

During the 11 years that I've been Animal Friends' Humane Officer, one factor has remained constant. Whatever case I've investigated, complainants and defendants alike asked me if I worked for Ed Blotzer. I have tried cases in front of judges and district attorneys who knew Ed by name and reputation, and they asked after his health. Lawyers representing defendants would wax nostalgic about a case where they went up against Blotzer and even they had a respect, an awe and a fear of him that bordered on fondness.

People in this area invoked his name as if it were a charm. Even the guilty had learned to use the "B" word as a tactic to keep me at bay. I often got this response when I knocked on doors in response to a complaint, "You know Blotzer? He's been here already." (In other words, go away). And I would respond, "Yes, the Chief Humane Officer has asked me to check on your pet." No one ever asked to see my ID or badge. If Blotzer had sent me, my authority was unquestioned. And just why did his name have so much clout?

Ed was certainly an unlikely candidate to become an animal protection hero. He was a typical "salt-of-the-earth," hard-working, union Democrat, ex-Navy, family man and Pittsburgher. He was big and tough, outspoken and sure of himself. In an era where it was neither trendy nor manly to have a soft heart for animals, he stood alone in his fight for justice and earned respect for his beliefs, for the cause and for the animals. I often think of the thousands of miles he traveled alone, day after day, in his fight for justice. I wonder how many times he talked the talk and no one listened. But Ed, with the loving support of his wife Kay, never, never gave up. Ed was instrumental in legislative initiatives on both state and national levels until the end of his life. He launched many people into new arenas to help more animals and supported us when we faltered. He made us all believe we could make changes.

Ed left us a wonderful legacy: self-sacrifice, compassion, loyalty, justice, steadfastness in the face of opposition and belief. Sue Krul made the statement at his funeral that Ed did not leave us prematurely, but that he had indeed finished teaching us all we needed to know to carry on the work. His legacy is also full of that responsibility. I envision Ed Blotzer's life's work as a thousand points of light, glowing brightly on a route through space and time. It's up to us to catch that light, to hold it forever and never let it fall.