



Turning Points in  
**Compassion**

Personal Journeys of Animal Advocates

*Praise for*

## Turning Points in Compassion

*This collection of awakenings and acknowledgements of our innate compassion, sourced worldwide from many of the most eloquent, passionate and intellectually progressive voices in today's growing Animal Rights movement, then crafted into a beautiful tapestry by the editors, is bound to be the turning point for many to become, as Matthew Scully explains, "radically kind."* ■

—Dr Craig Quarmby, A Gentle Place, Tasmania, Australia.



*Our relationships with other animals and ourselves are complex. But this complexity and tension are arguably the greatest when it comes to discussions of how and who we eat. Drawing on reflections of diverse writers from around the world, Turning Points in Compassion is a remarkable, inspirational exploration of plant-based (vegan) eating. The moving personal accounts comprising each chapter provide a rich philosophical and practical resource for any and everyone.* ■

—G A Bradshaw PhD PhD, Founder and Director, The Kerulos Center Oregon, U.S.A.



*Giving voice to a diverse range of thought, and presented through a variety of contributing styles (articles, interviews, editorials and poetry), this ambitious volume offers a powerful, multi-vocal narrative across the spectrum of veganism. Covering a range of topics from politics and law, to spirituality and social change, Turning Points in Compassion makes a compelling case for the recognition of the beauty, sentience and intelligence of all things – something sadly lost in the rampant consumerist-individualism of late modernity. This volume is essential reading for anyone interested in, or committed to, the ethics, politics and life of veganism.* ■

—Dr Shannon Brincat, Research Fellow at Griffith University, Queensland.





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**Compassion**

Personal Journeys of Animal Advocates

**Edited by**

Gypsy Wulff and Fran Chambers

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*To*

*John and Pepe*

*The angels of light who opened my heart in a way no others could.*





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A deep debt of gratitude also goes to the animals for whom this book was compiled. They are teaching us to move beyond ourselves into an understanding that all life is an interconnected web of co-existence. Their plight is challenging humankind to rethink its established perceptions of animals as commodities, rather than as feeling, sentient beings. They are proving to be potent teachers as we humans struggle to evolve beyond a relationship of exploitation, into one of deep care, appreciation and respect. As we look into the world we have created for them, we see reflected back a human value system that has strayed from an awareness of the sentience and interconnectedness of all life. It is only when their suffering and exploitation ceases, and we have found our way into harmonious cohabitation, we will have come of age.

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*“If we could feel the pain of all that we destroy in the attainment of our desires our minds would drown in tears of sorrow and remorse. Then in the death of our denial we would be reborn.”* ■

—David Coles

# Preface

It has been a great privilege to edit a book of this nature and we are deeply grateful to the many contributors who have made it possible.

Filled as it is with the personal journeys of people who have taken a stand for the things they really believe in, we are amazed to see how varied and unique their approaches have been. They have revealed to us both just how deep the well of human goodness and kindness can be when people learn the truth about the animals around them, and how desperately animals need a voice if they are ever to be heard.

Through the voice of each contributor we see both the animals and our relationship to them in a new light. Their words reveal a world of sentient beings who display intelligence and have the same desires to live lives without oppression and cruelty as we do ourselves but, lacking the means of protest, have been unable to do so. On the contrary, they have been forever victimised and used as food, clothing, entertainment and labour for thousands of years, in silent slavery. The pain and suffering of the animal kingdom has been well recorded, but with little compassion.

Habituated to the sights and sounds of such treatment for untold centuries, people accepted it all as normal, and never considered it as a misuse or abuse of creatures they little understood but regarded as inferior to themselves. Most of our own families like millions of others, were born into that same web of ignorance and taught to treat animals as objects, not as living creatures with cravings for love, care and consideration. There were few people around to tell them that animal hearts are broken for the same reasons ours so often are – cruelty, neglect, and pure indifference.

Is it not a wonderful thing that people like the contributors to this book have not only been awakened to the animal world around them but also so powerfully moved by the injustices being perpetrated upon those animals that they have seen fit to open their minds and hearts to a new understanding of them, and to take a stand for their actual liberation by sharing their experiences with others? We think it is.

In a hundred and one different ways the message contained in this book is reaching the world through conversations, encounters, films and a host of other mediums but nothing can ever replace the words of someone who has personally encountered all their doubts and fears, felt the rightness of what they were doing, and was openly prepared to let others know what prompted their decision to change their lives for the betterment of the entire animal kingdom and their own. The story of that turning point in their lives is a permanent treasure that thousands will read.

