

September 4, 2001

IN MEMORIAM: The Officers and Directors of The Animal Council note with deep sorrow the passing of Vicki Hearne on Tuesday, August 21. Her friendship, steadfast support, interest and confidence in our mutual work were immeasurably valued and will be greatly missed.

Growing up in the 1950's when girls knew animals as friends and aspired to a hands-on life's work with animals, Vicki's career transformed that pure magic of knowing animals into a life's work as an animal trainer and academic, bridging these disparate worlds - in terms of philosophy and real animals --with her unique insight and gifted writing. Her New York Times obituary, published on August 27 was headlined, "Vicki Hearne, Who Saw Human Traits in Pets" and might be casually mistaken for that of an "animal rights" advocate. Vicki surely advocated for the interests of animals in her written work but captured the false promise of "animal rights" as distinguished from real rights for animals that came from the hearts of those long-ago girls. In a personal note of this July 10, she opined of Ingrid Newkirk, "Woe ist mir! I don't understand how the poison spewed forth from the Dragon of Error is taken for insight, knowledge, etc."

Vicki's writings - books, essays, poetry and what would be volumes of letters and notes to a wide network of friends and perhaps others were at times esoteric and hovering on arcane but always written from the heart. When read from the heart, the meaning would be clear and evident. Last year, she was able to have two pieces - one her own and another about her reprinted on a website put together by her husband, Robert Tragesser. Her own article, "What's Wrong With Animal Rights" was originally published in Harper's Magazine, September 1991 and the article about her, written by Timothy Foote and published in The Smithsonian in April, 1999, "That is not a bad dog - that's a splendid dog."

Never a joiner of organizations, she would muse of a "Global FIDO." This would be a "subversive organization, devised to undermine confederations and organizations. It is, after all, my brain child." Rather, Vicki's action was her own, authentic voice, not only written but spoken, as well. In another personal note, she left in just a few written lines, a legacy that can live on through our own words, actions and lives,

"I have started simply saying to people, after they decide they like me and I'm a righteous person, that I have a pit bull. Then while they are doing the spasm dance about that I say:

You want some education? The enemies of my pit bull are the enemies of your [Himalayan, Great Dane, wonderful mutt, budgie, whatever.]

This is of course like suddenly singing loudly in Aramaic, but it does bring the spazzed out litany to a halt. And they say, OK, tell me.

And then I trot out one of the three or four short speeches (replete with amusing anecdotes; ya gotta have winning animal anecdotes) to the point of whatever their

concerns are, and, one by one, I get their attention.

That is, I am doing _real_ grass roots stuff. In the line at the supermarket, whatever."

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