over his nose; yes "walked over his nose." When this happened—and it did not happen often—Froggy became alive and snapped and gulped the ant in a split second. He was extremely fast in this maneuver, then settled back into motionless waiting, waiting for the next ant who strayed from the normal route to pass in front of the frog's nose. I don't know how many ants he caught per day, but it must have been enough to keep him in good shape. Occasionally he made excursions on my desk but he always returned to his window sill.



Froggy stayed through the winter. When spring came, he was not yet ready to leave because he got a visitor: another frog from the back yard, maybe a female mate? The two got along very well, suggesting that they were a real couple. Their favored place to spend time together was the wet rocks in the little



puddle next to my desk. I took this photo in June 2012, seven months after Froggy had moved in. By the end of June, the little puddle had become empty; the pair had left for good—to raise a family?

Hansi

Whenever the weather is pleasant, I enjoy sitting in our backyard at day break and experience the gradual transition from a starry night to a glorious day. In late winter and spring, I am taking this opportunity to feed the birds and chipmunks right in front of me. The chipmunks have lost their fear of me very quickly and regularly climb up on my hand. It's always an exhilarating experience to feel the high-frequency life energy vibration of these energetic little creatures.



The birds, especially the quails and the doves were not so daring and kept at an out-of-reach distance from me. There was one exception, a scrub jay. One morning in October 2015, Hansi started exploring me from a safe distance. He did not get in contact with me but checked me out from all sides, looking straight at me with slightly tilted head: "it's nice that you feed us, but can I really trust you?!" I guess he convinced himself that my intentions were friendly and finally flew on my hand baited with sunflower seeds. At first, he instantaneously took off after landing, flew around, landed again on the hand, took off and hovered over the hand for a second and then settled down on it.



Looking into his eyes at such close quarters was such a beautiful experience! Once he took the first sunflower seeds from my hand, buried them nearby in the sandy soil and came back for more seeds, Hansi became the "preferred" customer. He didn't miss one morning to collect his sunflower seeds from my hand.



After a few weeks, I noticed another scrub jay who often came with Hansi but he picked up the bird seeds from the ground. I named this fellow Robi. He often watched Hansi who sat on my hand as if it was a normal thing to do for a jay. It did not take many days before Robi got inspired and after a few tentative attempts landed on my head while Hansi was sitting on my hand. In order to avoid any competition, I shook my head a bit to get Robi off his perch, put a woolen cap on my head and put sunflower seeds on top of it. It worked immediately. As if he had been waiting for this, Robi returned to his perch on my head and helped himself to sunflower seeds. Now I had two winged friends!

The two got quite attached to me, respectively to the sunflower seeds on my hand and on my head. One of their favorite trees was the big maple in front of the kitchen window. I would whistle and call them, and they would swoop down and perch on my extended hand and on my head, respectively. Our relationship extended over a two-year period after which I lost contact with the two.

Mimmi the raccoon

Hanna and I met the first time on June 25, 2015. It was unusual for a raccoon to show up in the middle of the day, but this one gave the impression that this was normal for her; she was kind of curious, came pretty close and allowed me to take photos of her. After about 10 minutes, Hanna disappeared into the brush.



I met Hanna again after two years on July 10, 2017. This time she was not alone; she had brought her kits and took her living quarters under the deck of our home. The daily bath turned into a highlight for Hanna's family during the hot summer.



One of the kits had gotten injured and lost her tail. We called the little one Mimmi.

Hanna and her weaned kits left their quarters under the deck in the course of early October, probably to find a more suitable lodging for the winter.



On October 31, Mimmi showed up at the back door.



On November 4, she climbed up to the little platform in front of the kitchen window, contemplating if she should slip through the cat door ... and create havoc. Fortunately she decided against it!

After this first visit, Mimmi occasionally came to sit on the cat's cushion in the late evening and/or very early in the morning. Maunschi, a former stray cat who had adopted us in 2002, didn't like the stranger sitting on her cushion. She did a lot of hissing behind the window; this did not impress Mimmi but it was a signal for us that Mimmi was here. We noticed her presence one or two times a week. To our great relief, Maunschi never picked a fight when she met Mimmi on the deck or in the backyard, but diplomatically headed for her cat door and behind the safe window into the kitchen. When it got bitter cold in December, I decided to supplement feed the little raccoon during her visits. After I took this photo in the kitchen on December 29, I walked



out on the deck. Mimmi didn't hesitate but immediately climbed down from her cushion came to me and tried the various food treats presented in front of my feet. Only a few such late-evening meetings were necessary before I figured out what Mimmi's preferred treats were: cashew nuts, peanuts and walnuts. An occasional hard boiled egg was savored, a few raisins were not snubbed and a piece of apple was accepted once in a while.