They know that they are challenged by the many myths that perpetuate the eating habits of most people when they live in a society that has an economic

machinery primed and fuelled by the animal industry but despite the problems and difficulties both large and small, they know full well their persistence will win. Why? Because every day they are discovering more people who are not indifferent to the welfare of the animals, people who truly care, who are doing what they can to bring love, compassion and light into a world of darkness they once knew nothing about.

We feel very proud to walk beside every single person who contributes their time and energies to alleviating the plight of animals in this world. We are also grateful to have shared the incredible energy and determination of those who are educating people to understand that we really can have a different relationship with animals when we are no longer dependent on them as a food source. Plant-based food is more than sufficient for our needs, and once this is understood by more and more people, the demand for meat will decrease, and the slaughter of animals will one day be abolished. Only then will the animals be truly free. Their nightmare will have ceased.

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# Farmers As Visionaries: Stories of Emergence and Transition

## ■ FARMKIND

Harold Brown

Harold Brown is a former US cattle farmer who has spent most of his life in agriculture. He grew up on a cattle farm in Michigan and worked for three years in the dairy industry. He eventually left the farm and became a vegan/animal rights advocate and promoted plant-based agriculture and environmental sustainability. Harold has formed his own non-profit organisation called Farmkind and travels across North America talking to people about sustainability, veganism, kindness to animals and his experiences as a farmer. He has appeared in two documentaries by US director Jenny Stein: *Peaceable Kingdom*, released in 2004 and the remake in 2009, *Peaceable Kingdom, the Journey Home*. The films focus on farmers who were in the animal agriculture industry but ultimately rejected their profession because of the inhumane treatment and slaughter of animals and the severe damage to the earth as a result of livestock damage. Due to his heavy consumption of animal products Harold suffered a heart attack at the age of eighteen...



▶ Harold Brown.

Life happens, doesn't it? The more pertinent question though, is are we involved with the process? For the better part of my life I was not a conscious participant in what was happening. My observation has been that most human beings are not present enough to appreciate the awe and wonder of what is right in front of them.

I grew up on a small family farm in Michigan and worked for three years in the dairy industry. My great uncles who lived nearby raised sheep and dairy cattle. As on many family farms we raised different animals for food: Angus cattle, rabbits, pigs and dairy goats. I was also a hunter so my relationship and indoctrination to animals as food began on the farm.

As a farm boy, my indoctrination went beyond family to the rural community that surrounded us, which included our extended family, to 4-H, the world's largest youth organisation (The 4 Hs are head, hands, heart and health and the 4-H

organisation is a driving force behind indoctrinating children into agriculture). Another influence was going to a land grant college, but more than anything the greatest impact was made by television. Nearly every TV commercial sold one or more animal products, so with all this reinforcement I truly believed I was doing good work, living a good life and being a good person.

Yet there were things I was expected to do or that I did of my own free will that deep down I found objectionable. Things such as castrating calves, killing rabbits with my bare hands, beating cows onto trailers; things that I did that are painful to share. Carl Jung talked about how we cast those things we find objectionable in ourselves upon our shadow selves, thereby allowing us to continue to feel good about ourselves. But if that shadow gets too big it consumes us.

A turning point came when I was working in the dairy industry and I injured myself. Blood tests revealed I had extremely high triglycerides, a problem that turned out to be the same one that had resulted in my father having bypass surgery and a stroke. The doctor gave me a warning: either change my ways or expect a bypass by the time I was thirty-five. Considering the amount of animal products I was eating, this now doesn't come as a surprise. I had already suffered a heart attack when I was only eighteen, so all this scared me. The doctor gave me a pamphlet on how to eat better. I took it to heart and made changes and within a couple of years I was on an entirely plant-based diet and had reversed my heart disease.

However, while I had made dramatic changes in my quality of life there was still something missing. I had become involved with an amazing community of people who practised veganism and while I intellectually understood what they were talking about in relation to animal issues, there was still a gap. The connection and next vital turning point came a few years later when I found out about animal sanctuaries, places where rescued farm animals are allowed to live out their lives in peace. I was intrigued and it was at one of these sanctuaries that I met and adopted a young steer called Snickers. One day, after meeting him only a few times, I thought I'd test him out to see if he remembered me. When I entered the barn he was standing over in the corner chewing his cud and I called out, "Snickers!"

He looked at me and immediately came running, planting his forehead into my chest with a thump. I wrapped my arms around his neck and gave him a hug and at that moment something amazing happened within me. It is hard to put into words but it was as if there was a torrent of emotion flooding through me and I immediately had some profound revelations. It was as if the last layer of my emotional armour had broken away.

