Can rabbits fly? They can if they travel with their human parent on a Boeing 747! On an early March Morning in 2014, while working in Faridabad, India, I noticed a beautiful white rabbit at a corner pet store, sitting all alone in a little wire cage with no food or water. It was already 95°F and she had been placed directly in the sun. The rabbit looked so majestic that I asked my driver to stop. With my driver translating for me, I told the owner that I would be back to buy the rabbit after work, and to give her some food and water and get her out of the sun. The rabbit looked so beautiful and proud sitting there in that cage. She was all alone, but it seemed that she was holding her head high, and her striking red eyes just drew me in. I had to have her! I returned and purchased Baby for $3, and it’s been a love affair ever since.

Prior to acquiring Baby I knew nothing about rabbits or rabbit care. I thought their diet consisted entirely of carrots! I immediately started scouring the internet for rabbit care information and discovered House Rabbit Society’s website. I also found some information in magazines. In India, rabbits are not commonly kept as pets, so at first I had some difficulty acquiring rabbit food and supplies. I noticed one pet store that had rabbit food displayed in the window. Fortunately, with the help of my now good friend Ambar who owns that store, I was able to obtain everything that made Baby the happiest, healthiest rabbit possible. I was also able to take Baby to his vet, who visited the store daily.

Three months after adopting Baby, I returned to the United States. With diligent planning and a bit of good fortune, I was able to take her with me. When booking my ticket I checked and double-checked on the specifics of traveling with pets, and rabbits specifically, but it still took a large amount of persuasion and luck to get Baby from India to the U.S. Even though I had checked the airline policy in advance and had booked Baby to travel in-cabin on the flight with me, I arrived at the airport at Delhi and was told that rabbits couldn’t fly in the cabin. Any exceptions would be up to the pilot.

(continued on page 3)
Helping Bunnies Around the World
by Beth Woolbright

Even though all domestic rabbits are of the species “European rabbit” (Oryctolagus cuniculus), they can be found around the planet. Four HRS international representatives share their experiences.

JAPAN

As an HRS educator in Tokyo and board member for Japanese Coalition for Animal Welfare, Keiko Yamazaki acknowledges that hutch rabbits in elementary schools are a major problem in Japan: “More often than not there are budgetary restraints as well as lack of expertise, which make life very miserable for these rabbits.” Volunteers strive to educate the public on better conditions for school pets. As in the United States, bunnies there have become the third most common companion animal, after dogs and cats. Yamazaki notes, “There are more services and supplies available for rabbit lovers as compared to, say, a decade ago. However, with the growing popularity, there are more abandoned rabbits than before. Rabbit rescue groups are not yet well-organized in this country, but it seems that more efforts are being made by rabbit advocates to improve the situation.”

AUSTRALIA

In Australia, where no rabbits are native, those released in the wild have had a disastrous impact on the environment, causing them to be declared “feral pests.” Although pet rabbits are illegal in Queensland, in some areas of the continent they are increasingly the companion of choice, especially for people who live alone. Bryce Inglis of Melbourne, Victoria, vice president of Rabbit Run-Away Orphanage and HRS Australia chapter manager, says that the increase is “reflected in a fivefold expansion of Melbourne’s high-rise district and the [number of vets] who see rabbits.” Local shelters also feel the impact, with more discarded bunnies than there is room. Because of the perception of rabbits as pests, some shelters have a 100% kill rate.

Some volunteers are teaming to educate, foster, and rehome. They respond to daily queries from vets, rescue groups, government departments, and bunny guardians across Australia. With a view toward the long term, they want to work for legal changes. And their efforts show that perceptions can change. Bryce says, “This year I have focused on the major renovation of our building, made possible due to receiving a grant of AUD$50,000 from the Bureau of Animal Welfare (Victoria). This was the first government grant specifically for rabbits.” House Rabbit Society’s website provides much information, but some advice is not universal. Regional efforts and information dissemination are also required.

GREECE

Bunnies of Greece began as a Facebook group in late 2013 “for trading information, [but] it eventually grew to also taking action when needed, by organizing rescues and finding homes for bunnies in need,” says Clementine “Emmi” Symeonoglou, an HRS educator-in-training. Bunnies of Greece’s principles are “adopt, don’t shop, spay, neuter, and vaccinate.” The group hopes to build a shelter so its rescue and foster program can help even more bunnies.

