

# *Happy Birthday, Doris Day! Shall we start counting? An overview of Doris Day's impact on Animal Welfare*

By  
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*'I went on the warpath about the animals being used in the scenes. It was one of the few times in my life that I pulled rank. I said I would not appear in any scenes with animals unless they were properly fed. I wouldn't get in the keop and allow the horses to pull me unless they were fed. As a result, the company set up a feeding station where all the goats, lambs, horses, cows, dogs, cats, burros, and other animals were brought to be fed. I couldn't provide for the feeding of the entire undernourished population of Marrakesh, but by the time our photography was finished I had succeeded in fattening up the animals used in the picture'<sup>1</sup>.* It must have been during the end of 1973 or sometime in 1974 when Doris Day was saying those very words to A.E. Hotchner about her experience on filming the Hitchcock film *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and by that time, Miss Day had already decided to take matters into her own hands. Well, not for the animals of Marrakesh per se, but as the saying goes 'think global, act local', her battle began in California and quickly spread to the rest of the United States of America and the world.

Her passion and involvement in the well-being of animals stems from her childhood and her beloved, black and tan, doggie Tiny<sup>2</sup>. As a lifelong animal lover, she has always kept a rigid stance against animal cruelty and animal neglect. Throughout her professional career in the entertainment industry, however, she was extremely busy with recording songs and shooting movies that prohibited her from getting actively and hands-on involved in this passion of hers. No introduction is needed to the brilliance of Doris Day in song and motion picture. She has recorded over 600 songs, has performed in 39 films, and to this day still remains the top-ranking female box office star of all time<sup>3</sup>. Her body of work has been praised and celebrated with some of the most prestigious awards. To name just a few, she is a Grammy Award of Lifetime Achievement recipient (2008), a Golden Globe Award of Lifetime Achievement recipient (1989), a three time Grammy Hall of Fame Inductee for her recordings (*Que Sera Sera* in 2012, *Secret Love* in 1999 and *Sentimental Journey* in 1998), an Academy Award Nominee (1959 – don't get this fan started about this!), an Emmy Award Nominee (1971), and the Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient of 2004<sup>4</sup>. As President Bush had stated in his speech in presenting the highest civilian honor to Doris Day, *'it was a good day for our fellow creatures when she gave her good heart to the cause of animal welfare.'*<sup>5</sup>

I wish I knew the exact day that Doris Day decided to devote her time and heart solely to the animals. I presume it must have been some day within the calendar year of 1971. This was the year that Doris Day began to pursue her real passion, the year Doris Day unofficially began to change the world into a more humane one for our voiceless companions. Along with her friend and co-star Jackie Joseph, Lucie Arnaz, and Richard and Diana Basehart, she co-founded *Actors and Others for Animals*<sup>6</sup>. She

actively got involved in all aspects of the organization, from organizing fundraising events, promoting fur-free clothing choices to knocking on people's doors in order to give them some 'advice'! Doris Day officially became the tireless patron of the voiceless when she founded her own non-profit charity, the *Doris Day Pet Foundation*, in 1977<sup>7</sup>. According to Santopietro (2007), Miss Day established her foundation by investing her own private funds in opening a kennel in the San Fernando Valley, which allowed her to operate in the greater LA area. He also stated that this new foundation gave her a platform to promote animal welfare on a greater scale than *Actors and Others*<sup>8</sup>. The mission of this new foundation was to help the animals of California in need. '*We [the DDPF] placed individual animals in good homes and raised money for spaying, neutering, and even feeding animals in need. It was limited to California, and I realized that we could help so many more animals with a national organization. First came the Doris Day Animal League in 1987, and the Doris Day Animal Foundation followed later.*' said Miss Day in an interview to C. Givner<sup>9</sup>.

### The Doris Day Animal League

The *Doris Day Animal League's* mission is to '*reduce the pain and suffering of non-human animals through legislative initiatives, education, and programs to enforce statutes and regulations which have already been enacted protecting animals*'<sup>10</sup>. During its 26 years of operation, the *DDAL* has successfully been serving its purpose and has helped redesign and create a better legal environment for the animals. Some of the extraordinary work it has accomplished includes, among others, the involvement in the passing of the California law of making counseling mandatory for people convicted of animal abuse (1998)<sup>11</sup>, the passing of the 'Crush Bill' which prohibits the commerce of all digital formats that depict animal cruelty (1999)<sup>12</sup>, the passing of the Dog and Cat Protection Act which bans cat and dog fur based products (2000)<sup>13</sup>, the passing of the Exotic Pet Protection Act (2003)<sup>14</sup>, the endorsement of the Pet Animal Welfare Statute – PAWS legislation (2005)<sup>15</sup>, the endorsement of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (2006)<sup>16</sup>, and the endorsement of the Farm Animal Stewardship Purchasing Act (2009)<sup>17</sup>.

