

# Our Founders

We begin with Colonel Edmund and Thelma Evans and a stolen Yorkshire Terrier. A Yorkie fancier, Thelma was contacted about the dog. "We got into this and dropped everything else," said Thelma in a 1984 interview. She and Edmund began their journey by joining the Taxpayers Anti-Cruelty Federation of New Mexico in September 1965. Before long, the Federation was being run out of Thelma's kitchen. Shortly thereafter, the organization's name was changed to Animal Humane Association of New Mexico, Inc. with the adoption of its first by-laws in November 1968.

Our original focus was providing lost and found services. But by 1969, an ad calling for support for the Association showed the mission had evolved, listing the primary services as: rescuing injured animals, finding homes for abandoned pets, promoting protective legislation, investigating cruelty complaints and, finally, operating a lost and found service. The Association's aim was "to protect animals from the abuses and neglect of people."



Thelma & Edmund Evans

Thelma and Edmund were masters of change. By championing animal protection legislation and offering humane education, they molded the public's perception of responsible pet ownership through commentary, public relations and by example. They were early ambassadors of the need to spay and neuter to reduce the overwhelming number of homeless pets. The Association, under Edmund's Presidency, influenced the passage of the city's first animal ordinance requiring licensing of dogs and cats and establishing its leash law as well as the statewide ban on dog fighting. Animal Humane today is the direct result of their vision, dedication, and leadership.

## Thelma

Thelma grew up on a farm in Kansas. She was an administrative assistant her entire career, until she and Edmond retired to Albuquerque in the 1950s. Her involvement with Animal Humane spanned 27 years, from 1965 to her retirement in 1992. She ran the day-to-day operations of Animal Humane with special involvement in the veterinary clinic.

At only 5 feet tall, Thelma was known for both her sweet nature and having the "determination of a pit bull" according to Bob Wolf, Board President from 1996 to 1999. She was adamant about rules and their enforcement. She is well-known for her strict policy on length of stay given the realities of limited facilities and the sheer number of homeless pets. She felt they all deserved an equal chance to find a home. Animals were given three weeks at the shelter. After three weeks, they were humanely euthanized. At the time, they believed that was the only choice they had. Over the years, she mothered thousands of pets, championed humane education, and the pet therapy program.

Built in 1977 with funding from the George C. Whittell estate and donations from local contractors, the veterinary clinic provided care and spay/neuter operations for shelter residents with the help of volunteer veterinarians. Pets were fixed only after adoption.

An early advocate for pet sterilization, Thelma created a rebate program. Pet owners presenting a receipt for spay/neuter procedures from local veterinarians would receive a \$25 rebate check as incentive to fix their pets. The Evans established and endowed a scholarship program for pre-vet and pre-med students at the University of New Mexico. All of these programs continue under the terms of her trust.

Thelma was active in her later years—still driving and going to the gym at the age of 91. In March 2003, at the age of 92, she passed away from cancer. In a final act in support of science, she donated her body to the Medical School at UNM.

## Edmund

While many knew Edmund was a Colonel, few knew he was the Commandant of the nuclear facility buried in the Manzano Mountains. The house he built at 2400 Morrow was built to withstand a nuclear blast, with window and door frames built of tungsten. The entire house was built on reinforced I-Beams on a skid system. Following his retirement from the United States Air Force, the Colonel earned his degree in fine arts from the UNM. He became an avid potter, firing his work in a kiln he built at his home.

Edmund was the President of the Board in the early years until the end of 1977 when his term expired. He was the public face and spokesperson for our organization and continued as President until his death in 1988. He actively pushed for the city animal ordinance that required licensing for dogs and cats as well as a leash law that passed in 1973. Licenses cost \$5, and monies raised were used to hire additional



Edmund with Pet Resident

animal control officers and to establish a city-run spay/neuter clinic. Dr. Glen S. Bolton was contracted as the city veterinarian. In 1974, Animal Humane and the City of Albuquerque announced a cooperative agreement to provide reduced rates neutering for low-income pet owners and for pets that had been adopted from either shelter.

Edmund wrote a weekly pet column "Animal Outlook" for The Albuquerque Tribune in the 1970s and early 1980s. Familiar topics included how to protect your pet from the heat, training tips, what to do if your pet is lost, the importance of responsible pet ownership, as well as sad tales of animal hoarding and abandonment. He also used this forum to voice support for legislation banning dog and cock fighting in 1980. While the dog fighting bill passed in 1981, the legislature did not ban cock-fighting until 2008.

The Evans were committed to humane education for young people. As early as 1973, our Association had junior members and sought out opportunities for school outreach education. All education programs were carried out by volunteers until 1993.

In 1987, Edmund reported that "at 78 I feel like a new person," after he suffered a heart attack and received a pacemaker. Two weeks later, he wrote a letter to Pete Ford, President of Jaynes Corporation, whose firm had built the veterinary clinic. In the letter, Edmund updates Pete on recent fundraising successes, the Purina Pets for People Program (still in place today). In 1988, Colonel Evans passed away at the age of 79; however, his tireless efforts to promote animal adoptions and education continued to the end.

## The Organization 1965 – 1980

The original purpose was humane education and providing a lost and found service for stray pets. From December 1966 to the following December, 124 animals, including one horse, were adopted out. By 1968, the cost of boarding an average of 20 dogs was cutting into the funds and the agency at risk of "going broke." By 1969, the group had expanded its services by offering adoption services. Adoption fees were \$24 prompting one angry citizen to complain, "What kind of group is this?"

The primary funding was from memberships. The four original members in 1965 had grown to 362 by the end of 1968. In a 1980 Albuquerque Tribune article, Colonel Evans is quoted as saying the Association had 4,000 members.

The total operating budget for the first year of operation was \$125 in income and \$100.92 in expenses with annual income growing to \$2,030 by the end of 1967. Compare that to our \$4.2M in income for 2009 and you can see the organization has thrived over the years!



*Our first Campus building in 1969*

In June 1969, the Association moved from the Evans home to our present location with the purchase of the Robert McKee property at 615 Virginia Street SE for the grand sum of \$26,500. The only building on the property at that time was the brick building that currently houses Administration. During that same year, Charlie Black, a small black Chihuahua mix, became the organization's first mascot after being rescued by the Evans. A victim of animal cruelty, Charlie Black had been thrown from a four-story building by his 10-year-old master when he refused to "go home." He became the poster dog for many outreach activities and lived, happily, to be eighteen years old.

The first kennels were built in what is now the cattery and kennel processing building. In 1977, Animal Humane received a gift from the estate of George C. Whittell which funded the construction of the veterinary clinic by Jaynes Corporation.

As early as 1972, Animal Humane was comparing its numbers for intakes, adoptions and euthanasia to the city's Animal Control Center (ACC). That year, the city took in over 24,000 versus 1,063 at Animal Humane. Animal Humane adopted 52% of intakes compared to 9% at the ACC. A 1975 interview with Colonel Evans in Kirtland's Weekly newspaper Focus, pegs the stray/homeless pet population at 50,000 – 60,000. It was estimated that 23,000 pets were destroyed at the ACC that year. By 1984, Animal Humane was taking in 3,000 pets a year, adopting 70%, reuniting 20% with their owners and euthanizing 10% because of injury, illness or unadoptability.

It's interesting to note the on-going public confusion between the City shelter and Animal Humane. A Letter to the Editor to the Albuquerque Journal written in 1978 by Colonel Evans referred to Animal Humane as "the one on Virginia" a phrase we continue to use to this day.



*Edmund & Pete Ford, President of Jaynes Group, at Clinic Ground Breaking*