SWITZERLAND

When Elena Grisafi Favre moved to her new home in Switzerland, she found that “despite a good animal protection and welfare act, rabbits are very neglected.” So, she set up an educational website on bunny care in French. La colline aux lapins rescue center soon followed. This association of “passionate rabbit lovers” fundraises and spreads the word on spay/neuter and re-homing.

An HRS educator-in-training, Elena lectures on bunny behavior and welfare needs around French-speaking Switzerland. Speaking for unpaid rabbit advocates everywhere, she describes her role this way: “I am only a humble interpreter. I try to do my best to take the humans by hand down to the burrow to show what rabbits really think and need to be happy with us.”
After some pleading, I was able to speak to the pilot and ask him if Baby could travel in-cabin with me; he said yes! Then, good fortune smiled at me once again. I had been told by the airline that the hard cage I had obtained for Baby was good for in-cabin travel, but it was much too big to fit under the seat in front of me. Fortunately, the flight was only about half full and I was able to keep Baby on the empty seat next to me.

After we landed in New York for my connecting flight to Dayton, Ohio, I was told that Baby’s cage was not acceptable for in-cabin pet travel. The ticket agent told me that if they had a soft-sided travel cage, I could purchase it and travel would be permitted. My luck held out! The airline had one soft-sided cage left, and on to Ohio we went.

After spending the summer in Ohio, my work then took me to Kuwait, which meant additional work to ensure that Baby could travel with me. I was originally due to fly to Kuwait via Abu Dhabi, but I discovered that Abu Dhabi does not allow any pets to travel through their airport. So, I booked a nonstop flight directly from the U.S. to Kuwait.

Baby and I arrived safely in Kuwait in September of 2014, where I was informed by the agents at the airport that Baby was the first and only rabbit ever to come through customs in Kuwait! I found a really good pet store in Kuwait called Pet Zone that rescues rabbits and has a veterinarian. They usually have about five or six rabbits in a really nice habitat. They also have all the Timothy hay I need, and the local produce market has the greens that Baby loves. Fortunately, veterinarians are very easy to find in Kuwait and I will be able to get Baby spayed here.

I love Baby so much and I marvel at what good companions rabbits are. When I was in India, Baby had the run of our apartment. When I sat down, I would pat the couch and she would jump up to sit beside me and let me pet her for hours. In Ohio, she had her own room with a baby gate—pun intended—across the door. When I stepped over the gate to spend time with her, she would run up to me so I could pet her. Rabbits are so smart and trainable and love to be loved. I am so lucky.

My advice for rabbit parents who want to travel with their babies is to call the airline directly well in advance and speak with a representative. All airlines have strict “In-Cabin Pet Travel Specifics” that limit the types of pets that are permitted to travel in-cabin, and each flight has a limit on how many pets can travel in-cabin on each flight. In addition, most airlines and countries have policies that restrict pet travel in cargo due to weather considerations – for the safety of the animals the ground temperature at both departure and arrival destinations must meet certain requirements. When traveling internationally with your rabbit, I highly recommend using a pet travel service to help with arrangements so you are clear about the specific policies of the countries you will be traveling to and through. Different countries have widely varying regulations regarding rabbit and pet travel, and some have required pet quarantine periods. PetTravel.com and PetTravelStore.com proved invaluable to me.

In an effort to encourage more “rabbit friendly” policies, I plan to contact several airlines to educate them on what easy travel companions rabbits are. They are quiet, odor free (if the cage has proper bedding and litter material in it), and small enough to fit easily into soft-sided travel carriers.

Baby and I are currently enjoying living in Kuwait. I would like to start a Middle East chapter of House Rabbit Society in Kuwait. I have also become an official Educator in Training. Anyone wanting to communicate with us can contact us at: tonymeinerding@yahoo.com.
On December 4, 2005, my gunner bought a small white bunny with burned whiskers from the local kids. He named the bunny CIB, which stands for Combat Infantry Bunny (pronounced “sib”). He cost only two dollars, but I cannot think of anything else that would have made my next six months of deployment in Iraq any better.

December 17

I am watching CIB in the room next to me hopping merrily around loads of ammunition stored there, much to my chagrin. Despite the questionable safety of the whole scenario, it really is quite amusing to watch the juxtaposition of a small white rabbit jumping from ammo can to ammo can. Fortunately, he just scared himself when he fell into an ammo can cavern! And now he is trying to escape from the plywood and cardboard walls this room is divided by, surely in hope of a better world. Sorry, little guy, this as good as it gets around here.

