

## Year Ends on Somber Notes: Assassination Attempt, Two Research Programs Halted

The year 1988 came to a disturbing end as animal activists escalated their attacks on laboratory animal programs by an assassination attempt on the head of a surgical materials company and by the harassment of two medical schools that led to the voluntary closing of federal research projects involving cats.

Arrested by Norwalk, CT, police in the assassination attempt was animal rights activist Fran Stephanie Trutt, 33, of New York City, who is accused of attempting to use a radio-controlled bomb to kill Leon Hirsch, founder and chairman of the US Surgical Corporation. The company has been the target of animal activists for several years because of its use of dogs to test synthetic sutures.

Acting on a tip, police staked out the company's headquarters and spotted Trutt entering the heavily guarded facility and planting a pipe bomb near Hirsch's parking space. Police described the bomb as a sophisticated device about 18 inches long and 4-5 inches in diameter and designed to blow up and scatter roofing nails at its victim. Police said the bomb's destructive force was enough to kill anyone within 10 or 15 feet of it.

Trutt has been charged by Connecticut police with attempted murder, possession of explosives, and manufacturing a bomb. Bail was set at \$500,000.

New York police in a search of Trutt's apartment in Queens found two other pipe bombs, a sawed-off shotgun, and a homemade weapon described as a cross between a bazooka and a shotgun. It is unclear what charges, if any, would be filed by New York police.

Trutt claims to be a member of several animal rights organizations including Trans-Species Unlimited, which she joined in 1987.

### Cornell Turns Down Grant

Trans-Species Unlimited is the group whose more than a year-long protest caused Cornell University's medical school administrators to force a prominent drug abuse researcher to give up a \$720,000 federal grant for studies involving experiments on cats.

In a letter cosigned by a Cornell dean, Michiko Okamoto, a professor of pharmacology, informed the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) that she had reluctantly decided to turn down the three-year grant for her ongoing research using cats to study barbiturate addiction. Cornell administrators reportedly told Okamoto to refuse the grant because the university had made a promise in a letter to the protesters that the cat research would be phased out.

Okamoto's studies on cats has advanced scientific understanding of drug addiction, according to NIDA officials who view Cornell's action as a capitulation to an animal rights group and claim that the university's action could endanger the freedom of other scientists to do animal research.

George P. Cave, president of Trans-Species, said the group protested the research because the studies "were simply of no benefit for human barbiturate addicts." He added that the success in halting the research was significant in that the organization challenged the need for the research rather than contending the animals were being mistreated.

Of Trans-Species' decision to challenge the scientific need, Cave said, "We deliberately chose a tactic that had never before been taken. We didn't even raise the question of laboratory conditions. We have no reason to believe anything was wrong with the caging or veterinary care at Cornell."

### Research Stopped at Cincinnati

The treatment of animals was a cause of concern cited by an animal rights group that led to the closing of a head trauma research project involving cat experiments at the University of Cincinnati.

The study involved delivering blows to the head of anesthetized cats in effort to simulate human head trauma. The experiments were placed under scrutiny last summer when it was publicly criticized by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Research. In September, in response to the negative publicity, the university defended the cat experiments as offering "hope for limiting destructive effects of head trauma and for restoring injured citizens to productive lives." Less than two months later the university stopped the experiments.

William M. Samuels

### PETA Liberates Seven Restaurant Lobsters

Seven Maine lobsters were liberated by PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) from a lobster tank at a Rockville, MD, restaurant and flown to Maine where they were returned to the Atlantic Ocean.

The animal activists spent \$240 to return the lobsters to their native waters: \$40 to purchase the lobsters and \$200 round trip airfare. The lobsters were escorted by a PETA member and traveled in Styrofoam boxes in an overhead bin on the commercial airliner to Portland, ME.

In Portland the lobsters and their escort were met by the US Coast Guard who took them about 15 miles out to sea where the ship's sonar found a rocky area that lobsters like.