

Life & Times Transcript

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VAL>> A FEW YEARS BACK, WE INTRODUCED YOU TO A GROUP OF KIND-HEARTED BIRD LOVERS IN ORANGE COUNTY. THEY'RE MAINLY IN THE BUSINESS OF SAVING INJURED AND SICK BROWN PELICANS. WE SAW THEM RESCUE THOUSANDS OF BIRDS WHO HAD EATEN TAINTED FISH FROM THE SALTON SEA, BUT NOW THE PACIFIC WILDLIFE PROJECT IS ON THE VERGE OF BEING EVICTED FROM ITS HEADQUARTERS AT THE IRVINE ANIMAL SHELTER. PHILIP BRUCE TALKS WITH LINDA EVANS AS SHE TRIES TO SAVE THE BIRDS AND THE PROJECT SHE CO-FOUNDED.

PHILIP BRUCE>> SO, LINDA, YOU'VE BEEN DOING BUSINESS WITH THE PELICANS AND THE OTHER ENDANGERED ANIMALS FOR HOW LONG NOW?

LINDA EVANS>> TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. THIS YEAR WILL BE THE TWENTY-FIFTH YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE PACIFIC WILDLIFE PROJECT.

PHILIP BRUCE>> AND ALL THAT COULD COME TO AN END VERY ABRUPTLY?

LINDA EVANS>> UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S LOOKING PRETTY DISMAL FOR US NOW.

PHILIP BRUCE>> TELL ME WHAT YOUR SITUATION IS? YOU'RE DOWN AT THE IRVINE ANIMAL SHELTER AND YOU'VE BEEN THERE FOR A WHILE.

LINDA EVANS>> RIGHT. A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO, WE OUTGREW OUR FORMER LOCATION WHICH WAS MY HOME WHERE WE SERVED THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AND RESCUE ANIMALS ALL OF THAT TIME. ABOUT SEVEN YEARS WHEN OUR PROGRAM INCREASED, WE MOVED OVER TO THE IRVINE ANIMAL SHELTER COMPLEX AND BEGAN USING ONE OF THEIR BUILDINGS THERE AND HOPED WE'D BE ABLE TO STAY FOR A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME.

PHILIP BRUCE>> BUT THEY'RE TELLING YOU YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO MOVE?

LINDA EVANS>> RIGHT, RIGHT. AND IN TRUTH, THE FACILITY THERE REALLY ISN'T SUITABLE FOR WILDLIFE, BUT WE'VE MADE DO WITH WHAT WE HAVE AND WE'VE MADE IT WORK AND WE'VE CARED FOR THOUSANDS OF ANIMALS IN ALL THE YEARS THAT WE'VE BEEN THERE AND SERVED THE COMMUNITY THROUGH OUR VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS.

PHILIP BRUCE>> THE THING I REMEMBER ABOUT THE OPERATION COMING THERE A FEW YEARS BACK WAS THE PELICANS YOU'D RESCUED FROM THE SALTON SEA.

LINDA EVANS>> RIGHT.

PHILIP BRUCE>> AND THAT'S PROBABLY THE KIND OF FLAGSHIP THING YOU'VE BEEN DOING THERE FOR A LONG TIME.

PHILIP BRUCE>> "PANCAKES". THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL THE ONES THAT JUST LIE THERE, THOSE THAT ARE ALL BUT PARALYZED BY THE TIME THEY'RE RESCUED, AND THEY COME HERE BY THE TRUCKLOAD. IF A BIRD CAN FEEL TERROR, THIS IS WHAT IT MUST LOOK LIKE.

>> OH, I WAKE UP AT NIGHT CRYING. I SEEM TO BE THE ONLY ONE THAT FINDS THE DEAD BIRDS. I KNOW I'M NOT, BUT IT ALWAYS THROWS ME.

LINDA EVANS>> ODDLY ENOUGH, FOR A LITTLE TINY ORGANIZATION LIKE OURS, WE'VE ACTUALLY HANDLED NEARLY FIVE THOUSAND ENDANGERED BROWN PELICANS MORE THAN ANYBODY WORLDWIDE, WHICH IS AMAZING TO ME, BUT WE'RE BEST KNOWN FOR THAT WORK WITH PELICANS. ALTHOUGH WE RESCUE A LOT OF PELICANS ALONG THE COASTLINE WHICH IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE NO ONE ELSE DOES THAT.

PHILIP BRUCE>> SO YOU PHYSICALLY GO OUT AND LOOK FOR THEM?