December 25

Man, my mom works fast! This bunny has only been in my life for twenty days and already he has a Christmas present from her. It is a dog collar with military-style dog tag on it. I was very confused until I flipped the tag over and read, “Combat Infantry Bunny.” When we put it on and then put CIB down, he literally flipped out: he did a back flip. I have taken the collar off for the bunny’s safety and my sanity.

January 1, 2006

The New Year’s Eve spectacular was complete when the boys threw diesel fuel on the fire and a large fireball rose up and scared the freak out of the bunny I was holding. Then the guys at the ammunition depot down the road set off a controlled detonation (big boom) at midnight - that was funny.

March 19

My truck got hit with our first IED a few days ago. It was a surreal wall of orange and dust: I kept driving through until someone told me to stop. By the time we got home, the experience definitely seemed more real. I went immediately to the bunny hutch to detach in a different way. Today was supposed to be a day off, but while we were home three mortars hit the FOB, surrounding our house by 50-100 meters. Once we stopped getting hit my first thought was the bunny, of course. So I ran to the back of the house and got him from his cage and brought him inside - just in case.

April 5

CIB cannot be contained. He’s maturing and wants to be outside. We could all be in trouble if he is found in our house: Army regulations do not allow pets. I had hoped he would stay outside in his hutch, but he’s too smart for that. He has escaped his hutch and dug an extensive burrow in the sand next to the house. He does not wander far. I do what I can to keep him safe from predators with wire mesh. I check on him every night to make sure he is still around.

June 2006

I am heartened to find out what a following that little Iraqi bunny had on my blog. My friend had even been relating the exploits of CIB to her third grade class! She decided to tell them of his fateful end and they reluctantly accepted it as a natural part of the food chain. Even children in Boston mourn my little friend.

CIB’s early departure left us with an excess of bunny food that his fan club sent from the States. Fortunately, there are some bunnies that live in the Special Forces compound. Those high-speed bunnies will now be feasting on the imports.

The gunner who had purchased CIB procured some cement and another gunner got a real CIB (Combat Infantry Badge). We will make a grave marking for the bunny. One day some Iraqi is going to get quite a surprise!

Today

I still remember that the only sadness leaving Iraq eight years ago was leaving CIB’s grave. I know that it is covered under a foot of sand now, as if it never existed. It doesn’t matter if anyone sees it again. His story is not the story of Iraq. It is my story: a tale of how one small creature made war just a little bit more bearable for one soldier.
Mythical and Misunderstood: Rabbits Throughout Time
Review: Rabbit, by Victoria Dickenson (Reaktion Books, 2014)
By Margo DeMello

When Susan Davis and I wrote Stories Rabbits Tell: A Natural and Cultural History of a Misunderstood Creature (Lantern 2003), we wanted to write a book that gave a complete picture of rabbits. We described how rabbits evolved; how they were domesticated; how they were represented in the myths, stories, art, and literature of the world’s cultures; how they were (and are) used by the industries that exploit them; and finally, what they are actually like as individuals with their own thoughts, feelings, and agendas. When we wrote the book, there was nothing else like it in print.

There was, of course, Marinell Harriman’s House Rabbit Handbook (Drollery Press, 1985; latest edition 2013), which remains the best book on living with a house rabbit. And there were countless books on raising and using rabbits for profit, along with the first study of wild-rabbit behavior: Ronald Lockley’s The Private Life of the Rabbit (Andre Deutch, 1964). But rabbits—small, voiceless, considered to be dull by many people, associated with women and children, and primarily raised for food and fur—never really aroused the interest of many scholars.

In 2014, a new book arrived, and it should be added to rabbit lovers’ bookshelves. Rabbit, by Victoria Dickenson, is part of Reaktion Books’ Animal Series that includes 61 books about animals. From Ant to Wolf, the books have been written by noted animal studies scholars. While these books often are used in college classrooms, they also are good reads for people interested in the titular animals. For House Rabbit Society members, Rabbit will be a good read indeed.

One of its central themes is the contradictions that rabbits present. The rabbit is both beloved and reviled. We keep rabbits as cherished pets, and we raise them to eat. We buy them toys and we create deadly viruses to wipe out millions of them. In the United States, they are a “multi-purpose animal.” Rabbits can be kept as pets, slaughtered for food, or used as biomedical tools. The rabbit is a “paradoxical beast,” as Dickenson puts it in her opening line. (The reality, of course, is that humans are the paradoxical ones, because we cannot decide how we really feel about these creatures!)