I had the mental image of a light switch right over my heart. I call it my compassion switch. I realised I had developed the capacity to turn it on and off as circumstances dictated. Of course it was always my choice but at that moment I understood I had 'learnt' to turn it on for certain people and animals, and to turn it off for others.

Now I could clearly see that my coping mechanism had been the simple phrase, "I don't care." Whenever I was in a position of doing something that

wasn't in line with my core values I would say, "I don't care," and I was immediately in a place where I was disconnected psychologically, emotionally and spiritually from the other and was capable of doing just about anything. I had grown up in an environment where violence was commonplace and an accepted way of living and recreation. At that moment when Snickers nuzzled into my heart, I knew I would never use that phrase again. I also knew the flip side of that coin was that whenever I found myself in an objectionable situation I must say, "I care."

When we say, "I care" we show up in the world in a very different and marvellous way. When we truly care, our intentions, words and deeds are acted out with integrity and are consistent with our core desires of compassion, empathy and love.

*That day I truly became vegan. Being vegan is not just a way of eating. Sure, what we put in our mouths is very important but it is only one component of a vastly larger picture and way of being. It is a practice of selfless service, unconditional love, and a holistic understanding of the biota. It is non-cooperation and non-participation with anything that does not allow another being to live on their own terms. There was now a conscious connection between my heart and my head and I now had a moral and ethical foundation upon which to live my life. On that day I learnt to trust my heart. ■*

That day I truly became vegan. Being vegan is not just a way of eating. Sure, what we put in our mouths is very important but it is only one component of a vastly larger picture and way of being. It is a practice of selfless service, unconditional love, and a holistic understanding of the biota. It is non-cooperation and non-participation with anything that does not allow another being to live on their own terms. There was now a conscious connection between my heart and my head and I now had a moral and ethical foundation upon which to live my life. On that day I learnt to trust my heart.

As you will see in this book there are many people who have shared their stories of transformation. I don't believe we are extraordinary people; I know I am not. In my interactions with those who have developed what I call animal consciousness, there are common themes found in everyone's story, yet no two are alike. More than that, these folk are examples of how we can all be and do better, and live lives where our core values are in line with words and actions; in other words, to live lives of moral and ethical consistency. We are not perfect and we all are works in progress but we have learnt to trust our intuition and our hearts and I can say for me, it has never led me astray.

All people know they can do better. It is a question of having the emotional courage and moral imagination to do so. By our choices we create and recreate our reality and our world.

I invite you to take this journey. You won't be sorry. Besides, if this old farm boy can do it, anyone can.

## ■ MAD COWBOY

Howard Lyman



▶ Howard Lyman.

Howard Lyman is a former Montana cattle rancher. He travels more than 100,000 miles every year as a speaker and lecturer and has been the subject of two documentary films, *Mad Cowboy* and *Peaceable Kingdom*. He is also the author of *Mad Cowboy* and *No More Bull!* He is the former director of the Beyond Beef Campaign and the Humane Society of the United States Eating With a Conscience Campaign as well as past president of both the International Vegetarian Union and EarthSave International. He is currently the president of Voice for a Viable Future. In 1997

he was awarded the Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience Award... ■

### Background

Every morning when I get up and put my feet on the floor, I realise I am one of the luckiest people alive. I have been able to walk since 1979, which at the time I didn't believe was ever going to be possible again.

I was a fourth generation farmer, rancher and feedlot operator from Montana who was raised during the Second World War. My parents had one of the largest dairy farms in the state and because they weren't able to hire any help, they milked the cows and my grandparents raised me. By the time I was four or five years of age I knew I also wanted to be a farmer.

Despite the fact I never paid much attention to school work or ever took a book home, I managed to graduate from high school and went back home to work on the family farm. I discovered that farming is a business and I didn't have the tools to run one. I decided to go to Montana State University and learn to be an agri-businessman. I graduated with a degree in agriculture and over a period of years I developed a small farm into an operation where I had seven thousand head of cattle, twelve hundred acres of crop and thirty employees.

### A Wake Up Call

Just when I thought I was on top of the world, I woke up one morning to find I was paralysed from the waist down. Doctors discovered I had a spinal cord tumour. Prior to surgery to remove the tumour I was told I had less than one in a million chance of ever walking again. I can tell you I did a lot of thinking prior to that operation. I was convinced I would probably be in a wheelchair for the rest of my life and I started doing a real inventory of what I was doing to the planet. I made a decision there and then to never again in my life do anything I didn't think was right. I had to admit the way I worked the farm using chemical methods was doing harm. I had seen the birds die, the trees die and the soil change. I decided I was going to change.

It took twelve hours for the surgeons to remove the tumour from the inside of my spinal cord. I walked out of the hospital with that one in a million chance of doing so.