Two of the issues the *DDAL* has been strongly endorsing are currently the top two animal welfare issues in the European Union, the ban of animal testing for cosmetic uses and the end of horse meat consumption. The *DDAL* is one of the proud partners of the Coalition for Consumer Information on Cosmetics that was established in 1996. They created the leapingbunny logo that promotes animal-friendly cruelty-free products. The biggest success of this Coalition is the enforcement, in March 2013, of the Ban of Animal Testing for Cosmetics in the EU<sup>18,19,20</sup>. (As I am writing, I am happy to say that today, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013, is the day the ban is coming into effect. Tomorrow, March 11<sup>th</sup>, will be a better day for the animals in Europe, because of Doris Day... Thank you, Doris!) The other issue is a heartbreaking one, unfortunately. It wasn't long ago that Miss Day had appealed through her personal website to back the Horse Slaughter Prevention Act<sup>21</sup>. As she stated, it is not within our culture to eat

horse meat and hence, the slaughter for their consumption should be banned. Worst of all, however, is the situation in the EU as it seems to be out of control with the horse meat scandal blasting in our plates. If only they would listen...Well, knowing the perseverance of this fine lady, I know she WILL make them listen!

The *DDAL* joined forces and merged with the Humane Society of the United States in September, 2006. Since then, they continue their animal rights activism by ‘*working with U.S. Congress, government agencies, and state and local officials, to pass laws and enforce existing laws that reduce the suffering of animals anywhere they are mistreated*<sup>22</sup>.’

### The Doris Day Animal Foundation

In 1997, Doris Day decided to rename the *Doris Day Pet Foundation* to the *Doris Day Animal Foundation* and widened its area of operation from the ‘local’ state of California to a nationwide operation. The *DDAF*’s mission stayed the same, the very simple but highly important: ‘*to help animals and the people who love them.*<sup>23</sup>’ Throughout its 35 years of operation, the *DDAF* has helped millions of animals and people who care for them. Doris Day is the current president and CEO of this foundation and is personally working tirelessly for all the foundation’s programs.

In the beginning of the *DDAF*, apart from the hands-on involvement of improving the well-being of the animals, the organization had also invested in publishing various articles and research pieces on the human-animal connection and the link between animal abuse and human violence. The *DDAF* created a partnership with the *Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PSYETA)* and developed projects, either on its own or with *PSYETA*, such as ‘*The Violence Connection (1997)*<sup>24</sup>, the ‘*AniCare Model of Treatment for Animal Abuse (adult edition, 1999)*<sup>25</sup>, the ‘*Beyond Violence: The Human-Animal Connection (2000)*<sup>26</sup>, the ‘*AniCare Child: An Approach for the Assessment and Treatment of Childhood Animal Abuse(2002)*<sup>27</sup>, the ‘*Empathy Connection (2004)*<sup>28</sup>, and two groundbreaking features that focused on raising children’s awareness, ‘*Comics for Compassion(2000, 2003)*<sup>29</sup> and ‘*Animals Aloud! (2004)*<sup>30</sup>.

In current years, the *DDAF* has placed emphasis on assisting organizations across the United States of America that are involved in hands-on activism and has shifted its concentration into becoming a grant-giving organization. Along with its own programs that focus on improving animal welfare which include, among others, the *Doris Day Horse Rescue and Adoption Center* in Texas<sup>31</sup>, *The Duffy Day Life Saving Program* (inspired by her very own rescue Duffy Day)<sup>32</sup>, the *Doris Day/Terry Melcher Scholarship for Shelter Medicine* at UC Davis<sup>33</sup>, and the *Seniors for Seniors* program<sup>34</sup>, the *DDAF* has given grants to a vast number of non-profit organizations across the USA. The most recent recipients are: *Senior Dogs 4 Seniors, Tabbytown, St.Louis Senior Dogs Project, Rogue Valley Humane Society, Eye in the Sky*, etc. (for a full list please visit [www.ddaf.org](http://www.ddaf.org)). It is estimated that during the years 2008 to

2011 the *DDAF* has allocated over one million dollars to non-profit organizations and other services that promote improvements of animal welfare, such as educational programs, spaying/neutering programs, etc<sup>35</sup>.

Two specific interventions made by both the *DDAF* and the *DDAL* should be mentioned, at this point, and applauded. It is through difficult and trying times that Miss Day has extended a helping hand to the community in need. When Hurricane Katrina hit the gulf coast, in 2005, with such devastating consequences, Doris Day made sure that no one was left behind. Through her *DDAF* she was able to fund a \$20,000 charter airlift to evacuate 130 cats and dogs, transporting them from New Iberia, La to the Santa Cruz *SPCA* where they were subsequently rehomed. In her own words: *'There are no words to express the overwhelming joy and gratitude I feel in my heart right now. In cooperation with the Santa Cruz SPCA, the DDAF has been given the opportunity to airlift 130 dogs and cats out of several overcrowded Louisiana shelters. Our rescue mission is called Operation Just Paws. These precious angels are the silent victims of Hurricane Katrina and I'm so grateful that we can contribute to this humanitarian effort.'*<sup>36</sup> In addition, her *DDAL* sent volunteers and staff in situ in order to provide help and lend their expertise where needed. (Their efforts have been documented as a diary on the *DDAL* site.<sup>37</sup>). Not long after this disaster, the *DDAL* endorsed the Animal Bill *'The Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act – PETS Act, H.R. 3858'* introduced by congressmen Tom Lantos (D-CA) and Christopher Shays (R-CT). This legislation was drafted to ensure that people were not separated from their household pets and service animals during a disaster such as Hurricane Katrina<sup>38</sup>. The second intervention was when Hurricane Sandy swept away the east coast. The *DDAF* did not waste any time and instantly granted \$5,000 to the *Pet Safe Coalition*, an organization highly specialized in emergency management and disaster mitigation for animals<sup>39</sup>.