Rabbit covers the natural history of rabbits, their domestication and spread across the planet, how rabbits have been used over the years, the symbolism of the rabbit, and rabbits in art and literature. The book ends with the status of rabbits in the 21st century. While most of the final chapter is dedicated to all the ways that humans exploit rabbits, Dickenson ends with a brief section on her own relationship with her first house rabbit; this is, perhaps, an indication of how we all might move forward with these much-abused creatures.

The book lacks the “house rabbit perspective”—how domestic rabbits behave in the home as well as the relationship between rabbits and people. In fact, only on the final page before the postscript and various appendices does Dickenson mention keeping rabbits as house pets. (After having her first rabbit in her home for a few years, she notes, she discovered House Rabbit Handbook, which affirmed her understanding of rabbits as underrated pets.)

The book’s strength, on the other hand, lies in its historical overview of the human-rabbit relationship, and how overwhelmingly one-sided that relationship has been. For most of human history, it has been a relationship of people using rabbits. Humans have used rabbits for food, fur, and, in the last century, science, as well as a symbol that reflects our own identities. Just over the last few decades, with a few notable exceptions, have people realized that rabbits are more than a resource. We now understand that rabbits can be partners in mutually fulfilling relationships.

With rich color illustrations that document rabbits throughout history, Rabbit also includes a timeline. Rabbit history dates back to 55 million years ago, when the first lagomorphs appeared in the fossil record. The more recent timeline includes 1988 as the year in which House Rabbit Society was founded!

Rabbit is well worth buying for yourself or as a gift for another rabbit lover.
Fear-Free Veterinary Visit Initiative
By Susan A. Brown, DVM

Fear-Free is the brainchild of Marty Becker, DVM ("America’s Veterinarian"), a well-known veterinarian who has written twenty-two books related to the care of dogs and cats and has appeared on many television programs.

After hearing behaviorists speak for years about the detrimental effects of anxiety and fear experienced by animals in the veterinary setting, Dr. Becker spent two years putting together an advisory board of nearly one hundred veterinarians and other professionals who are devoted to developing a fear-free veterinary experience for all species.

Dr. Becker points out that, according to the Bayer Veterinary Healthcare Study, the three most common reasons people do not take their companion animals to a veterinarian are:

• Stress to the companion animal going to the vet (including how the animal is handled at the clinic, how stressful the trip to and from the vet can be, and the difficulties administering prescribed medical treatments at home)
• Stress to the caregiver who takes a companion animal to the vet (because of the stress experienced by a cherished companion but also at times for how well the human is treated).
• No money to pay for recommended products and services

The Fear-Free advisory board is directly attacking the first and second points right now. There are also ideas in the works to add relief to the third problem.

I was asked to be on the board two years ago by the late Dr. Sophia Yin, a beloved behaviorist of dogs, cats, and other animals. I was the first exotics veterinarian on the board, but with Dr. Becker’s blessing, I have been able to pull together a group of exotic companion animal professionals who will cover small mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, and even camels. Mary Cotter, who is on the House Rabbit Society Board of Directors, is a member of our group and will guiding us in developing material for fear-free rabbit veterinary care.

Material related to dogs and cats has already been developed, and hopefully we will not be far behind with exotics. Although there is no website yet, the resources development committee is devising a place for people to get more information.

Currently the Fear-Free group is exploring and developing basic materials that will be freely accessible to veterinary staff and clients, in addition to more advanced materials as part of a certification process for veterinarians and technicians. These materials will cover low-stress techniques for caregivers to prepare an animal to go to the veterinarian as well as techniques used at the veterinary clinic for examination, performing diagnostics, administration of treatment, and housing of animals who need to stay at the veterinary clinic.

The following ideas are also being worked on:
• Development of fear-free techniques for administering treatments and medications once the animal goes home
• Fear-free veterinary hospital design, both for new hospitals and remodeling existing facilities
• Investigation of commercially available products that promote the Fear Free mission

• A Fear-Free resource center and brochures for clients

Sponsored Fear-Free symposiums that will be part of major veterinary conferences are already scheduled for 2015. At the North American Veterinary Conference I attended in January 2015 in Orlando, Florida, there was a full day of lectures on Fear-Free topics for veterinarians and veterinary staff.