### **A New Direction**

While I was recovering, I asked my doctor what had caused the tumour. He said adolescent cells were stimulated to grow by the chemicals I was using on the farm. I decided it was time to become an organic farmer.

I went and saw my banker and said, "I want to borrow some money. I want to start farming with nature."

My banker leaned back in his chair and said, "What in the world does that mean?"

I said, "Well, I want to become an organic farmer."

He looked at me and laughed. "You want me to lend you money but you are not going to spend it with my other customers – the chemical dealer and the pharmaceutical dealer and the fertiliser dealer?"

It was at that point I decided to sell the farm and pay my debts. It was 1983. I began working with other farmers, helping them not to make the mistakes I had made.

In 1987 a phone call came that turned me in a new direction. I was asked to go to Washington to work on Capitol Hill as a lobbyist for the National Farmer's Union. All I could think was "Geez...five hundred and thirty-five members of Congress!" I was absolutely convinced all they needed to know was the truth and we would have clear sledding on farming with nature.

I went to Washington DC and spent five years working on Capitol Hill and the first thing I learnt was the Golden Rule – "Them that got the gold, make the rules." There was no doubt after working there for five years that we were never going to achieve a solution. So I told my friends, "I'm going out to talk to the people."

My friends laughed and said, "You are never going to get half of the people to do anything."

I said, "We don't need half. Eighty per cent of the people are brain dead, they are part of the herd and they follow nose to tail and if you follow nose to tail there is only one thing you should see in front of you. Our job is to educate the twenty per cent who are still thinking and when the majority of those realises the solution, the herd will follow."

And that's what I did. After five years of working on Capitol Hill I went out and started talking to people about things like Mad Cow Disease and the environment and about what was happening to the birds, the trees, the soil and the water.

I've spent about twenty years travelling and speaking and at one time I was on the road for about three hundred days a year. I didn't have any money so I couldn't afford to fly and had to drive, sometimes up to a hundred thousand miles a year.

### **In Court with Oprah**

In 1996 I ended up on the Oprah Winfrey show talking about Mad Cow Disease. Following my appearance on air I ended up getting sued along with Oprah

by a group of Texas cattlemen. They had us in court for six years. We won four different cases before the judge threw out the case with prejudice in 2004, which meant they could not refile it. I ended up with a good deal of notoriety but my message is still the same. No matter how you do the inventory, there are fewer natural resources on Planet Earth today than there were the day *Homo sapiens* first inhabited the planet.

### **A Change of Diet**

I was a three hundred pound football player and when I quit playing football I kept eating the same way I'd always eaten. I got much heavier than three hundred pounds. I would sit down and have lunch and my nose would bleed. You know, I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer but I knew I wasn't going to live very long if I didn't change my bad habits. But I came from Montana and I'd rather be caught riding a stolen horse than admitting to someone that I was going to become a plant-eater. So I became a closet vegetarian. I didn't tell anyone about it. I lost some weight. My blood pressure went down, my cholesterol went down. I thought, "Gee, if I can do that being the world's worst vegetarian, just think what I could do if I became vegan."

I became a vegan in 1990. I lost a hundred and thirty pounds. My blood pressure went from sky high to normal. My cholesterol fell from three hundred to one hundred and thirty five. You know, at that time I was pretty cocky. I wanted to go out and tell everyone all they had to do was change their diet and we would save the world. But I found it is a little more difficult than that to educate people. When I went to my fiftieth class reunion in Great Falls, Montana, I found half of my graduating class had already died. Nobody wanted to talk to me about my diet unless it was some clown who would come along and say, "Do you ever sneak out and get a burger? Do you ever go to McDonalds?" The thing I have learnt is you cannot point at someone and say, "Let me tell you what you ought to eat." It is just too overwhelming for them. The thing you have to do is tell them, "You know I saved my own life by changing my diet." As long as you are talking about yourself they are willing to hear the message. They begin being convinced I am crazy but when I use myself as an example I open their minds and I can talk to them. Even in my hometown, Great Falls, Montana, there happens to be a vegan restaurant. Every supermarket in town is loaded with plant-based products so there must be a lot more vegans there now than there were before I started.

### **Getting the Message Across**

I've spent twenty years on the road. I've been to all fifty states and ten or twelve overseas countries. My book, *Mad Cowboy*, is in its thirteenth printing. It is available in English, Polish, Korean, Japanese, Chinese and Serbian. So I think the message is being heard.

