



Regina
Humane
Society

1964

Our Founding Story



The following is a history of the Regina Humane Society as remembered in 1992 by Winifred D. Ramsay, one of the founders. The text has been shortened but not otherwise altered from her account. Descriptions and verbage are her own and may not represent current terminology or expressions.

The Need

My husband and I did not realize there was a problem until the day our thirteen-year-old daughter brought home a bedraggled, starving mutt. At that time we lived with an assertive and bossy Dachshund named Pretzel who was not about to let us add this stray to our family.

It was through our quest to find a home for our woebegone friend that we discovered there was literally no place for our homeless friend to go, other than the pound. We did find a home for him eventually, but from then on, I knew something had to be done.

Shortly after this incident, as if by coincidence, a short advertisement appeared in The Regina Leader Post calling for anyone interested in forming an organization to care for lost and abandoned animals in the city. I immediately responded and discovered that the young woman who had placed the ad was Margaret Borland, a fellow Scot and church member. We made arrangements to meet soon to discuss this matter.

The six people who responded to the advertisement sat around Margaret's kitchen table and discussed what was soon to be The

Regina Society for the Humane Care of Animals. Attending were: Margaret Borland, Jack and Evelyn Wise, Al Juno (an inspector with the Regina City Police Force), my husband, Jim Ramsay, and I. We were a diverse group held together by a common desire to help those who could not speak for themselves. My husband offered the use of our family room, and for the next few years, 1718 Parker Avenue was where we drank coffee and planned and plotted for the sake of the animals.

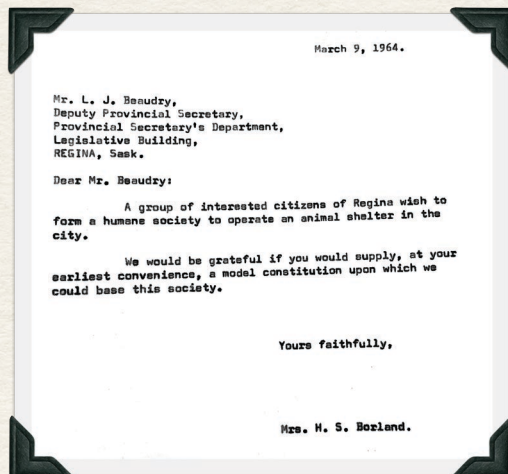


*At the beginning, we were full of enthusiasm,
but had we known of the trials ahead...*

A Plan is Made

The Society began with Al Juno as President, Evelyn Wise as Secretary, and Margaret Borland as Treasurer. Jim Ramsay had the distinction of becoming our first member; he donated a cheque for \$100 (a very large sum in those days). With this money we were able to print our first membership forms.

With such a small nucleus of people for a task so formidable, it was difficult to know where to begin. However, not one of us doubted the ultimate success of our venture. At our first meeting (and the many that followed) the discussion centred on fundraising. We decided to approach City Hall for funding. In our opinion, it was ridiculous that the queen city of the plains did not have a facility for lost and stray animals within its boundaries. We budgeted for our needs: \$10,000 would be more than enough to erect and furnish a humble Quonset as our first shelter.



An Ask to City Council

Knowing that it was unlikely that City Council would give us the entire amount we requested, we decided to play the barter game and ask for \$20,000, an amount that would have bought an executive home at the time. In our minds we felt we would certainly get the \$10,000 we needed. We were wrong. City Council must have seen through our little ploy. Instead, Council voted to give us nothing outright, but would match dollar-for-dollar what we earned in fundraising. I'm sure they felt they had the advantage by not committing to a specific amount and not having to give a direct no.

Our next meeting was not very encouraging. We were faced with a seemingly impossible task. We sold memberships for a dollar to all our friends and acquaintances, and, minus the cost of printing our membership books, we had amassed a princely sum of \$300 - far from the \$10,000 we needed. None of us voiced our doubts that night, but I'm sure we were all wondering how our small group could ever raise enough.

And as it is sometimes the way, when we seemed to be at our darkest moment, when hope is almost lost, a Fairy Godmother appeared...

A Donor's Generous Gift

One day, while my husband was drinking coffee in the cafeteria at his office, an elderly woman asked if she could join him. She sat down, produced her Regina Humane Society membership, and said she was very interested in helping us financially by donating a large number of paintings and other artwork. She invited Jim to drop by her home after work that evening to see the donation for himself.

My husband arrived at an elegant old home on College Avenue (it has since been bulldozed to make room for one of the tallest high rises in the city.) After the woman led him up three flights of stairs to a dusty attic, Jim made arrangements to return the next day with Al Juno, and the two of them would move the paintings to Parker Avenue.

When the two men arrived the next morning, the woman had more artwork to donate. On her dining room table were several pieces of exquisite First Nations beadwork. She told her two guests that her father had been friendly with numerous First Nations peoples. As for the paintings, her father had purchased them on his many trips to Europe. Al and Jim thanked the lady and transported the donated artwork to Parker Avenue.