LINDA EVANS>> WE PHYSICALLY GO OUT AND DO THAT. OUR VOLUNTEERS GO OUT WITH BOATS, THEY BRING BOATS, THEY RENT BOATS, THEY SWIM IN THE WATER, THEY JUMP IN THE WATER, THEY STAY ON THE DOCKS. THEY FIND THE BIRDS THAT ARE INJURED. NOT ONLY PELICANS, BUT ANY BIRDS THAT THEY FIND THERE, AND FIND THE ONES THAT ARE INJURED, NEED HELP AND BRING THEM IN FOR CARE.

PHILIP BRUCE>> SO NOW, EVERYTHING YOU DO IS FOCUSED RIGHT THERE IN THE IRVINE ANIMAL SHELTER. IF YOU'RE NOT THERE, WHAT HAPPENS TO THE ORGANIZATION?

LINDA EVANS>> WELL, THE ORGANIZATION WOULD BE SHUT DOWN. WITHOUT AN ALTERNATE LOCATION, WE'D HAVE TO CLOSE OUR PROGRAM NOT ONLY FOR THE ANIMALS THAT WE TAKE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS, BUT THE CASELOAD OF SALTON SEA BOTULISM PELICANS AND THEN THE RESCUE WHERE MAYBE WE RESCUE THREE HUNDRED TO FIVE HUNDREDS BIRDS EVERY YEAR.

PHILIP BRUCE>> NOW I RECALL YOU TELLING ME THAT YOU TAKE ALL KINDS OF ANIMALS. I MEAN, WE'VE SEEN THE PELICANS AND THAT'S SOMETHING THAT ALL OF US REMEMBER. YOU TAKE ALL KINDS OF BIRDS AND ANIMALS, DON'T YOU?

LINDA EVANS>> WE DON'T DIFFERENTIATE, THAT'S CORRECT. WE DON'T DIFFERENTIATE ONE SPECIE FROM ANOTHER. WE TAKE EVERYTHING THAT'S IN NEED. WE TAKE COMMON AND UNCOMMON, BIG AND SMALL. WE'VE EVEN TAKEN LITTLE MICE THAT PEOPLE BRING TO US. IF IT'S IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO SOME MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY TO GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO RESCUE, WE DON'T FEEL IT'S OUR PLACE TO MAKE A JUDGMENT AND WILL CARE FOR IT.

PHILIP BRUCE>> WELL, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, AND I KNOW THAT THE CITY OF IRVINE HAS HAD GOOD THINGS TO SAY ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, WHY ARE YOU FACING A POSSIBLE EVICTION?

LINDA EVANS>> THEY HAVE BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE AND THAT'S WHY IT'S SORT OF A SURPRISE TO US THAT WE'RE NOW BEING ASKED TO LEAVE. WE'RE NOT REALLY SURE WHAT IT IS. WE'RE ASSUMING THAT WE'RE BEING ASKED TO LEAVE IN FAVOR OF ANOTHER ONE OF THEIR PROGRAMS.

PHILIP BRUCE>> WHICH IS RESCUING ANIMALS. THEY GO OUT AND THEY TAKE --

LINDA EVANS>> -- WHICH IS RESCUING COMPANION ANIMALS.

PHILIP BRUCE>> DOGS AND CATS.

LINDA EVANS>> WHICH IS A WONDERFUL THING TO DO, BUT NOT

AT THE EXPENSE OF THE OTHER ANIMALS OF THE WILDLIFE BECAUSE THEY'LL HAVE NO PLACE TO GO. AND IN A PARTICULAR CONCERN, WE ALWAYS HAVE SOME ANIMALS THAT ARE NOT RELEASABLE AND THESE ARE ENDANGERED BIRDS. NORMALLY WE WOULD BE ABLE TO PLACE THESE ANIMALS IN ZOO FACILITIES OR FACILITIES THAT ARE SET UP FOR THEIR CARE. IF WE CLOSE, THEY'LL HAVE NO PLACE TO GO AND, BECAUSE OF THE NEWCASTLE QUARANTINE, WE WON'T BE ALLOWED TO SEND THEM OUT OF THE STATE WHERE THEY MIGHT LIVE A HAPPY LIFE, SO WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THEM.

PHILIP BRUCE>> SO THESE BIRDS ARE PERHAPS INFECTED WITH NEWCASTLE DISEASE AND, AS A RESULT, YOU CAN'T SHIP THEM OUTSIDE THE STATE, RIGHT?

LINDA EVANS>> WELL, THE STATE IS UNDER QUARANTINE FOR THE DISEASE. ALL OF OUR BIRDS HAVE BEEN TESTED FOR THE VIRUS AND THEY'RE ALL NEGATIVE, BUT BECAUSE THE QUARANTINE IS IN PLACE, NO BIRDS CAN BE SHIPPED OVER STATE LINES. SO THESE ENDANGERED BIRDS ARE CAUGHT IN A BUREAUCRATIC CROSSFIRE.