This is an exciting time and there are many opportunities to make the lives of all our companion animals, no matter what species, less stressful when it comes to necessary and vital veterinary intervention. I am grateful to have been practicing veterinary medicine long enough to see us emerge from the 1970s (when I graduated from veterinary school) when animals were still thought to have little to no emotions, little to no perception of pain, and little to no ability to have complex thought processes—to a time when we are acutely concerned about their mental and emotional welfare. We have moved forward from the days when only the physical abnormalities of an animal were a veterinarian’s concern to a time when veterinarians see all of their patients as complex, sentient beings who deserve the best care on all levels, with mental and emotional well-being equally as important as physical well-being.
The Rabbit Shrew
By Sarah Demarest Guthrie

I knew this day would come. You know the day—when your darling seven-year-old daughter looks you in the eye and says, “I want a rabbit.” A rabbit.

Now, I have nothing against rabbits. Bugs Bunny, The Velveteen Rabbit, Peter Rabbit—loved them all. They even lived in my house—on the bookshelf. Where they belonged.

I did the sensible, wise, and caring thing to do: I said no. N-O. For all the right reasons—she was too young, we had a dog, and—let’s be honest here—picking up rabbit poop was just not on my list of fun things to do. And we all know who would get to do it. Mom.

Then my husband, a man of logical and rational thought, said, “I always wanted a rabbit.”

And so, on a snowy February day, we emerged from the pet store with not one but two rabbits (who could separate brothers?) a cage, water bottle, food, litterbox, and more. We named the rabbits Frank and Wilbur.

We discovered that rabbits like hay—lots of it—too bad if you’re allergic. And yogurt-dipped rabbit treats—which are not good for rabbits but are top sellers at the pet store. We also discovered the House Rabbit Society (whose rabbit lovers came to our rescue on more than one occasion.) The Kansas City chapter members assured us that bunnies were great pets. We would love them, take care of them, and make sure the dog didn’t hurt them. I was not convinced—but I was also outnumbered.

So it began. On day one everyone fed Frank and Wilber and cleaned the rabbit area. On day three I gently reminded everyone to feed the rabbits and, yes, clean up the poop. After a week I was reminding them often. After two weeks I shrieked, “You said you would take care of the rabbits; you promised you would feed them. I know you have homework, but so do I!” Moms always have “home” work.

The “rabbit shrew” had arrived. I harped, I ranted, I raved, but it didn’t do any good!

Then it was spring...then fall. No one ever had “time” to clean out the rabbit pen. Except Mom, Mom, MOM.

So there I was. Sweeping up poop, washing litterboxes, and shouting, “I am not going to clean this cage one more time.” It’s a good thing Frank and Wilber were cute. It almost made up for the fact that their aim at the litterbox was as bad as a two-year-old learning to use the toilet.

Finally I went to the sweet House Rabbit Society volunteer had talked with earlier. She would understand—and take them off my hands. Right? After I dumped my litterbox full of woe on her she asked, “So, you want to teach your daughter that living things are disposable? That if choosing rabbits for pets isn’t what she thought it would be then get rid of them?”

Talk about a swift kick to the gut.

And then I saw Frank and Wilber in a new light, as two living creatures who did not choose to have a rabbit shrew purchase them at a pet store. Those sweet, brown-eyed boys deserved a loving family that spent more time playing with them than fussing about the poop. They really were lovely creatures. The rabbit shrew shriveled away. I quit complaining—most of the time. They became part of my routine and one that I enjoyed. There is nothing quite like sitting with a soft, cuddly bunny in your lap after a stressful day.

Frank and Wilber lived for ten poop-filled years. I cared for them—sometimes with help, mostly without. When they died, I cried.

After they died I volunteered to provide short-term rabbit care in emergency situations. For example, I’ll never forget Ruben, who arrived one night with no supplies, no pen, not even a litterbox. And he was scrawny. He stayed with me about six weeks. His transformation was amazing—what had been a small, almost hairless creature had grown into a handsome, friendly bunny ready to go to his improved home. It’s amazing what love—and the House Rabbit Society—can do!
Taking Rabbit Knowledge to a Higher Level
The 2014 HRS Educators’ Conference
By Joy Gioia, Chapter Manager, House Rabbit Society of Missouri, St. Louis

For years, the idea of doing a conference for HRS Educators floated around and a few options were discussed. One email can be traced to May 2009, with the announcement of Amy Espie’s passing. Amy had been an integral part of HRS and many of us truly regretted that we had never met her in person or learned more from her. That thought was echoed again and again, which led to the suggestion that, since most of us had never met, wouldn’t it be great if we could all get together somehow?