We called the committee together to view the items, and I must admit that their attitude was not one of overwhelming enthusiasm. The paintings were thick with dust and grime from their many years in the old attic. "Five dollars for the lot!" someone offered. "I'll make it ten dollars", joked Al Juno. "I can use the glass!" I could not believe my ears. Years earlier I had taken a correspondence class from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and I proceeded to make it very clear to the committee that no one was touching anything until we had the donation appraised. "There is a

The Editor: Having read recent letters concerning the lack of humane facilities for pets in Regina, I should like to add my comments.

It is unfortunate that Regina does not have an organization for the welfare of pets which is eligible for financial support under the United Appeal. I, for one, would like to see a portion of my yearly donation spent to assist in finding the answer to this problem.

It would appear that, as with other matters of interest to city residents, this is a problem which should be dealt with by city council. A hostel for wayward pets, associated with or replacing the city pound, set up and operated by the city would seem to me to be the solution. It might be said that the pound well serves the purpose, however, I prefer to believe that citizens of Regina have more humane feelings than to destroy healthy animals which may be welcome in many homes now missing the enjoyment that comes from having a pet.

Regina () MRS. J. M. WISE

As the Committee reviewed the art, they also wrote several letters to The Leader Post Editor about the pressing need for an animal shelter.

Russell Flint and a Fry", I added, "and if those paintings are originals, then we'll have our shelter!".

With much skepticism from the others, I was put in charge of selling the artwork. I went to the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery to enquire about having the artwork appraised. At the time, the art gallery was struggling to survive and the man who did the appraising had moved to the Glenbow Institute in Calgary. However, by a stroke of good fortune, he was returning to Regina the following week to attend a meeting. When I telephoned the man and mentioned the Russell Flint, he immediately showed some interest, although he doubted it was an original.

The next week I cleaned up the frames and glass on the paintings. At the arranged time, I picked up the appraiser from his meeting and brought him to my home where the artwork was displayed. He was immediately impressed when he saw the art displayed in my family room, and after closer examination, he excitedly proclaimed the Russell Flint and Fry as originals. He positively drooled over the paintings by Rossi of Sitting Bull and Poundmaker. "You have a small fortune here!"

he exclaimed, but he refused to give me some sort of estimate on their market worth.

The committee was called again to discuss this new turn of events. Jim Ramsay felt that, in all fairness, the woman who had donated the art should be informed about the alleged value of her donation and be given the opportunity to have her donation returned. The committee agreed and Jim and I were elected to contact her. She was absolutely delighted by our news. She assured us that she did not need the money. She was long widowed, had no children or dependents, and was overjoyed that her small contribution would perhaps pay for our animal shelter. Her one stipulation to us was that her name not be mentioned, and from that day forward, the words "Anonymous Donor" became synonymous with our benefactress.

News of our windfall and our cause spread. Photographers from The Leader Post came to the house, and CKCK TV invited us to appear on a local television show for three consecutive Thursdays. This was a wonderful source of free publicity and I intended to make the most of it. I drove six miles on the Trans Canada Highway through a terrible October blizzard to

my 10:00 am appointment at the CKCK TV station. Because of the publicity, we had numerous enquiries about our paintings. At last we felt that our shelter was about to become a reality. But first, the paintings would have to be auctioned off.



In preparation for the sale, Winifred Ramsay appeared in the Regina Leader Post with a selection of the donated art and photographs. A public display of the art was being planned but in the meantime, anyone interested in viewing the pieces were invited to the Ramsay residence.

Fred Bard, the director of the Museum of Natural History (now called the Royal Saskatchewan Museum) was an enthusiastic member of our society, and he generously offered us the use of the museum's great hall to display our paintings. We decided to have two Sunday showings followed by the auction itself. We all worked furiously to get the artwork display just right.

In retrospect, I can't help but chuckle as I recall the comments of our small committee as we bustled about with trestle tables and sheets of white paper. Who could have imagined this at our first meeting? This small group with one common interest to provide care for homeless and abused animals had been plunged willy nilly into the art business. Comments such as "Does this Flint look better in this light?" or "What about the Fry?" were commonplace as we frantically set up our displays. In the space of a few short months, we had all become art connoisseurs!

Art aids animals

A sale of 56 pictures and paintings will be held in an effort to raise funds towards the Regina Society for the Humane Care of Animals.

The pictures will go on sale Sunday in the Museum of Natural History from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Three other dates have also been fixed: Nov. 21 in the Public library, Nov. 25 in Hotel Saskatchewan, and Dec. 4, in the Sherwood Co-op Auditorium.

Some of the paintings were donated by an anonymous donor who asked that the paintings be sold and the proceeds turned over to the society.

Any person or organization may bid on them.

The Art Auction

Citizens turned out in droves to view our artwork. In true police officer fashion, Al Juno provided lots of security so that none of our items walked out. All of us were amazed at the favourable comments we heard. One of the many who attended was our anonymous donor. Jim escorted her around the displays, and her delight was obvious. I'm certain that not one person in that room guessed that the small woman with the cotton gloves and the sprig of artificial violets pinned to her coat was the Humane Society's Fairy Godmother.

