

According to *People* magazine, which reported the results of the annual “Spam Speed-Carving Contest,” the event’s intention was to “expand the creative boundaries of ground ham, pork shoulder, salt, sugar, water and sodium nitrate.” And in the words of one contestant, “It’s tough to get smooth cuts with all those tiny red blobs.”

According to the contest winner, who demonstrated on the “Tonight Show” how to craft crude animal figures out of Spam (a commercial trademarked product of the Hormel company), carving up animal flesh for entertainment “felt like the natural thing to do.” While he was busy disassociating himself from the fact that the material he was carving into had once been alive, I was left wondering what the slaughterhouse circumstances were under which it had died.

Just what does it say about society when network entertainment execs refuse to expose violations of federal laws? Instead, they provide time to teach an audience of tens of millions how to carve miniature animals out of processed animal flesh. What I wouldn’t have done to have gotten those eleven minutes of airtime to expose slaughterhouse violations.



During the early stages of my investigation, I’d been engaged in a battle even more frustrating and personal than the one I was waging with the networks. The very people I most needed support from were putting roadblocks in my path.

For years I’d worked for an organization called the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Shortly after I began my slaughter investigation, however, a new vice president was hired by the HSUS.

My new supervisor focused on splashy, symbolic animal issues that brought him airtime and column space in the print media. In the meantime, he instructed me not to speak to the media and attempted to undermine the slaughterhouse investigation by depriving it of funds. While this vice president was traveling around the world wining and dining on HSUS’s tab, I was defiantly continuing to provide my documentation to the media, and futilely pleading with his supervisors at HSUS to support the investigation.

The last straw came when my supervisor announced that, henceforth, to generate media attention, we were only to initiate high-profile investigations that could be completed in eleven days. This made in-depth investigations next to impossible. I knew the only way I could ever continue to document and expose slaughter violations would be to resign.*

I applied for a job at the Humane Farming Association (HFA), the nation’s largest organization dedicated to protecting farm animals. Based in San Francisco, HFA had established an impressive reputation as an organization that had accomplished a great deal on behalf of farm animals. HFA’s national veal

*That supervisor was later fired from the HSUS for falsifying his expense reports. In June, 1998, he was criminally indicted by a Maryland grand jury for embezzling nearly \$90,000 from the society. In June, 1999, he pleaded guilty to one count in Maryland Circuit Court, and agreed to make partial restitution and serve a six-month jail term. He also admitted in a *Washington Post* cover story to having faked his resumé and altered his academic record to mask time spent in jail for a 1973 burglary conviction. (The *Washington Post*, June 13, 1998, p. C7; The *Washington Post*, June 17, 1999, p. B2.)