There is no doubt in my mind that before I die the majority of Americans will be plant-eaters. Now the bad part about that is that it may not be soon

enough. We are going towards the cliff environmentally at two hundred miles an hour. Never have we had less topsoil, less clean water, less clean air, whatever natural resources you want to look at – we are putting ourselves in the same position as the dinosaurs. The dinosaurs didn't know they were going to become extinct. *Homo sapiens* should be smart enough to figure that out but it was the famous German philosopher Goethe who said, "We hide everything in plain sight."

Schopenhauer said, "Truth. First it is ridiculed, then it is violently opposed and then it is accepted as self-evident."

*I believe it is extremely important to enjoy your life. I think it is mandatory that you have joy in your life and that you are able to laugh and that you are able to enjoy the small things. But when we look into the eyes of the children, we need to remember it is our responsibility to do everything we can to ensure they have a future.* ■

We're in a position right now that we are either going to change our habits as a species or we are going to disappear from the face of the Earth. That is the premise I work on. Every time I look in the eyes of my children or grandchildren, I want to be able to say to them, "I may be a crazy old dude but I have done everything I could in my life so that you would have an opportunity in the future of surviving as a species." Every time I talk to my grandson on the phone I realise he has no control yet over the world he has been brought into. It is up to me and the adults on the planet to find a solution for his future. We are not doing very well but I have great hopes.

### Learning the Facts

You can't change anyone until they understand the magnitude of the issue or what you are talking about. I would say to any individual, "Educate yourself." If you take just the United States for example, one out of every two Americans is dying of heart disease, one out of three has cancer, one out of four is dying of cancer, sixty per cent of Americans are either overweight or obese, diabetes is growing astronomically. If you take a look at the largest dietary study that has ever been done in the history of the world, *The China Study* by Dr T Colin Campbell, you will find there is a direct relationship between our human health and the animal products in our diet. If we can get people to stop and assimilate the facts we have an opportunity of getting the majority of thinking people to change their diet. When ex-president Bill Clinton went on national TV and told Wolf Blitzer he was eating a near-vegan diet, a rocket went through the American people, so it's changing, but are we changing quickly enough?

I believe it is extremely important to enjoy your life. I think it is mandatory that you have joy in your life and that you are able to laugh and that you are able to enjoy the small things. But when we look into the eyes of the children, we need to remember it is our responsibility to do everything we can to ensure they have a future. I believe I have been marvellously blessed in my life. I just hope I do everything that I can, as well as I can for as long as I can.



## ■ A FARMER IN TRANSITION LEARNS A HEART LESSON

David Lay



▶ David Lay and Pooh Bear.

Born to parents who grew up on traditional depression era farms in the Midwest, USA, David was raised in a conservative family who lived in the suburbs of Chicago during the school year, and then spent much of his time on his Grandparents' farms in Kansas and Oklahoma. Despite going on to become a physics teacher, David also chose to follow in his Grandfather's footsteps to breed and raise Guernsey cows. Due to his mother's influence however, he found it difficult, and is now unwilling, to bring any of his animals to be killed.

David also raises free-range chickens who will never become 'dinner'. He also has three pigs who, because they were runts and would have died otherwise, were rescued and became pets who mingle with David's chickens and cows, but who mostly stand on the back door stoop begging for treats. David has rescued several older cows bound for slaughter, as well as two veal calves who are now rather large, gentle, pasture ornaments named Pooh Bear and Tigger... ■

The drought of 2012 came unexpectedly in the Midwest, USA, and its effect was like that of a house fire that was suddenly raging behind you while you read your morning paper. At first, surprise, almost an intellectual study, and then panic as the reality of its heat was felt upon the face of every farmer who stood overlooking their vast herds of cattle grazing in what only a few days before had been placid green fields now turned to dried wilted grass. I had just planted a field of buckwheat for ground cover and a field of sorghum/sudan grass hybrid as feed for my purebred Guernsey cows and bulls. There had been just enough moisture to allow the seeds to sprout into seedlings, and at a height of only a couple of inches it began to wilt and die in the unprecedented heat. The grass crunched when walked on and it was evident there would be little food for the animals who lived primarily on its sustenance.

I have always loved and cared about animals. My mother and father wanted my brothers and me to be 'animal husbands' and learn the responsibilities that came with that charge. As a child I had many different pets, from hamsters to rabbits and parakeets, and as an adult I always wanted to have my own farm to raise animals. When I retired from full-time teaching, this became a reality, and like my grandfather, I began to breed and raise Guernsey cattle. I have always seen animals as kindred spirits and though I knew the day would come when I would have to make the decision to send an animal for slaughter, the concept had always remained an

academic exercise. In spite of a growing herd and limited pastures, I always found some good reason to put off any such act. I even went so far as to 'rescue' a few older cows from being taken to slaughter simply because I saw their beauty as living beings, and not as potential pet food. The drought of 2012 forced me to face the logic of animals as food, and to challenge seeing my cattle as sentient beings. If I did not reduce my herd of thirty-two animals, living on fifty-four acres of now dried and parched land, to a more manageable number of fifteen, I faced the very real possibility of watching them starve to death.