Mimmi quickly developed trust in me and I gained trust in her, so that I could offer her the treats in my hands or between my finger tips. She always took the food very gently with her long fingers, rubbed it a bit and consumed it. On three occasions, she climbed on my lap, looked at me with her clear eyes and helped herself to the nuts in my hand. In the course of the winter, we became friends who enjoyed being with each other.

On March 31, 2018 I saw Mimmi shortly after sunrise emerging from under the deck. It now became clear where she had "hibernated."



Maunschi

One sunny, early spring morning in 2003 she just walked through the door; simple as that! No formality was needed; this was Maunschi's home and we were Maunschi's adopted caretakers. There was no room for much thinking because it was all so clear to her—not to us. What made her so sure that we would be the perfect match for her? She didn't kind of interview us before making her decision; she just knew. Well she was right; how could we possibly shut the door in front of a cute little cat without a home?!

Intending to do a lot of traveling we had decided not to get any pet so that we would be free to leave our home during our excursions. Maunschi's presence taught us a lesson: Don't make plans for the future; it's full of unexpected surprises.



Needless to say, we fell in love with Maunschi. One of the first things she offered us as a thank-you token was the early morning wake up miao. Long before sunrise, she would sneak into our bedroom and start miauing; not softly but with full blast: "Time

to get up, right now!" Fortunately she didn't jump on our bellies as other uncivilized cats like to do; just a distinctive miau that was loud enough to wake up even a cat. Her intention was to get at least one of us out of bed. I was the one; she was happy and instantaneously softened her voice a bit, just a little bit. My question was pretty clear and urgent: How can I stop this alarm clock? The answer seemed obvious but it was a big mistake. I stumbled in pitch darkness to the kitchen with Maunschi miauing in anticipation (of what?!) and meandering right in front of my toes. By now I was wide awake and got the best idea: Give her some food; this will stop the miauing. It worked and I could return to bed. As it turned out pretty soon, my idea was smart but stupid at the same time. I tried to stop Maunschi from miauing while we slept but achieved just the opposite: By giving Maunschi food right after her wake-up aria, I actually rewarded her miauing. Within only one session, Maunschi learned that trying to wake us up in the middle of the night opens the door to the fridge and she gets her beloved food reward. I am no longer trying to stop Maunschi's miauing by feeding her, but I have a bit of hope that she finally will give up on her own accord.

There is one thing that Maunschi taught me very clearly: Respect my free spirit and I will trust you! We live in coyote country, so it is for safety reasons that we keep Maunschi indoors during the night. But how do you catch a cat who wants to stay outside? In the beginning I looked for her in our big backyard in the early evening. Once located, I walked up to Maunschi with the determined intention to pick her up and bring her in. It didn't work; under these conditions, Maunschi refused to cooperate and simply dodged out of my reach and ran to another place where she could hide. This exercise got frustrating very quickly until I got to senses. I stopped trying to pick up Maunschi but trained her with a food reward to come to me of her own accord when I clapped my hands a few times. She learned

very quickly and after only a few sessions came whenever she heard my clapping hands; it's true, sometimes I have to clap my hands several times in the backyard and then in the front yard, but without fail, Maunschi always responds to it correctly. Once she comes to me, I can pick her up without any problem and bring her into the house. Often, I clap my hands in the open door, and after a few minutes she is here and walks into the house.

I respect Maunschi's free spirit also in other situations when I have to physically interact with her. First, I will groom and pet her until she relaxes completely in the typical cat fashion. Once she feels my positive intention, I can clip her nails, clean an irritated eye, clip matted hair and treat bite wounds while she is holding still. Cats are known to be unpredictable, ready to hiss and strike out when they don't like you. I guess, Maunschi does like me; she never strikes out but invites me to rub her head against my chin, my nose or my forehead. She is a darling!



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