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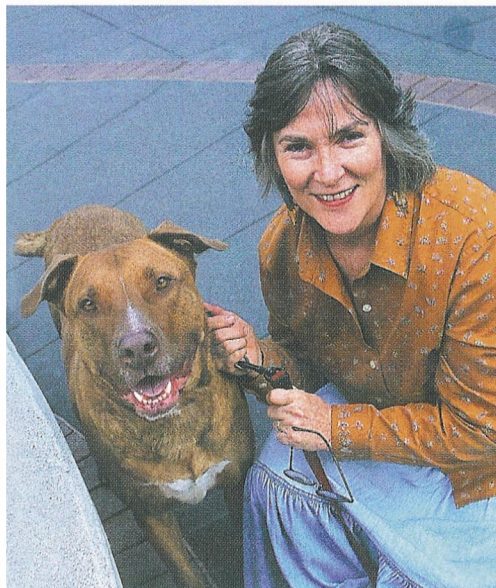
Animal Watch™

Dedicated to the Protection of All Animals

SUMMER 2002

EDITOR'S DESK

Bearing to Witness



The videotape sat on the coffee table for 10 months. We moved it every week when we dusted, then we put it back on the coffee table. "I really want you to see this," I'd tell my husband, Larry. "You'll love Eddie Lama." "How about tomorrow?" Larry would ask. I sensed he was stalling, and I was afraid to push. Finally, six days ago, we watched *The Witness*.

Actually, it was more complicated than that. What happened was that I needed to check some facts for our upcoming story on Lama [see "Eye on The Witness," pp. 50-51]. At the last moment, Larry said he really didn't want to look at animals being hurt. And although I knew the film wasn't about that, I told him that I understood. So I sat alone in front of the TV. Larry went into the next room to put away groceries. "I'll be listening," he said.

In truth, I did understand his qualms. I remembered how my insides had churned that day last August as I waited for the seminar to begin. "Witnessing Our Relationship With Animals" would open with a showing of *The Witness*, an award-winning documentary that's been described as "a personal journey into awareness of the obligation to bear witness to suffering." The conference brochure had cautioned that some of the footage "may be disturbing." Talk about red flags! I'd lived through the years when every appeal from a humane organization had to be handled like a letter bomb: gingerly transported to the circular file before its grisly contents could spill out. Terrified that I'd be compelled to look at sights that would haunt my dreams, I took deep breaths as the room slowly filled with people. But when the lights were lowered and the film began, my fears fell away. It was just this guy Eddie from Brooklyn, telling his story. He reminded me of Jimmy Smits on *NYPD Blue*. No pain there.

Eddie's story is mythic: a recovering punk who never had—or even wanted to have—a childhood pet becomes the world's most persuasive animal advocate. The camera comes in tight on Eddie's face as he relates key moments in his awakening. He sees himself as he towered above his very first cat, smoking a Camel cigarette. "I was so much bigger than him," Eddie says, "so he was smoking like 10 times as much as I was...only he didn't have a choice." And Eddie looks with sad brown eyes at those undercover films that we in "the movement" have seen before, and we see them through the eyes of an innocent. When Eddie asks the questions a child might ask, we don't dare to offer our weary, grown-up answers. A pig is being herded to the killing floor. "She knows, man," he says softly, "she knows she's gonna die." Eddie empathizes with the pig: "Please...don't kill me and the kids..."

In the kitchen, my husband was flinging groceries into the cupboards, slamming doors, trying to drown out Eddie's voice. Soon enough, I could tell that he was listening. Finally he came into the living room and sat beside me in front of the TV.

Ironically, the images that we share don't haunt our dreams.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marion Lane".

Marion S. Lane

Eye On The Witness

By Tracy Epp

He drives slowly through the streets of New York, taking in the expressions of the people who stop to gaze at the images that play from his van. The camera glides from one horrified face to another and slowly makes its way back to him. He looks solemn. He has been witness to this scene many times, and has watched many bystanders have epiphanies, much like the one that changed his life. He is Eddie Lama, a Brooklyn, New York, native and subject of the award-winning documentary, *The Witness*.