At the time it was still early summer and the total number of cattle being sold for slaughter was still relatively small. Most farmers wanted to try to wait out the dry weather until prices were higher. However, as the summer progressed, the drought became overbearing for everyone and panic set in. The market was glutted and prices dropped, so now selling an animal was done not to make money, but simply to avoid feeding it expensive feed. In the business world this was called 'cutting your losses'. Even though I was facing the same dilemma, there were no easy choices. All of my bulls were tame and every animal in my herd had a name and a personality. So I bought hay, very expensive hay at that. Because of the drought, the amount of hay available was low and prices were running about two hundred dollars a ton, and since my herd could eat a ton a day, it would not take a mathematical genius to know there was a limit on how much hay I would be able to afford. I advertised some of my young bulls for sale, and sold one young bull and traded another for a young heritage variety pig – the logic being a pig ate different things than cattle, and less – so better to trade a bull for a pig and give the bull a chance at life rather than have it slaughtered. The pig became a pet. I named him 'Bubby'.

I didn't want to cut my losses, I wanted these wonderful creatures to live out long and pleasant lives, so I continued to look for alternate ways of either reducing my herd or finding new ways to feed them. I continued to advertise, but I also contacted some farm sanctuaries around the country and found they were full. Even if there had been room, most sanctuaries tended to take in hopeless cases in need of rescue, not animals who came from loving farms.

I also looked into hydroponics to grow grass quickly, and even the possibility of feeding my cattle corn syrup, as one of my neighbours had started to do, if not for nutrition, at least they would have energy. For various reasons, none of these options was viable. With no hope that a solution would arise, such as a saviour who would show up at my doorstep and tell me there was a place not far from here where I could take my animals and keep them safe, I was back to the only option I could see: taking my animals to the sale barn to be sold for slaughter.

Earlier in the year, a neighbour told me, "You need to learn how to kill", and a friend told me, "You're a guy that never should have been a farmer." Those words seemed to be haunting me now. All I ever wanted was to raise these beautiful animals called Guernseys and sell them to other Guernsey breeders. There wasn't supposed to be any agony in it. This was my retirement dream, a way to spend my last years blissfully living in the country and enjoying fellowship with the spirits

of such kind and gentle creatures. Now, with the final lesson my parents had tried to teach me years ago, I had to shun all of the love and caring I had given to these animals and send some of them off to a death I knew would not be easy or pleasant for them. I felt like a child being forced into adulthood, having to make 'adult' decisions – decisions of life and death.

In late August, I spent an evening going over the list of cattle I had, looking at pros and cons of keeping each or sending it away. With only names on paper, it seemed this was going to be easier than I had feared, and when I came down to the final choices, it would be easy, as my rational mind went, to load them onto the trailer and haul them away, 'away' being an abstraction that made the very real physical place I was taking them some ethereal shadow in the future that really didn't exist except in some horrid Grimm's fairy tale. I decided to take two yearling bulls – bulls because they had less 'value' to the herd than cows – and yearlings because they were actually about a year and a half old, big enough to not have to stand in a feed lot, and they would have less attachment to the farm and less trauma being removed, or so I thought. Bulls also tend to be very interested in cows, and they would be around many, many cows where they were going. Certainly this would be bliss for two young fellows with nothing but love-making on their minds. I could not have been more wrong.

My two fellows, two very handsome Guernsey bulls that surely all of the girls at the sale barn would swoon over, were named Valentino and Butternutts, and were easily lured to the trailer with sweet feed. My worry they would balk was unfounded. As they approached the trailer, I stepped into it holding the feed bucket in front of them, where they stood at the doorway, Valentino in front looking at the feed, and then around the inside of the trailer, and then back at the feed. I felt like the proverbial stalker who offers little children candy to lure them into his car, and the end result would be no better for these two. They were, in fact, children and what only a few hours before had been an abstraction for me, was now becoming reality and that's when the doubt started. Something didn't feel right about what I was doing. There was suddenly an underlying heaviness in my arms and seeing the innocence in their eyes was making this task increasingly difficult. Just when I was about to stop, to lower the feed bucket, give the feed to them and send them on their way, Valentino and then Butternutts stepped up into the trailer. I stepped back and closed the inner door to keep them toward the front of the trailer for balance, and then latched the outer door.