A conference put on by HRS would not only allow many of the Educators to meet but also to learn extremely valuable information simultaneously, which we could then pass along back home to other Educators, members, adopters, and even veterinarians. Veterinarians and technicians attending such a conference could be assured that this was the highest level of bunny-approved information available anywhere in the United States—and all in one location at one time.

More emails were exchanged in the following years, but such an event would be a massive undertaking, requiring many dedicated hours of work for many months for anyone involved. Then, in October 2013, things suddenly began to solidify. An email on the Educators’ list about laypersons being unable to attend veterinary conferences really got people talking. If we were serious about education on a higher level, then we simply had to do our own conference and hope that enough people would come to make it worthwhile. Knowing it wouldn’t be easy, several HRS Educators offered to be on the committee. Some of us had met, but others we barely knew except through our emails on the list. Fortunately, the group turned out to be an incredible blend of people with the abilities, knowledge, experience, and sheer determination to actually pull this off. The committee meshed instantly, and from then on the conference took on a life of its own, with a momentum that no one was going to stop.

The conference team consisted of Margo DeMello, Mary Cotter, Bill Velasquez, Laurie Gigous, Nancy Ainsley, Debbie Widolf, Sharon Dumas, and me. We also had June Booth for a short while, but health reasons compelled her to step aside. Yet she still offered some valuable information during her time on the committee.

For the next several months, the group practically lived in each other’s pockets (via email) as plans took shape, topics were chosen, fabulous speakers secured, sponsors found, and numerous details worked out. The conference title was chosen and St. Louis was selected as the venue. St. Louis was ideal for a variety of reasons, including the fact that its central location would reduce overall travel costs for most, a suitable free site was available at the Humane Society of Missouri, and the local HRS chapter had previous experience hosting a veterinary conference, plus sufficient volunteers to handle the needs of a large, complex event. The House Rabbit Society of Missouri in St. Louis had also recently purchased its own shelter building and many were interested in visiting it.

To seal the professional value of the
conference, it received accreditation by RACE (Registry of Approved Continuing Education), which is the continuing educational arm of the American Association of Veterinary State Boards. Our conference was at a level high enough to provide fourteen continuing education credits in just two days for any veterinarian or veterinary technician attending from anywhere in the United States.

The conference began with a reception at the new shelter building of Missouri HRS on Friday evening, September 27, 2014. Educators not only enjoyed a tour of the facility, great food, and petting many bunnies but had their first opportunity to simply meet and talk. It was a truly magical experience. If registration hadn’t been starting so early the next morning, the reception would have likely lasted into the wee hours.

St. Louis weather was shining on the conference; we had a warm, sunny weekend. And even though an unprecedented event in Chicago’s airport history caused some serious problems for a few travelers, most of the conference went off without a hitch. Our illustrious speakers included R. Avery Bennett, Jr., DVM; Carolynn Harvey, DVM; Susan Brown, DVM; Peter Fisher, DVM; Anthony Pilny, DVM, ABVP; Diane McClure, DVM, PhD; and Micah Kohles, DVM, MPA. All provided a level of professional credibility way above the norm. They were joined by some of our highly regarded HRS colleagues: Dana Krempels, PhD; Margo DeMello, PhD; Mary Cotter, EdD, LVT; Susan Smith, PhD; George Flentke, PhD; Anne Martin, PhD; Marlene Larkin, MS; Debby Widolf; and Dawn Sailer, MS. Even I got to speak on a subject dear to my heart.

The highlight, though, was an interview with Marinell Harriman, who founded House Rabbit Society in 1988 at her home in Alameda, CA. She had the audience weeping and laughing as she recounted the early years of the organization and how it all started. The details of the conference can still be seen at http://rabbit.org/conference.

Over and over we heard how well the conference was done and how much everyone enjoyed it. Even our vendors and sponsors said it was better than the professional conferences they normally attend, yet it was accomplished entirely by volunteers on a shoestring budget. Its success can also be measured by the fact that more than two hundred attendees came from twenty-seven states (including Hawaii) plus the District of Columbia and two provinces in Canada. One of our vendors actually flew in from England!

