

## Bill Rea ? Hands off others? animals

At first, I found the whole thing rather silly.

An animal rights activist apparently saw fit to give water to pigs headed for a slaughter facility. And then she was charged. I thought the act was silly and I thought the act of going through a costly judicial procedure to address the matter was silly too, not to mention wasteful.

The woman was found not guilty last week of doing anything that was in violation of the law. The judge also stated he was satisfied the woman had been giving the pigs water, although how could anyone have known at the time what she was giving them? And since this involved food that people would eventually be consuming, I think the concerns were legitimate.

And according to a press release I received the day after the ruling, various farm organizations in Ontario were disappointed with the decision, fearing this might encourage other animal rights activists to become bolder.

I frankly think a lot of these activists are pretty bold already, and have been for some time.

But the other fact is some of these animals are part of the food chain in our society. The health and livelihood of many depend on these animals. Alas, it means they have to be killed, but that has been the case since human beings got themselves organized, and I believe the job is done as humanely as possible.

There was a time about 30 years ago when there was talk that an abattoir would be going in Bolton's Industrial Park. I thought it was a great idea, and so did a lot of other people, but a vocal few raised a loud stink and the idea was dropped when Town council announced it wouldn't allow it. This was just before a delegation of proponents was about to make presentation of its case. Not one of the shining moments in the history of Caledon council. But as the issue heated up, I decided to learn more about it, and made arrangements to take a tour of an abattoir, including the kill floor. Although it was interesting, it was certainly not the most enjoyable morning I've ever spent. But I got to talk to some of the people who worked there, and found they were ordinary guys who had a job to do, and they did it. The experience in no way turned me off of consuming meat.

My late mother, for a couple of years, worked in the accounting department of a meat-packing operation around the stock yards in Toronto. She said she never went on the kill floor, but she knew where it was and she certainly knew what was going on there. And being an employee, she would get a rate on her meat.

The fact that animals are taken to such operations is just part of reality.

I also think most people, myself included, are very fond of animals and care about their welfare. I know there are some who don't, but for the most part, I think these people are very sick individuals.

Many of us keep animals in our homes, either for protection, companionship or just because we love animals. But it is certain types of animals we have as pets.

I married a cat lover, meaning there has been a cat under our roof for just about the entire time since our wedding. Our current cat is named Ella, and she lives for free, tolerating our presence at her convenience. She also has a bad habit of waking me up in the morning by biting me in the arm. She's also been known to swat me in the face with her claws, usually drawing blood when she does.

Despite that, there is an obligation on Beth and myself to make sure she's cared for, no matter how out of line she gets.

It's true we could get her declawed, but that would essentially mean amputating her fingertips. I wouldn't go along having someone do that to me, and my conscience won't allow me to do it to Ella. I don't think Beth would go along with it, even if she does get upset when Ella scratches the furniture.

As well, Ella is an indoor cat, who seldom tries to get outside. But if she ever did, without her claws, she'd be defenceless.

But I have complained lots of times about the blood I have lost because of Ella and her habits. Some have expressed sympathy, and some of those I actually believe were sympathetic. There have been a few who have mentioned declawing, and since I knew their hearts were in the right place, I responded as politely as I could, explaining my concerns with the procedure.

Now had someone taken upon themselves to have the operation performed, that would have been out of line. It might be okay to suggest (although it's really the business of the cat owner alone), but that's the limit.

That's what I think the real problem was with the woman, the pigs and the water. She might have thought she was doing the right thing, but she interfered with another person's property without authorization. She may not have been guilty of a crime, but she was out of line.

I can understand where animal rights activists are coming from, although I don't always go along with the extent of their commitment or the methods they sometimes employ. There are limits to what they have the right to do.

I don't fish any more, but I know there are many who do and that's fine with me. It's their choice. And there are those who hunt. Go

for it. Just don't expect me to join you.

Like so many others, I chose to eat meat. I know a lot of people object to that. Object away. Just don't get out of line.