Up until now, the day had been calm, but suddenly a hot, dry wind came out of the south. This happened often in the late afternoon as the heat would build, but this time it was as if someone were pushing on me, to reinforce the dread that was building in my heart, and to tell me something just wasn't right.

When I've hauled animals before, they would tend to move from front to back as much as they could. This time was no different. These boys were going for a ride and for them it was an adventure, something new with new smells, and they vied for the best position to see a sight or smell a scent, just as I saw other cattle doing when riding in someone else's trailer. It's almost as if they were truly enjoy-

ing the experience, but time went fast, and I was soon pulling into the sale barn lot. I was surprised to see so many other trailers, with many more cattle than I had brought, and so we waited in a long line, waiting our turn. Having been to sale barns in the past, I was familiar with the bawling of cows, but as I turned off the engine of my truck while waiting I noticed a low hum. When I rolled down the window, the hum became louder, almost in a slow vibrato, in the key of low G, one octave below middle C, if my music training from high school had any credence. It then dawned on me this was the sound of more than a thousand cattle all bawling at the same time, with the occasional lone bawl from some animal with a distinguishable voice. I also noticed the motion in the trailer had lessened.



▶ Valentino.



▶ Butternutts.

It finally came the turn of the trailer in front of me, and I saw him pull to the left and reveal a long, red trailer full of young, black cattle. He backed up his trailer to the loading dock, got out and began to do some paper work with the attendant there. The back gate of the trailer was then opened, but the cattle would not come out. I saw a young boy, no older than six or seven years old, come out with a cattle prod, one that shocks the animals, and climb up onto the fender of his trailer. He began poking the cattle with the prod through the openings in the side of the trailer with the understandable result of the cattle in the back reluctantly pushing the animals in front of them and then all leaving the trailer. I could see the animals more closely, and saw they were young heifers, or young female cows, which are the animals a producer would normally keep back to replace his older cows. This could only mean that he was reducing his herd because of the drought. To get rid of his young females would mean that if he wanted to continue his business, he would have to buy new cows in the future in order to restore his herd. This is a drastic move for a farmer. These animals would be sold for slaughter, not for building someone else's herd, and this was an indicator of how serious this drought had become.

My turn came – or should I say our turn – as these two boys I had in the back of my trailer were as much a part of this as I was, but with a much deeper stake. I

backed up to the loading dock. The little boy was already up on the fender and had unlatched the middle gate. The attendant opened the outer gate and both of my little boys were pushed up against the front of the trailer facing out the back gate staring at a wall of young, black calves in an open pen just inside the building, all bawling as loudly as they could.

The attendant looked in and said, "What 'a ya got? Guernseys?" It wasn't a question, this man knew his cattle. "Steers?" he asked.

"No, bulls," I said.

He nodded his head and took my information. While this was happening, I saw the little boy poke Valentino with the cattle prod and he came forward but halted at the door, then began to turn around when the little boy poked Butternutts, who then jumped forward and crashed into Valentino. The little boy was fast and had moved down to the end of the trailer, put the prod through the open part of the trailer, which was enough to get the two bulls moving into the area where the attendant stood. Their ears were back, their heads down and their tails were between their legs. The attendant drove them in with the young calves, trying to find someplace where it was least crowded. I took my receipt and drove away from the loading dock with a sinking feeling and my inner voice screaming that things just weren't right. I've learnt to listen to my inner voice over the years, as it's almost always been right, but this time I ignored it, and the voice became louder and louder.

That night, as I tried to sleep, I kept thinking of the sound coming from that sale barn, the sheer number of cattle needed to make such a woeful sound and the hell that Valentino and Butternutts must be enduring in the midst of so much bawling and crying, a sound that would not stop. I live near other farms that have beef cattle, and when they wean the calves off the mommas, their woeful crying can be heard for three days before it begins to wane and then silence. It would seem these farmers had entirely bypassed the weaning process. Added to this is the fear of being taken out of their familiar, peaceful pasture, surroundings and family of cows, and dumped into a living sea of fear, smell of manure and urine, which could only add to the volume of the bawling. At times I would wake from briefly falling asleep to the sense I was seeing what they were seeing, hearing what they were hearing, and feeling the fear they were feeling. I agonised all night long and knew I had to go back and get them before they were sold.

I figured if I could get up early enough, I could get my chores done and run to get them in the morning before I had to go in to teach. I was up extra early, but by the time I'd finished the farm chores, it was time to leave to teach.