PHILIP BRUCE>> NOW I KNOW FROM TALKING TO YOU OVER THE YEARS THAT YOU'RE NOT A BIG-MONEY OPERATION.

LINDA EVANS>> WE ARE ABSOLUTELY NOT A BIG-MONEY OPERATION.

PHILIP BRUCE>> YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF VOLUNTEERS. IT'S PRETTY MUCH EVERYBODY IS DOWN THERE FROM THE GOODNESS OF THEIR HEART.

LINDA EVANS>> EXACTLY, YEAH.

PHILIP BRUCE>> WELL, HOW MUCH MONEY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT TO BAIL YOU OUT? HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU SPEND A YEAR TO KEEP THIS OPERATION GOING?

LINDA EVANS>> OUR AVERAGE ANNUAL BUDGET IS ABOUT \$60,000, A FRACTION OF WHAT OTHER FACILITIES WOULD USE.

PHILIP BRUCE>> SO \$60,000 A YEAR?

LINDA EVANS>> A YEAR, A YEAR.

PHILIP BRUCE>> AND FOR THAT, YOU'RE ABLE TO DO WHAT?

LINDA EVANS>> WE TAKE IN A COUPLE THOUSAND ADMISSIONS EVERY YEAR AND WE DO VERY WELL ON THAT. WITH THAT AMOUNT OF MONEY, WE COULD REPAIR OR ADD TO OUR CAGING, MEDICAL SUPPLIES. FOOD IS OUR BIGGEST EXPENSE. FOOD AND MEDICATIONS ARE REALLY OUR BIGGEST EXPENSE.

PHILIP BRUCE>> SO WHAT ARE YOU ANTICIPATING IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, FEW WEEKS? HOW LONG CAN YOU GO AS IT IS NOW AND WHAT'S THE HORIZON LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

LINDA EVANS>> WELL, THE CITY HAS LET US KNOW THAT THEY WOULD LIKE FOR US TO MOVE OUT IN A FEW SHORT WEEKS, SOMETIME IN THE BEGINNING OR POSSIBLY SOMETIME IN SEPTEMBER, SO THAT MEANS THAT THE END IS DRAWING NEAR. SO WHAT WE'RE HOPING IS TO FIND AN ANGEL, FIND A BENEFACTOR, FIND SOMEONE, SOME JURISDICTION, SOME INDIVIDUAL, SOME ENTITY THAT WOULD BE WILLING TO DONATE THE USE OR LEASE OF SOME PARCEL OF LAND WHERE WE COULD BUILD A VERY MODEST -- BECAUSE THAT'S HOW WE ARE -- ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY FACILITY WHERE ANIMALS COULD BE KEPT IN NATURAL KINDS OF SETTINGS WHILE THEY RECOVER.

PHILIP BRUCE>> WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT AN ANGEL, YOU MEAN A CITY, A COUNTY, AN INDIVIDUAL, ANYBODY?

LINDA EVANS>> A WATER DISTRICT, ANYBODY, A UTILITY COMPANY, ANYONE. THESE BIRDS, MOST ASSUREDLY, NEED AN ANGEL. THEY NEED SOMEONE THAT CARES ABOUT THEM AND SOMEONE THAT'S WILLING TO COME FORWARD AND HELP. WE'RE ALL WILLING TO MAKE THE SACRIFICE OR TO CONTINUE MAKING THE SACRIFICE THAT WE'VE BEEN MAKING BY OPERATING ON THE SHOESTRING THAT WE DO, BUT WE REALLY NEED PEOPLE TO COME FORWARD. WE NEED THE COMMUNITY TO COME FORWARD TO LET JURISDICTIONS KNOW THAT THEY SUPPORT THIS PROGRAM AND THAT THEY WANT IT TO EXIST AND WE CERTAINLY NEED AN ANGEL TO HELP US FINANCE AND BUILD IT.

PHILIP BRUCE>> WELL, WE CERTAINLY WISH YOU WELL. LINDA EVANS, AS ALWAYS, A PLEASURE TALKING TO YOU. THANKS FOR JOINING US HERE ON LIFE AND TIMES.

LINDA EVANS>> THANK YOU.

VAL>> FOR YEARS, BROWN PELICANS HAVE BEEN GETTING SICK AFTER EATING CONTAMINATED FISH FROM THE SALTON SEA, BUT LINDA EVANS TELLS US RECENTLY THAT THE PROBLEM HAS DIMINISHED MAINLY BECAUSE MOST OF THE FISH FROM THE SALTON SEA HAVE DIED BECAUSE OF THE INCREASING SALT LEVELS IN THE WATER.