The knowledge that everyone gained was priceless and easily demonstrated by the number of veterinarians, veterinary technicians, HRS allies, and members who attended. But just as priceless was the HRS Educators finally getting to meet in person.

There has been a lot of post-conference discussion going on. San Diego HRS has offered to host the next conference, which may occur in as little as two years. Everyone is so eager to get together again and continue the quest for knowledge about that subject we all love: those little long-eared bunny wabbits.
A Rescuer’s Legacy

A core inspiration for the recent Educators’ Conference in St. Louis, Amy Shapiro Espie was one of the pioneering spirits of HRS. As a humane educator, rescuer, and national HRS board member, Amy helped shape the direction of this organization in its early and middle years as well as influenced attitudes of people all over, sharing her keen perceptions of how to better comprehend the world as seen by house rabbits and other rescued animals. Marinell Harriman compiled a number of Amy’s Zen-like, black-and-white photographs and video clips of bunnies, dogs, cats, and guinea pigs at home with each other at youtube.com/watch?v=rALVXFvi6mQ. In addition, you can re-experience or visit for the first time Amy’s incisive Journal articles on bunny behavior and volunteering at http://rabbit.org/page/2/?s=espie.

Buy a bunny a little time.

Twenty-seven years of eleventh-hour rescues. With your support, rabbits are rescued from animal shelters when their time is up and are cared for by House Rabbit Society until they are adopted. Membership and donations provide needy rabbits with food, housing, veterinary care, and enough time to find permanent, loving homes.

House Rabbit Society Membership
United States: $20; International: $28
House Rabbit Journal is included. Support your local HRS chapter and visit our website for chapter information. Enroll online or mail in the form below.

NAME
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Join the HRS Bunny Brigade!
When you make a monthly donation, you become a member of the very special HRS BUNNY BRIGADE MONTHLY GIVING CLUB. Bunny Brigade members sustain our daily operations and put food into our rabbits’ mouths. With your monthly gift of $30+, you will receive our thank you gift, an official House Rabbit Society necklace. Join online:
http://www.rabbit.org/bunnybrigade

House Rabbit Society
148 Broadway, Richmond, California 94804
www.rabbit.org/ 510-970-7575
Whole Foods Update
By Margo DeMello and Beth Woolbright

As many HRS members know, Whole Foods Market, an upscale US market chain, began selling rabbit meat in May 2014. In response, Bay Area rabbit rescue organization SaveABunny began an active campaign to fight it, reaching out to other groups for help. House Rabbit Society joined the campaign, and one of the first things the new coalition did, under the name Rabbit Advocacy Network, was organize a Day of Action for August 17, 2014. On that day, dozens of rabbit rescue and humane organizations protested outside of fifty-four Whole Foods stores across the US, educating customers about the horrors that rabbits experience as they are raised and slaughtered for meat. Volunteers also circulated a petition on change.org, which has now reached over 35,000 signatures.

Volunteers continue to write articles, speak on the radio, host protests at local stores, and get newspapers and other media outlets interested in the story. Unfortunately, Whole Foods has stopped responding to our concerns and has since expanded rabbit sales from their initial two regions to eight regions in the country even though sales are dismal in all regions (see rabbitadvocacynetwork.org/whole-foods/whole-food-rabbit-meat-sales); we now know that this will be a long fight. On International Rabbit Day, September 28, 2014, during House Rabbit Society’s Educator Conference in St. Louis, a group of key activists in the campaign met and decided it was time to incorporate Rabbit Advocacy Network in order to more effectively work together to fight Whole Foods. The group is led by Marcy Schaaf and Tara Baxter of SaveABunny and Margo DeMello of House Rabbit Society, and volunteers come from groups across the country. Its website, rabbitadvocacynetwork.org, is now the repository for the campaign’s materials, featuring a calendar of activities around the country. Visit the website to find out how to get involved!

Making a Difference
Whether at the local or global level, we encourage HRS members to be voices for rabbits as indoor companions. Volunteer with your local shelter or rescue group, tell your house rabbit’s story to anyone who will listen (but who can not help doing that?), or contribute an original article to the Journal (HRJEditor@rabbit.org). The now international House Rabbit Society started twenty-seven years ago with two volunteer foster parents and some rescued bunnies in Alameda, CA. As this Journal issue shows, it’s compassionate people, working independently and together, that makes the world a kinder place for us all.