Stellar teaching was not what you would have witnessed in my classroom that day, and if you chose the word 'distracted' then you would have been close. But it was worse than that; my mind was with Valentino and Butternutts, and hoping they were going to be all right, wanting them to not suffer but knowing that was what they were going to do. At lunch, the agony ceased, as if a small voice said, "They're going to be fine, they're not sold yet." I relaxed, finished my last class and was on the road by 2pm, arriving at the sale barn in what was probably record time. I went to the front desk and asked if they had been sold and the receptionist

typed some things into the computer and said, “No, they won’t be sold until later this evening.” Fortunately for the bulls, as it turns out, because they were Guernseys and weren’t black, they were less preferred animals and would have sold as slaughter cows, or ‘junk cows,’ which means these beautiful, purebred bulls would have brought the lowest possible price. The fact is, this facility which was made to hold a maximum of fifteen hundred animals, and normally only handled seven or eight hundred on a typical sale day, was handling more than two thousand five hundred head of cattle, and so the sale would go on late into the evening.

I said, “I want them back.”

She looked at me and replied, rather stunned, “I’ve never heard of anyone wanting their animals back before.”

When I got to the loading dock, it was the same attendant who had been there the previous evening. I gave him the ticket and explained what I wanted. He looked at the ticket and then gave me a sideways glance, like, “This guy is nuts,” and then he asked when I would be back to pick them up, because he left at five o’clock and there would be someone else there. I told him I’d be back before five and so I jumped into my car and raced home to get my truck and trailer.

Notably, when I got back to the saleyards, there was no waiting line. I backed up to the loading dock and the attendant told another worker to get my bulls. It seemed like an eternity, but actually was only a few minutes before they were brought up. What I saw when they came to the alley into the loading area broke my heart. My two beautiful bulls were smeared with manure and dirt, had snot running out of their noses, were hunched up in total fear, and seemed not to want to move. Up came the same little boy from the previous evening, but this time with a stick with a large plastic ‘hand’ filled with marbles on the end. He raised the stick up and with a swift, rattling ‘whack’ came down on Butternutts’s hind quarter and they started to move, though not seeming to know in what direction to go, until they saw the trailer.

*“I used to eat meat, eat eggs from cruel farms, and drink milk from cruel dairies. I’ve fished and even hunted until I killed my first deer, when I cried afterward and have never picked up any of my guns to kill since then, and I’ve thrown away my fishing rods. I am in the middle of evolution, and have ‘seen the light,’ but for those who know me as I used to be – it’s kind of like when a good friend announces he’s become a ‘born again Christian’ and everyone cringes.”* ■

I can only describe their motion toward and into the trailer as ‘flying,’ because it seemed their feet hardly touched the ground. They ran to the very front of the trailer, even trying to get up into the storage compartment, trying to get as far away from that place as they could. When they couldn’t get up there they cowered against the front wall of the trailer, each trying to push the other out of the way, vying for front-most position. I could almost smell their fear. I closed the back door on the trailer without closing the middle door; I just wanted to get them out of there.

As I drove home, I was not in as much of a rush, wanting more to give them a gentle ride. I could feel them moving in the trailer; the difference this time, however, was they were not moving front to back and front again, but from side to side, and always at the front. As I drove, in my silent voice I kept saying, "I'm sorry" over and over. When I pulled into the driveway of my farm it seemed they recognised the sights and smells and they began to bawl, and continued to do so as I went through the gate and up to the field where I was going to release them. I stopped the truck, opened the gate to the field and then opened the trailer door. At first they seemed hesitant, but then stepped out, bawling the whole time, walked only a few steps and stopped, just bawling out to seemingly no one. The other cows and bulls began coming up to them, but they still continued to bawl. It took a few moments before I realised what they were doing.

A friend of mine had fought through some of the most highly pitched battles of the Korean War, and had witnessed many of his young comrades' deaths.

"Almost every one, when death was imminent, would call out for their mothers," he said.

My bulls, my little boys who had long since been weaned, were calling for their mothers.

“ Covering a range of topics from politics and law, to spiritual and social change, *Turning Points in Compassion* makes a compelling case for the recognition of the beauty, sentience and intelligence of all things... This volume is essential reading for anyone interested in, or committed to, the ethics, politics and life of veganism.”

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This inspirational collection of personal stories challenges our widespread perceptions about our relationship with animals. With a powerful blend of compassion and honesty, the writers in *Turning Points in Compassion* share pivotal moments that awakened them to a life-changing awareness. Each one's life has been enriched beyond measure as a result of their journey. With open eyes, hearts and minds, they describe their entry to a new world of compassionate living where they no longer see animals as their food or their property. Their description of a life lived with awareness of animals as equally feeling beings who have conscious awareness and lives that matter to them will touch the hearts of people everywhere. No readers will be left unchallenged by this book.

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