The auction was a great success. It raised over \$6,000 for the shelter, to the delight of everyone except maybe City Council. By agreement, the City had to match this dollar for dollar. With \$12,000 in our coffers, our shelter was assured.

We had the money for the shelter; now we just needed the land to build it on. We were granted a small acreage on Highway #6 North. At this time we also purchased an old farmhouse and we towed it to the site to be used as the home of our future inspector. This house was in a sad state of disrepair, so our committee went from the elegant world of the

art business to the very physical painting, papering, and fixing-up business. When would we ever get to do what we had started out to do, namely, caring for homeless and abused animals?



Mayor Henry Baker points to the proposed new site for the Regina Society for the Humane Care of Animals. At left is city police Insp. J. A. Juno, President of the Society, and at right are Margaret Borland, Treasurer and Dr. John Tanner, Director.

The Shelter Opens

Finally our shelter arrived in the shape of a Quonset. It was erected on the bald prairie, and like the prairie, it was unbelievably hot in the summer and bone-chillingly cold in the winter. Our shelter had cement runs for the dogs, cages for the cats, and a telephone. We were nearly ready to begin caring for the animals.

Regina Society for the Humane Care of Animals

requires a person to fill the position of inspector and caretaker. Applicant should be physically sound and love animals. Interested persons please apply

P.O. Box 1211, Regina
for application form.

With our newly found wealth, we were able to advertise for an inspector and we hired one. To our delight the City agreed to pay the inspector's salary. The inspector was only paid minimum wage, but he, his wife, and their many young children were

able to live for free in the house, which was a considerable perk.

Our first inspector was quite the character. I can't remember his last name, but his first name was Andy. He insisted on having a uniform so we provided him with a hodgepodge outfit of

twill pants, a khaki jacket, and a bus driver type cap. With his dark hair, and pencil-thin Clark Gable moustache, Andy in his uniform could have drawn countless recruits for any army. His bearing was military: his walk was more of a march, and I never saw Andy less than impeccably dressed.

We had a building and an inspector. Finally we were ready to open the shop! None of us, not even our inspector, had any expertise in the day-to-day running of an animal shelter. Andy did a marvelous job of keeping the shelter clean, but as for the rest of the duties involved, it was a case of the blind leading the blind.

Shelter to be opened

The animal shelter at Albert St. and Armour Rd. will be officially opened Sunday in a brief ceremony followed by an open house from 2 to 5 p.m.

Mayor Baker will cut the ribbon at 2 p.m. and declare the new shelter open. Lt. - Gov. Hanbidge and Mrs. Hanbidge are expected to attend the opening.

An honorary membership in the Regina Society for the Humane Care of Animals will be given to Arthur Allen of 2724 Victoria Ave., architect of the shelter.

The Shelter was officially opened on Sunday, December 12, 1965.

Our inexperience was painfully obvious as the number of animals coming into the shelter escalated. Never in my life had I seen so many cats! Big cats. Small cats. Fat cats. Thin cats. And many typical prairie cats missing their ears and tails because of frostbite. On one occasion, Andy

was sick and I was the only person available to tend to the shelter. As I mopped the floor, fed and watered the numerous animals, hosed down the kennels, and frantically answered the phone to pick up more cats, I wondered what sort of Genie we had unleashed from its bottle. Had no one in Regina ever heard the magic words spaying and neutering?

Just when the amount of cats we had in the shelter appeared to be insurmountable, disaster struck the shelter in the form of



distemper. It raced through the shelter like wildfire. We ended up having to euthanize the entire animal population in the shelter. It was a bitter lesson for all of us to learn, and served to show us just how complicated it was going to be to run and uphold a hygienic shelter. Thankfully we had the expertise of Dr. C.D. Fawcett, a local veterinarian with a very busy practice.

Chuck, as he was known to us, was never a member of our committee, but he attended all our meetings and gave us countless hours of help and advice. The shelter had to be closed while it was thoroughly disinfected. An isolation room was erected in one corner where new arrivals were checked for disease and given a distemper shot before being integrated into the shelter population. As well, Andy underwent a crash course in animal husbandry and hygiene.

We were in business once again. And so our Society took shape. Those early years were full of trials, errors, and many, many headaches. Jim and I were completely burned out, and we most willingly and thankfully handed over the reins to those with fresh faces and new ideas.

The Society began because of the hard work of a diverse and very busy group of people who came together, almost in desperation, to do something about the homeless and abandoned animals in our city.

We honour and thank them for their vision and dedication to founding the Regina Humane Society on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of animals helped since 1964.

The Regina Humane Society Founders

Margaret Borland
Homemaker
Unknown DOB/DOD

Al Juno
Police Officer
1925-2002

Jim Ramsay
Doctor
1918-1971

Winifred Ramsay
Homemaker
1926-2001

Evelyn Wise
Homemaker
1932-2001

Jack Wise
Engineer
1924-2018





**Regina
Humane
Society**



The logo of the Regina Humane Society was inspired by the above image. It is from a Christmas card that was sent to the Society by a kind donor.