

FROM "PREFACE"

As is the case with many animal lovers, my lifelong fondness for animals translated into my being a *pet owner*. I grew up with dogs that primarily lived in the yard, and I incorporated a dog into my first adult home. I do not remember being alive without a dog around, and I hope never to live without dogs in my family.

Unfortunately, my two earliest childhood *pet* memories are traumatic. First, I watched my beloved, gentle grandfather decapitate one of the chickens he raised for eggs and meat. Later, I was traumatized watching a stray dog maul an innocent, frail kitten, after their paths crossed in a neighbor's yard.

Many years later, the sad horror of those moments is a vivid reminder of the cruel fates that beset animals in our society. They are at our mercy and, more often than not, are the victims of poor human choices and behaviors. Watching that dog kill the kitten informed me that when animals receive inadequate care and protection, they suffer. I consider both the kitten and dog as victims. That experience congealed into a promise that my life must somehow benefit animals. Over the course of my life, I have learned that whether we realize it or not, when animals suffer, we suffer with them. I believe that disregard and indifference for their lives is contagious, fueling a similar lack of caring and compassion for our own lives and the lives of other humans.

For the past few years, I have spent more time with my dogs than with anyone else—one of the challenges and benefits of being a writer. I became aware that a lot more was going on

between us than I realized, that I was the beneficiary of a remarkable relationship, and that I was not alone in my admiration for and appreciation of the animals in my life.

This book represents an amalgamation of my deep desire to make a difference for animals, my appreciation and understanding of the investigative process, and my journalistic training and experience.

You are about to read about one of the most enduring and crucial relationships in existence: the powerful bond between people and their companion animals.