#### A Special Initiative that is close to Doris Day's heart.

Although there is no doubt that Doris Day loves all animals, she holds a very special place in her heart for doggies and kitties, her *'babies'*. In her autobiography she was very clear about her feelings about dogs: *'Dogs are as important to me as people. The dogs I live with are just as much my family as my mother and son. [...] my canine family has been a source of joy and strength to me. I have found that when you are deeply troubled, there are things you get from the silent, devoted companionship of a dog that you get from no other source.'*<sup>40</sup> And I am sure her cats have, also, 'enslaved' her heart.

When Miss Day began to actively and forcefully take matters into her own hands, the situation with the pet population was devastating. All animals left behind in shelters were made into fertilizer in decompression chambers. In 1972, Miss Day was enraged about the situation: *'Money is at the bottom of all the trouble with the pounds. Throw them in the decompression chamber. Make fertilizer out of them. Get the money for the fertilizer. Get the money, get the money, get the money'*<sup>41</sup>. Thank goodness for the

hard efforts of the *Actors and Others for Animals*, the decompression chambers were outlawed in 1981<sup>42</sup>. A first step was made in addressing the cruel conditions in shelters. However, to this day, the situation of the pet overpopulation problem has yet to be successfully and thoroughly addressed.

Today it is estimated that there are more than 500 million homeless dogs worldwide and approximately the same amount of cats<sup>43</sup>. In the USA, in particular, the *National Council of Pet Population Study and Policy* has yet to pinpoint the exact number of stray dogs or cats living in the USA. The rough estimate is about 70 million stray cats<sup>44</sup>, and, most likely, about the same number of dogs. What is, in fact, known is that the USA is home to 78.2 million owned dogs and 86.4 million owned cats<sup>45</sup>. The statistics given on the ASPCA website reveal that approximately 5 to 7 million pets enter shelters on an annual basis and approximately 3 to 4 million of them are put to sleep (60% of all dogs and 70% of all cats)<sup>46</sup>. Hence, it is no surprise that Miss Day has called this situation a '*national shame*'<sup>47</sup>.

Being aware that the pet overpopulation problem needs to be eradicated by its roots, through the reproduction cycle, Doris Day has always been a strong proponent of spaying or neutering our pets. She has been such an ardent advocate that in 1995, through her foundation, she initiated the designation of the last Tuesday of February as the day dedicated to spaying and neutering, widely known as *Spay Day USA*<sup>48</sup>. The establishment of this event has made it possible for millions of animals to be sterilized and help not contribute to the devastating problem of stray and unwanted companion animals. In fact, in Doris Day's own words: '*We hit an amazing milestone on our 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Spay Day USA in 2003 – the 1,000,000<sup>th</sup> companion animal was spayed or neutered*'<sup>49</sup>. In 2004, Doris Day encouraged all Americans to be '*PETriotic*' and spay or neuter their pets in order to contribute to the reduction of the pet overpopulation and consequently the reduction of euthanasia in shelters across the country<sup>50</sup>.

When the *DDAL* merged with the *HSUS*, in 2006, *Spay Day USA* went under the jurisdiction of the *HSUS*. The *DDAF* and Doris Day, however, still remain partners on all the efforts and ardent supporters of the event. *Spay Day USA* has become popular worldwide and as of 2011, has been held in 45 countries. Thus, the *HSUS*, in 2012, decided to rename the event as *World Spay Day*. Upon the popularity of the event Doris Day has said that '*It is a dream come true for me to see how the spay/neuter program has grown over the years and how, by working together, the Doris Day Animal Foundation along with the Doris Day Animal League under the supervision of the Humane Society of the United States have been able to accomplish so much*'<sup>51</sup>. Every year the *DDAF* contributes grants in order to support the event's goal. This year, just a month ago, the *DDAF* provided a \$75,000 grant to fund spaying and neutering in 16 towns and cities in 14 States<sup>52</sup>.

## Concluding Remark

It is, therefore, without a doubt that we could say Doris Day is an extraordinary patron of the animals, lending her beautiful voice to the voiceless. Her tireless efforts, her perseverance, her drive, her passion, her determination, her brilliance, her stubbornness, her kindness, her intelligence, her diligence, and her hard work have all benefited the animals of the world. For 35 years (officially) or 41 years (unofficially) she has been every animal's, on this planet, guardian angel making sure they live their lives free, carefree, without violence or cruelty. If for her birthday, we have to give one specific number that would characterize Doris Day, that would have to be somewhere close to 1,700,000 spays/neuters young! May God bless you, dear Doris, with health and strength to be able to multiply that number by the power of 1000. Thank you for all that you have done, for all you do and for all that you will do.

*Happy Birthday!!!*

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