Lama's story begins in the mid-1970s, when he was attacked and left to die "like an animal" on a New York sidewalk. No one came to his aid. But Lama didn't die, and that's when this substance abuser and street tough made some life-altering decisions. "I used to like walking into a bar with my jewelry on and a good-looking girl at my side and buying everyone in the place a drink," he says, in a thick Brooklyn accent. But after the attack, Lama started to focus on helping others who were down. He stopped drinking and doing drugs. His general contracting business prospered, and he donated his time and money to homeless and indigent people. "It was like my circle of compassion grew," he says. "I became an advocate for what I call 'disempowered' humans."

Some years later, a friend asked him to cat sit. "My motives were selfish," he says sheepishly. "She was a very pretty woman and I wanted to, you know, get in good with her. But something happened to me. I watched the cat play and saw its range of emotions, and I realized how similar we all are—and how vulnerable." His circle of compassion had widened again, and Eddie Lama the animal advocate was born.

Coming to a Sidewalk Near You

Lama's newfound interest in animals brought him to an anti-fur protest where activists were demonstrating on behalf of their "fur-bearing friends," using powerful images of animal cruelty. Lama was deeply moved by the bloody pictures and

realized that in our visually driven society, traditional protesting was not too successful. The rally had sparked an idea: Instead of trying to get people to hear the message of animal welfare through protesting and pamphlet pushing, he would bring a visual message to the mainstream.

Using nothing more than a TV and an old van, Lama went to work building the platform from which his message would



Above: Eddie Lama with one of his rescues, Moondoggie. Below: Lama drives the state-of-the-art FaunaVision van as pedestrians look on in curiosity at the video footage.

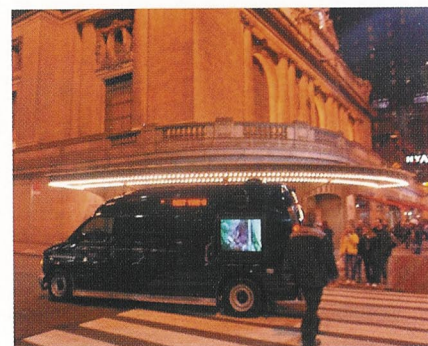
play. When the refitted van, which he called "FaunaVision," was ready, Lama took to the streets, cruising slowly through local neighborhoods while video footage of animal cruelty played on the TV screen. FaunaVision featured a sound system and a message board with a running display of animal welfare information. It was crude, but it worked. Lama didn't ask for money, nor did he push information packets on the passersby. He simply let the tape roll. And just as he had hoped, the people on the sidewalk began to approach him. From the start, he says, reaction to FaunaVision was "invariably positive."

It was also around this time that Lama began noticing the stray cats and

dogs who loitered in the alleyways of the neighborhoods where he worked. He started picking up the abandoned animals and placing them in homes. "Let's just say I've got a lot of friends," he laughs. "But it got to a point where there was just no more room."

A Place to Call Home

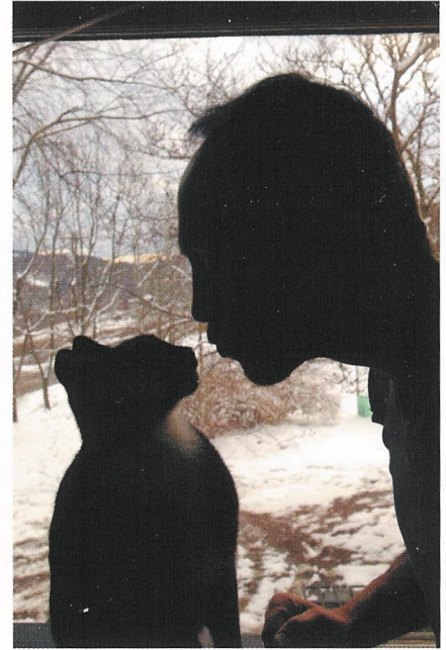
In 1998, Lama founded Oasis Sanctuary, a no-kill shelter situated on 60 acres of land in North Branch, New York. Today, Oasis Sanctuary is home to many species of animals, including cats, dogs, pigs, chickens and rabbits. It also serves as a



temporary home for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts who come to the sanctuary to live and work in a nonviolent, vegetarian environment. Lama calls Oasis Sanctuary a "synthesis of his passions" because it combines his love for helping animals with his desire to help people.



Left: An Oasis resident poses for the camera. Right: Lama gets a kiss from a rescue.



For More Information

To donate to Oasis Sanctuary, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, contact them at 163 Third Avenue, Suite 320, New York, NY 10003, (212) 459-4825; info@oasissanctuary.org.

Tribe of Heart, P.O. Box 149, Ithaca, NY 14851, (607) 275-0806; mail@tribeofheart.org; www.tribeofheart.org. Copies of *The Witness* may be purchased for \$20, plus \$4 shipping and handling.

Meanwhile, producer James LaVeck and director Jenny Stein, founders of independent film studio Tribe of Heart, had been searching for a subject for their documentary about people who had life-changing awakenings. They knew Lama was their man. "Eddie is living proof of something we all hope is true—that people are good at heart, and that any person, from any background, can transform his life," says LaVeck. In the summer of 2000, Tribe of Heart released *The Witness*. The film has received critical acclaim and numerous film festival awards, and continues to be a favorite among educators and activists, who hold screenings all over the country.

Lama has since donated the original FaunaVision van and now pilots a state-of-the-art vehicle loaded with the latest technology. "It's eyeball-popping," he says. "It has cameras that let us capture the reactions of the people we pass." And Oasis Sanctuary is thriving—there are now eight full-time employees. His future plans include opening a veterinary clinic in Manhattan, where he will offer new graduates the opportunity to anchor themselves and establish a practice at greatly reduced costs. Though stretched thin, Lama says he will continue his work as an animal advocate. "The responsibilities are never ending. But I'm up to the challenge."

The Witness — ORDER FORM

The Witness Video VHS-NTSC Cassette (43 Min., Color)
 _____ video(s) at \$20 each plus shipping (\$4 shipping plus \$1 extra for each additional copy)

Gift of Compassion Program - 24 Videos

_____ box(es) containing 24 copies of THE WITNESS, (\$240 per box, plus \$15 shipping.) I agree to use these copies as gifts or donations only, and not for resale:

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PROMOTING RESPECT FOR ALL LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION

For Immediate Release

Contact: Judy Johns
The Latham Foundation
Phone: 510-521-0920

WINNERS ANNOUNCED IN THE LATHAM FOUNDATION'S SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE VIDEO AWARDS PROGRAM

Alameda, Calif. -- The Latham Foundation, a leader in the production and distribution of videos about humane education, the connections between animal abuse and other forms of family violence, and the human/companion animal bond, believes that the motivation behind and results of videos produced by other organizations is commendable and deserves encouragement. Therefore, Latham sponsors a competition, the "Search for Excellence" Video Awards.

The purpose of the Search for Excellence awards is to recognize and encourage excellence in video productions promoting respect for all life.

The contest is held every two years. This year's winners are:

First Place: Advocacy/Public Policy and Awareness Category

***WITNESS*, Produced by Tribe of Heart**

Witness tell the true story of a tough New York City construction contractor who is transformed by the love of a kitten and as a result, is inspired to rescue abandoned animals, become a vegetarian, and invent a creative new form of activism. Contact: James LaVeck, Tribe of Heart, P. O. Box 149, Ithaca NY 14851-0149, 607-275-0806